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The Western: An Anti-Feminist Genre?

Gender Representations and Relations in Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* (2012) and *The Hateful Eight* (2015)

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I. Introduction

Quentin Tarantino's high-flying films do not only generate huge box office numbers but also controversies regarding violence, racism, and gender issues on-screen. While the filmmaker won an Oscar for Best Original Screenplay for *Django Unchained* (2012) at the Academy Awards in 2013, his seventh motion picture has drawn much criticism due to its depiction of real violence during the period of American slavery. Though the film's historical reference is morally questionable, Tarantino's tribute to Spaghetti Westerns constitutes his highest-grossing film to date. With his subsequent film, *The Hateful Eight* (2015), he created again a novel take on the Western genre, depicting a group of mean bastards of the deepest dye trapped in a lodge in the dead of a Wyoming winter. Set after the American Civil War, the still existing tensions between former Union and Confederacy supporters, following the abolishment of slavery, form the film's framework.

Numerous reviews of both cinematographic works focus primarily on race issues, yet the following thesis takes a different account and concentrates on the portrayal of female characters with reference to the Western film and its relation to gender. As the classic Western is not only one of the most racist genres but also highly sexist towards women, stereotypical images emphasizing the importance of manhood are clearly visible throughout the great majority of Western films ranging from the 1930s to the early 1970s. However, Tarantino is known for breaking with conventions and both of his Western productions under consideration were released in the recent years. Thus, the question to be answered is how the representation of women has changed from the classic Western film genre to neo-Western films, regarding Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* and *The Hateful Eight*. Moreover, the paper aims to analyze whether genre-specific gender constructions of classic Western movies are still prevalent in the respective films and if so, in how far.

In order to determine if the famous filmmaker upsets generic conventions of female representation in his neo-Westerns, a closer look on feminist film theories and the Western genre itself needs to be undertaken initially. The first chapter is consequently concerned with feminism and gives a brief overview on the women's movement as well as the development of feminist film studies. A special focus is placed on Laura Mulvey's theory of the "male gaze". In addition, recent surveys on contemporary Hollywood movies and power structures in the film industry are taken into account with regard to

diversity and intersectionality.

The second chapter deals with the Western film genre and features a short summary of its emergence, expansion, and decline. Besides describing traditional depictions of women in Westerns, the classic Western male hero and his transformation is also addressed since male and female roles are interdependent. Based on the Western's distinctive characteristics and iconography, various stereotypical images of women and men as well as racial stereotypes are presented.

In relation to the preceding theoretical parts, an analysis of *Django Unchained* and *The Hateful Eight* follows. In order to examine both films in all respects, Quentin Tarantino's film aesthetics need to be outlined at first. The available roles for men and women of his contemporary Western films are then analyzed on a descriptive and a comparative level with a primary focus on the two female main characters. A subsequent discussion ultimately connects the two films and highlights several similarities and differences between the female representations by referring to the Western Formula, feminist film theories and the findings of chapter three. A conclusion summarizing the research results and giving an answer to the raised questions is presented at the end.

The aim of this thesis is to examine if the voiced critique by feminist film theorists on the cinematic representation of women influenced the two neo-Westerns under consideration. It is assumed that feminist film studies and its criticism have an impact on modern Western films and their depiction of female characters on-screen. Thus, the paper's underlying hypothesis is that *Django Unchained* as well as *The Hateful Eight* represent atypical Western films that defy generic gender constructions. The objective of the analysis is to shed light on these matters and to investigate if the stated assumptions prove to be true.

II. A Feminist Perspective on Film

In order to analyze the representation of female characters within Quentin Tarantino's movies under consideration, *Django Unchained* (2012) and *The Hateful Eight* (2015), a historical overview on feminist film theory needs to be presented first. The following introduction deals with a number of concepts and theories, which had an enormous impact on film studies and filmmaking itself. However, since an in-depth analysis of

feminist film theory is beyond the scope of this paper, it is necessary to focus on the core ideas and to give a simplified representation of these theoretical models.

2.1. A Brief History of Feminism

To begin with, it is important to determine a proper definition of feminism as a movement and to outline its historical development. In general, feminism "strives to analyze and change the power structures of patriarchal society – that is, societies where men rule and where their values are privileged" (Chaudhuri 3-4). Therefore, the role of women and women's rights are main objectives of the feminist movement as are other suppressed and socially marginalized groups, which means that feminism does not necessarily exclude matters of importance to men (Chaudhuri 4).

First Wave feminism started in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and was primarily concerned with women's suffrage – it is thus also called the "suffragette movement". Fostered by the Industrial Revolution, women's independence as an effect of entering the workforce was also an important issue. One of this First Wave feminism's major achievements was the success of the activists' call for political equality between men and women, which eventuated in their Constitutional right to vote in 1920 (Benshoff, Griffin 210-211, Chaudhuri 4). Second Wave feminism emerged after World War II in the 1960s as women were supposed to return to their conventional gender roles as housewives and mothers in order to fulfill their traditional domestic duties. As the movement's slogan "the personal is the political" indicates, a change of women's position in every aspect of their lives was the main aim, in contrast to First Wave's sole focus on women's right to vote. Issues such as financial independence, education, family life as well as women's bodies, appearance, and birth control were put on the agenda. These areas of everyday life and the role of women in a patriarchal society were addressed by the French existentialist philosopher and writer Simone de Beauvoir, whose pioneering book, *The Second Sex* (1949), highly influenced the debate in the 1950s and 1960s. Another groundbreaking work that initiated the movement was Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963. Friedan challenged 1950's American women's social standing and their culturally constructed image which, together with de Beauvoir's concepts, gave rise to feminist film theory and its criticism (Benshoff, Griffin 272-273, Chaudhuri 4-7).

However, a socio-cultural backlash on Second Wave feminism's ideals and achievements marked the 1980s. Conservative groups and politics aimed at returning to traditional "family values" of the fifties, which regarded patriarchal family structures as the only model worth striving for. The term "feminism" as well as calling oneself a "feminist" became negatively connoted, which is still the case nowadays (Benshoff, Griffin 277). During the 1990s, members of the Generation X, who were born in the sixties and seventies, initiated the start of the Third Wave Feminism. They benefitted considerably from Second Wave feminists' accomplishments and some activists were actually daughters of second wavers. The movement was concerned with challenging and redefining prevalent concepts of gender, womanhood, sexuality, as well as femininity and masculinity. Being aware of one's gender identity and deliberately and individually shaping it was one of their main objectives. In contrast to the preceding feminist movements, Third Wave feminism was more diverse, included people of different classes as well as various cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and focused on intersectionality. Due to the newly developed possibilities of publishing online, Third Wave feminists reached a global audience through videos, e-zines, and blogs (Burkett, Brunell).

Social media and other internet tools gained even more importance during Fourth Wave Feminism in the 2010s. Following various incidents of sexual assault, such as the brutal gang rape and subsequent death of a young woman in Delhi in 2012, the movement's main concerns include rape culture, body shaming, abuse of authority as well as justice against sexual assault and harassment. Other cases that attracted widespread attention and outrage were Donald Trump's disparaging remarks on women throughout his presidential campaign and the Harvey Weinstein allegations in 2017. The famous film producer was accused of sexually abusing women during his career, which caused the Me Too movement, launched in 2006 to empower female victims of sexual assault and harassment, to went viral (Burkett, Brunell). Of particular interest to this thesis' topic, *The Hateful Eight* (2015) marks Quentin Tarantino's final cooperation with the Weinstein Company due to the sexual abuse allegations (Sharf). Following Harvey Weinstein's trial in January 2020, the film mogul was found guilty of rape and sentenced to 23 years' imprisonment (Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica).

2.2. The Power of the Look

Due to Second Wave feminism, researchers started to examine the cinematic representation of sexual difference in Hollywood film. Since women are deprived in a power structure that privileges white heterosexual men, an underrepresentation and limitation of female roles in cinema and especially Hollywood movies had taken place and, unfortunately, still is the case nowadays. The portrayal of stereotypical sex roles in classical Hollywood movies is based on its narrative form, which has a linear narrative and generally features a protagonist, the hero/heroine of the story, his/her love interest, an antagonist and other stock characters as, for example, the best friend. Within such classical Hollywood stories, men usually play the leading part, the active and central role, whereas women are depicted as merely a love interest that needs to be rescued and/or functions as the hero's goal (Benshoff, Griffin 27, 203, 229-230). Besides analyzing the existing parts for men and women in the movies and plot lines, film critics investigate the film form as well, which is concerned with the specific editing and filming of the characters. Two publications focusing on film form and of particular importance for the starting point of feminist film theory were John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* (1972) and Laura Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975). In his book, Berger addresses the different power relations between men and women created by the system of the look. Through examining female representations in paintings and advertisements, he concludes that

> *men act* and *women appear*. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight. (Berger 47)

According to Berger, while men look, women simply appear as objects to be looked at by men. The long tradition of portraying women as objects that can be sold and possessed is still a common practice today and can be found in visual culture and mass media, such as in photographs, paintings, advertisements, commercials, magazines or in the movies. Through this objectification of women, male dominance is strengthened and the maintenance of patriarchal capitalism in Western culture is supported (Benshoff, Griffin 230-232, Ruppert 1-2, Stacey 7).

A different approach towards analyzing the power of the look has been taken on by the British feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey, whose essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) has had a significant influence on film studies, with many of

her concepts still remaining valid. In order to understand how classical Hollywood movies and popular cinema construct the image of woman on the screen and, as the essay's title suggests, generate pleasure for the spectator, Mulvey, besides other notable film theorists like Claire Johnston and Pam Cook, based her critique on the psychoanalytic concepts of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, the semiotic studies of Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva as well as Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralism (Chaudhuri 2, 8). With her political use of psychoanalysis, Mulvey tries to reveal how the cinematic apparatus establishes sexual difference in patriarchal society, arguing that "[i]n a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female" (837). Thus, Mulvey (838) states that women on-screen become erotic objects of the controlling "male gaze", which describes the steady look of the active male figures in the film and that of the masculine spectators, who identify with the leading male character, their controlling ideal ego.

2.2.1. Psychoanalysis as Approach

Based on a psychoanalytic background, Mulvey (836-838) explored the functions of narcissism, voyeurism, scopophilia, and fetishism in the cinematic context. She states that there are two distinct ways of gaining visual pleasure of a narrative film, namely objectification and identification. The first process is concerned with the scopophilic look, in which a character on-screen is used as sexual object for the spectator's arousal. The other mechanism derives from narcissism and the process of identification, as the viewer identifies with an object to form an ideal ego. While active scopophilia requires a distinction between the subject's identity and the on-screen object, Freud's ego libido (forming identification processes) involves identification with the image screened to form the ego. Since the viewer traditionally identifies with the masculine leading figure, he takes on the character's active look and is virtually in full control over the events happening in the story. Thus, the man becomes the representative of power and the bearer of the look, whereas the woman turns into a passive erotic spectacle, which connotes "to-be-looked-at-ness" and can be possessed by the man.

In her essay, Mulvey (843) notes that there are three different looks subordinate to the voyeuristic-scopophilic look: (1) The look of the camera (the filming of a cameraman; the instructions of the director) at the pro-filmic happenings, (2) the look of the

spectators towards the screen, and (3) the looks among the characters within a movie. Narrative cinema aims to disavow the first two in order to generate a perfect fictional world for the audience "in which the spectator's surrogate can perform with verisimilitude" (Mulvey 844). Mulvey concludes that the three gazes are all male, whether or not the spectator is a woman, and that narrative cinema serves to satisfy the fantasies and desires of a male audience. Hence, the female spectator is limited in her position and compelled either to take on a male perspective or to identify with the objectified female character in the movie (Benshoff, Griffin 235).

Feminist film critics have shown that

> [d]ominant Hollywood cinema [...] is constructed according to the unconscious of patriarchy; film narratives are organized by means of a male-based language and discourse which parallels the language of the unconscious. Women in film thus do not function as signifiers for a signified (a real woman), as sociological critics have assumed, but signifier and signified have been elided into a sign that represents something in the male conscious. (Kaplan 30)

Mulvey reasons that it is essential "to free the look of the camera into its materiality in time and space and the look of the audience into dialectics, passionate detachment" (844). This would destruct the visual pleasures of conventional Hollywood cinema and display its gender-based discrimination.

2.2.2. The Female Figure: A Threat to the Male Unconscious

However, according to Mulvey (840), woman as representation implies more than visual pleasure through being looked at, she also signifies a threat of castration due to her absence of a penis. The psychoanalytical concept of castration has been described in Freud's theory of the Oedipus Complex and is crucial to feminist film studies. In Sophocles' classical Greek mythology, Oedipus unintentionally marries his mother after killing his father. According to Freud, the Oedipal phase between the ages of three and five is descriptive of a child's disaffiliation or affection towards the parents. In that early stage of development, the child wishes to be like the parent of the same sex as it longs to be with the parent of the other sex. Whether the child is a boy or a girl, an incestuous bond with the mother evolves until the child detects that she lacks a penis. This leads to the assumption that the mother was castrated and that the father might want to castrate the boy child as well. Thus, the boy represses his tender feelings for the mother and comforts himself with the fact that he will find another woman. The

little girl, though, discovers her own absence of a penis and develops, as Freud puts it, a “penis envy”, which turns into the desire of bearing her father a boy. Through this process, the girl becomes a woman and takes on the culturally dependent model of femininity. Nevertheless, Freud assumed that the Oedipal conflict can never be entirely accomplished by girls, who then struggle with the act of becoming a woman (Chaudhuri 20-21).

From this, Mulvey infers that “the woman as icon, displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men, the active controllers of the look, always threatens to evoke the anxiety it originally signified” (840). She points out that there are two different strategies for a man’s unconscious to avoid this fear of castration: (1) repeating the trauma through voyeurism or (2) denying castration through fetishism. The voyeuristic mechanism sets out to investigate the female figure, determining her guilt, and, as a consequence, either devaluate, punish, or save the object. This sadistic inclination is a prominent feature of the film noir, exemplified by Mulvey in reference to the movies of Alfred Hitchcock. Contrary to this, fetishistic scopophilia is used as a tool to escape castration by overvaluation. The idealized woman on-screen becomes a fetish herself, as in the star cult, or is substituted by a fetish object, a woman’s isolated body part. In this way, the male unconscious overcomes the threat of castration since the female figure becomes soothing and satisfying instead of dangerous. Close-ups of a woman’s face, legs, breasts, or other fragmented parts of the female body support this fetishism and function as an eroticized cut-out or icon, thus promoting an effect of superficiality rather than establishing verisimilitude. Therefore, women on-screen are valued for their physical appearance and their idealized, sexualized image suits the needs of the male spectator. They are no longer seen as whole human beings but appraised for their isolated, fetishized body parts which serve as objects of sexual desire. The male unconscious tries to conquer the fear of lacking control and power through directing one’s desire on a particular part of the body, such as the feet in a ‘foot fetish’, which can be controlled. Subsequently, by objectifying women, they become less of a threat to men and are ultimately in an inferior position (Benshoff, Griffin 238-239, Chaudhuri 36, Mulvey 838-840).

This objectification is still a well-known feature in today’s pop culture and acclaimed in TV and music videos. Since conventional, cultural ideals of femininity are closely linked to youthfulness and sexual attractiveness to men, women always face a fear of loss that is caused by the unavoidable process of physical aging. Hence, it comes as no

surprise that Hollywood movies display a very limited number of roles for women of middle-age and beyond (Stacey 226). In 2016, The Pudding, a team of journalists explaining culturally debated topics with visual essays, conducted an analysis that supports this assumption. They collected data concerning the percentage of dialogue spoken by age-range and gender. The results in Figure 1 show a clear tendency towards younger actresses in Hollywood movies, quite contrary to their male counterparts, whose presence increases proportional to their age. Thus, it becomes apparent that there are considerably less roles available for women over the age of 40 (Anderson, Daniels).

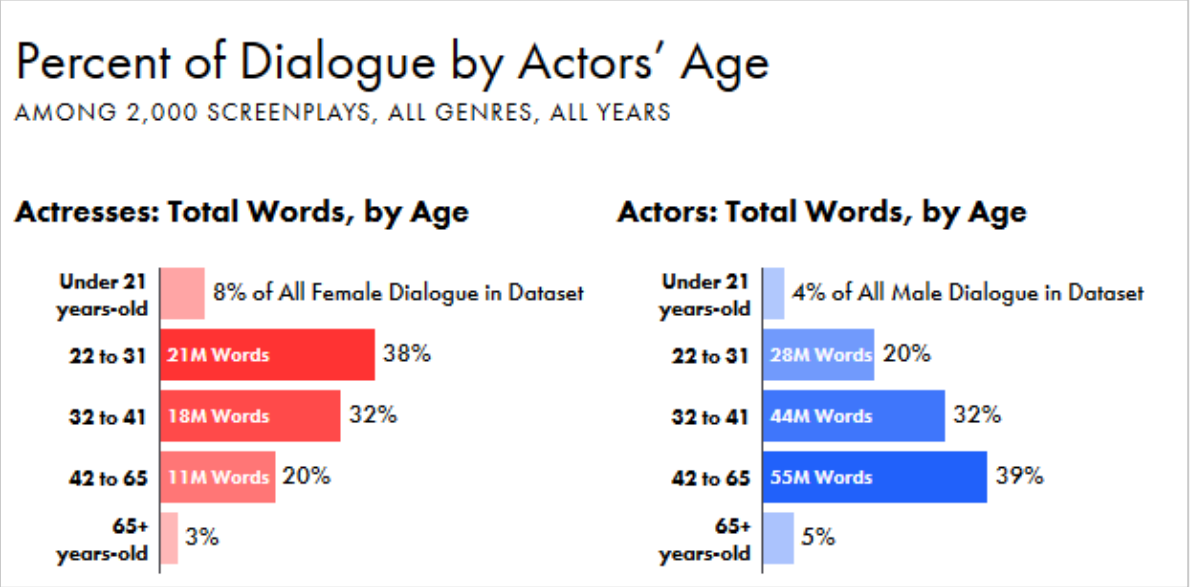

Fig. 1. Percent of Dialogue by Actor's Age (Anderson, Daniels).

2.2.3. Women as Spectators

However, not only women have been the target of objectification. In contemporary Hollywood movies, the trend of the male star and his objectification has been foregrounded to please a "female" gaze. Before narrative film started to objectify men and sexualize their physical attributes in the same manner as women's bodies, male characters have been usually admired for their power and agency on-screen, such as John Wayne. Traditionally, the heterosexual white male protagonist is characterized by his profession, activities, and beliefs contrary to the hero's female love interest, that is usually recognized by her beauty and bodily desirability. Hollywood's recent male

stars and 1980s/1990s action heroes, such as Tom Cruise, Brad Pitt and Sylvester Stallone, contradict this common tendency while exposing their heavily stylized muscled bodies on-screen. Action movies as well as Westerns frequently feature fight and torture scenes where the male body is the focus of attention and displayed "as an active, powerful, and dangerous (as well as sexy) weapon wielded against other men" (Benshoff, Griffin 246). Male characters usually take off their clothes in action scenes, thereby presenting their muscles while running, fighting, and shooting, whereas women, on the contrary, often get undressed while remaining passive in front of the camera. Nevertheless, this trend often poses difficulties for male spectators who feel disturbed by homosexuality since they are compelled to stare at other men, thus provoking a homoerotic feeling, which may then lead to discomfort. As a result, the objectification of men in cinema is considerably less common due to these circumstances (Benshoff, Griffin 246).

It becomes apparent that by the time men become the objects of the gaze, women act as gazers and thereby step into the male role. By taking on a masculine position, female characters frequently substitute their conventional feminine features "- not those of attractiveness, but rather of kindness, humaneness, motherliness" (Kaplan 29). They adopt what are supposed to be male characteristics and become "cold, driving, ambitious, manipulating", which in turn conduces to maintain the segregation of the sexes in representation as "feminine" and "masculine" positions, thus supporting patriarchal power structures (Benshoff, Griffin 28, 245-246, Kaplan 28-30). In light of this, "[t]he gaze is not necessarily male (literally), but to own and activate the gaze, given our language and the structure of the unconscious, is to be in the 'masculine' position" (Kaplan 30).

Mulvey's essay attracted much attention and her theory influenced subsequent debates among film scholars significantly. The position of the female spectator raised controversy and led to numerous reactions, which dominated the discussions during the 1980s. Although there exists a special genre primarily intended for a female spectatorship, the "woman's film", which was most popular in the thirties and forties, it has to be taken into account that most of these films are produced by men and the stories usually revolve around what they understand as "female issues". The movie's female protagonists are generally concerned with family relations, the domestic sphere, and their romantic feelings for men and therefore sustain traditional power relations and patriarchal structures. This is exemplified by films such as *Jezebel* (1938),

a romantic drama starring Bette Davis and Henry Fonda, King Vidor's *Stella Dallas* (1937), and Victor Fleming's historical romance *Gone with the Wind* (1939). Additionally, since films of this genre are also referred to as "tearjerkers" or "weepies", which implies that their stories affect people's emotions, women are assumed to be more sentimental than male viewers and thus reinforce gender stereotypes. Whereas the woman's film is especially assigned for a female audience, there is no need to create such specific movies for male spectators since every other genre is a male domain (Benshoff, Griffin 29, 219-220, 251).

Mulvey modified her theory on female spectatorship in her "Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" inspired by King Vidor's *Duel in the Sun* (1946)", published in 1981. She (123-124) argues that stepping into the masculine role may be pleasurable due to the possession of power and the ability to act afforded by an identification with the male hero. The female spectator's sexual identity is seen to be unstable, conflicted between femininity and masculinity. Here, Mulvey again bases her arguments in reference to Freud and his views on the formation of femininity. According to Freud, during the phallic phase, which applies to both sexes, girls too pursue masculinity, which is then repressed by their development of femininity. However, in some cases, women's identity and behavior shifts between passive femininity and regressive masculinity as a result of common regressions to the pre-Oedipal phase. Mulvey states that the opportunity for the female spectator to identify with the active male protagonist in the narrative world permits to discover what has been lost – the repressed masculinity of her sexual identity (Chaudhuri 39-40).

In her *Afterthoughts*, Mulvey analyzes the Western *Duel in the Sun* (1946), in which the female protagonist, Pearl, is split between two desires, personified by the two male characters Jesse and Lewt. Jesse symbolizes a conventional way of life for Pearl – stepping into her role as a lady, behaving in a "correct" and socially accepted feminine manner. Lewt, on the other hand, provides an opportunity for her to act like a tomboy – to live out her longing for activities which are traditionally reserved for men, such as shooting and riding, as well as being a passionate woman with sexual needs. Hence, Pearl's inner conflict functions as an example of the sexual ambivalence described by Freud. Although *Duel in the Sun* allows a successful masculine identification of a temporary nature for both Pearl and the female spectator, its melancholic and sad aspect is emphasized (Mulvey, *Afterthoughts* 128-129, Chaudhuri 40-41, 44). According to Mulvey, this "trans-sex identification is a *habit*, that very easily becomes

second nature. However, this Nature does not sit easily and shifts restlessly in its borrowed transvestite clothes" (*Afterthoughts* 125).

The role of the female spectator has also been explored by other feminist film theorists, such as Mary Ann Doane, who expanded Mulvey's viewpoint. Counter-theories on the relationship between women and conventional narrative cinema have questioned not only the general use of psychoanalysis as approach but also the female point of view in relation to race, class and sexuality. Moreover, feminist film critics have stressed the importance of analyzing the connection between spectatorship and other marginalized groups as well as their representation since power relations and privileges do not only differ between white heterosexual middle-class men and women (Chaudhuri 40-44).

2.3. A Culture of Female Invisibility

Now, the question arises to what extent filmmaking and cinema have changed over time or if Hollywood still upholds these old-fashioned structures. Despite the criticism voiced by feminist film studies concerning the gender representation in classical Hollywood movies, the film industry continued to release its movies in the tried and tested way; depicting men and women in culturally and socially stereotypical roles in a vast majority of its productions. Besides, filmmaking itself was almost exclusively male-dominated – unaffected by the women's movement and raised consciousness of the Second Wave feminism. In consequence of the predominant assumption between the 1930s and 1950s that women are not qualified as directors, producers or for other executive positions, and the fact that Hollywood was mainly financed by men, women were often compelled to fulfill minor jobs in the film business and work as assistants or clerks. While the movement led to some major changes regarding emancipation and equal legal rights for women, such as the UKs Sex Discrimination Act of 1975, which, among others, prohibits to discriminate a person by its sex in the workspace, women still face disadvantages in today's society, as, for example, the gender pay gap displays (Benshoff, Griffin 207, 273, Chaudhuri 6).

Furthermore, recent studies highlight the constant underrepresentation of women in movies and in social institutions although half of the population is female. Considering the number of female characters in movies, surveys show that roles for men are twice as high as roles for women (Benshoff, Griffin 204). The Annenberg Inclusion Initiative,

which is based at the Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism, examined the leading and co-leading characters' gender and race/ethnicity of the top-grossing fictional films released domestically between 2007 and 2018. Among these 1,200 top films, only 28 percent of women were driving the action. Of this percentage, 15.5 percent were actresses from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group. However, statistics recorded an uptick in 2018 with 40 films featuring a female-driven storyline across the 100 highest earning movies. This marks the highest number of female protagonists with an increase of 20 percent from 2007 and 8 percent from 2017. Additionally, the numbers of films with women of color as leads and co-leads almost tripled since 2017 (4) with a total of 11 actresses in 2018. In comparison, solely 1 woman from an underrepresented racial/ethnic background was shown as leading or co-leading character in 2007. Besides race and ethnicity, 2018 reports a rise in middle-aged and older female protagonists. Of 2018's top 100 films, 11 movies displayed female leads or co-leads of 45 years of age or beyond. This number more than doubled in comparison to 2017 with a total of 5 actresses (Annenberg Inclusion Initiative 1-2).

In addition, not only is the uneven distribution between roles for men and women significant, the speaking time in movies has also been subjected to critical scrutiny. The analyzed data by The Pudding reveals that men have more to say in three-quarters out of 2,000 analyzed screenplays of all genres. In fact, 90 percent of all sentences spoken in 15 percent of Hollywood movies are uttered by male actors, whereas the female cast only gets a chance to speak more than 90 percent in 0.4 percent on-screen. The chart below (Fig. 2) displays the distribution of speaking time between men and women in Oscar-winning movies of the category Best Picture (Anderson, Daniels).

However, this imbalance is not only a phenomenon to appear in narrative cinema. According to research studies, it can also be detected in today's working environment, such as in meetings or at conferences. In this sense, it is not just that most films create a fictional image but indeed depict the world as it is, including Hollywood's power structures (Schenz 1).

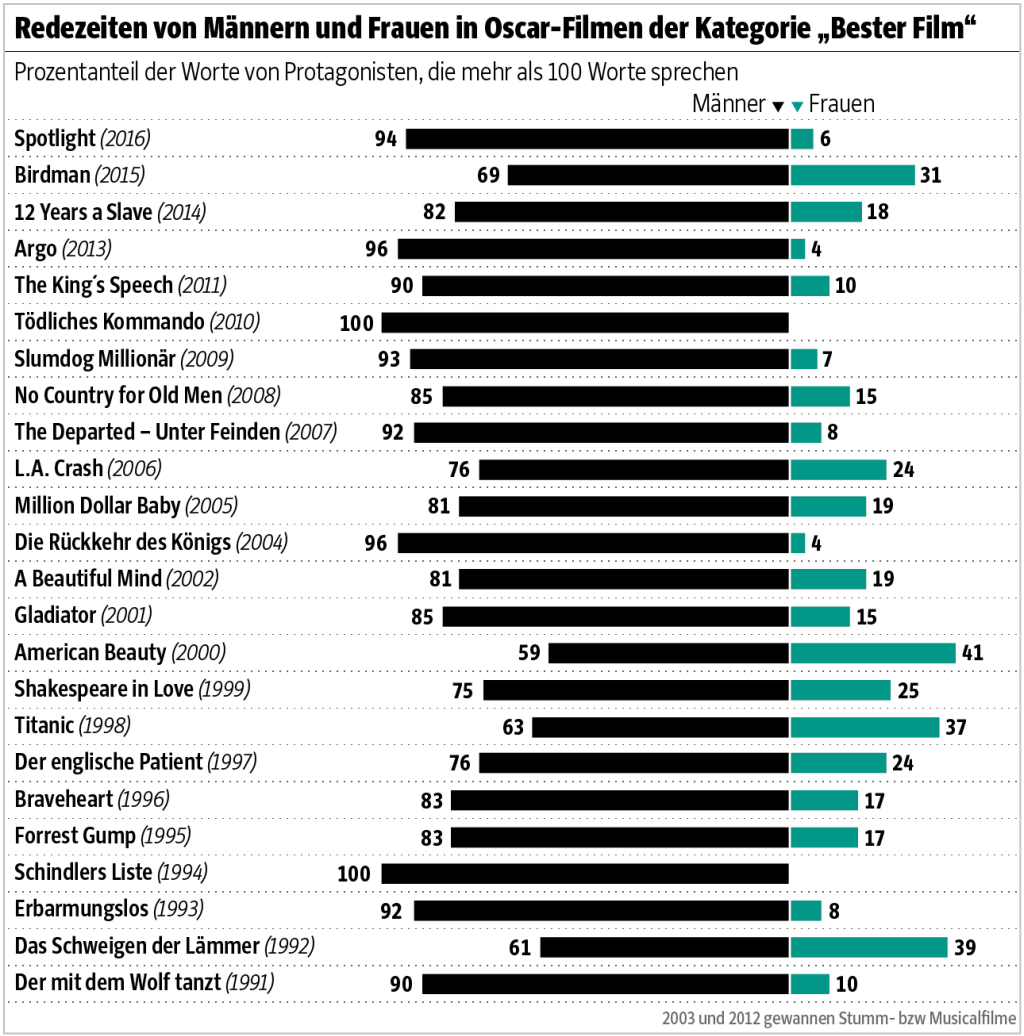

Fig. 2. Speaking Time of Men and Women in Oscar-winning Movies of the Category Best Picture (SZ-Grafik: Schenz; Source: Hanah Anderson, The Pudding).

Since women are still a minority in the film industry, it stands to reason that the filmmakers' gender influences their output. Therefore, prior to the Pudding's objective to visualize gender in film based on measuring dialogue, they examined who pulls the strings behind the scenes. In order to determine the inclusiveness of Hollywood productions, an analysis of films that fail the Bechdel Test has been carried out. The so-called Bechdel Test, publicized by Alison Bechdel in her 1985's comic *Dykes to Watch Out For*, is a test that investigates the presence and involvement of female characters in movies. To pass the test, a film needs to meet the following three criteria: (1) it has to have at least two (named) women in it, (2) who talk to each other, (3) about something besides a man. Although this seems to be quite humble, about 40 percent of the analyzed movies on bechdeltest.com do not fulfill these requirements, including *Avatar* (2009), *The Lord of the Rings* (2001), *The Jungle Book* (2016), and *Toy Story* (1995) just to name a few. On the basis of this measurement, the Pudding collected the

genders of the producers, directors, and writers of about 4,000 rated movies and looked at the screenwriter's gender of the 200 highest-grossing films between 1995 and 2015, to control for progress in gender diversity. Assuming that writers influence the visible product on-screen due to their own way of thinking and their experiences, gender diversity of the writing team would make all the difference. Unsurprisingly, the findings demonstrate what had been expected – out of the most popular 200 movies, 53 percent of films with an all-male writing team do not meet the Bechdel Test's requirements. With at least one female writer, only 38 percent fail and all 7 movies with an entirely female screenwriting team pass. Thus, the number of films passing the test increases significantly with the amount of women involved in the writing process. A similar outcome applies to the 4,000 films rated – almost half of the movies written by men alone fail the test, whereas only 17 percent do not pass if at least one woman is part of the team. In addition, of all partaken directors, producers, and writers, the number of men was five times higher with, for example, only 500 female directors out of 4,500. Looking for time-related changes, the collected data exhibit no progress on diversity in 20 years. Back in 1995, 18 percent of directors, producers, and writers were female and about 37 percent of films failed the Bechdel Test. In 2015, still only 17 percent of these roles were occupied by women and again 38 percent of movies did not meet the test's requirements (Friedman, Daniels and Blinderman). In summary, the fact that the percentage of movies passing the Bechdel Test rises considerably if women are involved in filmmaking demonstrates that gender diversity among writers, directors and producers has a crucial effect on a film's inclusiveness.

This conclusion has also been drawn by Dr. Stacy L. Smith, Founder and Director of the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative, who examines the gender, age and race of directors in an annual report titled *Inclusion in the Director's Chair*. The current issue was released on January 4th, 2019 and compiles data on the most popular films from 2007 to 2018. The findings show that the director's chair is white and male. Across 1,200 top films and a total of 1,335 directors, men outnumbered women 22:1, that is 4 percent of female directors, with a gender ratio of 27:1 and only 3.6 percent of females in 2018. Hence, the results signal that the small proportion of women in directing jobs remains the same in the stretch of 12 years (Smith et al. 1). Considering the number of directors from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups, the statistics reveal severe issues of intersectionality within the film industry. During the 12-year sample, 80 people (6%) in directing positions were Black/African American, 5 of which were females, and 42

(3.1%) were Asian/Asian American with only 3 directing assignments filled by Asian women. The percentage of Black film directors peaked in 2018, with 16 people of African American descent (14.3%) working across the 100 top-grossing films, in comparison to the small number of 6 listed Black directors in 2017 and 8 in 2007. Although this indicates a change for the better in terms of inclusiveness, the statistics illustrate that the increase is basically on account of Black male directors, whereas women of color still face gender inequality in key production roles with only 1 Black woman in a directing job in 2018. Moreover, the proportion of Asian directors has not changed overtime with only 4 directing positions in 2018 which were occupied entirely by males (Smith et al. 2-3).

Overall, it becomes apparent that film language reflects the mechanisms and power structures behind the camera and in both cases are women disregarded. If this diversity problem on-screen and in the film industry persists, stereotypical gender roles will be reinforced in everyday life, thereby "promoting a culture of female invisibility" (Friedman, Daniels and Blinderman).

2.3.1. Solutions for Change

It needs to be acknowledged that Hollywood has made a small step forward with more diverse representations on-screen over the last decades. The number of underrepresented actors, such as Black and Hispanic people, commanding the storyline is on the increase. Nevertheless, most African American heroes are male while the majority of their female counterparts is white. The small number of homosexual protagonists on-screen are most commonly masculine and white. Though real life includes people of all racial and ethnic groups, sexual orientations, genders and social standings, the screen reality is still strictly bound to the prevalent white patriarchal ideology and portrays mainly white heterosexual male heroes whereas all others are featured on a limited scale or are totally left aside (Benshoff, Griffin 29-30).

Since inequality on account of sexism and racism still poses a problem in the entertainment industry as outlined above, solutions to fix Hollywood's inclusion crisis need to be addressed. Oscar-winning actress Frances McDormand ended her speech at the Academy Awards in 2018 with the words "Inclusion. Rider". The idea of an inclusion rider, an additional clause, was first mentioned in 2014 by Dr. Stacy L. Smith

in order to reform Hollywood's hiring processes. Contracts of A-list actors could be equipped with a provision which specifies that traditionally underrepresented people of marginalized groups on-screen – be it women, people of racial/ethnic minorities, disabled people, or members of the LGBT community – should be displayed proportionally to their presence in the population. According to Smith, characters in movies would consequently mirror the real world more accurately (Communication and Marketing Staff).

The Annenberg Inclusion Initiative proposed further solutions suggesting that every studio should set inclusion objectives for the director's chair as a guideline to make progress in diversity. Furthermore, transparency concerning hiring procedures and interviews for directing jobs should be constituted. Due to an assessment on the basis of standardized appraisal criteria, female aspirants and applicants from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups would have a greater prospect of working in key production roles (Smith et al. 38).

Another way to solve this systemic problem in the motion picture industry was proposed by the black filmmaker Spike Lee, who suggested that something similar to the National Football League's Rooney Rule would bring about a change. Just like this policy obliges NFL teams to interview candidates of ethnic minorities for head coaching jobs and other leading positions, interviewing applicants of all genders and racial/ethnic groups in the hiring process before making a final decision would ensure more diversity in filmmaking. In addition, Lee announced that it is important to increase the number of people of color in decision-making positions since there is not a single person from an underrepresented racial/ethnic group who has a greenlight vote in filmmaking or TV. In consideration of recent gains made by films featuring black protagonists, he criticized that this success comes in a 10-year cycle and is no indication for a change in the industry (Rosenberg). Lee's film *BlacKkKlansman* (2018) was nominated in six categories for the 91st Academy Awards in 2019 but he stated that this honor is mainly due to a tweet gone viral. The hashtag #OscarsSoWhite created by April Reign was a direct response to 2015's Oscar nominees, which were entirely comprised of white actors across the acting categories. Her tweet turned into a movement that has impacted the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences considerably. Following #OscarsSoWhite, the organization focused on a greater diversity among its membership ranks, thereby placing special emphasis on women, people from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups and non-American filmmakers

with 928 new invitations in 2018. Consequently, the Academy's list of nominees for the Oscars 2019 is more diverse than ever before. According to activist April Reign, "the whole point of #OscarsSoWhite is that children of any age should be able to see themselves reflected on screen" (Gardner).

To sum up, the good news is that possible solutions exist, now they need to be implemented. The statistics signal that there is urgent need for action and concrete demands concerning behind-the-scenes employment as well as women's on-screen representation. Practices need to change and not just products in order to give rise to a greater diversity off-screen and ultimately reform film business and the movies we all grow up with.

III. Genre Conventions and Gender Representations

As already presented in the first chapter, there is no doubt that movies convey certain meanings and values on account of some individual's imagination and perception. These pictures can influence our thoughts and ultimately our reality and the world we live in. Concerning this thesis' topic, the following chapter examines the iconography and genre conventions of classic Western films. In order to understand how genre-specific gender constructions and relations in the Western developed, a closer look at the decisive factors for the emergence and expansion of the Western film genre needs to be undertaken first.

3.1. The Rise and Fall of a Genre

The Western film genre is concerned with the American history from 1865 to 1890 – a time period where numerous stories and tales about the "Wild West" were spread among the people in the East of the country through dime novels and in verbal form. These narratives, regardless of their veracity, were primarily concerned with the adventures of real-life figures, who thus became living legends (Weidinger, *Konstruktion* 34-35). An example of such an American Western legend is William Frederick Cody, better known as Buffalo Bill, who rose to fame as heroic character of many dime novels. In addition, Cody was the founder of the famous *Buffalo Bill's Wild West* – a show that highly influenced the popular notion of the "Wild West" by offering

typical Western elements, such as rope tricks, rodeo riders, trick shots, as well as fights between homesteaders and Indians (Benshoff, Griffin 99). The epic tales about brave cowboys fighting savage Indians and civilizing the West reached great popularity not only in the USA but also in other countries, especially in Europe. One of the most famous European authors of adventure novels set in the American Old West was the German writer Karl May (1842-1912), who is well-known for his Western stories revolving around the fictional characters Winnetou and Old Shatterhand.

Since the Western genre's thematic myths and iconography are typically linked to historical events that had been taken up by various forms of media in the nineteenth century, an "aura of truth" evolved around the genre's figures and their (perceived) heroic deeds. Harry M. Benshoff and Sean Griffin state that it is the Western's particular connection with American history that ultimately supported the formation of a "national identity" and established it as "the 'most American' of genres" (99).

Yet, although the settling of the American West in the stretch of about thirty years is relatively short in comparison to the settling of the East, which started in the early 1600s and lasted around 170 years, the era provided ideal conditions to establish a national myth. The West's attraction is most likely based on the various ways of living the frontier had to offer that serve as a perfect ground for fiction that propagates plausible clashes of interests as well as conflicts among those lifestyles (Wright 4-6). Will Wright reasons that "[t]he real but limited use of violence to settle differences in the West is simply the final rationale for the transformation of a historical period into a mythical realm" (6).

Moreover, Jane Tompkins (37-39, 43-45) outlines in her book *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (1992) that common explanations see the Western's roots grounded on an attempt to escape from overpopulation and inhuman labor caused by the emerging industrialization and urbanization in the East. In addition, she explains that other circumstances, such as militarism, the call for a heroic figure without classes that everybody can refer to, as well as dominant philosophical doctrines that promoted the principle of natural selection in the 19th century, can be seen as influencing factors. However, Tompkins also states a different point of view on the origins and rise of the Western. While declaring that these factors only relate to men and their experiences, she argues that the women's movement into the public sphere and the predominant 19th-century women's culture highly influenced the genre's defining features and reception. The Western is thus the polar opposite to the Cult of True Womanhood of

the Victorian era, which becomes obvious when comparing the characteristics of the sentimental novel to the Western genre. Those novels are concerned with female main characters and their efforts to lead a virtuous life rooted in Christian faith. The stories take place in the women's homes and depict them being at prayer or reading the Bible. They have a close connection and confide their emotions and state of mind to each other while giving advice and encouragement on their endeavors. Moreover, the natural death of religious women on their deathbeds is frequently described in extensive dying scenes. In comparison, the central characters in Westerns are usually all male. The activities happen outside the private sphere – on the prairie, the Western town's main street, or in saloons, shops and offices. The main theme is about the hero's conflict with his enemies, which is commonly resolved in a gun or fist fight, and thus the plot concentrates on physical strain. Furthermore, the protagonist is oftentimes in a close relationship with another man, who is either his comrade or sometimes his enemy. Emotions are barely revealed and the hero remains silent for the most part. The many death scenes take place in public spheres as well and feature brutal, sudden deaths in a typical "showdown".

By this juxtaposition, Tompkins demonstrates that the Western can be seen as a direct answer to the women's culture of the 19th century and their movement into public life between 1880 and 1920:

> Given the pervasiveness and the power of women's discourse in the nineteenth century, […] it is no accident that men gravitated in imagination toward a womanless milieu, a set of rituals featuring physical combat and physical endurance, and a social setting that branded most features of civilized existence as feminine and corrupt, banishing them in favor of the three main targets of women's reform: whiskey, gambling, and prostitution. […] Can it be an accident that the characteristic indoor setting for the Westerns is the saloon? (Tompkins 44)

Consequently, she reasons that "[t]he Western doesn't have anything to do with the West as such. It isn't about the encounter between civilization and the frontier. It is about men's fear of losing their mastery, and hence their identity, both of which the Western tirelessly reinvents" (45).

Tompkins' line of argumentation and her point-for-point comparison of the sentimental novel and the Western carry conviction. Nevertheless, the aim here is not to determine the decisive factor for the Western genre's popularity, thus, it needs to be assumed that multiple components account for the rise of the Western.

However, with the first Western film, *The Great Train Robbery* (1903), Edwin Porter laid the foundation of a thriving film genre, which fostered the expansion and

importance of the frontier myth in cinemas and television (Wright 5). According to Benshoff and Griffin (253, 102-104), instead of depicting a modern-day image of masculinity, Porter's film reproduced the dime novel's and Wild West show's thematic myth of the West. The film's success fostered the genre's expansion into radio programs and television series in the thirties with *The Lone Ranger* being one of the most significant serials. In 1939, John Ford's *Stagecoach,* starring John Wayne as the Ringo Kid, marked a turning point in the Western's film history. Wayne rose to fame and became the ultimate Western symbol – representing "the spirit of the nation: masculine individuality, strength, and justified violence in the name of God and country" (Benshoff, Griffin 104). John Ford's great track record of Western film productions lasted until the 1960s, directing John Wayne in further movies and contributing to his image as *the* American frontier hero. In addition, Rita Parks (96-97) mentions that during the 1950s, many more actors became major names – personifying a masculine ideal in their screen performances as, for example, Gary Cooper in Fred Zinneman's *High Noon* (1952) and Alan Ladd in George Steven's *Shane* (1953).

Yet, Benshoff and Griffin (105) as well as Georg Seeßlen (98-102) note that the film genre and its image of masculinity changed after World War II. The so-called "adult Western" of the 1950s and early 1960s was born and addressed more complex themes, which challenged the protagonist's nature and the consequences of his actions in contrast to the simple moral code and tolerant, upright national hero of previous decades. The Westerner was floundering and became a tragic figure who is lacking self-confidence and even reveals mental issues. Attention was drawn to his wounds rather than his glorious deeds. Traditional Western stars could not escape the genre's shift to discussing problems of power, violence and law either. In *High Noon* (1952), Marshal Will Kane (Gary Cooper) portrays a conflicted hero, who acknowledges the absurdity of his fights to keep up law and order. Alan Ladd, in turn, embodies a larger-than-life-size savior in *Shane* (1953), who protects homesteaders from ranchers at his charge. His only mission is to sacrifice himself for others and practicing self-denial, thus leading an unhappy and lonely life. Moreover, even the epitome of the Westerner, John Wayne, was under scrutiny in *The Searchers* (1956), which questions his role's racism against Indians. Further notable films of this period, as described by Parks, were directed by Anthony Mann and often feature a mentally unstable and neurotic hero, who "bears within him the seeds of evil and destruction" (97). Examples include films

such as *The Naked Spur* (1952), *The Man from Laramie* (1955) and *Man of the West* (1958).

However, as the classic American Western stars grew older, the audience asked for new and younger heroes, particularly in Europe. Therefore, a large number of European productions emerged during the sixties, such as the German Karl May adaptations, the so-called "Sauerkraut" Westerns, and the Italian Spaghetti Westerns (Seeßlen 147-148). Werner C. Barg (9, 19-21) specifies that the Italo-Western, in contrast to the traditional American frontier films of the Old West, feature more brutal, uncompromising and relentless main protagonists, who frequently pursue a personal vendetta. Examples given by Seeßlen (149-152) are Duccio Tessari's narcissistic main figure Ringo (Guiliano Gemma) in *Una pistola per Ringo* (1965) and *Il ritorno di Ringo* (1965), as well as Sergio Corbucci's avenging "messiah" Django (Franco Nero) in *Django* (1966).

The most renowned director of the Italo-Western is Sergio Leone, who highly influenced the formation of a more existential and troubled anti-hero persona (Parks 103). Barg (9) states that he made significant contributions to the Spaghetti Western's success and helped to form a new subgenre especially with his popular *Dollars Trilogy*, starring Clint Eastwood as the "Man with No Name" in *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964), *For a Few Dollars More* (1965), and *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966). With his lead character, No Name, Leone breaks with the traditional Hollywood Western's clean-cut hero and pictures a ruthless, self-interested, stoic bounty hunter, who is acting in a violent male society (Barg 9, Staig, Williams 33, 37, 61). According to Christopher Frayling, "Leone makes no attempt to engage our sympathy with the characters, but watches the brutality of his protagonists with a detached calm: they are brutal because of the environment in which they exist. And they make no attempt to change that environment" (160). Seeßlen (157) declares that Leone's films are more than just a formal development of the genre itself. His anti-heroes represent to some extent what the traditional American Westerners became after being deprived of the simple rule of life on the frontier.

Laurence Staig and Tony Williams (26, 33, 36, 48) explain that, besides featuring a darker type of male hero, the Italian Westerns depict a more realistic Old West due to the frequent use of violence. Moreover, a greater degree of emotionalism is established through the film technique's emphasis on soundtrack and visuals. For example, the underlining scores by Ennio Morricone are a distinctive feature of Leone's films and a

significant element that contributes to the Italian Western's unique film aesthetic (Seeßlen 155). In addition, another motif is the occasional integration of humor that turned the genre into comedy. Thereby, the Western "heroes" try to top each other with grotesque acts of killing, which parody the genre's image of masculinity and hero cult, such as in E. B. Clucher's high-flying slapstick comedies *They Call Me Trinity* (1970) and *Trinity Is Still My Name* (1971), starring Terence Hill and Bud Spencer (Seeßlen 154).

The American Western film genre became increasingly violent in the same decade, as can be seen in George Roy Hill's *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) and Sam Peckinpah's example par excellence, *The Wild Bunch* (1969). Nevertheless, the end of the Western's glory days grew visible in the late sixties and early seventies. Filmgoers questioned the excessive degree of violence as sensitivity had become a sociopolitical concern (Parks 103-106). Since the nation developed and its society changed, a new view on white superiority over Native Americans arose and the Western's nostalgia seemed outdated (Benshoff, Griffin 109). Moreover, Seeßlen (176) notes that the search and longing for something to call a home, the unknown territory, turned obsolete due to the emerging media age as people started to live in a global village.

According to Weidinger (*Konstruktion* 29), some revisionist Westerns of the early 1990s revived the genre with blockbusters such as Kevin Costner's *Dances With Wolves* (1990), Clint Eastwood's *Unforgiven* (1992), George P. Cosmatos' *Tombstone* (1993) or Jim Jarmusch's *Dead Man* (1995). However, its success was short-lived with only a small number of Western films finding their way in cinemas since the mid-1990s. Weidinger notes that the action movie and the science fiction genre successfully replaced the Western in celebrating male American heroism and by presenting the last remaining global power in a properly glorious light.

3.2. The Western Formula

When it comes to the Western, most people have the same images in mind: cowboys, Indians, gun fights, saloons, horses, six-shooters, the life on the frontier. The Western genre as such is of a highly repetitive nature with a firm set of thematic codes and iconographic elements (Tompkins 25). These generic conventions incorporate typical characteristics regarding the setting and the plot structure, which are addressed further in this chapter.

The Western is comprised of American history, myth and legend. The majority of actions take place in the past between the end of the American Civil War 1865 and 1890. The term "frontier" refers to the period of the Western settlement by European Americans and its great cattle drives (Stoeltje 25, Parks 30-31). The geographical setting is the American Southwest and Midwest, specifically the areas west of the Mississippi – the desert regions, prairies, grasslands, buttes and mountains of Arizona, Utah, New Mexico, Nevada, Texas, Wyoming, Colorado, the Dakotas, Montana, and some Californian territories (Tompkins 4, Weidinger, *Konstruktion* 43). Thomas Klein (63) emphasizes that the most prominent region that shaped people's image of the West is the area of Monument Valley, which is located on the border of Arizona and Utah and belongs to the Colorado Plateau. It owes its significance to director John Ford, who staged the valley's famous geological formations in numerous of his films, such as *Stagecoach* (1939), *My Darling Clementine* (1946), *The Searchers* (1956) or *Cheyenne Autumn* (1964). Other directors made use of this characteristic landscape as well, for example, Sergio Leone in his Spaghetti Western *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968). According to Weidinger (*Konstruktion* 44), a number of Westerns are also set after 1890 or 1900 and draw attention to the Mexican territory as a retreat for all those who lack space in society after the "civilization" of the American West. Nevertheless, in Westerns, time and place can vary since the essential factor is the idea of a "Wild West", which basically means a locale where guidelines and standardized rules are absent to at least some extent and thus correspond to an idea of "the wild". Therefore, films that represent this notion, which are set during the second half of the 20th century, may also be considered as a Western – they are classified as "post-Western".
Still, André Bazin (48) points out that the landscape plays an essential role in both the Western and the post-Western as it lies at the core of the confrontation between man

and nature. Westerns picture the scenery with the aid of extreme long shots, tracking and panoramic panning shots, thereby bursting the bounds of the screen and restoring the vast space of the land. Tompkins (69, 71) notes further that landscape shots are commonly used at the beginning of a Western. The sweep of the horizon and the desert space illustrate an environment which is hostile to man by lacking indispensable conditions, such as water or shady trees, which are essential for survival. Therefore, the land symbolizes suffering and physical effort. According to Tompkins, the main message is that only the strong survive – a Darwinian survival of the fittest – where "[t]he qualities needed to survive on the land are the qualities the land itself possesses – bleakness, mercilessness. […] To be a man in the Western is to seem to grow out of environment, which means to be hard, to be tough, to be unforgiving" (73). This notion of the landscape as a threat to human beings is also fostered by the many outlaws and Indians (typically portrayed as savages), who inhabit the wilderness that separates settler communities from each other. Consequently, it is a necessity for the Westerner to carry a gun and ride long distances on horseback to reach isolated towns and be victorious in relentless pursuits. Guns are not only elementary for the hero's personal use as a form of self-protection but also for his role as a moral authority, who strives to act righteous while establishing order. Therefore, the landscape and its settlers, who are in need of protection, serve as a justification for the genre's gun violence (Lenihan 12-13).

Since the Western hero is always risking his life, death is an omnipresent element of the genre. The centrality and importance of events that involve mortal combats is described by Tompkins:

> When life itself is at stake, everything else seems trivial by comparison. Events that would normally loom large – birth, marriage, embarking a career – become peripheral, and the activities and preoccupations of everyday life seem almost absurd. The Western's concentration on death puts life on hold, empties the canvas of its details, while placing unnatural emphasis on a few extraordinary moments – the holdup, the jailbreak, the shoot-out. (Tompkins 31)

According to Klein (80-83), these specific stock situations, such as the showdown, the duel, a robbery, a pursuit and an escape, as well as saloon or bonfire scenes, are central components in Western films and frequently appear in close succession. The shootout is a dominant form of the showdown, in which the two rivals or competing gangs face each other for a final death-feud. The typical shootout occurs in a public place, often in the dusty streets of a Western town where the competitors are opposing each other without cover. The one who draws his weapon faster from the holster emerges the

winner. Films like *High Noon* (1952), *The Wild Bunch* (1969) and especially numerous Italo-Westerns, such as Sergio Leone's *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (1966) as well as *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), prominently feature such shootout scenes.
In Westerns, Indian raids on blockhouses, farms or on a trek of settlers are depicted like the attacks of the army on Indian settlements as well as train and bank robberies. Holdups can take on various forms, depending on who performs them. They are in many cases followed by an escape and a pursuit, which are mutually dependent, such as in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) or *The True Story of Jesse James* (1957) (Klein 86-87).
Bonfire scenes, on the other hand, bring the action to a halt since they are usually embedded as a period of rest in an ongoing movement. The setting is the wilderness and the scene is characterized by an intense use of dialogs. If the rest takes place at night, a threatening atmosphere is noticeable, where every crack can spell trouble. The experienced Westerner, though, has everything under control and uses the situation to parade his knowledge and make his mark, such as in *Winchester '73* (1950), for example. Another setting for rest and social interaction is a Western town's saloon. In addition, the saloon offers amusement and a welcomed distraction from the struggles on the frontier in the form of piano playing, drinks, and dancing or singing saloon girls (frequently prostitutes) though, in fact, the saloon often stages violent acts like a brawl, a shootout or a showdown, such as in films like *Dodge City* (1939), *Rio Bravo* (1959), or *Shane* (1953) (Klein 88-92).
However, Klein (79-80, 84) explains that such typical story elements are not exclusively associated with the Western genre. Since many genres feature similar conflict situations and consequential resolutions, stock situations like the showdown, the pursuit and campfire scenes can also be found in adventure films, action or road movies, science-fiction films, as well as crime or gangster movies. The decisive factor is not the sheer presence of such events but their respective functionalization in a specific generic action and conflict context. Therefore, it is an important fact if a pursuit takes place by foot, with cars, on horseback or with futuristic means of transportation. Klein argues that genres have always occurred in hybrid forms, which helps in analyzing the transculturality of stereotypes. For example, the structures of an Italo-Western's shootout scene show great similarities to the showdowns of 1960's Japanese swordplay films. Despite differing in weapons, the key component of the sword fight is also who draws first blood. Both fight scenes do not last long and the protagonists of

those two genres are usually capable of winning out over a considerable number of opponents. Such overlaps and genre mixes are no accident. According to Seeßlen (154-155), the script for the Italo-Western *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964) was written by Sergio Leone and Duccio Tessari and was built after the Japanese film *Yojimbo* (1961), directed by Akira Kurosawa. Furthermore, Kurosawa's renowned samurai film *Seven Samurai* (1954) was adapted to the Wild West in John Sturges' *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) (Parks 99).

Nevertheless, according to Parks, it is the harmony and consistency of the components that is crucial to a genre:

> The iconography and language, the mythic dimension and the stock situations, the characters and setting are all readily recognizable if they are consistent in their relationship with each other within the requirements of the genre. No one mistakes a Western for a spy thriller, although both are adventure stories and both contain the elements of character, setting, action, myth, and verbal and visual form. If the story is set on the American frontier, if the action is consistent with that setting, and if individuals are involved who look, speak, and live out a particular life style characterized as "frontier", these specific colorations will harmonize into an integral world view. The world is the mythic West and the story is a Western. (Parks 32)

In terms of storyline and plot structure, Will Wright (29-33) classifies the Western film into four categories in his study *Sixguns and Society* (1975): the classical plot, the vengeance variation, the transition theme and the professional plot. The archetypical form, as the name suggests, is the classical plot, which determines the Western film genre. Out of 64 top-grossing Western films between 1930 and 1971, 24 are categorized as classical. Most of them were released until the mid-1950's and all other plot lines derive from this classic form. According to Wright, changes in structure became significantly apparent after the Second World War, with the majority being content-related and primarily concern the relationship between the hero and society. The classical plot's basic storyline deals with a lonesome cowboy, who arrives in a town that is in great distress, mostly because of threatening villains. The hero puts the helpless townspeople out of their misery and finally receives credit by the community and wins a woman's love. Examples of Westerns that follow a classical plot structure include *Dodge City* (1939), *Duel in the Sun* (1947), *The Far Country* (1955), and *Shane* (1953), which is the most prominent example of the classical plot.

The vengeance variation is similar to the classical plot in its depiction of the society as being weak and the hero being strong. Yet, instead of entering the society to save its people, the hero needs to step out of it in order to carry out his personal vendetta. Films

like *Stagecoach* (1939), *Red River* (1949), *The Naked Spur* (1953), *The Man from Laramie* (1955) and *The Searchers* (1956) are examples of the vengeance variation. Western films of this plot structure are less common than the classical plot and display a worsening in terms of the relationship between the hero and society, which ultimately culminates in the professional plot of the late sixties (Wright 59).

The shift from the vengeance variation to the professional plot is represented by Wright's transition theme, which occurs only a few times in a certain time period. In this variety, society changed as it grew considerably in the last decades and is now characterized as strong and evil. Its members turn against the hero, who is part of the society in the beginning but becomes excluded. The hero fights against society, which takes on the role of the villain. The following three films are listed as corresponding to the transition theme: *Broken Arrow* (1950), *High Noon* (1952), and *Johnny Guitar* (1954) (Wright 74-75).

The vast majority of Westerns released in the late sixties and seventies belong to the fourth structure, which Wright (85-86) refers to as professional plot. It resembles the classical plot insofar as its heroes are strangers and not part of the society. In both cases, they fight the bad guys, who threaten the community or parts of it. The professional Western differs from the other plot structures as its heroes do not act out of idealism, moral issues or vengeance but on account of personal profit, typically money, as well as love of adventure and pugnacity. They are professionals who sometimes gang up against their opponents. Contrary to the transition theme's depiction of a vicious society, the professional Western's community, its state and values simply do not matter to the heroes. The main focus throughout the story is on the conflict of two equally powerful groups that battle each other not only in a final showdown but over the entire plot line. Weidinger (*Konstruktion* 51-52) notes that despite embodying the good and the bad, both parties are closely related. Yet, the heroes are still slightly stronger and prove superior as they return to traditional values and ideals at the last second. Their victory, however, frequently goes hand in hand with their downfall. The often featured "victory through death"-motif in slow motion turns them into larger than life-sized mythical figures, such as the main characters in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) and *The Wild Bunch* (1969).

According to Weidinger (*Nationale Mythen* 94-95), Wright's classification presents an influential analytical model, where most Westerns can be assigned with only minor or no deviation to one of his four plot structures. Nevertheless, his attempt of a strict

categorization based on his structural study poses some difficulties and thus should be understood as a guidance. However, Wright's plot structure aptly illustrates the genre's shift from the classic Western period with films of the classical plot to the emergence of the Spaghetti Westerns and the greater degree of violence in films of the professional plot.

3.2.1. Gender Representations and Relations

3.2.1.1. Masculinity and Heroism

The great majority of Western films feature a masculine hero as leading role. He is central to the story and personifies its core, which Tompkins describes as a "narrative of male violence" (28). The Westerner frequently combines aspects of historical facts and fiction in his persona and shaped the popular image of the American hero. A masculine model was created that, according to Tompkins, stresses "the importance of manhood as an ideal. It is not one ideal among many, it is *the* ideal, certainly the one worth dying for. It doesn't matter whether a man is a sheriff or an outlaw, a rustler or a rancher, a cattleman or a sheepherder, a miner or a gambler. What matters is that he be a *man*. That is the only side to be on" (17-18).

With that said, Westerns celebrate male heroism while all other characters are subordinate and dependent on the protagonist's actions. Therefore, it is necessary to give a brief description of the hero's principal characteristics. However, as outlined previously, the Western genre evolved over several decades and thus its heroes did not remain static. They were affected by social changes and reflect the respective changing values (Parks 32, 56).

One of the hero's main features is the fact that he is a loner, not part of a community and often a stranger to it. If he connects with others, it will last only a certain period of time since he is not able or willing to become integrated into society and to give up his independence. The Westerner stands between civilization and wilderness and foremost remains in that position but is sometimes forced to leave one of his ways of life behind in a struggle for survival. He lives in solitude and feels more comfortable outside of society and in nature. Since he is closely connected to the wild, he is on to every dodge and prefers to play a lone hand. His relationship to people is rather complex since he

gets in touch with other persons only when necessary. This classic image of the lonesome stranger is once again best portrayed in George Steven's Western *Shane* (1953) (Parks 56-57).

The Westerner's living environment is characterized by a male society in the first place. Although he does not seek the company of women, he generally knows how to behave properly around them. The hero has good manners and treats women well, which is an indication of his ability to fit into civilization and sets him apart from rude and brutal villains. Yet, his courtesy towards women is not shaped by respect or the idea of equality but is rather a kind of paternalism. Thereby, female figures get frequently treated by their male counterparts as being on an intellectual level with children. They are cared for and protected but not taken seriously. This pattern becomes specifically obvious in interactions between older, male protagonists and younger women, such as in John Wayne's late Westerns of the sixties and seventies and in further films starring other aging male stars (Weidinger, *Nationale Mythen* 101).

A characterization of the Westerner's social intercourse with special regards to his behavior around women is described by Beverly J. Stoeltje in her article "A Helpmate for Man Indeed: The Image of the Frontier Woman" (1975). Although Stoeltje (27) focuses primarily on the available roles for women and their position in the frontier society, she also takes the part of the frontiersmen into account since male and female roles are interdependent. She distinguishes between three types of frontier male images: (1) the cowboy, (2) the settler, and (3) the bad man.

Stoeltje's first type, the cowboy, belongs to an all-male group and makes contact with women in towns after cattle drives or at dances, which are arranged at ranches after more women settled in the West. These interactions, though, are usually rare and short-lived. The cowboy has an idealized picture of women or does not give thought to them at all. His ideal woman is "a chaste, beautiful, princesslike, fragile creature, set apart from the real world upon a pedestal where he […] [can] worship her from afar" (27). Cowboys are frequently called "the boys" since they are not considered mature or to have attained manhood yet. Hence, their relationship to women is characterized by a boyish behavior. They are either referred to as shy or to have an abhorrence of women. However, instead of approaching their feminine ideal, cowboys are more often getting in touch with prostitutes, which places them for the moment into the role of the "bad man". Two types can be distinguished then, namely the soft and timid one and

the malcontent cowboy. Cowboys either stay alone for the rest of their lives or marry their idolized woman many years later (Stoeltje 27-29, 38).

If the cowboy decides to settle down to family life at his own ranch, he becomes a cattleman, which leads to Stoeltje's second category, the settler. They are either cattlemen or farmers, who own land and occupy a house or ranch with their families. The settlers give up their mobility and gain control of the territories, which classifies them as successful frontiersmen. These frontiersmen are described as self-confident, aspiring, and prosperous. However, settlers occasionally transform into the role of the "bad man" by visiting prostitutes but revert to their initial position after their encounters (Stoeltje 27, 31, 38, 40).

The third type of Stoeltje's frontier male images is the bad man. These men live outside of society and do not take part in community life. They are outlaws, social bandits, and Robin Hood figures, such as Billy the Kid or Jesse James. Sexual contacts between men of this nature and women build the foundation of their relationships, though the males dominate their liaison as the females simply need to be temporarily available for them. On the contrary, actual relationships after the fashion of the settler are more like a comradeship than a love affair by considering sexuality only as a means of reproduction, whereas displays of affection are confined to the romantic type of cowboy (Stoeltje 27, 37, 39-40).

Since cowboys are not regarded as having acquired maturity yet, infatuation and the expression of emotions are thought of as unmanly. According to Tompkins, "[f]or a man to speak of his inner feelings not only admits parity with the person he is talking to, but it jeopardizes his status as potent being [...]. Silence establishes dominance at the same time as it protects the silent one from inspection and possible criticism by offering nothing for the interlocutor to grab hold of" (60). Therefore, she reasons that the Western hero's reticence reinforces his masculinity and demonstrates that the absence of words is strongly tied to virility and integrity (Tompkins 54). He is a man of action, hence, "[d]oing, not talking" is celebrated in Westerns (Tompkins 50).

Yet, as Tompkins (49-51) demonstrates, if the Westerner talks, then in an unequivocal manner. He has a minimalist language repertoire and generally gives short commands, which often leave out the indefinite article. His statements are always perfectly timed and bear traces of pessimism, seriousness, and aggressiveness, which oppose the romanticized image of the West. This is illustrated by examples of film quotations, such as "In the end you end up dyin' all alone on a dirty street. And for what? For nothin'."

(*High Noon,* 1952), "A human rides a horse until he's dead and then goes on foot. An Indian rides him another 20 miles and then eats him." (*The Searchers*, 1956), "This is hard country, double hard." (*Will Penny*, 1968). Moreover, these utterances display the hero's superior wisdom. According to Tompkins, he "doesn't need to think or talk; He just *knows*. Being the hero, he is in a state of grace with respect to the truth" (52).

Along with the hero's taciturnity and reclusion comes a unique repertoire of skills that grants him his special status in society. His quality to be in full control over events and all living beings turns him into a godlike figure. The Westerner is a clever man, who goes about it skillfully. Due to his extraordinary abilities, he is fully self-reliant and independent (Parks 56-57). According to Robert Warshow (54-55) in his article "The Westerner" (1954), he is a man of leisure – even if he wears a sheriff's badge or owns a ranch, he still seems to be out of engagement. It is unclear whether he possesses anything else apart from his horse, his pistols, and the one set of clothes he is wearing all the time. Belongings, same as love, are irrelevant in the Western. If he takes on any kind of employment, it is not to assure his livelihood. The moment the audience gets acquainted with the Western hero, he already has everything: he can ride flawlessly, he can keep his cool in the face of death and produce his pistol in a split second faster and shoots more accurately than anybody else he might come across.

The same applies to his interaction with animals – he is almost spiritually akin to them, be it cattle or horses. The Western hero's horse is his home and is worth a mint in the story as well as in history (Parks 57). Tompkins (97, 99-102) states that it serves multiple purposes: it is, on the one hand, a means of transportation, but, on the other hand, it functions as a comrade that the hero can talk to, trust and share adventures with. Therefore, he is never fully unaccompanied. Nevertheless, it needs to be kept in mind that Westerns revolve around power, competition, and conflict, and this is also reflected in the taming of horses. Not all horses are won as friends through care and devotion, as described by Tompkins. The portrayal of a romanticized partnership between horse and rider as equals became different in the adult Westerns. She argues that the hero's horse does not voluntarily enter into a relationship with him but is rather forced into it. Thus, Tompkins reasons that the taming of a horse ultimately makes the hero a master and highlights his superiority and dominance over nature. As a consequence, "[e]ach time the figure of a horseman appears against the horizon, it celebrates the possibility of mastery, of self, of others, of the land, of circumstance" (101). Yet, although the hero's power is celebrated, it leaves behind a certain touch of

melancholy and nostalgia. Since by the time a horse is possessed against its will, an outlaw defeated or settlers defended, the West loses what provides its attraction – its wildness (Tompkins 101-102).

The "wild" in the Wild West, in turn, constitutes an indispensable condition for the hero's actions in the first place. According to David Assmann (25-26), the absence of an efficacious legal system, the lack of an executive body or the presence of a corrupt system, which follows the interests of villains or exploiting oligarchs, forms the framework for the Westerner's presence. It justifies his autonomy and his existence as a moral authority. Consequently, if law and order would not demand his protection, he would become redundant. True, the Western hero takes action according to his moral duty, which is more than a genre convention – it is considered as a universal law. Despite his own needs, he puts his duty above his personal interests, which functions as a sign of his moral greatness. His motives are beyond any doubt, therefore the Westerner comes off as moral winner whether in defeat or in death. He fights for the right thing and consequently prevails or dies a hero. Weidinger (*Nationale Mythen* 100-101) points out that violent acts of men and their fights have always built the classic setting for the construction and representation of masculinity. The hero's lone battle is inevitable since it does not only serve as an opportunity to stage and prove his masculinity but also to illustrate his moral high ground of a masculine ideal as superior to the immorality of the bad guys. His imperturbable, single-minded and resolute actions, which he performs with a great degree of clarity and certainty, are best shown in the early and middle Western films, as noted by Parks (57). They pictured life in a plain and simple way, whereas the content became more complex in the genre's later decades – and the hero therefore insecure and torn.

Furthermore, as Assmann (25-26) explains, the Westerner's acting on behalf of a threatened community and his heroic deeds establish a moral foundation and contribute to the emergence of civilization. He does not need anybody else, whereas society is heavily dependent on him. On the other hand, Warshow (53, 56-57) declares further that if a frontier society no longer requires his protection, he would be out of work. In films that indicate that his days are numbered, he either dies at the end or he is forced to set out for remoter regions. As the classical Western hero is aware of his fate and the hardships of life, he bears within himself a note of melancholy. He has no choice but to fulfill his duty since he is driven by his sense of responsibility and his conscientiousness, which Assmann (25-26) describes as the hero's demon. Once he

acknowledges that he cannot escape his fate, he fights with abandon, which is expressed in numerous Western films with statements such as “a man’s gotta do what a man’s gotta do” (*High Noon*, 1952), or “there’s some things a man can’t run away from” (*Stagecoach*, 1939). According to Parks (58), the Westerner’s fatalism based on his scrupulousness almost end in tragedy in films of later decades, which becomes apparent in the existential hero’s pessimism and dry sarcasm.

Despite all the shooting, fighting, and riding long distances on horseback under the burning sun, Weidinger (*Konstruktion* 46-48, *Nationale Mythen* 102) notes that the classic American Western hero is almost always miraculously displayed in neat clothes and clean-shaven throughout the film. His overall appearance plays an important role in the Western as a distinction between good and bad can be easily drawn by the character’s style. Since the Westerner has to adapt himself to both civilization and the wild, he needs to walk a tightrope. He has a well-groomed appearance, which underlines his moral and physical superiority, but is never too dressed up. Custom-made suits, frilled shirts, velvet scarfs, as well as richly ornamented holsters and all forms of jewelry are not suitable for the wild and considered as unmanly. Such garments function as a symbol of weakness and are associated with the civilized East. They either belong to braggers or psychopathic villains, who use them as a tool for intimidation and to arouse fear. The same is true for the form of hats – too elaborately decorated and ostentatious is as bad as seedy and raddled. Black hats in combination with neat, black clothes are in many cases a distinctive feature of bad men with psychopathic traits.

However, according to Weidinger (102), the hero’s appearance became more realistic as of the late 1960s, largely owing to the influence of the popular Spaghetti Westerns. As a result, Western heroes were depicted as sweaty, bearded, and with greasy hair, as exemplified by Staig and Williams (61) with reference to Clint Eastwood as No Name in *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964). In this film, Leone disregards traditional Western conventions already in the film’s opening sequence with the portrayal of his “hero”. Eastwood is pictured as untidy, wearing a poncho, which in Westerns usually refers to Mexicans, and riding a mule instead of a horse. One should not, however, that this modified representation applied primarily to the younger and newer protagonists, whereas the image of the long-established Western stars remained unaffected (Weidinger 102).

3.2.1.2. Women in Western

> There is a region of America that I have come to call Hisland. In a magnificent western landscape, under perpetually cloudless western skies, a cast of heroic characters engages in dramatic combat, sometimes with nature, sometimes with each other. Occupationally, these heroes are diverse: they are mountain men, cowboys, Indians, soldiers, farmers, miners, and desperadoes, but they share one distinguishing characteristic – they are all men. It seems that all rational demography has ended at the Mississippi River: all the land west of it is occupied only by men. This mythical land is America's most enduring contribution to folklore: the legendary Wild West. (Armitage 9)

As set out above, the Western film genre is obviously dominated by men. The same is true for most writings by historians, who merely focus on a small number of events that took place in the American frontier time. This circumstance prompted Susan Armitage (9-11) to introduce the term "Hisland" in her article "Through Women's Eyes: A New View of the West", in which she examines and criticizes female stereotypes of traditional Western historiography. Her focus is on women's lives and their experiences on the frontier in order to challenge prevalent assumptions of the West. Besides Susan Armitage and Elizabeth Jameson, many more historians and scholars started to pay attention to women's realities and their contribution to frontier life. Not surprisingly, the findings suggest that the widespread image of the West is "one-dimensional and historically inaccurate" as Native and Hispanic Americans as well as women in general are absent for the most part (Armitage, Jameson 3). However, the limited number of female characters that actually do appear, still need to be further addressed. In order to analyze the representation of women in the Western films under consideration, common female stereotypes and traditional women's roles are discussed subsequently.

According to Pam Cook (82-83), the position of women in Westerns is ambivalent and contradictory. She illustrates this proposition by referring to the American Western film directors Budd Boetticher and Anthony Mann. On the one hand, Boetticher states that "[w]hat counts is what the heroine provokes, or rather what she represents. […] In herself she has not even the slightest importance" (qtd. in French 32). Whereas, on the other hand, women are added to every Western since these would not work without them, so Mann. Thus, they basically function as props, who may be the cause for the hero's action, influence his activities and boost his figure but have no personality of their own. This is also described by Tompkins, who states that "women are the motive

for male activity (it's women who are being avenged, it's a woman the men are trying to rescue) at the same time as what woman stand for – love and forgiveness in place of vengeance – is precisely what that activity denies" (41). In the case of a revenge plot, as exemplified by *The Searchers* (1956), women as well as children serve as legitimization for the hero's murders to save them. Because of the many violent acts and killings for the purpose of protection, their lives may be considered as valuable. Yet, most Western stories ignore women and their views (Tompkins 40-41).

To construct and portray masculinity, Weidinger (*Nationale Mythen* 96-97, 104-106) argues that Westerns need to present femininity, if only as negative antithesis and mirror face of the masculine ideal. He claims that a great majority of Western films constitute the woman as the male hero's direct counter-image. Whereas the hero embodies the West, nature, crosses borders, and is without fixed abode, the woman symbolizes the civilized East, culture, is settled, and personifies the home. The Western draws a clear distinction between a masculine outer world – the wilderness and nature – and a feminine inner world – the settlement/ranch and family. While he is a man of action, who is mostly withdrawn and silent, she is reduced to a passive role, rarely shows individual initiative, and is solely responsible to support him. Weidinger adds that female passivity is also expressed in the genre by being patient. Women are designed to wait for men to return home – sometimes for years. This is clearly recognizable in many of John Ford's Westerns, such as in *The Searchers* (1956) or *Fort Apache* (1948). Hence, the core message is that men act and women wait. Due to their inactivity, female characters gather experience of the West passively at second hand and through their men's narrations, given that they talk.

This dichotomy of a male and a female sphere is thus further noticeable in the use of language. As described previously, masculinity and power are expressed by the male's taciturnity. Consequently, as Tompkins (55, 59) infers, silence signifies superiority and therefore indicates the inappropriateness of verbalization, which is primarily ascribed to female roles. Since language is strongly linked with women, civilization, and faith, it serves as a sign of peace and as criticism of violence and power. This attitude, however, contradicts the Western's genre convention fundamentally as the conflict between gunslinging men lies at its core. In addition, Weidinger (*Nationale Mythen* 100), Warshow (53) and Peter A. French (32) state that women's talking is depicted as pointless. They try in vain to argue against violence and killing since the hero's duty is not negotiable. His violent way of conflict resolution is the only one possible and an

indispensable element of the Western genre. Ineffective persuasions of female characters to change the hero's intention can be found in numerous films, such as in several versions of the story *The Virginian* as well as in *High Noon* (1952) and *Shane* (1953). Women are thus generally pictured as pacifistic. In a male-dominated world, which glorifies gun battles and fistfights, this is no mean feat.

According to Seeßlen (74-75), the excess of men in Western society resulted in a corresponding mythologization of women, who became idealized and needed protection. In opposition, a highly eroticized feminine portrayal emerged, which is held in low esteem by the hero and simply serves as a fetish. In both cases, though, a successful relationship between the hero and a woman of either category seems impossible. For the Westerner, a woman's soul is incompatible with her body. They are not comprehensible as a coherent unit. Therefore, partnerships are a male preserve. Benshoff and Griffin (274) point out that the typical male buddy films of the late sixties and early seventies celebrate homosocial bonds between men as the principal form of relationship, as in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969). In these cases, female protagonists merely function as platonic love interests, who occupy a subsidiary position in the film, or are featured as sex objects just to indicate that the male buddies are indeed heterosexual. Tompkins argues further that women in Westerns "perform this alibi function all the time, masking the fact that what the men are really interested in is one another" (40).

If female characters occur in Westerns, they most likely correspond to one of the three popular frontier images of women identified by Stoeltje (27, 29-31): (1) the refined lady, (2) the helpmate, and (3) the bad woman. They represent the female counterparts to the three types of male roles discussed in the previous subchapter. The first image, the refined lady, personifies the cowboy's feminine ideal. She is a sensitive, gentle lady, who is hardly conformed to the harsh conditions of the unfamiliar environment. Although some of her qualities help to create a social life and encourage cultural development, her refined manners are inappropriate for the most part. If she does not adapt to the American frontier, it is certain that she will lead an unhappy life. According to Jameson, the notion of genteel women, who civilized the West, derived from Victorian literature, "which reflected and taught the cardinal virtues of 'true womanhood': piety, purity, domesticity, and submissiveness to male authority" (146). Benshoff and Griffin (208) describe that female characters in early American film represent this Victorian model of "good" women and are usually portrayed as virginal

daughters. They are passive, innocent, and helpless women, who sometimes do traditional "women's work" like cooking or sewing and often feature a childlike behavior. They need to be protected by their fathers or other men, which applies to older western heroes and their paternalistic relationship with women as mentioned above. Following this Victorian model, refined ladies are also described as "gentle tamers" by Dee Brown in his book on women of the Old West, published in 1958 (Jameson 146). According to Jameson, Brown "portrayed an image of western woman as the reluctant pioneer who, while her man tamed the physical wilderness, gently and passively tamed the man and brought civilized culture to the frontier" (146). Although this stereotypical image of inactive, unhappy frontier women still persists, Jameson (146-148) and Armitage (13-14) argue that Western women, in fact, contributed a great deal to institutional life and community-building and were far from being passive. Yet, their informal activities were not documented in newspapers and are therefore invisible and often overlooked in research that lacks data from diverse and important sources, such as oral histories and private writing, to draw a more authentic picture of women's lives on the frontier.

However, if the hard work of women, who successfully adapted to the West, was stressed by historians, another image of frontier woman emerged, namely the helpmate (Jameson 146). According to Stoeltje (32-33, 37-38, 41), she features bodily and emotional strength, as opposed to the refined lady, and proves herself by fulfilling her duties. Those are principally everyday household chores, such as cooking, raising children, and needlework – basically looking after house and farm and being a working partner of the cattleman-settler type. Furthermore, she is a tough, brave woman, who can cope with periods of drought, Indian raids, as well as death. The helpmate manages such difficulties well and uncomplainingly. Due to her skills and her endurance, she is appraised by men but, as Stoeltje comments, as more of a "nonsexual helper" for her husband, the settler. The image of the helpmate then became the "symbolic frontier woman" as she succeeds in surviving within the new society. On the downside, the more the helpmate adjusts to the demands of frontier living, the more she accepts her role as a nonsexual comrade, who enables her husband to be successful. Consequently, Jameson (146) argues that the emphasis on the helpmate's hard work simply resulted in the image of the oppressed drudge.

Stoeltje's third type, the bad woman, is associated with sexuality, an exciting, wild lifestyle, and with a town's saloons and dancing halls. Her way of living is considered

as sinful, thus she is to be found outside the margins of society and embodies the female partner of the bad man. The expression of powerful emotions and lust are ascribed to bad women, who are usually unattached but get in temporary contact with bad men. In this case, however, it is also the male part, who defines the nature of their association. Moreover, as part of trading activities between white men and Indians in some frontier regions, it was also common that the males took advantage of the Indian "squaws", whereas Indian "princesses" needed to be courted and married (Stoeltje 27, 38-41).

This clear distinction between good and bad women was known as the virgin-whore complex of the Victorian era, which already has its roots in the Bible's classical form of Maria and Maria Magdalena (Benshoff, Griffin 210, Weidinger, *Nationale Mythen* 107). According to Benshoff and Griffin (210, 218-219), this dichotomy can be found in early cinema and is still prevalent in classic and contemporary films and cultures. Thereby, women get judged by their sexual morality and represent either the image of the unmarried, virginal, pure woman or the sexualized, "loose" and "fallen" woman. Unlike good women, who usually get rewarded with marriage and love, bad women get punished for their immorality and promiscuity. Western movies frequently feature this simplistic classification and picture female characters as either virtuous farmers' daughters and chaste schoolteachers, or, on the other hand, as saloon girls, which is often a euphemism for sex workers. Weidinger (*Nationale Mythen* 107-108) states that the image of the "whore", however, does not necessarily stand for prostitution. Women of this type simply do not meet the requirements of a good woman. The saloon girl then may be a dancer, a hostess, or an actual prostitute. Independent women, who own a saloon or, less common, a ranch, are also negatively encoded like the saloon girl since both are primarily surrounded by men, which is a distinctive feature of prostitutes, even if those men are only employees. It does not matter which role the woman actually occupies – her symbolic function remains the same in each and every case. Women, who operate outside their traditional sphere of home and family, get punished by being positioned as bad women on the side of the "whore" since they do not keep to their socially predetermined place. As independent women are not acceptable in Westerns, which celebrate male dominance, the final resolution is either their death or entering into a relationship with a man. In the latter case, the woman changes her way of life drastically and takes on her role as housewife, whereas her husband becomes the boss of the ranch or bar.

The married life, however, is never fully displayed in Western stories, as Weidinger (*Nationale Mythen* 109) declares. It takes place beyond the scope of those mythical narratives since the male protagonist would have to give up his independence. Mulvey (*Afterthoughts* 125-127) argues on account of Vladimir Propp's concept of character function in folktales that marriage also serves as narrative closure in Westerns. It is a conclusive, social practice and the ultimate motive for all female roles. As a wedding would imply a woman's victory over masculine independence, Westerns rather resolve without one. She reasons that "the rejection of marriage personifies a nostalgic celebration of phallic, narcissistic omnipotence [...] [and] resistance to social demands and responsibilities, above all those of marriage and the family, the sphere represented by women" (*Afterthoughts* 126). Hence, Weidinger (*Nationale Mythen* 109-111) states that the great majority of Westerns end with the male hero's departure, such as in *My Darling Clementine* (1946). In addition, he adds that it is a significant characteristic of the Western that the hero's matrimony starts either in the end, after the story or alternatively ends with the beginning of the plot. In this case, the death of his wife frequently serves as starting point for a vengeance variation, which is exemplified by *The Outlaw Josey Wales* (1976) and *Seven Men from Now* (1956).

If the male protagonist takes a woman as his wife, he usually marries the virginal type since she functions rather as a prestigious object and valuable property than as a partner with equal rights. An equal cooperation is more likely between the hero and the bad woman, who shares the Westerner's sentiments as she knows how to take care of herself and about life's hardships, as in Robert Altman's *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* (1971). Women of the virginal category, on the contrary, who come from a civilized, sheltered inner world, will never understand his philosophy of life. Although the hero shows respect for the prostitute, their association is destined to fail in the long run due to her impurity, John Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939) constituting a notable exception. Bazin (44) and Warshow (54) explain that despite being good at heart and kind, the prominent stock character of the prostitute with the heart of gold is morally tainted and atones for her sins typically through her death. In the end, she takes the bullet for the hero out of love and saves his life. According to Weidinger (*Nationale Mythen* 111-112), the hero does not need to make a decision between virgin or whore anymore and is now free to ally with the morally pure, white Anglo-Saxon woman, who acknowledges his dominance without contradiction. Like the classical, idealistic hero in many modern Western films, the portrayal of the virgin faded out, whereas the figure of the

bad woman gained popularity in Westerns that belong to Wright's professional plot variety from the mid-sixties onwards.

A clear distinction between good and bad women can also be drawn based on their appearance. Weidinger (*Nationale Mythen* 109-110) distinguishes between the virginal rancher's daughter or schoolmarm with a light hair color and skin tone, and the dark-haired prostitute, who is generally of a darker type. Although saloon girls are often blond, they are easy to identify on account of their explicit role. Moreover, their hair is bleached and not naturally blond as that of the good women. In terms of ethnicity, the virginal female characters are exclusively white Anglo-Saxons, whereas the bad woman is of an ambiguous background. The opposing female roles in *My Darling Clementine* (1946) serve as a typical example of this dichotomy. Chihuahua, the saloon girl, is at least partly of Mexican or Indian descent, whereas Clementine Carter obviously embodies the pure, Anglo-Saxon woman, who comes from Boston and stays as a schoolteacher in Tombstone. Chihuahua, on the other hand, suffers racist verbal abuse, but is depicted as loving, brave woman on her deathbed since her "dark" sexuality does not pose a threat to the white community of Tombstone anymore.

However, Cook (83, 85) notes that female protagonists, who do not belong to either category, who wear pants, know how to shoot, and ride horses in the beginning, usually end up wearing dresses or skirts while accepting their subordinate status. On the other hand, bad women, who operate in the same terrain as the hero, will come to a miserable end if they do not throw themselves into the hero's arms. According to Cook (85-90) and Seeßlen (246), examples of Western films that feature female leading roles and mark the complex shift between tomboy and wife are, for instance, *Calamity Jane* (1953), *Hannie Caulder* (1971), *Duel in the Sun* (1946), as well as *Johnny Guitar* (1954) and *Forty Guns* (1957). Yet, Seeßlen (247) points out that the women's Western, which increased since the late 1970s, are situated in the B-movie and comedy segment. He (250) declares that the appearance of a strong woman in a Western hero's costume pierces the genre's "Puritan" heart and, consequently, initiates an ongoing dressing drama. Therefore, instead of indicating a process of emancipation, they rather prompt fundamental questions on gender identity and challenge the universality of the myth itself.

3.2.1.3. The Good and the Bad

As described above, both male and female roles feature good and bad images. One vital element to tell the bad guys from the good ones is their physical appearance. According to Weidinger (*Konstruktion* 46-48), the typical bad guy's look is in direct opposition to the hero. He is unshaven, dirty, and his clothes are shabby and well-worn. He has greasy, unkempt hair, which are often longer than those of the classic Western hero. The anti-heroes in Italo-Westerns, though, feature a similar look to those of the villains. Yet, another clearly visible characteristic distinguishes the antagonists from the hero. As in the case of the bad woman's "dark" look, the bad guys frequently indicate a different ethnic background in contrast to the white, male Westerner. Thus, Benshoff and Griffin (28) declare that Hollywood representations of good and evil are basically narrowed down to racial stereotypes that feature a heterosexual, white, male hero in opposition to an antagonist of color.

Tompkins (8-9) points out that most Indians are pictured as villains, who threaten the white community of settlers and attack wagon trains, the stagecoach, and the cavalry. Despite the fact that the appearance of Indians on the screen is strongly associated with the Western genre, Tompkins could not recall the presence of any Native Americans in about eighty films. She reasons that "Indians are repressed in Westerns – there but not there – in the same way women are" (9). They merely function as props with no personality or individual history. Moreover, Indian characters that received attention were primarily played by white actors, whereas actual natives only occupied bit roles. According to Benshoff and Griffin (102), this method of "redface" film make-up was commonly used until the 1960s and led to the stereotypical illustration of the Hollywood Indian with bow and arrow, who wears moccasins, a headdress of feathers, smokes a ceremonial pipe, and occupies a teepee or wigwam. Popular portrayals of Native Americans are, as defined by Benshoff and Griffin (97-99, 102), the bloodthirsty savage and the noble savage. The first image describes natives as brutal, belligerent, hostile people, who want to destroy white settlement as well as kidnap and rape white women, as can be seen in the representation of the Native American leader Geronimo or of the Sioux and Apache tribes. Although it is certainly true that indigenous people did fight back, the attacks by European Americans are barely mentioned in Western films.

In contrast, the image of the noble savage displays natives as naïve, primitive people with a close connection to nature and a sure feeling for their environment. The depiction of the title character in the story *The Last of the Mohicans* by James Fenimore Cooper, Indian "princesses", such as Sacajawea or Pocahontas, as well as the submissive sidekick Tonto of *The Lone Ranger* belong to this stereotype. In both cases, indigenous people are presented as being driven by instinct instead of rationality and lacking culture. As their way of life is positioned beyond the borders of civilization in the Western genre, Native Americans are mainly associated with the wilderness of the West that needs to be controlled. The films suggest that, otherwise, they would pose a danger to the expansion of European-American settlement.

However, during the era of the adult Westerns and the civil rights movement's protests against discrimination and racial segregation in the fifties and sixties, the American Indian Movement (AIM) was founded and claimed equal rights and justice for Native Americans. Due to social changes, the stereotypical portrayal of natives as bloodthirsty savages slowly faded and the gentler depiction of the noble savage gained popularity in films of the 1980s and 1990s, such as Disney's *Pocahontas* (1995) or *Dances With Wolves* (1990) (Benshoff, Griffin 105, 109).

Yet, Benshoff and Griffin (137-138, 146-147) note that Hollywood solely substituted the barbaric Indian Western villains with mustachioed Mexican criminals by the mid-sixties. The so-called greaser stereotype pictured Hispanic people as either violent, vicious thieves or as dishonest, lazy, and frowsy bandits. Examples of Westerns that feature the villainous greaser-type are *The Wild Bunch* (1969), *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) as well as numerous Spaghetti Westerns, such as *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* (1966). In terms of female representation, women of Latin American descent frequently take on the roles as Latin Lovers, who are associated with erotic adventures and displayed as hot-blooded sex objects, as exemplified by the saloon girl Chihuahua in *My Darling Clementine* (1946).

In addition, racism, anti-feminism, and intersectionality in traditional Western films did not only account for Native Americans and people of Hispanic descent but also for African Americans. As stated by Seeßlen (215-217, 219), classic Western films constructed a white worldview while ignoring black heroes, such as the cowboy Nat Love or the outlaw Cherokee Bill – not to mention the third of cowboys who historically were of African American ancestry and the many black settlers, sheriffs, soldiers, and preachers of the West, as well as the entire black ninth and tenth U.S. cavalry. Yet, due

to segregated cinemas, race movies with an all colored cast for a black audience emerged and took up the popular Western genre in the 1940s. These black Westerns, however, appeared unintentionally funny, and were based on a limited budget. Nevertheless, the production of black Westerns stopped with the desegregation of cinemas in 1954 and the Westerns continued to display a white society with singing black track workers at best. John Ford's *Sergeant Rutledge* (1960) first dealt with black buffalo soldiers and a black Western hero, while it lasted another decade until African American protagonists were featured on a regular basis in Westerns. Post-Westerns of the eighties and nineties frequently present black cowboys in leading and minor roles, especially as good guys, but could not prevent the Western genre's decline.

However, Benshoff and Griffin (76, 79-80, 86) point out that black Westerns continued to make use of a culturally dependent color code exhibited in the genre, which fosters the association of black with evil, filth, and darkness while the color white signals graciousness and virtue. In the classical genre's black and white thinking, a white hat and a white horse belong to the hero, whereas the antagonist is dressed in black. In consequence of this film practice, race movies starred lighter-skinned African Americans as good guys while actors with a darker complexion were portrayed as villains. The use of blackface make-up as well as stereotypical African American images can be found in early films and prevailed until the end of the second World War. Although some characterizations became outdated, others were simply reworked and resulted in the hypermasculine black action hero of the early 1970's Blaxploitation films. Typical traditional stereotypes include the overweight female Mammy and her male counterpart the Uncle Tom figure. They are both black household slaves, loyally and gratefully serving their white owner and thereby reinforce the assumption of an allegedly benevolent slavery. In contemporary stories, the Mammy generally acts as helpmate to white women and looks after the children while the Uncle Tom character fills the role of a butler, doorkeeper or shoeshiner. Moreover, the image of the Coon represents a comedic, simpleminded film figure, who is unwilling to work. Further stereotypes include the Tragic Mulatto and the Black Buck with the former depicting women of mixed-race, who always die in the end due to their sinful nature, and the latter accounting for hypersexualized, violent black males, who threaten white society based on their masculine power and virility. In both cases, the cultural anxiety of interracial sex and non-white relationships is revealed, notably with the Black Buck

image expressing the fear of brutal African American men raping white women as a reprisal for the sexual abuse of black female slaves by white slaveholders.

Besides, the fear of a sexual commingling of people from different racial backgrounds did not only account for relationships between black and white people but can also be detected with regard to Native Americans, as mentioned by Cook (88). She states that the image of rapacious Indians kidnapping and raping white women clearly highlights the anxiety of cultural mixing. Yet, Benshoff and Griffin (57) note that mixed-race relationships occurred ever since Europeans settled in America. However, according to Cook (88), love stories between a white woman and a native usually do not end well. The woman becomes spoiled by the primitive, polygamous wilderness and is thus not adapted for a monogamous and "civilized" family life anymore. In contrast, the situation is different if a civilized white man enters into a relationship with a Native American woman, who is often described as noble, brave, intelligent, and willing to make sacrifices. Seeßlen (245) illustrates this circumstance by the example of Pocahontas and Captain Smith while elucidating that the woman functions as a tie between the two cultures. The man most likely recognizes possible parts of the other culture's humanness in her figure.

Nevertheless, Seeßlen (175) declares that the historical West was the place the oppressed set their hopes on. Still, the oppression in the American West was more radical than anywhere else. The domination of gender, class, race, and religion became prevalent as if only the White Anglo-Saxon Protestant was responsible for the settlement. According to Tompkins, as the Western heroes are "invariably white, male and Anglo-Saxon, the Western naturalizes a certain racial, gender, and ethnic type as hero. There is no need to say that men are superior to women, Anglos to Mexicans, white men to black; the scene has already said it" (73).

IV. The Western in New Clothes?

4.1. Tarantinoesque: Tarantino's Film Aesthetics

Quentin Jerome Tarantino, born on March 27th, 1963 in Knoxville, Tennessee, is one of Hollywood's most famous film directors and renowned for his distinctive filmmaking. He is described as a movie fanatic, a cineaste, and a walking film encyclopedia, who has watched and analyzed countless movies – not least over the course of his apprentice years in a video store. His vast cinematic knowledge enables him to easily reproduce traditional schemes and narrative patterns and virtuosically play with them. Though being criticized to solely making films out of films and not telling stories about life, his innovative combination of the already known by taking the stories against the backdrop of certain stereotypical patterns and formulas of cinematic history further, renders Tarantino's work outstanding (Nagel 137, 139).

In order to discuss *Django Unchained* (2012) and *The Hateful Eight* (2015) in the light of Quentin Tarantino's film aesthetics, an overview on his narrative style and structure needs to be given first. According to Susanne Kaul and Jean-Pierre Palmier (13), Tarantino's films are characterized by his unique, "tarantinoesque" way of narrating a story rather than the stories itself. His films are often associated with postmodernism since they feature a self-reflective patchwork of quotations and mix different genres as well as high and low art, especially references to B-movies and pop songs. In addition, his linking of humor and violence is one of his well-known stylistic elements. Although his films are frequently judged as questionable in terms of content and morality, his technique is referred to as masterly. Kaul and Palmier distinguish three major characteristics of Tarantino's film aesthetic: a hybrid narrative style, self-referentiality as well as humor and violence.

His hybrid narrative style describes the combination of miscellaneous elements, such as modified scenes from other films, the general use and transformation of silver screen quotations, and cultural or film-historical references to genres through the score, such as music by Ennio Morricone hints at the Italo-Western. Moreover, it is not only his allusion to specific genres and movies, it is his witty mixing of them which carries Tarantino's thumbprint. Out of his multiple references to other films, he quotes various elements, such as camera settings, names, pieces of music, plot components, dialogs, and even his actors may point to other movies. His genre-mix does not only apply to

the content and the entire storyline but also to the technical, audiovisual realization of individual pieces of film (Kaul, Palmier 14-15).

Moreover, Kaul and Palmier (15-16) state that all of Tarantino's films are characterized by an episodic depiction of the narrative, which is sometimes highlighted through superimposed titles of various chapters. According to Uwe Nagel (137), a thoroughly planned structure underlies the individual narrative threads and frequently interrupted temporal chronology. Often featured flashbacks give essential background information on previous events, which usually build the core of a present scene, such as the last flashback in *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) provides confirmation for the exposure of the traitor on the present level.

Another aspect of his hybridity is his use of autotelic dialogs. His protagonists talk about music, movies, or about what they are doing at the respective moment. The conversations are often featured in restaurant scenes, such as in *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) or *Death Proof* (2007), no matter if they are consistent with the genre or story. They are not necessarily needed for the plot or the character-painting but provide entertainment if they break with traditional genre conventions instead, which is exemplified by the gangsters' talk on foot massages in *Pulp Fiction* (1994). Still, eloquence or multilingualism play an important role in many of his films. It illustrates the character's power since his strong rhetorical figures dominate the action (Kaul, Palmier 16).

Besides functioning as parts of Tarantino's hybrid narrative style, Kaul and Palmier (14, 17-19) explain that quotations and allusions mark the self-referentiality of Tarantino's films. In terms of his cast, Tarantino often points to an actor's film history, such as John Travolta's dance performance in *Pulp Fiction* (1994) refers to his leading role in *Saturday Night Fever* (1977) or starring Pam Grier in *Jackie Brown* (1997) hints at her role in the Blaxploitation films *Coffy* (1973) and *Foxy Brown* (1974). With the use of Ennio Morricone's music, Tarantino gives a scene a touch of a Western duel and indicates established genre situations as well as referring to the Italo-Western genre with typical Sergio Leone camera settings. Furthermore, he quotes from his own films by adopting names, actors or settings, such as his trunk shot. Although his films frequently feature time specifications and existing locales, he stresses the story's fictional character by its respective representation. Tarantino makes use of superimposed titles, metafictional elements, exaggerated acts of violence as well as the integration and arbitrary modification of traditional plot structures, genres, and

stereotyped characters to call the film's fictionality and constructedness to mind. Kaul and Palmier (18) argue that rather being a matter of lifeworld connections, character studies, social criticism, and morality, it is an aesthetic matter of cinematic art as such for Tarantino.

The interaction of humor and violence is another characteristic of Tarantino's films as described by Kaul and Palmier (19-21). However, humor is not always generated through a joking depiction of violence. It is rather established by the audience's expectations, which are first built up on genre-specific patterns but ultimately destroyed. Tarantino's way of breaking with expectations is also displayed in a sudden and incidental killing of a protagonist in a banal situation, which contributes to the scene's comedic effect. This is shown in the sudden death of Melanie in *Jackie Brown* (1997) as well as the shooting of Vincent in *Pulp Fiction* (1994). As noted above, extended scenes of dialog add to Tarantino's narrative hybridity. Such conversations are also a typical element of his films' comic relief and appear funny due to their length, banality, and autotelism. Still, these conversations are often ambiguous and sarcastic and come along with violence as in the shooting of Marvin in *Pulp Fiction* (1994) or as in the case of the character Oberst Landa in *Inglourious Basterds* (2009), whose humorous talking only disguises his evil intention. Nevertheless, Tarantino's specialty is to establish the representation of violence itself as a subject of humor. He either cuts out the negative consequences or exaggerates to such an extent that the scenes acquire a cartoonish nature, such as the bride's cut-off arms cause blood fountains in *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* (2003). Kaul and Palmier (21) describe that Tarantino loves violent scenes in films that are presented as a comic strip. Though coming under moral criticism, he points out the difference between actual and fictive violence and considers it as "an aesthetic thing. People will attach a moral thing to it, but that's bullshit. It's just one of the things that movies can do" (qtd. in Kaul, Palmier 21). Therefore, Kaul and Palmier (21) reason that the representation of violence has only good entertainment value and has a mere aesthetic status and not a moral one for Tarantino.

4.2. *Django Unchained* (2012)

4.2.1. The Plot

In 1858, two years before the outbreak of the American Civil War, a pair of slave traders, the Speck Brothers, transport a group of shackled slaves somewhere in Texas until Dr. King Schultz (Christoph Waltz), a former dentist but now bounty hunter from Düsseldorf, stops them. He is looking for the slave Django (Jamie Foxx), who is among the group, since he needs his help to identify the Brittle Brothers, a trio of wanted outlaws hunted by Schultz. Django confirms that he knows them from his previous plantation but the Speck Brothers do not agree on Schultz's offer to buy Django. As a result, the German bounty hunter kills one of them, wounds the other and frees the slaves. Schultz takes Django with him and offers him $75 and his freedom in exchange for tracing the Brittle Brothers. They find and kill the trio at the Tennessee plantation, owned by Spencer Bennett, also referred to as "Big Daddy". As Django and Schultz move on to get their reward, Bennett, accompanied by a gang on horseback, tries to ambush them as a payback. Yet, Schultz equipped his carriage with explosive and blows it up while Django shoots Bennett.

On their journey, the freeman Django tells Schultz that he is married and seeks to find and rescue his slave wife Broomhilda Von Shaft (Kerry Washington). Schultz, feeling accountable for Django, suggests helping him find her while setting up a partnership and training Django as a bounty hunter. After profitable manhunts during winter, the duo finds out that Broomhilda was sold to Calvin Candie (Leonardo DiCaprio) and works at his cotton plantation, Candyland, in Chickasaw County, Mississippi, where Candie arranges cruel mandingo fights – wrestling matches between slaves, who fight to the death. Since the selling of one of his average slaves for $300 would not appeal to the rich Candie, Schultz and Django pretend to be interested in buying one of his best mandingo fighters for private wrestlings in Germany. Keeping their primary objective, namely freeing Broomhilda, in mind, Schultz offers Candie the ridiculous amount of $12,000 at the Cleopatra Club in Greenville. As the considerable sum arouses the slave owner's interest, he invites Schultz and Django to his plantation.

At Candyland, they encounter some of Candie's trackers threatening one of his fighters, D'Artagnan, who tried to escape the brutal competitions. Candie, annoyed by D'Artagnan, orders to set the dogs on him, which tear him to pieces. When Schultz and

Django ultimately meet Broomhilda, they unfold their plan. During dinner, Candie, in the company of his lawyer Leonide Moguy and his bodyguard Butch Pooch, negotiates the deal with Django and Schultz, who submits an offer to buy Broomhilda as well. As his reason, he cites her ability to speak in his native German tongue, which she learned from her previous owners. Yet, Candie's loyal house slave Stephen (Samuel L. Jackson) defeats their plan and informs his master about it as he has figured out Django's and Broomhilda's connection. Calvin, upset by their deception maneuver, threatens to slay Broomhilda unless Schultz pays $12,000 for her instead for the mandingo fighter. Schultz grudgingly accepts the offer and they sign the contract. However, as Candie insists on sealing the deal with a final handshake, Schultz shoots him dead with a pocket pistol hidden in his sleeve. Pooch subsequently shoots Schultz while Django kills him in turn as well as Moguy and other followers of Candie. Nevertheless, Django is forced to surrender as Stephen takes Broomhilda as hostage.

After talks on different variants of how to punish him, Stephen informs the almost castrated Django that he will be sent to the LeQuint Dickey Mining Company, which is known for their relentless slave labor. During the transfer, Django successfully proves his bounty hunter identity with the handbill of his first bounty, Smitty Bacall, and convinces the slavers to believe that the men on the paper are wanted back at the plantation. Blinded by the reward, they set him free and equip Django with weapons, who immediately takes the opportunity and shoots them dead. When returning to Candyland on horseback and with a bunch of dynamite, Django frees Broomhilda and shoots several of Candie's trackers before killing the remaining members of the Candyland plantation, including Calvin's sister Lara, who just returned from her brother's burial. Django releases two other house slaves but shoots Stephen in the kneecaps before sparking off the explosion and blowing up both the mansion and Stephen with the dynamite. Broomhilda and Django watch the detonation from outside and ride off happily together.

4.2.2. Film Analysis

Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* (2012) opens with a typical Western landscape shot. It presents a stony, harsh desert, hostile to living beings and implying physical strain and suffering. The depiction of the vast land and mountain panorama as well as characteristic Western towns and saloons are featured in numerous film sequences.

The story takes place in 1858 Texas, Tennessee and Mississippi, which is introduced by superimposed time and locale captions throughout the film. The film's fictional character is also highlighted by textual information displayed on-screen that recounts parts of the plot that were skipped, such as Django and Schultz's bounty hunting during winter. Contrary to Tarantino's usual narrative style, chapter titles are not applied.

The film's score features typical Spaghetti Western tunes with music composed by Ennio Morricone and several songs from Sergio Corbucci's *Django* (1966), such as the "Django Theme Song" (English Version) in the opening credits, which introduces the leading character Django and refers to the film's underlying love story through the song's lyrics. Further songs that underline the respective scenes can be detected as the descriptive nature of the lyrics match the current actions. For example, the song "Main Titles Theme Song (Lo chiamavano King)" from the Italo-Western *His Name Was King* (1971) introduces Dr. King Schultz, followed by "I Got a Name", which emphasizes Django's presence as a free man with a new outfit and saddle that is engraved with a 'D'. The lyrics of the song "Who Did That to You?", played after Django defeats the LeQuint Dickey Mining Co. escorts and rides off back to Candyland, describe Django's vengeance and his intention aptly as follows: "Now I don't take pleasure in a man's pain, but my wrath will come down like the cold rain. And there won't be no shelter, no place you can go. It's time to put your hands up, time for surrender, I'm a vigilante, my law's defender. You're a wanted man, here everybody knows". Once Django has blown up the mansion, the song "Trinity: Titoli", from E. B. Clucher's *They Call Me Trinity* (1970), highlights his exceptional skills while stating "he's the top of the West, always cool, he's the best. He keeps alive with his colt 45" as he rides off into the night with his beloved Broomhilda.

The plot structure can be defined as a revenge plot, more specifically as a racial vengeance plot since the main character, Django, takes the law into his own hands and avenges slavery and cruelties exerted by white slaveholders. In accordance with Will Wright's vengeance variation (ch. 3.2.), the hero needs to step out of society, which is depicted as weak, to pursue his personal vendetta. In this case, the crimes and atrocities committed in the name of a racist system represent white society as ill-natured and evil, except for Dr. King Schultz. The rest of society, black slaves in particular, are portrayed as weak and poor people, who cannot escape their fate on grounds of the color of their skin. Special emphasis is placed on the moment Django becomes unchained. The audience gets introduced to the story's hero, who drops his

raddled blanket in slow-motion, reveals his scarred back, and steps out of the line formed by the shackled slaves. The impressive images presage that Django's days spent in slavery are over as he rises from servitude to change his fate. Moreover, since Django and Schultz become partners, the film resembles Hollywood's popular black and white buddy formula of the eighties and nineties. According to Benshoff and Griffin (88, 102), films such as *Lethal Weapon* (1987) or *48 Hours* (1982) have become box office hits due to their leading roles of mixed races, who attract a broader audience. Dynamic male duos as in *Django Unchained* have a long tradition in film and in Westerns as well. Besides *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969), Indian and white pairings are featured in Karl May's Winnetou and Old Shatterhand and in the early fifties' TV series *The Lone Ranger,* starring Jay Silverheels as the Indian companion Tonto.

Characteristic stock situations featured in the great majority of Westerns can also be found in *Django Unchained*. Classic shootout scenes in public places with two competitors facing each other appear several times. For example, Dr. King Schultz shoots the sheriff of Daughtrey, the wanted outlaw Willard Peck, who goes by the name of Bill Sharp, in the town's streets. In addition, the film features a generic raid on the German bounty hunter's carriage due to the killing of the Brittle Brothers. Besides displaying numerous torture scenes and fights throughout the film, the closure depicts a typical final showdown in which the hero wins out over a considerable number of opponents. Such showdowns are characteristic of Italo-Westerns, which follow the Japanese example. Moreover, two campfire scenes with a great use of dialogs are embedded and focus on conversations between Django and Dr. Schultz. In the course of their talking, Schultz tells Django the Germanic saga about Siegfried, the dragon slayer, and Brünhilde after learning that Django is married to Broomhilda. He describes Django as a real-life Siegfried while comparing Django's intention with the legendary Germanic hero's quest. Tarantino's reference highlights the story's fictional character and serves as a typical example of extended dialog commonly occurring during campfire scenes.

The film features various sequences in slow-motion just as in the "victory through death"-motif and other shootout scenes in Spaghetti Westerns. For example, slow-motion sequences in *Django Unchained* appear as Candie sets the dogs on D'Artagnan, as Django whips Roger Brittle alias Lil Raj as well as during the bloodbath at Candyland after Schultz kills Candie. Moreover, the story contains several flashbacks that focus on Django and Broomhilda's background. Additionally, some parts of the plot are left out,

such as Django and Schultz's bounty hunting during winter and the presentation of Candie's mandingo fighters at Candyland.

Django Unchained shows typical characteristics of Tarantino's hybrid narrative style. He combines different genres, namely the Western and the Exploitation film, integrates a considerable number of extended dialogs, such as in the campfire scenes and at Candyland, and makes an extensive use of violence (Kaul, Palmier 14). Furthermore, Tarantino creates humor in numerous instances. For example, he displays Django in a foppish blue outfit that makes him look ridiculous and depicts him as a knight in shining armor as he kills two of the Brittle Brothers and saves Little Jody. His exaggerated outfit is also emphasized by one of Spencer Bennett's female slaves, Betina, soon after Django and Schultz walk into Big Daddy's farm. She is talking to Django and asks him if he is really free. After answering affirmatively, Betina replies with a shake of her head, "You mean you wanna dress like that?". In addition, Tarantino breaks with the audience's expectations and transforms the raid into a comedic element since Spencer Bennett and his gang are not able to see with their masks on. Besides featuring a comical conversation on its usability, the gang resembles Klansmen due to their white masks made of cloth bag, which make them appear unintentionally funny. Other comical effects are created by displaying Django firing at a snowman during his shooting training and by equipping Schultz's carriage with an oversized imitation of a tooth on a coil spring at the top that flickers squeakily across the screen.

Tarantino's use of film-historical references to genres and movies is also shown in *Django Unchained*. Apart from featuring numerous pieces of music from Spaghetti Westerns as described above, Tarantino constitutes several scenes in the tradition of the Italo-Western genre. The high degree of violence, typical shootout scenes as well as an exaggerated showdown that comes along with a bloodbath are reminiscent of the Italian Western's increase in brutality. Moreover, the avenging main protagonist of Sergio Corbucci's *Django* (1966), Franco Nero, appears in a cameo as Amerigo Vessepi, a patron at the club in Greenville and owner of the mandingo fighter who loses the fight against Candie's "Big Fred". Tarantino quotes the fictitious mandingo fighting sport from the film *Mandingo* (1974) and refers additionally to the famous Blaxploitation film *Shaft* (1971) by naming his female lead Broomhilda Von Shaft (Kaul, Palmier 136-137).

However, Kaul and Palmier (18, 22) state that the historical reference and moral dimension in *Django Unchained* is unusual for Quentin Tarantino and adds another element to his film aesthetic. Furthermore, he breaks with the classic Western genre that glorifies white male society by directing Jamie Foxx as black hero and featuring numerous actors of African American descent.
In order to examine how the representation of women has changed from the classic Western film genre to neo-Western films, both male and female roles of Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* are analyzed in the following since they are interdependent.

4.2.2.1. Poor Devil becomes Bright Boy

Jamie Foxx plays the lead in *Django Unchained*, although his undisputed position as avenging Western hero is not clear from the beginning. His character, Django, develops considerably in the course of the plot. At first, he is introduced to the audience as a slave, a "poor devil", as described by Christoph Waltz in his role as Dr. King Schultz, who controls the action in the first place. Django becomes unchained on Schultz's account in order to help him find the Brittle Brothers. He takes on the role as his "valet", which Schultz explains is a "fancy word for servant". The bounty hunter makes no secret of benefitting from Django's situation but states that he despises slavery and feels guilty at the same time. He grants him various amenities that are thought of as being reserved for free men, respectively white men, such as horse riding, entering a saloon or choosing his own clothes. While Django spares with words in his initial, subordinate role as a helper, Schultz shows his mastery. He is eloquent, multilingual, and dominates the storyline, equally to other main protagonists of Quentin Tarantino's films, whose eloquence functions as a sign of their power, such as Christoph Waltz's former appearance as Hans Landa in *Inglorious Basterds* (2009) (Kaul, Palmier 16-17). The cultivated German bounty hunter is portrayed as a self-confident professional, who identifies with the law as he introduces himself as a legal representative of the criminal justice system of the United States of America. Moreover, he has a paternalistic attitude towards Django. This is highlighted in several scenes in which he parades his knowledge and lectures Django about the actual state of affairs. Besides teaching him how to read and shoot, Schultz states that he feels accountable for his

protégé after giving him his freedom and cannot let him ride alone to Greenville, a slave auction town in Mississippi, with a good conscience. Django, on the other hand, does what he is told and is to some extent dependent on Schultz. This power structure is best pictured as Dr. King Schultz tells Django how Siegfried, the dragon slayer, saves Brünhilde in the Germanic Nibelungensaga, while Django sits quietly just like a little boy who listens carefully to a fairy tale.

However, their relationship and their roles change gradually. Despite being pictured as a ruthless bounty hunter in the beginning of the film, the benevolent German still wants to help Django find his wife after releasing him from his service. The audience is, thus, sympathetic to Schultz, who turns out as being good at heart. Django's second change of clothes marks a turning point in their relation. He is now properly dressed and wears a hat, a belt with a holster, and sunglasses as opposed to his former "valet" outfit, which displayed him in a bright blue suit and with a white frilled ribbon bound as a bow around his neck. His haircut and his well-groomed beard remained unchanged between the two outfits whereas his style is in marked contrast to the beginning where he was represented dirty, unshaven, unkempt, and wearing a rag. He is now appropriately dressed as considered for a professional bounty hunter and the duo agrees on becoming partners. They start hunting wanted men together since Django states that there is nothing to dislike about killing white folks for money.

Though Django is pictured as more sensitive than Schultz as he intends to kill Smitty Bacall, whose son was present, he shows no mercy in his role as a black slaver. Schultz comes up with the idea of pretending to be interested in buying one of Calvin Candie's mandingo fighters while Django has to embody an expert on these wrestlings. He plays his part to perfection, which ultimately leads to their role reversal. Django is now quick-witted, talkative, and more ruthless. He takes the lead whereas Dr. Schultz becomes more insecure and acts on his advice. For example, Django suggests a total of $9,000 for the mandingo fighter Eskimo Joe and states that they will return with Schultz's lawyer Mr. Tuttle after five days. Schultz's insecurity is revealed in a private conversation with Django, who he chides for getting too carried away with his retribution. Schultz is afraid that he lost sight of their real objective and might blow their charade if he would not stop antagonizing Candie. Yet, Django knows better and lectures the bounty hunter that rather than antagonizing Candie, he is intriguing him. Dr. King Schultz is not in charge anymore and depicted as more sensitive than the mandingo expert. In the moment D'Artagnan is mangled by Candie's dogs, Schultz

avoids looking at it after trying in vain to ransom the fighter. By contrast, Django agrees on throwing D'Artagnan to the dogs without batting an eye. Schultz's behavior did not escape Candie's notice, who says to Django, "Your boss is a little green around the gills for wanting to get into a sport like nigger-fighting". Django explains, "Nah, he's just not used to seeing a man ripped apart by dogs is all". "But you are used to it?", Candie replies suspiciously to which Django answers, "Let's just say I'm a little more used to Americans than he is". Moreover, the German's missing relentlessness is also indicated by flashbacks of D'Artagnan's brutal killing, which reveal that he is smitten with remorse. His moral scruples eventually cause him to kill Calvin Candie although the shooting and the many deaths could have been avoided by a simple handshake. Yet, Schultz cannot grant Candie this success after observing all the atrocities that happen at Candyland.

Leonardo DiCaprio represents the ultimate evil in his role as Calvin Candie. He embodies the white establishment, capitalism, slavery, and injustice, similar to the other white male plantation owners, such as Spencer Bennett alias "Big Daddy" and Old Man Carrucan, Django and Broomhilda's previous slaveholder. Stereotypical Western villains, such as Indians or Mexicans, are absent, whereas white slave traders and plantation overseers occupy the role of the bad guys. They are depicted as retarded, knock-kneed, sweaty, dirty, racist and sadistic hillbilly figures, although being considered to represent the master race. They exercise their power over black people with bibles and whips, which forms another contradiction. In contrast, black people are portrayed as victims and appealing figures, such as Django or Broomhilda. Stephen and Schultz, on the other hand, constitute an exception to this formula, which equates whiteness with evil and a dark skin color with goodness. The Uncle Tom character Stephen, played by Samuel L. Jackson, is a black racist, who gratefully obeys his master Candie. Unlike all other black characters, he is one of the most unsympathetic figures in the film as he is the one responsible for Django and Schultz's exposure. Without Stephen's powers of observation, Calvin would have been fooled. Contrary to the majority of white bad guys, the benevolent bounty hunter, Dr. King Schultz, represents German humanism as opposed to the cruel American slaveholders. Despite conducting the "flesh for cash business", he operates in his legal boundaries as an officer of the court and is in favor with the viewers. He functions as a father figure, a guardian, for Django, who takes farewell of Schultz with tears in his eyes as he returns to Candyland to take vengeance. Although Django takes the role of the Western hero, he is dependent

on Schultz and his money. Besides buying Django as a slave, unchaining him, and giving him his freedom, Dr. King plans Broomhilda's rescue and eventually signs her freedom papers. Django needs to rely on his good will and his money to buy Broomhilda. Moreover, it is also Schultz who kills Candie in the end. Thus, the German bounty hunter acts as a white savior for Django and his beloved Broomhilda. Django's odds, in turn, would probably have been against him if it was not for the support of Dr. King.

Nevertheless, Django's character development leaves marks and he rises once again to finally wipe out everything left at Candyland. Rather than being other-directed as in the beginning, he acts now self-determined and persuades the white escorts of the LeQuint Dickey Mining Co. of setting him free. Back at Candyland, Django changed his outfit once again before shooting the remaining bad guys. He is now dressed in Calvin Candie's burgundy suit, which Calvin wore at their meeting in Greenville. Django triumphs, saves his wife, and becomes the ultimate valiant hero, which is highlighted by the lyrics of the final song "Trinity: Titoli" as described above. Besides featuring this hymn of praise, Django demonstrates his riding skills with horse tricks before the story ends. His exceptional skills, however, are emphasized several times in the course of the plot. For example, Dr. Schultz calls him "a natural" after Django shoots "Big Daddy", whereas Calvin Candie refers to him as "bright boy" and describes him as an "exceptional nigger", "that one in 10,000". Moreover, in a flashback, he is characterized by his former slave owner, Old Man Carrucan, as a boy who has got sand, which basically means that he has got much personal inner strength. In addition, another flashback at the end of the film shows Django during his shooting training in winter at which Schultz comments that people are going to call him "the fastest gun in the South". Thus, contrary to the classic Western hero, who is already capable of every skill imaginable, the film displays Django's development and how he acquired his abilities, such as his shooting or reading skills. The story ends after Django kills all the bad guys and rescues Broomhilda. Similar to classic Western films, the married life is not depicted as the film starts when the couple is already separated and ends with their reunion. He emerges the winner, the heroic figure, who receives credit and the love of the woman.

4.2.2.2. The Little Troublemaker

Kerry Washington plays the black female main protagonist, Broomhilda Von Shaft. She is Django's wife and mentioned for the first time as Django tells Schultz that he is married and wants to find her. He explains further that she was raised by a German mistress, who taught her a bit of German when she was little. A flashback shows Broomhilda sitting on a swing in a beautiful garden polishing some objects. She smiles dreamy-eyed and says that they use to call her Hildi, followed by a sanguine upward glance, which suggests that her future looks bright (Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. Kerry Washington as Broomhilda in *Django Unchained* (2012).

Amazed by her German name, Dr. King compares Django and Broomhilda's relation to that of Siegfried and Brünhilde from the Germanic saga. He depicts Django as the knight Siegfried on his quest to slay the dragon in order to save his beloved. Just like the legend's fictional character, Broomhilda is mostly pictured as a figment of Django's imagination. She is present but at the same time not as she appears only as a mental image until the duo finds her at Candie's cotton plantation. In Django's visions, she is represented as a beautiful, graceful, and happy woman in picturesque scenes, wearing a bright yellow satin dress and flowers in her hair. In another instance, Django imagines her bathing with him in a river, surrounded by a winter wonderland.

Several flashbacks provide an insight into their shared past. The audience watches them being chased by slave trackers as they try to run away from their previous plantation owned by Old Man Carrucan. Their attempt to escape is accompanied by the song "Freedom", which accurately describes their situation with the lyrics "Felt like the

weight of the world was on my shoulders. Pressure to break or retreat at every turn. Facing the fear that the truth I discovered. No telling how all this will work out, but I've come too far to go back now. I am looking for freedom, looking for freedom. And to find it cost me everything I have". While Django is represented as determined and calm, Broomhilda is pictured as frightened and insecure, which does not change in the course of the film. In the flashback, Broomhilda is portrayed getting whipped by Ellis Brittle as punishment for running away. Django, on his knees, begs John Brittle to not torture her but his efforts at persuasion backfire. A previously featured flashback shows Old Man Carrucan informing Django about the consequences of their attempted escape. As further punishment, they are going to get burned an 'r' (for runaway) on their cheeks and sold separately at the slave auction in Greenville.

As Django and Schultz arrive at the record's office in Greenville, they find out that she has been sold for $300 to Calvin Candie. Moreover, the register states that she is 27 years old and marked with an 'r' on her right cheek, which is displayed in a flashback during their conversation but not shown in Django's case. Django describes her as pretty but explains that "they goddamned her" due to the branding. She is not good enough for a house slave anymore and not suited for the field either since she talks well, apparently because of her German skills, and is, therefore, considered as too cultivated for a slave. Consequently, Broomhilda is now a comfort girl at Candyland, which basically means that her purpose is to please the mandingo fighters and others at Calvin Candie's will. As the duo tries to come up with a plan on how to rescue Broomhilda, Schultz compares her rescue with stealing a horse. He explains that stealing is a crime and, hence, they would get hanged for it plus the horse is still the farmer's property and would need to return to the farm. Therefore, Dr. King suggests on pretending to purchase a mandingo fighter and, in the course of this, buy Broomhilda in order to get her and a bill of sale. His comparison is not only degrading and humiliating for her but also for Django since Schultz puts his explanation by comparing her with a horse in simplified terms as if Django would not understand his plan otherwise.

By the time Django and Schultz arrive at Calvin Candie's plantation, Broomhilda enters the stage for the first time in person. She is trapped naked in the 'hot box', which is a closed off metal box that gets hot in the sun. Stephen explains that he gave the order to lock Broomhilda in it as punishment for trying to run away while his master was absent. Candie orders to take her out as Dr. Schultz would be pleased to talk to her in

his mother-tongue. In slow-motion, his overseers pour a bucket filled with water on her and pull her out of the box before they carry her away like an animal in a wheelbarrow. As they release her from the box, she screams out loud with her face contorted with pain. She does not notice that Django is present, who tries hard to keep his cool. Later, Calvin's sister, Lara Lee, walks Broomhilda, who got dressed up by the house slave Cora, to Dr. Schultz's room. After entering, her beauty is once again foregrounded as he compliments her on being beautiful. Dr. King tells her that she should not be afraid since she seems frightened. In their conversation, Broomhilda is calm, quiet, and gives only short responses when needed. As Django opens the door, he says, "Hey little troublemaker", while keeping a straight face. In contrast, Broomhilda gasps, pours out her glass of water, and immediately faints.

For the most part, Broomhilda is pictured crying and whining as opposed to her visionary representation. Django imagines her smiling and happy while it is more of a wishful thinking than the actual state of affairs since her life is constantly at risk. Besides being tortured as a slave, getting branded, whipped on her back, and locked up naked in the hot box, she is humiliated by Candie and Stephen, who suggest showing off her whipped back during dinner while Django has a hard time keeping his temper. Moreover, Candie threatens to bash her head in with a hammer after getting informed by Stephen about Django and Broomhilda's relation. Her status as Schultz's and Django's primary goal places her in a dangerous position as she is threatened to get shot dead by Candie's bodyguard Mr. Pooch if Schultz does not seal the deal with a handshake. Her portrayal as a weak, frightened, and helpless woman is further stressed as she is taken as a hostage by Stephen during the shooting at Candyland, which eventually forces Django to surrender. After defeating the LeQuint Dickey Mining Co. escorts, Django is once again up to save her life. He epitomizes the brave knight while Broomhilda embodies the damsel in distress. She is the reason for his action in the first place as in the classic Western films. She functions as a reward or object – a goal for the protagonist to reach. Since she barely talks and is only proactive on rare occasions, she is primarily characterized by others, who state that she is a beautiful woman and clever because of her German skills. Throughout the film, she wears a variety of dresses, skirts, and blouses, primarily in the colors blue and white. Her outfits are combined with different hairstyles and her overall look may be connoted as feminine. Besides underlining her femininity through her physical representation, Broomhilda is the only character bearing a nickname, which makes her appear more petite,

childlike, and in need of protection. She was given the diminutive form of her name by her former masters, The Von Shafts, and is also called Hildi by the members of Candyland. The film portrays her as an innocent, sensitive, decent, and peaceful character – a victim, who did nothing wrong, as opposed to the vast number of cruel and violent protagonists featured in the film. Although she has to face humiliation, sexual abuse, and torture, she is never shown fighting back, defending herself, or turning violent. Her only active reaction is trying to run away, which is displayed in a flashback and in one case solely talked about.

Once Django has successfully rescued her from Calvin Candie's plantation, he blows up Candyland while Broomhilda awaits him on horseback in front of the mansion. He is represented as the man of the hour, who puts on his fashionable sunglasses to watch the detonation from up close while smoking with a cigar holder. He stands still with his arms akimbo, whereas Broomhilda covers her ears and winces while her horse whinnies as the mansion explodes. She is relieved and claps her hands with joy as Django turns to her with a winner's smile (Fig. 5.). He calls her again "little troublemaker" whereas Broomhilda, filled with pride, salutes him with a smile and refers to him as "big troublemaker" before Django courts her with horse tricks. Their nicknames ultimately show that their characters do not meet on an equal footing. While Broomhilda is in a subordinate position and functions merely as a love interest, Django is hailed as a hero.

Fig. 5. Jamie Foxx as Django in *Django Unchained* (2012).

4.2.2.3. Female Bit Parts

Compared to Broomhilda, all other female characters play bit parts and are of less importance. Calvin Candie's widowed sister, Lara Lee Candie-Fitzwilly, played by Laura Cayouette, is the second most important woman to appear in the film. She lives at Candyland, in a close relationship with her brother. Lara Lee enters the stage as Candie, accompanied by some of his men, arrives at his mansion with his guests Django and Dr. Schultz. As Calvin introduces her, he foregrounds her beauty as he describes her as an "attractive Southern belle", who is "a tonic for tired eyes". She is white, has blue eyes and wears a white and pink-colored dress and flowers in her blonde hair. In the scene, she only responds once to her brother as she agrees that Cora, one of their house slaves, and herself get Broomhilda cleaned up and presentable for Dr. King. Just as in this sequence, her overall behavior remains the same throughout the film since she does not talk much and primarily wears a smile. She introduces Broomhilda to Dr. Schultz as she walks her to his room. In their conversation, Broomhilda does not respond to Lara Lee, who addresses her, and only speaks one sentence in German to Schultz because Lara Lee calls for her to do so. After Broomhilda enters, Lara Lee wants to ask him a question, but Schultz quickly shuts the door in her face without hearing her out and states that he is much obliged. Consequently, Lara Lee is bewildered about Dr. King's rude behavior since she is probably not used to be treated in such an impolite way. Schultz, however, would have never behaved in this manner towards Candie as he needs to ingratiate in order to seal the deal. Although Lara Lee is the one responsible for stopping Stephen and her brother to undress Broomhilda during dinner, her underlying motive for chastising them is probably less an act of compassion or of her righteousness. It is rather a consequence of her repulsion to look at Broomhilda's whipped up back while eating. Other instances support this assumption as she never objects to how Calvin brutally punishes his slaves and has no issues with prostituting female slaves, such as Broomhilda, for guests and mandingo fighters. After her brother's death, she wants to have Django castrated but ultimately accepts Stephens's proposal, who suggests selling him to the LeQuint Dickey Mining Company in order to torment him mercilessly. Thus, Lara Lee represents the evil white establishment in the same way as her brother and gets shot for it by Django at the end.

Other black female slaves owned by Candie, such as Cora (Dana Gourrier), Sheba (Nichole Galicia) and Coco (Danièle Watts) only speak a couple of words up to a few

sentences. While the submissive house slave and stereotypical, overweight Mammy character, Cora, is responsible for getting Broomhilda dressed and gives orders in the kitchen, Coco's job is to receive the guests at the Cleopatra Club, whereas Sheba is merely featured as an object to be looked at without further functions. Besides Lara Lee, another white woman lives at Candyland and works at the plantation. Although she is the only female tracker in the film, she does not get much attention. Her character is played by Zoë Bell, who constantly wears a red bandana that covers half of her face. The mysterious masked woman does not bear a name and does not say a word but is featured in close-ups in several scenes, for example, as she looks at a picture of two little boys. The emphasis placed on her in the film sequences indicate that there is more to come but eventually turns out to be wrong. According to an article published on *E! Online*, actress Zoë Bell explains that there was a backstory to her character and a planned fight scene, which eventually was not shot because of time limitations. She reveals that underneath the bandana, a part of her face was missing (Boone). This being the case, her figure leaves many questions open in the film and seems rather lost and incomplete as there is something missing.

Betina, a black female slave at Spencer Bennett's plantation, is featured while Django looks for the Brittle Brothers. She is called "Betina Sugar" by her master, "Big Daddy", who tells her to show Django around the plantation, while he receives Dr. Schultz in his mansion. Although being represented as childlike and slow-witted, she points out the three brothers Django and Schultz were looking for and informs Django that another black female slave, Little Jody, is getting punished for breaking eggs. Besides her conversation with Spencer Bennett and Django, she is not paid any further attention.

4.3. *The Hateful Eight* (2015)

4.3.1. The Plot

In the snowy mountains of Wyoming, sometime after the American Civil War, a stagecoach driven by O.B. Jackson (James Parks) gets stopped on its way to the town of Red Rock by Major Marquis Warren (Samuel L. Jackson). The black bounty hunter and Union veteran needs a ride to transport three dead bodies to Red Rock. Aboard is another bounty hunter, John Ruth (Kurt Russell), "The Hangman", and handcuffed to his wrist the prisoner Daisy Domergue (Jennifer Jason Leigh), who is wanted for murder, with a reward of $10,000 on her head, dead or alive. The two bounty hunters know each other from a dinner in Chattanooga about eight months ago. Although paying for a private trip, Ruth agrees on traveling together but they need to stop off at Minnie's Haberdashery to take shelter since a cold blizzard is close on their heels. On their way, Ruth asks Warren if he may read his letter from Abraham Lincoln, with whom Major Marquis corresponded, once again. He hands it over to Ruth but as Daisy Domergue spits on it, Warren slaps her and both, Daisy and Ruth, fall out of the wagon due to the handcuffs. As O.B. stops the stagecoach to get everybody back on it, a stranger, crying for help, approaches them on foot. Ruth recognizes that the person asking for a ride is Chris Mannix (Walton Goggins), who asserts to be the new sheriff of Red Rock as soon as he gets there. Since he would be the one responsible for paying the two bounty hunters their reward and leaving him to die in the cold would be murder, Ruth grudgingly takes him with them.

At Minnie's Haberdashery, the group encounters four other men – Oswaldo Mobray (Tim Roth), a hangman heading to Red Rock, Joe Gage (Michael Madsen), a cowboy on his way to visit his mother, Sanford Smithers (Bruce Dern), a former Confederate General traveling to Red Rock to advise a stone maker on his son's headstone, and the Mexican Bob (Demián Bichir), who claims to be in charge while the owner, Minnie Mink, and her husband, Sweet Dave, went to see her mother. In the haberdashery, Ruth disarms all other men besides Warren since he fears being ambushed by one of them due to the bounty on Daisy's head. As Civil War enmities and racism cause tensions in the group, especially between the former General and the Union veteran, the lodge gets split up in two halves with one side of the room representing the North and the other the South. The dinner table, though, is declared as a neutral area. While eating stew,

Mannix asks Warren doubtfully about his letter from Abraham Lincoln, saying that he does not believe him having been pen pals with the former president. Warren confirms that the letter is a fake, thus angering John Ruth and losing his trust. The Major walks over to General Smithers with some stew and asks to join him. They start to talk about Sanford's family but as Warren tells him that he met his gone boy on the day that he died, he places a gun next to the General. He explains further how he tortured his son, Chester Smithers, who sought to collect the bounty put on Major Marquis' head. Outraged by Warren's story, the General reaches for the gun but Warren draws his pistol faster and shoots him dead.

A narrator reveals that during this incident, one of the men poisoned the coffee and only Daisy saw it. As she plays the guitar, John Ruth and O.B. pour themselves a cup and start to spit blood shortly afterwards. Ruth realizes that the coffee is poisoned and tries to kill Daisy while O.B. collapses and drops dead. Domergue shoots Ruth with his own pistol whereupon Warren takes her gun and forces the remaining men to line up against the wall apart from Mannix, who he trusts since he almost drank the coffee himself. As the two of them try to find out who is working with Daisy, Warren explains that all signs point to Bob. He accuses him of killing Minnie and her husband as he reveals bloodstains on Sweet Dave's chair. Therefore, Warren shoots him dead. Since the two still do not know who poisoned the coffee, Warren threatens to pour it down Daisy's throat if the perpetrator does not confess. As Joe Gage admits having poisoned it, Mannix wants to kill him but suddenly a stranger in the basement shoots Warren between his legs. Oswaldo takes the opportunity and shoots Mannix in his thigh, who subsequently hits him in the abdomen.

A flashback unfolds what happened earlier that morning. A stagecoach arrives at Minnie's Haberdashery with four passengers aboard – Joe Gage, Oswaldo Mobray, Bob and Jody. The latter is Daisy's brother, the leader of the Jody Domingre gang who tries to rescue her. The other gang members' real names are Grouch Douglass, English Pete Hicox and Marco the Mexican. They kill everybody at the haberdashery, apart from Sanford Smithers since he makes the setup more convincing. After throwing the corpses down the well and cleaning up the bloodbath, they sit and wait until the stagecoach arrives while Jody hides in the basement.

Back on the present level, Warren and Mannix force Jody to surrender, who is subsequently shot by Warren as he comes out of hiding. Domergue, Gage and Oswaldo tell them their true identities and that fifteen killers are waiting at Red Rock. If Mannix

wants to save his town and himself, he should kill Warren and let them others go to Mexico. In addition, he can have Bob's body for $12,000 and English Pete's for about $15,000 since it is likely that he will die in the next two days. Warren, enraged by their offer, shoots Daisy in the toes and Mobray in the leg. As Joe Gage reaches for a pistol hidden under a table, both Warren and Mannix shoot him dead. Warren tries to kill Daisy, but he has no bullets left. As Mannix tells Domergue that he does not agree to the deal since he believes that the other fifteen men do not exist, he suddenly faints due to his wounded leg. Daisy, still handcuffed to John Ruth, cuts off his arm with a machete in order to reach for Gage's pistol. Mannix wakes up and shoots her. Major Marquis stops him from killing her with another bullet and suggests fulfilling John Ruth's last wish. Together they hang her by the neck until she is dead. After watching her die, Mannix asks Warren for the Lincoln letter and reads it aloud. Both are deadly wounded and wait to die in the lodge.

4.3.2. Film Analysis

The Hateful Eight (2015) is set in the wintry mountain landscape of Wyoming, sometime after the end of the American Civil War in 1865. The opening scene of Quentin Tarantino's eighth film features a landscape shot, displaying a snowcapped mountain panorama and an overcast sky. The next four minutes introduce the audience to the harsh, cold scenery, which shows vast stretches of unpopulated land and woods covered with snow. Behind a large crucifix statue with a wooden Christ figure, a horse-drawn stagecoach appears on the screen before superimposed titles herald the start of Chapter One: "Last Stage to Red Rock". Contrary to the distinctive Western landscape shots featured in the film, the story takes primarily place in Minnie's Haberdashery. Due to the limited space, the small cast and the film's focus on the characters' conversations, it is considered as a chamber drama, just as Quentin Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* (1992) (Kaul, Palmier 151). The contrast between the snowy, bleak landscape and Minnie's Haberdashery is highlighted by the film's color code. While a cold blizzard rages outside, the cozy interior of the lodge is presented in warm tints. The film consists of six chapters with applied chapter titles in the style of Tarantino. The narrative sequences are featured in chronological order apart from Chapter Five: "The Four Passengers", which functions as a back story that displays the

previous events. A superimposed caption states that it takes place earlier that morning. Besides, an omniscient narrator, spoken by Tarantino himself, reveals that one of the characters poisoned the coffee at the beginning of Chapter Four: "Domergue's Got a Secret". The episodic plot structure as well as the embedded narrator underline the story's fictional character.

The film's score is composed by Ennio Morricone, who is renowned for his music for Spaghetti Westerns, especially for Sergio Leone's *Dollars Trilogy*. It is his first scored Western since *Buddy Goes West* in 1981 and Tarantino's first complete original score for one of his films (Johnston). Besides featuring the famous composer's original music, the soundtrack includes Morricone's tracks "Eternity", "Bestiality" and "Despair" from John Carpenter's *The Thing* (1982) as well as "Regan's Theme (Floating Sound)" from *Exorcist II: The Heretic* (1977). The underlining score has a determining influence on the overall dark mood, especially due to Morricone's "L'Ultima Diligenza di Red Rock", which transforms the snowy landscape in the opening into a sinister, foreboding atmosphere (Kaul, Palmier 157). In addition, *The Hateful Eight* (2015) would not be a Tarantino film without featuring pop songs – in this case, "Apple Blossom" by The White Stripes, "Ready for the Times to Get Better" by Allen Reynolds and "Now You're All Alone" by David Hess. The latter is featured in the film *The Last House on the Left* (1972), whereby Tarantino refers to the Exploitation Horror genre. The song "There Won't Be Many Coming Home" by Roy Orbison from the musical Western film *The Fastest Guitar Alive* (1967) is played at the end after Chris Mannix finished reading aloud the Lincoln letter. Besides referring to the small number of soldiers returning home from war, the lyrics aptly point out that there are very few, if any, survivors in the film. Moreover, the film features two songs played by the characters itself, namely "Silent Night" played by Demián Bichir's character Bob on the piano and the Australian folk ballad "Jim Jones At Botany Bay" performed by Jennifer Jason Leigh as Daisy Domergue on the guitar.

In terms of Will Wright's classification of Western film plot structures (ch. 3.2.), the storyline of *The Hateful Eight* can be assigned to the professional plot, which is prominent in the Westerns of the late sixties and seventies and displays a greater degree of violence. Just as the heroes in Wright's fourth category, the Hateful Eight's actions are based on their personal profit. The two bounty hunters, John Ruth and Major Marquis Warren, are professionals who murder for money in the name of the law. Their opponents represent the remorseless Domingre gang members, who are

wanted criminals with bounties on their head. Both groups do not care about society, which plays a minor role in this plot structure. The focus lies on the two warring parties and their ongoing conflict throughout the film. Though being not fond of one another, the two professional groups ally to some extent in order to fight the bad guys but only on grounds of precautions to protect each other's bounties. As mentioned by Weidinger (ch. 3.2.), the opposing groups in the professional plot are closely related which also applies to the characters in *The Hateful Eight*. The boundaries between good and bad become blurred since both parties murder and act out of selfish reasons. Yet, at the end, two main characters, Chris Mannix and Major Marquis Warren, happen to act based on ideals. Instead of making a deal with the remaining Domingre gang members and, thus, shooting Warren, Mannix allies with Warren and both of them feel obliged to fulfill John Ruth's last wish, namely, to hang Daisy Domergue. Although it is more than likely that both are going to die due to their wounds, the end remains open and, therefore, they prove morally somewhat superior.

The Hateful Eight is considered as a Western, though it does not specifically feature typical Western stock situations as described by Klein earlier in this text (ch. 3.2.). Story elements like saloon and campfire scenes as well as an escape and a pursuit are not depicted in the film since the narrative is primarily set in Minnie's Haberdashery. However, a raid and several shootout scenes take place. The raid is performed by the four Domingre gang members on Minnie's lodge. Yet, it is not an armed robbery based on stealing money or other goods, it is rather done in order to free Daisy Domergue. Numerous shootout scenes occur in the haberdashery, especially during the last three chapters. These scenes are often represented in slow-motion and display violent acts on a large scale just like in the Italo-Westerns.

Tarantino's hybrid narrative style is clearly recognizable in *The Hateful Eight*. Besides depicting characteristic Western elements, he integrates components of the splatter and the crime film genres (Kaul, Palmier 14). Furthermore, the film is divided into chapters, includes superimposed titles and presents numerous sequences of extended dialogs. A narrator at the beginning of chapter four recounts what just took place while looking at it from a different angle. The sequence gives essential details on the progression of events and creates suspense in a whodunit manner. The entire Chapter Five: "The Four Passengers" represents a flashback, which reveals important background information as it shows what happened to the owner of the haberdashery, Minnie Mink, and her fellows. Thereby, the chapter serves to expose the villains and

introduce the Domingre gang members and their intention, which are key elements at the center on the present level. Besides featuring a flashback, the film illustrates how Sanford Smithers' son, Chester Smithers, gets tortured and sexually abused by Major Marquis Warren while he tells the General how he tormented him. Yet, this illustration cannot be considered as a flashback since there is no proof of authenticity and it remains open if and how the incident occurred.

Quentin Tarantino's propensity to exaggerate creates humor in numerous instances and gives violent scenes a comedic touch. Various sequences resemble splatter movies, such as John Ruth and O.B.'s excessive vomiting of blood. Their blood fountains equal comic strips just like the brutal killing of Jody and Bob. Major Marquis shoots Bob four times and blows his head off with two pistols as well as shooting Jody impatiently through the head as he comes up from the basement. Thereby, Daisy Domergue gets covered with Jody's blood and pieces of his brain. However, amusement is not only provided by exaggerated acts of violence. As the Domingre gang members raid the haberdashery, the front door gets damaged and needs to be patched with additional wooden planks to get shut. Thus, every time someone enters the lodge, the door has to be fixed again, which functions like a running gag. The same applies to the phrase "I got it", which occurs repeatedly throughout the film. In order to make sure that Daisy understood John Ruth's commands, she has to confirm it by saying "I got it" as well as Warren shortly afterwards. The recurring phrase is also used as Major Marquis forces Bob, Joe Gage, Oswaldo Mobray and Mannix to line up against the wall. Moreover, since Daisy and John Ruth are tied together with handcuffs, both have a hard time in certain situations. For example, a comical effect is generated as they want to eat stew or as Warren hits Daisy so hard that Ruth falls off the coach too. Another recurring humorous remark represents the Lincoln letter. While John Ruth is moved by President Abraham Lincoln's writing, Chris Mannix can only laugh about it since he believes that it is forged. As Warren confirms bluntly that the letter is a fake, all share a good laugh except Ruth, who is deeply offended by his lie. Yet, the film ends with Mannix reading the letter out aloud and acknowledging that the last phrase, which brought tears to Ruth's eyes, has a nice touch.

Just as in Tarantino's other films, *The Hateful Eight* presents a vast number of film-historical references. In this case, he refers specifically to the Italo-Western and Horror genres by featuring Ennio Morricone's music, as described above. Another reference to the Horror genre is made by starring Kurt Russell, who plays the lead in John

Carpenter's *The Thing* (1982), which is also scored by Morricone. The film displays further similarities to *The Hateful Eight* by representing a group of paranoid researchers, who do not know whom to trust after discovering that a shape-shifting alien is among them while being trapped during a snowstorm in Antarctica. Moreover, the title of Tarantino's neo-Western can be seen as an allusion to John Sturges' Western *The Magnificent Seven* (1960) (Johnston). Although *The Hateful Eight* was planned as a sequel of Tarantino's previous film, *Django Unchained* (2012), the idea of a continuation of Django's story was abandoned (Staskiewicz). Yet, some actors, such as Samuel L. Jackson, Walton Goggins, Bruce Dern, James Parks, Zoë Bell, and Dana Gourrier reappear in the film. Further actors that mark Tarantino's self-referentiality are Michael Madsen and Tim Roth, whom he stars in his directing debut, *Reservoir Dogs* (1992). The following subchapters focus on these actors' characters as well as others in order to analyze the film's representation of male and female roles.

4.3.2.1. Bad Bounty Hunters, Worse Outlaws

Instead of featuring the glorious, valiant hero of the classic Western films, *The Hateful Eight* rather represents a pack of hateful, vicious scoundrels, who share various negative character traits. The title refers to the eight main characters depicted: John Ruth, Daisy Domergue, Major Marquis Warren, Chris Mannix, Bob, General Sanford Smithers, Oswaldo Mobray, and Joe Gage. They can be divided in two groups with the ones who act in the name of the law on the one hand and the outlaws, respectively the Domingre gang members, on the other hand.

While the gang of killers has the same agenda, namely to free Daisy, the other untrustworthy and morally questionable characters differ in terms of their intentions and views. The two bounty hunters, Ruth and Warren, have something in common since both go after their business and want to collect their bounties in Red Rock. Yet, it becomes apparent that they are far from embodying honorable servants of the court. The black Major Marquis bears hatred against Confederate soldiers and burned down Wellenbeck prisoner war camp in order to escape. Thereby, he killed not only 47 Southern rookies but also about 37 imprisoned Union soldiers. As a result, the Confederacy put a reward of $30,000 on his head while the Northerners suspected him of joining the war just to kill white people. Yet, in the fights against indigenous people,

he earned a stellar war record so that the cavalry condoned his 'misconduct'. Nevertheless, Warren states that "whatever it took to put white Southern crackers in the ground, that's what [he] joined the war to do and that's what [he] did". His hatred against Confederates causes him to draw first blood as he tempts General Smithers to reach for the gun and, thus, sign his own death warrant. Though it is likely that he killed the General's son, Chester Smithers, it remains open if it took place the way he makes believe. Nevertheless, the story's veracity is subsidiary since Warren accomplishes his object. Therefore, he is one of the most rhetorically powerful, sharp-witted characters in the film, with an investigative skill that enables him to make Bob out to be a liar. Nevertheless, he cannot be trusted himself as he forged the Lincoln letter and probably made up further lies.

John Ruth is also known as "The Hangman" due to his way of executing wanted murderers. If the handbill states 'dead or alive', he chooses to escort his captives to the hangman's noose to watch them die. Warren, on the other hand, says that just like all other bounty hunters, he never brings desperate men in alive since it is "a good way to get yourself dead". Ruth's explanation for making his job unnecessarily difficult and dangerous is that "no one said the job is supposed to be easy", whereas Warren refutes that "no one said it's supposed to be that hard neither". While Ruth has no mixed emotions by bringing a woman to the rope, he gets sentimental when reading Warren's Lincoln letter. Therefore, Ruth's pleasure in watching villains hang, regardless of their sex, is an indication for his mental cruelty and, as his name suggests, his ruthlessness. Moreover, he is the most suspicious character of them all. He trusts no one and disarms the others since he is afraid of getting ambushed by someone who might want to free Daisy or collect the bounty on her head. Yet, Ruth and Warren agree on protecting each other's bounties, and so he hands him over a pistol. Nevertheless, his wariness and efforts count for nothing as he gets poisoned by Joe Gage and in quick succession shot with his own gun by his prisoner, Daisy Domergue.

The two bounty hunters are joined by the prospective sheriff of Red Rock, Chris Mannix. Although it remains open if he is actually going to be sheriff, there is evidence to suggest that he speaks the truth. First of all, he has no reason for further pretense after he got on the stagecoach. Nonetheless, at the end, he states while hanging Daisy that as his "first and final act as the sheriff of Red Rock" he sentences her "to hang by the neck until death". Secondly, he knows about the prisoner, Lance Lawson, who killed the former sheriff in Red Rock and is in jail for one month now. As Mannix encounters

Oswaldo Mobray, he asks him about the execution orders, which Mobray hands him over. In addition, Mannix is unable to shoot Joe Gage as he declares that he is unarmed. Although Chris Mannix may seem righteous and as a sincere representative of the law, he is prejudiced against black people and starts an argument with Major Marquis. Thus, Ruth assumes that Mannix and Warren would never work together after he suspiciously accused Warren to be in cahoots with Mannix. The future sheriff is a notoriously racist and the youngest son of Erskine Mannix, the leader of the renegade army "Mannix Marauders", who ravaged South Carolina. According to Ruth, they are a "bunch of losers gone loco" who especially attacked emancipated blacks. Mannix argues that he is misinformed by the Washington, D.C., newspapers and that his father "fought for dignity in defeat and against the unconditional surrender". While he regards white men in the South and in the North as "brothers", his racist attitude becomes apparent as he states that "when niggers are scared, that's when white folks are safe".

Racism also plays a major role in the haberdashery as the trio faces the Domingre gang members, Joe Gage, Oswaldo Mobray and Bob. Though the wanted men barely pass any racial remarks, feelings are running high as the former Confederate General, who is known for killing captured black Union troopers, and Major Marquis become aware of the fact that both fought at the Battle of Baton Rouge but for opposing parties. Therefore, the lodge becomes divided into a Northern and a Southern side with the bar representing Philadelphia and the fireplace symbolizing Georgia. General Smithers, though, cannot be assigned to one of the two groups since he is neither an outlaw nor a representative of the law. Furthermore, he is the only person left alive in the haberdashery after the gang's raid and knows about their plan and what happened to the owner Minnie Mink and Sweet Dave. However, his racist behavior prompts Warren to tell how he supposedly tortured his son and forced him to perform oral intercourse. During Warren's vivid story, the General, frozen in terror, sinks deeper and deeper into his armchair while pulling his blanket all the way up to his eyes as if he is watching a horror movie. Due to Major Marquis' powerful narration, the General reaches for the gun, which ultimately enables Warren to shoot him in self-defense. The story takes a dramatic turn with the killing of General Smithers. While Major Marquis and Smithers' conflict attracts everyone's attention, Joe Gage tips poison into the coffeepot which drives the plot forward. Shortly afterwards, O.B. as well as John Ruth die. The stagecoach driver, O.B., though, occupies a special status in the film. Although he is

present for a considerable period of time in the plot, he does not belong to the Hateful Eight and represents more of a neutral person, who takes an indifferent attitude towards the other characters' mutual mistrust and hostilities.

Unlike O.B., the characters of the Domingre gang represent a pack of cold-blooded killers, who do everything imaginable to rescue Daisy from hanging. The flashback in chapter five shows their arrival at the haberdashery. Joe Gage, Oswaldo Mobray and Bob are accompanied by a fourth man, the leader of the Domingre gang and brother of Daisy Domergue, Jody. Despite being part of the outlaws, he does not belong to the eight main characters since he has a comparatively short appearance in the film due to his primary position in the basement and his sudden death. The four men differ in their looks and origins. While their attire may be part of their false identities, the pack's diverse ethnic background seems to have no further meaning apart from integrating stereotypes. English Pete Hicox pretends to be Oswaldo Mobray whereas Marco the Mexican personifies Bob and, thus, serves as the stereotypical Mexican Western villain. Yet, the flashback reveals that the heterogenous group shares the same evil intention and portrays their brutality when killing six people at the haberdashery. The only one left alive is Sanford Smithers, who is threatened to get killed if he mentions anything about their plan. He does not hesitate to agree and makes no attempts to warn the others later on. Thus, it becomes apparent that he simply does not care about everyone else's business and makes no distinction between murderers and a bounty hunter duo, alongside a future sheriff and an innocent stagecoach driver. From all the events happening in the haberdashery, a black Major in a Northern cavalry officer's uniform seems to enrage him the most, though.

The preceding massacre becomes repaid with another bloodbath that leaves Major Marquis Warren and Chris Mannix at the end of the film (more or less) alive (Fig. 5.). Although the two had some discrepancies based on their racist attitudes and behavior during wartime, they end up working together to kill the Domingre gang. Moreover, they return to ideals and values as they hang Daisy Domergue in honor of John Ruth, who saved them from freezing to death and prevented Mannix from drinking the poisoned coffee. Despite being a far cry from Western heroes, they are depicted as the lesser evil in comparison to the gang of outlaws.

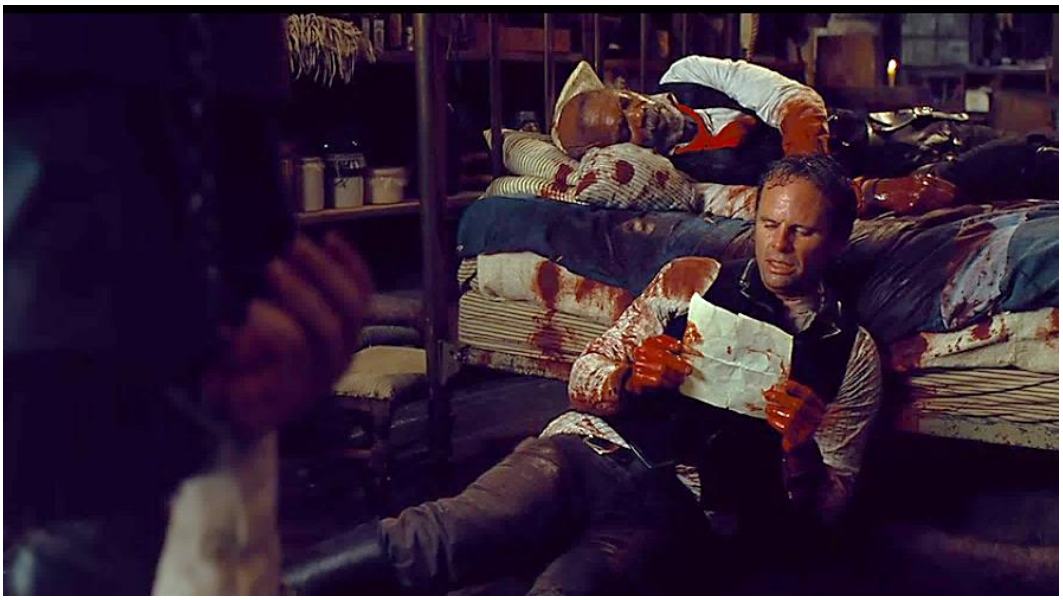

Fig. 5. Walton Goggins as Chris Mannix and Samuel L. Jackson as Major Marquis Warren in *The Hateful Eight* (2015).

4.3.2.2. What goes around, comes around

Jennifer Jason Leigh plays the only woman among the eight main characters. She takes the role of Daisy Domergue, who is part of the Domingre gang and the sister of its leader, Jody. The entire plot revolves around her hanging, respectively her rescue. Daisy enters the stage towards the beginning of the film. She is introduced to Major Marquis Warren by John Ruth, who captured and handcuffed her to his own wrist. As Ruth mentions that her head is worth $10,000, Warren is astonished while Daisy puts on a proud smile. Though she is worth a considerable sum for a wanted criminal in comparison to Warren's three dead bodies that add up to $8,000, nobody has ever heard of her before apart from John Ruth, who wants to collect the reward. As Major Marquis encounters Ruth and Daisy, he recognizes the bounty hunter but not Daisy. The same applies to Chris Mannix, who knows John Ruth, Major Marquis and Sanford Smithers by reputation, but does not know who Daisy is or what she did. By contrast, Warren confirms that he has heard of the other gang members, Jody Domingre, Grouch Douglass and Marco the Mexican. The audience does not learn more precise details about Daisy's past or her deeds as opposed to other characters in the film, such as Warren, Ruth, Mannix and Sanford Smithers. John Ruth only answers when getting asked by Mannix and Warren that she is "[a] no damn good murdering bitch" and

“[n]ot a goddamn thing to nobody, except me and the hangman”. However, despite the fact that the entire plot is concerned with Daisy’s execution, her character drawing is not as elaborated as that of some others, who talk more frequently and provide more background information on their personalities. Thus, the viewers have to settle with the limited information given on her persona. Although she represents the reason for most actions, as in the stereotypical representation of female characters featured merely as love interests in a vast number of movies, she is mainly not active herself. This is certainly conditioned by John Ruth, who keeps her handcuffed and frequently forbids Daisy to speak. Besides silencing her for the most part, he warns the others to steer clear of his prisoner and, consequently, restrains personal interactions between Daisy and the rest of the group. Yet, as soon as Daisy killed her captor and becomes the new leader of the Domingre gang because of her brother’s death, she comes to occupy center stage and starts to take measures to free herself.

On their way to Minnie’s Haberdashery, it becomes apparent that the others do not view her as a female. Warren asks Ruth if he has not got mixed feelings about escorting a woman to the rope. He replies, “By ‘woman’, you mean her?”, thereby calling her femininity into question and answering no. Daisy’s presence as a woman is once again foregrounded after Warren slapped her. When she asks him if black men treat their ladies like that, Warren says that she is “no goddamn lady”, most likely on grounds of her behavior. In the first chapter, Daisy is depicted as rude, feisty and impudent, which results in a constant denial of her womanhood. As John Ruth introduces Daisy to Warren, Major Marquis tips his hat and bows in salutation whereas Daisy insults him by calling him a “nigger”. While Warren seems to be upset, Ruth tells her that black people regard it as offensive to which she merely argues that she has been called worse. Subsequently, she leans out of the stagecoach, holds one of her nostrils and gives her nose a blow, which functions as a disrespectful gesture towards Warren, who shakes his head while laughing softly. Moreover, as John Ruth decides to take him with them, Daisy looks at Ruth in disbelief and asks if he is serious. She rather wants him to sit on top with O.B. instead of riding with him in the coach. A possible reason for her objection might be either her racist attitude or that she fears to get killed because Warren is also a bounty hunter open for business. Aside from that, Daisy might expect to get rescued by her gang and, therefore, does not want to have another opponent around her. However, it seems as if her objections are based on her racism since she does not complain when Chris Mannix is about to enter the wagon and additionally

states that she supports the way he terrorized black people as a member of Mannix's Marauders. Another incident that serves as an example of her provocative demeanor is Daisy's spitting on the Lincoln letter that Warren handed over to Ruth.

Since her behavior as a woman is not consistent with the social conventions at that time and, hence, not considered as feminine, she is not treated like a lady, respectively a woman. As a result, Warren and especially Ruth do not hesitate to hit her. This becomes apparent after the first eleven minutes of the film when Daisy questions Ruth's decision to give Warren a ride. He silences her with a blow on her head and threatens to knock out Daisy's front teeth if she opens her "trashy mouth" again. Daisy is pictured in a close-up with blood running down her temple while confirming that she understood. It stands to reason that her black eye is probably given by Ruth as well. Not even four minutes later, Daisy provokes and insults Ruth by stating that Warren overrates him since he is "like a man who took a high dive in a low well" at which he elbows her in the face. At first, Warren is startled but starts to laugh about Ruth's measures to bring her to obedience. Yet, Daisy reacts to their laughter by smiling at Warren with a wink and licking the blood on her lips (Fig. 6.). Her smile, though, suggests that she can take a fair bit of punishment and further effects that she does not cut a pitiful, pathetic figure.

Fig. 6. Jennifer Jason Leigh as Daisy Domergue in *The Hateful Eight* (2015).

Her provocations get her once again in trouble since Major Marquis slaps her in the heat of passion after she spit on his letter, which causes Daisy and John Ruth to fall out of the carriage. Warren gets off the stagecoach, spits next to her, collects his letter and throws snow in her face. Although it seems as gender mainstreaming that she is treated equally to male criminals and not differently on grounds of her femaleness, it might also be due to the fact that being a woman is considered as inconsistent with being a brutal criminal. Yet, also Mannix poses the same question as Warren but to Oswaldo Mobray. He asks if he feels bad about hanging a woman, to which Mobray answers factually, "until they invent a trigger a woman can't pull" and states further that he, as the hangman, also needs to hang women. Ruth comments that "you really only need to hang mean bastards, but mean bastards, you need to hang". It becomes obvious that they do not distinguish between male and female villains, though some might have doubts about it at first.

During their time in the haberdashery, Ruth informs Warren and O.B. about his suspicion that one or two men are in cahoots with Daisy. She confirms with dry sarcasm that he is right, which provokes Ruth to emphasize that he is going to take her to Red Rock to hang. During his talking, Daisy mimics getting hanged, which displays that she is not afraid and does not take it seriously. Daisy probably doubts that it will go according to his plan since she might reckon to be freed. Yet, although she knows the other gang members in the lodge, she does not show it and tries to maintain cover. This applies also to Domergue's secret, which refers to her knowledge about the poisoned coffee since she is the only one who witnessed Joe Gage pouring the toxic liquid in the pot. Another instance which displays her superiority over John Ruth is featured on their way to Minnie's Haberdashery. While Ruth has not heard of Major Marquis' deeds during the war, Daisy, to Ruth's amazement, knows about the bounty of $30,000 put on Warren's head. Despite being a deceitful, intelligent villain, her attempted deception fails as she tries to persuade Mannix to shoot Warren and release the remaining gang members and herself. As an often-featured characteristic of the Western genre, the three of them want to flee to Mexico, which traditionally functions as a safe haven for outlaws and other social outcasts (ch. 3.2.). Yet, her powers of persuasion do not work on Mannix, who does not believe in fifteen more gang members.

Though Daisy is beaten throughout the film, brutality increases after General Smither's death. Just like the rise in violent acts, Domergue's physical appearance deteriorates further. After drinking the poisoned coffee, John Ruth redeems his promise and knocks out Daisy's front teeth as he is in mortal agony. Her face gets covered with his blood before she ultimately shoots him. Furthermore, as Warren shoots her brother's head off, she gets hit by more blood and pieces of tissue. The events culminate as Mannix and Warren hang her by the neck until she is dead. While Daisy is pictured choking to death, the two men watch with joy and laugh.

It becomes apparent that Daisy Domergue has to endure more pain than the other hateful characters. Besides Grouch Douglass, everybody else of the Domingre gang has a higher bounty on their head than Daisy. Hence, it can be assumed that they committed more severe crimes than she did. Moreover, the four of them are pictured killing Minnie and five other innocent people in the haberdashery, whereas Daisy is never shown being physically abusive towards anybody aside from killing her captor, who brutally hits her throughout the film. Yet, the four male gang members die in a more unspectacular way in comparison to Daisy. They are exclusively shot dead and die relatively quickly without getting tortured or enduring unnecessary pain. Therefore, the story's attempt to justify her treatment solely due to the fact of being a member of the Domingre gang without giving further explanations on her crimes fails. Still, all of the Hateful Eight are given their due and have to pay the price for their sins to some extent.

4.3.2.3. The Remains of Civilization

Apart from the eight hateful main protagonists described above, the film features further characters, which are depicted in Chapter Five: "The Four Passengers". The flashback displays the arrival of the Domingre gang members Jody Domergue, Grouch Douglass, Marco the Mexican and English Pete Hicox at the haberdashery. One of the two stagecoach drivers, Judy (Zoë Bell), introduces the four men to Minnie (Dana Gourrier), her husband Sweet Dave (Gene Jones) and Gemma (Belinda Owino).

Minnie Mink is the owner of the haberdashery and of African American descent. She is portrayed as a cheery, independent and dedicated woman, who loves her work in the lodge. She is a strict host and has clear house rules, such as a no-hat policy. Despite being represented as a friendly, open-minded person, Major Marquis mentions later

that she has a racist attitude towards Mexicans, which is why he figures that Minnie would not leave Bob in charge of her haberdashery and that he is a liar. Yet, she does not treat him differently from the others. Therefore, Warren might be lying, or Minnie simply does not recognize his Latin American ancestry. Moreover, according to Charly (Keith Jefferson), a black man who receives the arriving guests, Minnie wants one out of her lodge, which most probably applies to the General because of his deep racism against people of African American descent. Yet, Sanford Smithers and Minnie's white husband are pictured sitting together next to the fireplace. The two older men are playing chess but probably just because the General wants to become acquainted with the only white person in the lodge. The depiction of an interracial relationship, as in the case of Minnie and Sweet Dave, is rare in Western films, although it was historically a fairly common practice since the European settlement, especially on the West (ch. 3.2.1.3.).

Minnie's helper Gemma is a black woman and primarily pictured at work. She plucks a chicken and gives a charming smile when being introduced to the passengers by Judy. Shortly afterwards, she gets shot by English Pete while getting him some jellybeans.

Judy, a white, cheeky, blonde woman from New Zealand, is one of the stagecoach drivers. She introduces Minnie and the others in the haberdashery to the four gang members, who use their aliases. Later, Grouch Douglass offers her one of his peppermint sticks, which he bought earlier from Minnie. The two talk about her accent and he asks Judy about her nickname. She explains that she is called Six-Horse Judy because she is the only Judy Douglass has ever seen, who can drive a carriage drawn by six horses. Despite the fact that they have a pleasant chat, she gets killed by Douglass soon after.

Douglass, Jody and English Pete are putting a good face on the matter and act obligingly, politely, and charmingly around the three women, while Marco the Mexican watches the two men's game of chess. As Minnie's coffee is ready, the cold-blooded outlaws murder everybody in the haberdashery apart from Sanford Smithers. The other stagecoach driver, Ed, gets shot by Jody and the haberdashery's door gets damaged by Grouch Douglass as he wounds Charly. However, he is killed subsequently outside the lodge where he tries to hide. The female characters, Minnie, Judy and Gemma, as well as Sweet Dave and Charly occupy only minor roles in the film. Yet, these characters and Minnie's Haberdashery represent the feminine inner world and civilization just as women stereotypically embody the civilized East, culture, and the

home in classic Western films (ch. 3.2.1.2.). Therefore, their death signifies the decay of civilization and its foundation, which is destroyed already at the beginning of the story. Unsurprisingly, the film ends in a bloodbath with practically no survivors.

V. Discussion

In the following, the two films under consideration are compared with one another in terms of gender representation and relation by focusing on the portrayal of female characters. Thereby, *Django Unchained* (2012) as well as *The Hateful Eight* (2015) are discussed in respect of the underlying theory described in chapter two and chapter three with a special emphasis on intersectionality, female invisibility and the Bechdel test.

Quentin Tarantino's two neo-Westerns are not only connected in the context of this thesis – they were also originally related with *The Hateful Eight* functioning as a sequel of *Django Unchained* called "*Django in White Hell*". Django's character was primarily intended to take the place of the black bounty hunter Major Marquis Warren but, according to Tarantino, Django did not actually fit into the story. Since *The Hateful Eight* features first and foremost untrustworthy and morally questionable anti-heroes in the Italo-Western style, Django's character seemed misplaced due to his morality and heroism. Thus, in a plot revolving around a group of brutal villains, there is no room for a main protagonist who represents "a moral center" (Staskiewicz). Still, both motion pictures share some similarities as they address racism before and after the American Civil War as a core topic, and both feature actors of African American ancestry in leading roles. By starring Jamie Foxx, Kerry Washington, and Samuel L. Jackson as central characters, the films break with prevalent Hollywood cinema, which privileges white actors, and oppose its inclusion crisis. In addition, by this means, Tarantino defies the classic Western's racial exclusion.
Nevertheless, in terms of female representation, women are underrepresented in both cases. While Kerry Washington plays the black female supporting role, Jennifer Jason Leigh personifies the only woman among eight main characters. Further female figures are merely integrated as bit parts without primary functions, as in the majority of classic Western films. Since it is a fact that women were present at the time and place

corresponding to what is commonly understood as the Wild West, constructing a male-dominated plot solely on grounds of being consistent with the traditional Western genre only supports gender-based discrimination. Western films that display female protagonists on a larger scale would be more realistic than those in which women are practically absent. However, as Pam Cook (83) stated, a wish for realism is possibly misdirected in a genre that concentrates more on mythology than on historical accuracy.

In terms of storyline, both Westerns deal with the rescue of its respective female leading part. Broomhilda represents the reason for Django's actions just as Daisy gives her brother and his gang cause for raiding Minnie's Haberdashery and ambushing John Ruth. Yet, neither *Django Unchained* nor *The Hateful Eight* focuses on the female characters' perspective. The two actresses remain primarily passive in front of the camera whereas their male counterparts embody the central roles that are praised for their agency. Although Daisy is present throughout the entire film as opposed to Broomhilda, who is mostly depicted in flashbacks, visions, and at the film's end, she barely acts. It becomes apparent that the narrative works against her since she is mainly kept as a prisoner, who is silenced, abused, and unable to move while being handcuffed. The same applies to Broomhilda, who is enslaved and tortured until she gets rescued. Therefore, Laura Mulvey's split between active/male and passive/female proves to be true in both cases.

While Daisy Domergue represents the bad woman, who is wanted for murder and depicted turning violent, Broomhilda Von Shaft personifies the good woman, the innocent damsel in distress who would not hurt a fly. Yet, both women are treated with a similar degree of brutality throughout the stories and have to endure unbearable pain and suffering. However, what sets them apart is their reaction. Django's beloved woman is frightened, desperate, crying and squalling in pain, whereas the cold-blooded villain's torments stir up her inner hatred. She takes the punches with a smile, thus generating no pity as opposed to Broomhilda, whose face is contorted with pain. Daisy steps into the active male role as she gains agency over her own actions and kills her captor, John Ruth. Yet, this ostensible gender equalization is solely an alternative for women to behave as violently as their male counterparts. Hence, female characters only become equal by adopting masculine prowess and acting with the same degree of brutality. Nevertheless, her success is only short-lived since she is subsequently kept in check by Major Marquis and Chris Mannix and therefore fails to get free. In contrast,

Broomhilda is never pictured fighting her oppressors. It remains with an attempt to break free and escape from the plantation which ultimately backfires too. Consequently, both women fail to free themselves and remain dependent on their saviors. Following the example set by traditional Western stories, at the film's end, only the innocent, good woman gets saved and reunited with her knight in shining armor while the bad woman must pay for her sins with her life. Referring to the psychoanalytical concept of castration (ch. 2.2.2.), Daisy's punishment and death is a direct consequence of the male unconscious' anxiety since the female figure signifies a threat of castration. Thus, by punishing the object, in this case Daisy, the masculine spectator overcomes his fear.

Regarding Laura Mulvey's "male gaze" and the long tradition of objectifying women in cinema and advertisement, Tarantino's Western films differ from each other. While Daisy Domergue as well as all other female bit parts in *The Hateful Eight* are never sexually objectified, Broomhilda is valued for her beauty in several instances and brimming with stereotypical femininity. Besides being mostly present in scenes of torture and oppression, she is portrayed with a lovely smile and dressed in beautiful clothes that underline her feminine features. Though her physical attributes are not as heavily sexualized as those of other actresses in a vast number of Hollywood film productions, her appearance is constantly foregrounded. The same applies to female characters occupying minor roles already in *Django Unchained*, such as Sheba and Lara Lee, who generate visual pleasure due to their objectification. In contrast, Daisy Domergue's look is never made a subject matter. Her status as a brutal criminal deprives her to be viewed as a woman. Since gentleness and kindness are traditionally associated with womanhood in society, Daisy's provocative, rude behavior is rendered as incompatible with her femininity.

In order to examine further if Tarantino's neo-Westerns deconstruct prevalent gender inequality, Alison Bechdel's test for measuring the active presence of women in fiction is applied to both films hereafter. According to the rating on the website bechdeltest.com, the respective films show different results. *The Hateful Eight* (2015) passes the test, whereas *Django Unchained* (2012) fails. Although the latter features more (named) female characters, they are not pictured talking to each other. While it is true that they address and speak to one another, they do not lead proper, meaningful conversations. For example, Lara Lee calls for Broomhilda to speak German with Dr. Schultz at which she only addresses him and does not reply to Calvin's sister. Another

instance displays Cora chastising Broomhilda for being a mess because of her stripped back but Broomhilda shows no response. The same applies to Cora saying goodbye to Miss Lara Lee on Django's orders. Before talking back, Lara gets immediately shot. Therefore, even though the women are addressing each other, they do not have a conversation. *The Hateful Eight*, on the other hand, passes the Bechdel test due to Minnie and Six-Horse Judy's chat about the coffee. Although their talking is basically not relevant for the plot line, it serves to meet the requirements to pass the test. Hence, it becomes apparent that the rating system has its flaws regarding what is considered as "talking to each other" since there is no definition given of what counts as conversation. Classic Western films that are renowned for starring female leading roles, such as *Hannie Caulder* (1971), *Duel in the Sun* (1946), *Forty Guns* (1957) as well as *Johnny Guitar* (1954), do not pass the Bechdel test either except for *Calamity Jane* (1953). Nevertheless, it remains the case that just like the great majority of Westerns, both films under consideration are obviously male-dominated and exclude women along with their feelings and thoughts for the most part.

VI. Conclusion

There is no need to say that besides all the criticism regarding violence and further issues, Quentin Tarantino's films still appeal to a great number of viewers due to his unique filmmaking and narrative style. The reason for choosing this thesis' topic was actually grounded on a personal preference for Tarantino's work, though *Django Unchained* (2012) as well as *The Hateful Eight* (2015) are not generally the most favored ones. Based on an interest in feminist film theory, questions were raised how these films perform in terms of gender representation, which is particularly interesting in relation to the Western genre.

After conducting the film analyses considering the research question posed at the beginning, it can be said that Tarantino's contemporary Westerns defy conventions of the Western genre to some extent. For example, by addressing race issues, starring male and female main characters of African American descent, and by featuring pop music as well as other stylistic elements of Tarantino's film aesthetics. Yet, in terms of female representation, *Django Unchained* as well as *The Hateful Eight* fail to establish a new image of women in Western film and rather reinforce generic conventions. The

findings of the descriptive and comparative analyses show that besides featuring women on a limited scale, both neo-Westerns lack strong, independent female characters. Since men dominate the storyline instead, it becomes apparent that genre-specific gender constructions of classic Western movies are still prevalent in the respective films. Although the female main characters play more important roles than women in most classic Western movies, they are still trapped in passivity and merely function as props for their male counterparts. The actual plot, though, is rather concerned with the hero's quest, as in the case of *Django Unchained*, or the male anti-heroes' own interests, such as in *The Hateful Eight*. As a result, the initially formulated assumptions prove false. In light of this, the two films signify a change for the worse in view of gender representation following Tarantino's appraised female roles, such as The Bride in *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* (2003). Reproducing stereotyped characters without breaking with conventions and expectations does not correspond to Tarantino's other cinematic work, which usually features innovative, arbitrary modifications. Though calling the films' constructedness and fictionality to mind by integrating various stylistic devices, both films under consideration fail to eliminate the gender divide and privilege masculinity and male prowess instead.

However, although the two neo-Westerns do not feature powerful women, they are still popular among female spectators. This is not only conditioned by the circumstance that "stories about men (at least in our culture) function as stories about all people" but also by women's upbringing, which socially enables them to emphasize with others despite diverse life situations (Tompkins 17). In this way, they learn early on to relate to masculine protagonists by taking on a male perspective and constantly cross gender lines while identifying with male heroes in books and movies to be able to take part (Tompkins 17). Yet, according to Tompkins, "Westerns do this more than most narratives, and the attitudes toward oneself that form over a lifetime of seeing oneself trivialized and degraded are extremely difficult undo" (17). Since fictive images have the power to influence people's thoughts and attitudes, they shape our worldview from childhood years on. Therefore, it is necessary to feature women along with their concerns and perspectives on an equal scope as men and their issues. If characters on-screen are created in accordance with the ideas and views of those creating – that is primarily white and male directors – an increase of women working behind the cameras in key positions would engage more diverse roles for women in front of it. Statistics have shown that film productions with a higher involvement of women

promote gender equality and give women a fair share. As a consequence, suggestions to reform the hiring process, as proposed by Dr. Stacy L. Smith as well as director Spike Lee, can provide an answer to the still existing underrepresentation of women and people of other marginalized groups in the film business. Fortunately, the entertainment industry starts to change gradually, though slowly, and will proceed further in line with society's changing understanding of gender and equality.

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VIII. Appendix

Abstract

In times of still existing gender-based discrimination against women in numerous areas of life, feminist movements and fighting for equality between men and women need to be supported. Since mass media and contemporary visual culture reinforce stereotypical sex roles to a large extent, this diploma thesis is concerned with cinematic conventions of gender representations and relations. Thereby, the emphasis is placed on the depiction of female characters in Western films. The purpose of this paper is to examine how the representation of women has changed from the classic Western film genre to neo-Western films, regarding Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* (2012) and *The Hateful Eight* (2015). It is assumed that the voiced critique by feminist film theorists affect women's depiction on-screen and that the two neo-Westerns under consideration defy genre-specific gender constructions. With reference to feminist film studies and the Western genre, the descriptive and comparative film analyses of the available roles for men and women show that traditional generic conventions of female representation are still prevalent in both films. Thus, the stated assumptions prove false as the two films depict patriarchal power structures and privilege masculinity. Since statistics have shown that movie productions with a higher involvement of women promote more diverse female roles on-screen, reforming the film industry and its hiring procedures would provide a possible solution to effect gender equality in film and in society.

Zusammenfassung

In Zeiten, in denen eine geschlechtsspezifische Diskriminierung von Frauen in vielen Lebensbereichen noch immer besteht, müssen Frauenbewegungen und der Kampf um Gleichberechtigung zwischen Männern und Frauen unterstützt werden. Da Massenmedien und zeitgenössische visuelle Kultur stereotypische Geschlechterrollen weitgehend verfestigen, beschäftigt sich diese Diplomarbeit mit den filmischen Konventionen von Geschlechterdarstellungen und Geschlechterverhältnissen. Dabei wird der Schwerpunkt auf die Abbildung von weiblichen Charakteren in Westernfilmen gelegt. Ziel dieser Arbeit ist zu untersuchen, wie sich die Darstellung

von Frauen vom klassischen Westernfilmgenre zu Quentin Tarantino's neo-Westernfilmen *Django Unchained* (2012) und *The Hateful Eight* (2015) verändert hat. Es wird angenommen, dass die geäußerte Kritik von feministischen Filmtheoretiker*innen eine Auswirkung auf die Abbildung von Frauen hat und dass sich die zwei zur Diskussion stehenden Westernfilme über genrespezifische Geschlechterkonstruktionen hinwegsetzen. Bezugnehmend auf die feministische Filmwissenschaft und auf das Westerngenre zeigen die deskriptiven und die vergleichenden Filmanalysen der vorhandenen Männer- und Frauenrollen, dass traditionelle Genrekonventionen weiblicher Repräsentation in beiden Filmen weiterhin vorherrschend sind. Somit bestätigen sich die genannten Annahmen nicht, da die zwei Filme patriarchale Machtstrukturen abbilden und Männlichkeit privilegieren. Nachdem Statistiken gezeigt haben, dass Filmproduktionen unter einer höheren Beteiligung von Frauen vielfältigere Frauenrollen auf den Bildschirmen fördern, würde eine Reformierung der Filmindustrie und ihrer Einstellungsverfahren eine mögliche Lösung darstellen, um eine Geschlechtergleichstellung im Film und in der Gesellschaft zu bewirken.