

THE CINEMATIC SOUTH: A LOOK INTO THE SOUTH ACCORDING TO
QUENTIN TARANTINO

by
Justin Tyler Necaize

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Approved by

Advisor: Dr. Andy Harper

Reader: Dr. Kathryn McKee

Reader: Dr. Debra Young

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To Laney
The most pure-hearted person I have ever met.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the eight films directed by Quentin Tarantino. More specifically, it examines how Tarantino portrays the American South, southernness, and southerners throughout his filmography. I watched each film countless times, read each screenplay, and read many articles written about the films. I also read many biographies, and I watched many interviews with Quentin Tarantino.

In this work, I find that Tarantino exploits the South in order to create much more despicable characters, which furthers the stereotype that the South is in some way lesser to the rest of the United States. The South according to Quentin Tarantino is perverted, grim, racist, misogynistic, and all around despicable. This work explores each of those elements and how they are used in the films and the dialogue they add to national discussions of the American South.

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“For others, film is almost a luxury, a hobby that turns into a passion. For
Quentin, film is survival”
-John Travolta

Quentin Tarantino’s immediate rise to superstardom after the release of his first two films was simply unprecedented. His knack for engaging dialogue, non-linear storytelling, exaggerated violence, and overall lack of concern for conventional film techniques blew audiences away. Actors in extremely popular movies often achieve a great deal of personal fame, but directors usually live behind the spotlight – not Tarantino. He immediately became a celebrity figure and a pop culture icon, and he has ridden the highs and lows of that status ever since.

Eight films, millions of fans, and hundreds of millions of dollars later, Tarantino still pushes the boundaries of modern cinema and storytelling. However, the man behind the movies is often criticized for having an overly large ego and being extremely self-absorbed. Quentin Tarantino’s ego and self absorption is often on display when, despite his subpar acting skills, he gives himself acting roles in nearly all of his films. In Tarantino’s mind, his opinions on things such as cinema are the only opinions that matter, as evidenced by statements like, “When I’m getting serious about a girl, I show her *Rio Bravo* and she better fucking like it.” While Tarantino’s ego and self-absorption allow him to flourish by pushing boundaries, his lack of a formal education and somewhat troubled childhood connection to the South, also led him down an all too common pitfall.

Tarantino's South is grim, twisted, stupid, and stereotypical. Being born and raised in the U.S. South, I know these stereotypes and over exaggerations are far from the truth. There is good and bad in the South just like the rest of the world. However, Tarantino does not seem to see it that way. Tarantino has written and directed over twenty southern characters, participating in the same type of dialogue and violence as the other characters in the films, yet none of them are redeemable. Tarantino's southern characters by default carry around an extra burden, not just that they are dumb or perverted but that there is an underlying reason why they are those things – southern-ness.

This thesis examines the southern-ness Tarantino has created and exploited in his movie characters. First, I will establish Quentin Tarantino himself with a biographical chapter that seeks to better understand Tarantino as a person, as a director, and his penchant for creating negatively stereotyped southern characters. Then, and most importantly, I will chronicle Tarantino's filmography from his first film to his most recent and examine the southern characters within. I will examine the negative qualities Tarantino gives to his southern characters as well as what these stereotypes do in the movie. I will conclude with a brief overview and discuss why I believe Tarantino makes the decisions he does in regards to the South.

The Man Before His Movies

Connie McHugh gave birth to Quentin Jerome Tarantino on March 27, 1963, in Knoxville, Tennessee, when she was sixteen years old. His first name comes from both Burt Reynolds's character on *Gunsmoke*, Quint Asper, and *The Sound and the Fury's* Quentin Compson (Charyn 8). Quentin Tarantino's father, Tony Tarantino, was a law student who helped Connie facilitate her emancipation from her parents. Tony Tarantino told Connie many times that he did not want children, so when Connie became pregnant, she left him. Today, Quentin Tarantino still has never truly met his father. "I've never had any desire to get in touch with him," Tarantino says. "I'm not mad at him or anything like that. It actually was my mom who left that relationship. I've just never had any desire to.... It would just be more or less embarrassing to look at somebody who I'm supposed to feel something for, even though I don't know him at all" (qtd. in Bernard 8).

Tarantino and his mother spent only two years in Tennessee before moving to Los Angeles, California, where Tarantino has lived his most all his life. (Peary 11). These first two years, though he most likely does not remember them, provide his first and most extensive experience with the geographical South. As a child, Tarantino lived with his grandmother for almost a year and was adopted by local Los Angeles Musician Curtis Zastoupil after McHugh married him, turning Quentin Tarantino into Quentin Zastoupil for a time (Charyn 9). The relationship ended in divorce when Quentin was around ten years old. His second experience in the geographical South was for a short one-year period

when he was in the fourth grade. Moving around can be difficult for a child, especially with no consistent father figure and frequently changing guardians. This provides the earliest foundation for Tarantino's possible disdain for the South.

As a child, Quentin Tarantino consumed movies and comic books constantly. His mother would often attempt to convince him to be more like the other children and play outside, but fiction was his obsession. He watched nearly every single movie that came to theaters near him and was glued to the television taping and watching movies (Peary 12). The movies he watched were not for children; "he saw *Carnal Knowledge* by the time he was six" (Charyn xxxvii) and *Deliverance* by the time he was nine (Bernard 13). From early on, Tarantino showed absolutely no interest in school, so he decided school was no longer for him after only completing the eighth grade. After he quit school, he worked at the Pussycat Lounge, an adult movie theatre in Torrance. However, the films themselves did not interest Tarantino "without that dreamlike play of characters involved in their own whirlwind..., [and] they weren't funny" (Charyn 14). After his time at the Pussycat Lounge, he moved on to the James Best Theater Company.

James "Jimmie" Best was never a very successful actor but acted in films such as *Verboten!* (1959) and *Shock Corridor* (1963). His most prominent role was that of Roscoe P. Coltrane in *The Dukes of Hazzard* television show. Tarantino enjoyed his time there and greatly appreciated the guidance Best offered. However, Tarantino says "...little by little I realized that I didn't fit in with

the rest of the actors in the school. I was too movie-mad, and my idols weren't other actors. My idols were directors like Brian De Palma. I decided I didn't want to be in movies, I wanted to make movies." This change led him to study with someone who would allow his directorial ambitions to flourish, Allen Garfield who is known for stage acting and having numerous smaller roles in films such as the police chief in *Beverly Hills Cop II* (1987). Garfield allowed Tarantino to direct scenes in Garfield's acting class (Charyn 14-15). "And it was Garfield who first saw Tarantino's "triple threat" – as an actor, writer, and director" (Charyn 15).

Finally, after bouncing around from job to job, Quentin Tarantino landed at the unlikely place that truly taught him how to be a filmmaker – Video Archives. He walked in the store one day as a customer, discussed films with the owner for over four hours, and walked out with a job being paid four dollars per hour. At Video Archives, Tarantino had thousands of movies at his disposal that he could sit and devour for hours. Peter Biskind called the small video store "a magnet for every movie geek in South Bay" (Charyn 15-16). He spent years at Video Archives working with men such as Roger Avary and Jerry Martinez, who both creatively worked with Tarantino years later. One former coworker, Russell Vossler, says of the store, "The thing about Archives is we were all interested in some creative endeavor – movies and art primarily, but also writing" (qtd. in Bernard 27). "I knew that Quentin was going to make it. But I never thought it would be like this, so fast. We all had a sense of history, we knew every filmmaker and what their story was and how they had made it. I thought that it would take Quentin at least a few more movies to get to this point..." Jerry

Martinez said after Tarantino's immediate rise to stardom with his first two films (Bernard 26). To put into perspective both the family atmosphere and the significant impact it had on Tarantino, there was a regular customer who would fix things around the store for no charge and was listed as "Nice Guy Eddie" in the records. Tarantino actually named a character Nice Guy Eddie (played by Chris Penn) in his directorial debut.

The family style "anything goes" atmosphere was not always positive though. Another member of the Video Archives gang, Scott McGill, had huge aspirations to be a successful filmmaker. He and Quentin worked together on small time unreleased home films such as *Lovebirds in Bondage* and *My Best Friend's Birthday*. However, the "vicious banter" that existed in the store was often too much for McGill, so he limited his time around the store and the film projects. McGill actually made the jump onto "the big time" before everyone else at Video Archives getting an assistant editor job with Don Coscarelli, director and writer of *Phantasm*. However, Scott McGill committed suicide on July 4, 1987. He left behind extensive journal entries and audiotapes as his suicide notes. Among the reasons listed in the suicide notes were that he felt he would never be as successful of a filmmaker as Quentin Tarantino or Roger Avary, despite the fact that neither Tarantino nor Avary had made a successful film up to that point (Bernard 39-42).

The employees at Video Archives spent long nights and weekends watching and debating movies using cash from the register to order food. With all of these movie "experts" there, the dialogue must have been inspiring and

memorable to Tarantino. Interviews with many of the old employees such as Stevo Polyi, Rowland Wafford, and Russ Vossler reveal that they all believe different conversations that they had with and around Tarantino have ended up in his movies. They can each pick out certain stories and ideas from movies and say “that was from me.” Some of this inspiration Tarantino acknowledges. Some he does not, but his tumultuous relationship with Roger Avary is felt with each of these Video Archives interviews. Tarantino and Avary were best friends for years until a massive falling out upon the release of *Pulp Fiction* over the writing credits, which led many of the old Video Archives employees to pick sides when telling stories from their days there. Some gush about Tarantino while painting Avary in a more negative light, and some do the reverse. Avary seems to hold the biggest grudge of them all saying of Tarantino, “If Quentin didn’t make it in the film business, it is very likely he’d have ended up a serial killer” (Bernard 48). Thankfully, he did.

In this work, I will only analyze the South in the movies that Tarantino both wrote and directed to completion. Incomplete movies such as *My Best Friend’s Birthday* or scripts that he sold to other directors such as *Natural Born Killers* and *True Romance* will be overlooked in this work. Of course, Tarantino played a pivotal role in those films, but Tarantino considers himself to be a director, not necessarily a writer. The directing part of the movie making process is most important to Tarantino, and it will be treated as such here.

Reservoir Dogs

In 1992, Quentin Tarantino finally exploded onto the film scene with his directorial debut *Reservoir Dogs*. Written in just three weeks, *Reservoir Dogs* is a heist film in which the heist itself is never seen on screen. Instead, the film jumps back and forth in time, showing the events before and after the heist. *Reservoir Dogs* is Tarantino's only film without a southern character. Therefore, instead of analyzing it the same way as the others, I will delve more into a short list of possible reasons why this is the only Tarantino film missing what is now a hidden signature of his. One obvious reason is that the characters in the films are meant to be very unknown. Their names and backgrounds are hidden from each other to protect themselves from law enforcement in the circumstance that one of them is caught. They use color-coded names such as Mr. Blue, Mr. Pink, etc. A couple of the characters' backstories are elaborated on very slightly, and a couple of names are revealed but not much more. Another reason could be the commonly cited influence of Ringo Lam's *City on Fire* on *Reservoir Dogs*. There have been countless articles written and comparison videos made claiming that Tarantino "ripped off" *City on Fire* by stealing the plot and many of the important scenes. Considering the way that Tarantino's old coworkers at Video Archives speak of him, along with the videos of side-by-side scenes, this seems fairly plausible. So *Reservoir Dogs* is a crime film inspired by Asian cinema filled with characters with no name or backstory, and therefore no southern character. After this

movie's widely successful Cannes Film Festival reviews and Hollywood buzz, Tarantino quickly became the number one young American director to watch. He could now take even more risks than he did with the infamous cop torture scene in *Reservoir Dogs*. People in Hollywood were clamoring to see what his next step would be. His next movie, though, was as far from predictable as a young director could get.

Pulp Fiction

Pulp Fiction, a 1994 independent film, blew viewers away with its engaging dialogue, non-linear story telling, and violence. All of these themes existed in *Reservoir Dogs*, but *Pulp Fiction* catapulted them to an entirely new level. The one important thing that *Pulp Fiction* has that *Reservoir Dogs* does not is Tarantino's first use of the South in his films. Butch Coolidge, an aging boxer played by Bruce Willis, accepts a bribe from crime boss Marsellus Wallace (Ving Rhames) to throw a big boxing match. Instead, Coolidge takes the money he is given and bets on himself to win the fight – fighting so hard that he actually kills the other boxer. When Marcellus Wallace finds this out, he immediately plans to kill Butch Coolidge for betraying him. The two see each other on the streets of Los Angeles and get into a dangerous chase involving car crashes and gunshots. Coolidge and Wallace then stumble into a pawnshop beaten and bloody from the chase and still fist fighting. This seemingly random pawnshop in Los Angeles is the only southern setting in the *Pulp Fiction*. The southern-ness, however, is both discreet and somehow very noticeable at the same time.

The first visible section of the pawnshop is the wall directly to the left as Coolidge enters. On the wall are two flags: the American flag and the rebel flag. Also tacked onto that same wall are about five license plates, yet only the Tennessee plate is easily and quickly legible without attempting to pause and zoom in or watching over again a couple of times. The last thing on the wall that

helps the scene have the southern feel that Tarantino was going for is the crude hog heads that look like the work of a very amateur taxidermist. Although there is no explicit acknowledgement in the film that creating the South within the pawnshop was Tarantino's goal, the screenplays shine more light on his motives. Two different screenplays are accessible from the writing of *Pulp Fiction*. In the first screenplay, Tarantino refers to the pawnshop as the "Mason-Dixie Pawnshop," and in the second screen, the name of the shop is the "Mason-Dixon Pawnshop." There are a handful of things I had to unpack when looking at Tarantino's use of the border created in the 1760s that would later become the understood division between the North and the South. University of Delaware Professor John Mackenzie writes, "Through the first half of the 19th century the Mason-Dixon Line represented the line of freedom for tens of thousands of blacks escaping slavery in the south" (Mackenzie 7). That same representation is used in this film with inside the pawnshop representing below the Mason-Dixon line and brutal captivity while outside the pawnshop represents above the Mason-Dixon line and freedom.

Another interesting thing to consider is that the correct term "Mason-Dixon" is used on the final screenplay. I am unsure if Tarantino purposefully used clever wordplay in Mason-Dixie and then decided to change it or if his lack of education led him to believe that Mason-Dixie was the correct terminology. Either way, Tarantino ultimately decides to leave the name off the store and out of the movie, but he is sure to establish the same setting he desired nonetheless.

With the scene set, the cashier quickly pulls a gun on the two not allowing them to finish their brutal fight. He then knocks out Coolidge while Wallace is lying on the ground already knocked out. He then makes a phone call saying only, "Zed, its Maynard. Spider's just caught a couple of flies." When Coolidge and Wallace wake up, they are bound to a chair with gags in their mouths preventing their escape or screams. Zed and Maynard also bring out what they refer to as "the gimp", a man who is most likely a sex slave dressed in an all black leather suit that covers his entire body and face. They then proceed to rape Wallace with the intention of doing the same to Coolidge before he escapes and subdues both rapists.

Tarantino's first use of the "South" in his films is a perfect combination of his own distinct personal genre mixed with *Deliverance*. The two pawnshop workers are actually called hillbillies by both Wallace in the film and by Tarantino in the screenplay; they also have a banjo on the wall next to the license plates, further completing the southern-ness. As stated before, Tarantino watched *Deliverance* at a very young and impressionable age, and it seems to have stuck with him in *Pulp Fiction*. In *Study the South*, Isabel Machado states "Although other, more positive images of working-class white southerners were also emerging in the 1970s, the "redneck nightmare" trope popularized by *Deliverance* became iconic and enduring" (Machado 1). Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*, also iconic and enduring, helped to further this "redneck nightmare" trope into the 1990s. Furthermore, Tarantino continues to advance a negative connotation of the South into the 21st century with his other works as well.

Jackie Brown

In *Pulp Fiction*, context clues are needed to truly establish the pawnshop scene as the “South” of the film along with the pawnshop owners as “southern.” However, in Tarantino’s 1997 film *Jackie Brown* starring Pam Grier, the southern character needs no context clues. In the film, Samuel L. Jackson plays a smooth-talking crime boss named Ordell Robbie. A key component to Ordell Robbie’s empire is that, in his words, he “puts girls up.” That is, he gives certain women a place to live and money to live on in exchange for sex, company, and, if need be, an accomplice in his criminal activity. Robbie “puts up” three girls in *Jackie Brown*, but the audience only ever sees two of them. The first is a young white blonde named Melanie that Robbie refers to as his “surfer gal.” While Melanie is far from the brightest or most likeable character in the film, she has a clear understanding of her situation with Robbie entirely. She sometimes hints that she only stays with Robbie for his money and often goes against his word. However, Robbie’s southern girl is very different.

In Sheronda, a young black Georgia native recently relocated to Compton, we see Quentin Tarantino’s first truly southern character. Sheronda is Ordell Robbie’s “southern gal” as he calls her, and she is by far the dullest, most unaware character in the film. Robbie laughs while he says that Sheronda was “two days out of Georgia, barefoot, and country as a chicken coop,” allowing Tarantino to firmly establish her as a southern character. Tarantino’s decision

here to make Sheronda southern is extremely interesting considering that just like in *Pulp Fiction*, the scene is Southern California. Sheronda's immaturity and low mental capacity seems to be immediately explained with the southern tag attached to her. In reality, she does not seem to have the mental capacity to understand that she is in a very strange sexual relationship with a man who does not love her or care for her. To further show her naivety, Ordell Robbie says, "[I] took her to Compton and told her it was Hollywood, and she believed it."

Through Robbie's descriptions the audience is able to get a sense of Sheronda's character before she first appears sitting in a food court in a Los Angeles mall with titular character Jackie Brown. Jackie is stunning for her age and the situation, wearing a bright blue flight attendant suit with a matching ascot and perfectly styled hair while her makeup looks professional and attractive. Sheronda on the other hand is wearing the absolute bare minimum, having neither makeup nor jewelry on and carrying no accessories. Her hair has no styling and is pulled back into a simple ponytail. The most alarming part, though, is her dress. She wears only a dingy, stained, off-white dress that looks like it belongs in her home state of Georgia, yet a couple hundred years earlier on a slave. She stares downward awkwardly, not wanting to make eye contact with Jackie Brown or anyone else around them. Jackie then gives Sheronda permission to eat – permission she did not need in any way – and Sheronda picks up her fork with all five fingers in clenched fist and childishly shovels food into her mouth. Even though Sheronda is unintelligent and lacks social graces, she still is sure to say "no ma'am" to Jackie, as if Sheronda was a southern child

respecting her elders just as a typical southerner would respect her elders.

Sheronda's inability to think for herself in almost any fashion begins to paint a picture of true mental deficiency.

If her southern background is stripped away from Sheronda, the character morphs from an unintelligent southern girl into a mentally handicapped woman being used for sex and crime. This, of course, would completely change the tone of the movie along with Ordell Robbie's character changing from a smooth talking, gunrunning crime boss into a perverted and twisted criminal. Along with the things that made it into the film that have been previously discussed, the screenplay adds to Sheronda's mental deficiency. In the screenplay, Jackie asks Sheronda her name and the young southern girl replies "Sherona?" Tarantino drops the "d" and adds a question mark to really drive it home. This young girl is even confused about her own name. Continuing in the screenplay, Jackie asks Sheronda if she and Robbie are married, a question that Jackie clearly knows the answer to. Sheronda once again demonstrates a complete lack of awareness of the situation when she says, "He say we like the same thing as married." The last thing cut from screenplay involving Sheronda is when Jackie asks both Ordell and Sheronda if Sheronda knows what she is doing when she is helping transport illegal gun money. Sheronda replies with the grammatically incorrect, "He say is a surprise," and Robbie replies, "I told her this is a game us rich folks play, exchanging gifts. Like a scavenger hunt. She didn't know what that was neither." Tarantino uses the word "country" and the state of Georgia to seemingly mask this almost blatant mental disability. With Sheronda's southern-ness being

a common talking point of Robbie, Tarantino is able to convince viewers that there is nothing more to see or know about Sheronda other than where she is from.

It is unlikely that Tarantino intended for Sheronda to be mentally handicapped which is possibly why he removed some of the dialogue from the screenplay when making the film, but there is no arguing that he intended for her to be incredibly stupid. Either way, Tarantino's use of the South as a character trait to establish complete ignorance is pivotal to attempting to pinpoint Tarantino's goal with Sheronda. Directors are in a unique position to elaborate on cultures that are in their films because many of the viewers have never experienced that culture for themselves. Movies are enveloping, they allow the viewer to transport him or herself into the world in which they are watching on screen. The issue here is that Tarantino uses his unique position to call the South stupid for the rest of the world to see. After watching this film, someone who has never been to the South could conclude that dumbness on a level that is nearing mental retardation could be an average quality of the "southern gal". Sheronda, Tarantino's first Southern character, launches the director's journey of unabashed, unfair southern representation filled with a clear disdain for the place he is representing.

Kill Bill

Tarantino's fourth installment, *Kill Bill*, grew too lengthy for one sitting and was therefore released as two volumes, *Kill Bill: Volume 1* in 2003 and *Kill Bill: Volume 2* in 2004. However, Tarantino still considers *Kill Bill* to be one singular film, and since he wrote and directed it as one film, it will be considered one film here. Four southern characters appear throughout both volumes of *Kill Bill*. I will touch on three minor characters and one major character.

The sheriff of El Paso, Texas is the first one to appear. "Well, give me all the gory details," he says as he walks up to a wedding day massacre with nine bodies laid out, any hope for him to be concerned or sympathetic instantly thrown out. Being a southern sheriff, Tarantino portrays him spitting dip throughout the scene and wearing a white cowboy hat. The sheriff then continues to inspect the crime scene and cracks a joke, "It seems that someone objected to this union and couldn't hold their peace." When his son, a deputy police officer of El Paso lets the word "goddamn" slip, the sheriff instantly snaps at him, "You better shitcan that blasphemy boy. You are in a house of worship," because they are standing in the church where the wedding would have taken place. It comes across strange that this man seems more worried about his son taking the Lord's name in vain than the nine dead bodies surrounding him including a pregnant woman and a priest. The irony of his reaction sets in when he gets blood on his face due to a physical spasm from the not-so-dead Bride (Uma Thurman), and

he instantly uses the word he forbid his son to use “goddamn” along with calling the comatose and bloody Bride a “cocksucker.” This faux religion or hypocritical religion is a common stereotype within the South. When it is his son, the Sherriff is quick to call him out on taking God’s name in vain, but then he does the same thing only a few minutes later. It also seems that a truly religious man would treat the entire situation with much more respect and sympathy than the Sheriff does.

The two other one-scene southern characters from *Kill Bill* are the most despicable people in the film, which is saying a lot considering there are murderers and torturers throughout. Jasper, the trucker from Tennessee, actually appears in two Tarantino films – *Kill Bill* and *Death Proof*. Since his role in *Death Proof* is much more prominent, he will be discussed more in depth there. The other character is Buck, a hospital orderly from Texas whose job is to watch over and take care of The Bride’s comatose body. Instead of taking care of her, however, Buck rapes her, and that is only the beginning of his perversion. He also sells her body for “\$75 a fuck” to any random guy who is willing to pay for it, Jasper being one of them. The audience is able to get a better sense of what type of people Jasper, Buck, and anyone else Buck sells The Bride’s body to when Buck lists his only two rules: No punching and no monkey biting. It should not be surprising that the type of person who would rape an obviously non-consenting and comatose woman would also be the type to punch her or bite her, but Buck’s listing of the rules is startling. He also carries around a tub of hair filled, disgusting looking Vaseline for his “customers” to use. The ridiculousness of Buck continues when The Bride sees he has the letters F-U-C-K tattooed on

four of his fingers. This triggers a flash back, and she remembers Buck saying, “My name is Buck, and I’m here to fuck,” to her comatose body. To complete the most deplorable, ridiculous character in the film, The Bride steals the keys to his truck and she sees the words “Pussy Wagon” written on them which pairs perfectly with his actual vehicle which has those words written largely across the tailgate in gaudy red and bright yellow coloring. Although the *Deliverance* influences are not as visible in these *Kill Bill* characters the way they are in *Pulp Fiction*, the horrible crime of raping of a comatose woman can only be done by one type of people in Tarantino’s South – southerners. Quentin Tarantino continues to further this stereotype which “to this day, affects the way the region and its inhabitants are perceived and depicted” (Machado 6-7).

The southern character with the most screen time and lines is the sadistic assassin Budd. He is the only member of the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad that is not a female other than the leader, Bill. Budd’s southern-ness is seen early on from his location in Texas to his “wife beater” shirt and cowboy hat along with his constant dip spitting. One of the words that Tarantino frequently uses to establish southern-ness is “ain’t,” and Budd uses it frequently. Budd lives in a disgusting trailer off away from any other people or homes. When Bill expects him to be doing productive or meaningful things, he tells him condescendingly, “I’m a bouncer at a titty bar.” Although Budd is a classic dirty, brutal southerner, he is also the type of southerner that knows what a debt is. He respectfully says, “I don’t dodge guilt, and I don’t jew up on my comeuppance.” While couched in an otherwise ethnic slur, it does show a sense of pride and honor from Budd to

know that he is guilty of some evil things and deserves some sort of retribution. However, there is a sense that Budd lives a self-imposed penance. He is an extremely skilled man with a priceless sword and a wealthy brother, yet he lives in destitute conditions. He also allows someone whom he could easily kill to berate him and talk down to him. Budd is a walking juxtaposition. On one hand he is a psychopathic, murderous alcoholic and on the other a regretful man whose twisted sense of honor forces him to reckon with his own evil deeds. Tarantino further juxtaposes Budd's character when he is burying The Bride alive. Her suffering is part of the conditions set forth by another character and Budd's deal. Before he unremorsefully seals her away in a coffin, he allows her the option to have a flashlight as one last sign of respect. Although Budd misses this opportunity to redeem himself and let the Bride go, this scene shows Budd is the perfect mix of honor and brutality, the stereotypical southern brute.

Death Proof

Tarantino's next film, *Death Proof* (2007), is a very interesting project that was actually released as the double feature, *Grindhouse*, along with Robert Rodriguez's *Planet Terror* and is an obvious ode to classic grindhouse genre films of the past. *Death Proof* is cut into two distinct parts, both taking place in the South: Austin, Texas, and Lebanon, Tennessee. The film follows a stuntman, humorously named Stuntman Mike as he attempts to murder one group of women per city using his stunt car as his weapon of choice. This is Tarantino's first film to be set primarily in the South and is his most sexualized film by far. It is also filled with smoking, drugs, and drinking and driving. These negative things portray the South in an extremely condescending light. Although it is never clear where the murderous psychopathic Stuntman Mike is from, he is called a "redneck lunatic bastard." Stuntman Mike says of himself, "I'm not a cowboy; I'm a stuntman. But that's an easy mistake to make."

Tarantino also includes strange perversion involving the female characters when one of the girls states that her dad likes to "pop up on me and my friends when they are all in bikinis to get a look" even though his daughter is one of those girls. *Death Proof* is filled with misogynistic behavior from the women. They persistently tell their friends that they need to do sexual acts that the friends don't necessarily want to do. They say that is the only way to keep a guy or that the guy deserves some sex even if the girl doesn't want it, or "you need to break him

off a piece.” Tarantino continues to use his characters to take lazily crafted slights at the South when the southern sheriff from *Kill Bill* returns and suspects that Stuntman Mike killed the girls. The sheriff says that he could follow him around and investigate him until he had enough evidence to prove his theory, or he could just go home and spend that time watching Nascar. It is obvious which one Tarantino’s stereotypical southern man chooses.

Tarantino’s misogynistic portrayal of the South is hidden behind a veil of feminism in *Death Proof*. Yes, one of the groups of girls is able to triumphantly kill Stuntman Mike, but that does not mask the first one hour and forty minutes of the one hour and fifty minute film. The first group of women is more open with their sexuality and mostly carefree, and they are immediately murdered. Tarantino characterizes the women with highlighting their bodies from all angles such as close ups of feet, shots of them getting dressed, and lap dances. This group does not stand a chance as Stuntman Mike murders them all at once with his stunt car. The second group, the group that succeeds in killing Stuntman Mike, only does so because they are stuntwomen themselves. Tarantino portrays their success as more bad luck and poor planning on Stuntman Mike’s part than empowering vengeance on the women’s part. In *Death Proof*, Tarantino uses a Sheriff who knows a murder has taken place but chooses to ignore it to watch Nascar, a father who wants to look at his daughter and her friends in bikinis, and strange close up scenes of feet and lap dances to further the southern stereotypes of laziness, incest, and perversion.

Inglorious Basterds

Inglorious Basterds is Quentin Tarantino's sixth movie and one of his most successful to date. Released in 2009, *Inglorious Basterds* is an alternate history film that follows a group of Jewish soldiers in occupied France whose sole mission is to kill Nazi soldiers. The leader of the Basterds is Lieutenant Aldo Raine, played by Brad Pitt. Lieutenant Raine, just like Sheronda in *Jackie Brown*, is the only character in the movie from the South and his southern-ness is at the forefront of his characterization. Unlike Sheronda, though, Raine is one of the film's central characters. Tarantino places Raine's southern-ness at the forefront of his character traits. Lieutenant Raine is an extremely violent and charismatically brutal man from Maynardville, Tennessee. One time, Raine claims he is a "direct descendent of Jim Bridger." Tarantino not only creates Raine as very southern but also extremely proud of it. Here Tarantino is playing into a common southern stereotype that southerners hold their heritage in high regard and importance. They are proud to be from the South, despite people like Tarantino himself portraying it as racist, uneducated, or backwards. Raine takes pride in being a rugged and tough man's man, just as Jim Bridger was. His accent is also particularly strong, and he never attempts to mask it despite the fact that he is a southern American in France often doing undercover work. Raine also claims he has some "injun" in him, portraying more reverence for his heritage while also marginalizing Native American culture. The reason Raine is proud of being part "injun" is because of the violence and savagery he associates with their culture. Raine nicknames himself "Aldo the Apache" showing the

Lieutenant truly exploiting this stereotype. He exemplifies the violent southern brute with one goal in mind, “killing Nazis.” The way he says the word “Nazi” is extremely comical because of his southern accent, even as he slices swastikas into the foreheads of living Nazis and cuts the scalp off of the dead ones. So, Lieutenant Aldo Raine is a walking southern stereotype being exploited by Tarantino while the character himself actually uses a Native American stereotype to define himself – a stereotype within a stereotype.

Tarantino could have accomplished a southern accent without having Lieutenant Raine saying “Nazis” the exaggerated way he does; however, it helps to further his southern stereotype to a degree that suggests a lack of education. Raine’s accent is on full display for the audience to gawk at throughout the film. As can be expected, he uses the classically southern words “ain’t,” “y’all,” and “fellers,” which is enough to see the stereotype being exploited. It doesn’t end there, though. Lieutenant Raine’s grammar in general seems to resemble an uneducated man, despite being the leader of an important team of American soldiers. “I need me eight soldiers,” Lieutenant Aldo Raine exclaimed at the beginning of the film. This allows the audience to immediately recognize him as slightly uneducated, at least in the formal sense. He also confuses the word “debt” and “debit” when telling his soldiers that each of them owes him a “debit of 100 Nazi scalps.” At first it is unclear if he is just speaking metaphorically in his order for scalps and actually just means 100 Nazi kills. After a quick scene showing Adolph Hitler’s extreme disdain for the Basterds, Tarantino cuts directly to a Basterd soldier slowly slicing a dead Nazi’s scalp off (this dead Nazi is

actually Tarantino himself) leaving no uncertainty about the literalness of Lieutenant Raine's orders.

Throughout the film, Tarantino uses subtle sentences and phrases to keep Lieutenant Raine's southern-ness from being forgotten. Lieutenant Raine says, "I'm thinking of getting a whack at planting old Uncle Adolf makes this a horse of a different color," which comes across as a southern colloquialism. He also admits that he has done his fair share of bootlegging back in America, referencing the often-exploited and stereotyped moonshining era of the South. He also has a physical deformity in his face that is extremely pronounced: an under bite. Although this may not seem like much, it is very prominent throughout the film and draws a lot of attention. It is especially discernable when the actor playing the character with the severe under bite is Brad Pitt who is renowned for his good looks. Anyone can at least attempt an accent when speaking another language, not necessarily a good accent but an accent all the same. When Lieutenant Raine is undercover as an Italian, he also has two of the Basterds with him. A cunning SS detective questions Raine and the Basterds about their names and where they are from. While the other two put forth their best effort to speak Italian with an Italian accent and try to sound convincing, Lieutenant Raine does not. He says "bonjourno" without a second thought or effort to sound Italian, along with pronouncing "rouge carpet" like "rooje carpay" just to be condescending. Tarantino clearly establishes that Lieutenant Aldo Raine is not unable to use an Italian accent but rather has too much pride to attempt one. Southern stereotype dictates that southerners often have a disdain for foreign

culture and exorbitant pride about their own. Lieutenant Raine shows both in his refusal to try an accent even though he was undercover.

Django: Unchained

Django: Unchained is far and away Tarantino's most southern film and is also filled with the most stereotypes. It seems, though, that those two things go hand in hand with Tarantino and almost do not need mentioning. *Django: Unchained* is a slave film that takes place in various places throughout the South. It features characters that personify very specific southern stereotypes such as the "Uncle Tom" character, the "Jezebel" character, and the "plantation owner" character while also having generalized southern stereotypes such as racism, stupidity, and filthiness.

Django: Unchained follows a freed slave Django (Jamie Foxx) and a German man Dr. King Shultz (Christoph Waltz) as they make money bounty hunting on their journey to eventually free Django's wife, Broomhilda (Kerry Washington), from slavery. From the very beginning of the film, Tarantino positions the horrors of slavery on full display. While the opening credits are still rolling, slaves march across the screen barefoot with iron shackles shredding the skin on their wrists and ankles. They walk for miles in horrible weather conditions while slave traders ride on horses next to them. These slave traders are the first southerners the audience sees. As soon as the German, Dr. Shultz, rides up, the slave traders get extremely apprehensive. They threaten to shoot him just for talking to the slaves. Dr. Shultz begins to question the slaves and talks to them like he would any normal human, and one of the slave traders says, "Hey, quit

talking to him like that.” It is clear that he is saying that he does not want these slaves to be talked to like they are actual humans but, instead, like animals or property. Finally, the slave trader points a gun at Dr. Shultz who quickly kills one and fatally injures the other immediately establishing Dr. King Shultz as “better” or “above” the South in this movie. Shultz then takes Django, and they set off. Not only does Shultz speak a much more refined and mature English (his second or possibly even third language since he also speaks French in the film), but he is also a quicker and more accurate shot. Shultz is also quick to tell Django that he despises the institution of slavery, which once again, elevates his character. Instead of riding a horse like almost every southerner in the film does, Dr. Shultz drives a one-horse buggy with a massive springing tooth on top that he bought when he still practiced dentistry. When the pair enter nearly any southern town or area throughout the film, their transportation choice sticks out like a sore thumb for two reasons: the cartoonish tooth on top of Shultz’s wagon and Django riding a horse, something southerners often considered illegal.

One of the first stops in Django and Dr. Shultz’s long journey is a massive plantation in Tennessee owned by a man who goes by “Big Daddy.” Big Daddy immediately takes offense to the fact that Django is riding on a horse and says that, “It’s against the law for niggers to ride horses in this territory.” Shultz quickly defends Django and explains that Django is a free man and can do as he pleases. Big Daddy snaps back “not around my niggers he can’t.” The southern plantation owner is clearly off put and bothered by Django’s expensive clothing and confident demeanor. Tarantino is portraying Big Daddy as an extremely

narcissistic man who does not allow anything to challenge his self-assured superiority. However, once Shultz lies to Big Daddy about an interest in an expensive slave purchase, Big Daddy quickly changes his tune. The plantation owner then instructs one of his slaves to show Django around the plantation and has an incredibly difficult time explaining to his slave that she has to treat Django differently than other black people – but “not like white folk.” Big Daddy’s slaves do not quite understand what it means to be a freed black man, partially because they have remarkably little experience with freed black people and partially because freedom does not beget equality. Once Shultz and Django complete their ruse on Big Daddy’s plantation and leave, Shultz knows that Big Daddy’s narcissism will not allow him to be tricked, even though the trick was a legal bounty. Big Daddy waits until nightfall and leads a KKK-like raid to torture and kill the bounty hunting pair. This scene represents a very real, scary, and terrible thing that existed in America. However, Tarantino spins this into the funniest scene he has ever crafted. The men all go back and forth about how they cannot see through the white bags over their heads and debate why they are even wearing them in the first place. This scene, jokingly, knocks the KKK down a few pegs in the eyes of the audience. They are already viewed as a racist, terrorist organization. However, now they can also be laughed at while hated because of their ridiculous masks and small eyeholes. At the end of the completely failed raid, the freed slave that Big Daddy so despised, Django shoots the plantation owner while he is trying to run for his life, not as a gentleman or a leader but a coward.

John Brittle, an important southern character with relatively little screen time, is an overseer who is seen multiple times in different scenes torturing slaves. He is never seen simply standing around the slaves participating in normal overseer activities; he is only seen torturing. On top of being a psychotic torturer, Brittle uses religion to justify his actions. In John Brittle's final scene, he is whipping a small girl while ripping pages and passages out of a Bible and tacking them to his clothing, including one over his heart. Brittle then recites a verse, "and the lord said the fear of ye and the dread of ye shall be on every beast of the earth," as he cracks his whip in his other hand. The beast Brittle is referencing is of course the slaves on whom he wishes to impose fear and dread. When Django finally stands face to face with Brittle who tortured both him and his wife, Django shoots him through the Bible page tacked to his shirt and right through his heart. With blood pouring from the bullet wound and covering the Bible page, Tarantino dismisses using the Bible to justify slavery. Despite John Brittle speaking of justice right before his death, the real justice is when he falls to the knees of a slave he had previously tortured.

Finally, Django and Dr. Shultz head to Mississippi to try and find Django's wife, Broomhilda. When they first arrive in the state, "MISSISSIPPI" in bold red letters scrolls across the screen while slaves are led through a street with muzzles and animalistic devices on their faces. It really stands out to me that Tarantino chooses to really emphasize the main characters' entrance into Mississippi. The state of Tennessee among others did not receive the same treatment – symbolizing the true horror Tarantino wishes to express that exists in

the Deep South. Django and Shultz finally make their way to one of the largest plantations in all of Mississippi, Candy Land.

Calvin Candie (Leonardo DiCaprio), fourth generation plantation owner, is the sadistic proprietor of the mega plantation bearing his namesake. Candie's favorite pastime is organizing and betting on sadistic Mandingo fights. Mandingo fighting pits slaves from different plantations against one another in a fight to the death for entertainment and betting. Tarantino includes a gruesome scene of a slave gouging his opponent's eyes out with his fingers during the only on screen Mandingo fight. However, scholars such as Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Daniel P. Black argue that Mandingo fighting was an extremely rare occurrence with very little basis in reality. Gates argues, "slaves were too valuable as investments to kill capriciously in this way." Black adds, "besides as field beasts and sexual beings, black men were never allowed to demonstrate their physical strength." (Gates 1; Black 2). Hollywood films such as *Mandingo* (1975) and *Drum* (1976) popularized Mandingo fighting leading to much of the world believing it was a common practice among southern plantations.

Tarantino is known for over exaggerations, but this is a major plot point of *Django: Unchained* which is attempting to portray the South negatively that is simply fictional. Despite the horrors of slavery needing no embellishment, Tarantino chooses Mandingo fighting as a way to really exaggerate the barbarism of the South. This is disappointing because Tarantino could have illustrated a much more mature point by using more factual occurrences of slavery. Django pretends to be a freed black man who actually scouts Mandingo

fighters in front of Candie to be able to get inside the plantation and find his wife. Django fascinates Candie; Candie calls the freed slave “bright boy” and says that he is “one nigger in 10,000” because Candie believes that Django sees the rest of the black population as subservient and lesser just as he does. While Django is simply pretending to be a black slaver, Tarantino does use the infamous “Uncle Tom” stereotype to portray Stephen, man who may actually believe he is better than the rest of the black population.

Stephen, played by Samuel L. Jackson, is a slave on the Candy Land Plantation who basically helps run all the slave work inside the house. He is described as the “head house nigger,” which, according to Django, is one of the lowest things a black man can be. Dr. David Pilgrim defines the “Tom” or “Uncle Tom” stereotype as a “faithful, happily submissive servant” often presented as a “dependable worker, eager to serve” along with usually being “old, physically weak, psychologically dependent on whites for approval” (Pilgrim 1). Tarantino writes Stephen as not only fitting each of these qualities but also exaggerating each one. As soon as Stephen sees Django riding a horse, he asks, “Who is that nigger up on that nag?” clearly offended by Django’s bravado. Candie explains that Django is a slaver, so he is different. Candie also informs Stephen that Django is a customer and will be staying inside “the big house.” Stephen’s eyes widen and his jaw nearly hits the floor because he simply cannot believe Candie is going to allow a black man other than himself to stay in the big house. Candie asks Stephen if this is going to be a problem, and Stephen replies, “Oh no I ain’t got no problem with it, if you ain’t got no problem with burnin’ the bed, the sheets,

the pillowcases, everything else when this black-ass motherfucker's gone! Your daddy is rolling over in his goddamned grave!"

As one of his most vile acts of the film, Stephen interrogates and observes Broomhilda until he can tell that Django and Shultz are not slavers and are actually deceiving Candie in order to get Broomhilda to freedom. This act by Stephen is one of the most unfortunate occurrences that the heroes of *Django: Unchained* face. Tarantino chooses to use Stephen instead of the many other white slavers to bring down the scheme of Django and Shultz. Clearly, Tarantino intends for Stephen to be absolutely hated by the audience. However, it is important to remember that this "Uncle Tom" caricature was as rare in reality as Mandingo fighting and was actually used in "defense of slavery. How could slavery be wrong, argued its proponents, if black servants, males (Toms)... were contented and loyal." There were slaves who were forced to help oversee other slaves, but clearly a much more nuanced and complicated relationship existed. Tarantino ignores this for a completely one-sided exaggerated stereotype. In reality, Stephen probably started off as a lowly field slave but worked his way up to the house and then achieved the highest status a slave could – being in charge of the house. This status could afford a man like Stephen certain rights and privileges that nearly any slave would desire. This explains his behavior in a much more realistic and understanding way than Tarantino does. Nevertheless Tarantino allows Stephen to die without being redeemed, an evil, racist black man; his main act is simply the collapsing of Django and Shultz's ruse.

Candie is furious when Stephen informs him that the former slave he

actually admired and a strange foreigner deceive him. Candie then calmly retrieves the skull of a former slave who worked at Candy Land his entire life. The sadistic plantation owner then places the skull on the table where he, Shultz, and Django sit at for dinner. Candie then pulls a saw out and cuts away a piece of the back of skull. He then holds the skull up to show three dimples in the back of the skull and claims that these dimples are in the area most responsible for submissiveness. Candie says that those same three dimples in Galileo or Isaac Newton would be in the area of creativity. He then shouts that Django has the exact same submissive dimples in his skull because all black men do. Just as southerners used religion to justify slavery, they were also known to use pseudoscience. Dr. Susan Branson defines phrenology as, “the science that claimed an individual’s character and talents could be determined by examining the size and shape of the head...” and states that it “arrived in the United States in the early nineteenth century and flourished widely for over half a century” (164). Some scholars also make the interesting revelation that even the anti-slavery movement bought into phrenology. “In Quentin Tarantino’s recent film, *Django: Unchained*, it is the slave owner played by Leonardo DiCaprio who takes up phrenology. In real life it was just as likely to be an abolitionist,” Dr. James Poskett writes (Poskett 1). This faulty science flourished because it gave evidence for people to believe that black people were biologically inferior beings, which led some people to believe they should be enslaved yet some people to believe they should be protected. Despite the fact that phrenology was a highly regarded science all over America and on both sides of the slavery argument,

Tarantino portrays it as a strictly southern element.

Candie then forces Shultz to end the ruse and complete a transaction heavily in Candie's favor. However, when the transaction is complete Candie says, "It is a custom here in the South, once a business deal is concluded the two parties shake hands." Shultz instantly refuses and after a brief back and forth Shultz decides that he would rather kill Candie and die immediately afterwards than allow the South or any of its customs to conquer him or intrude on his character. Even though it is just a handshake, symbolically Candie is bringing Dr. Shultz into the evil of the South, and Dr. Shultz shoots him for it. One of the more interesting parts about this scene is the fact that shaking hands is a custom across America and the world. This scene is about really more about honor and the degradation that participating in a (what Shultz believes to be) dishonorable and immoral culture can have.

No free southern character in this movie is portrayed in a redeemable way. If one were to only watch this movie for their knowledge of the South, he or she would conclude that everyone in the South is evil and only outsiders like Dr. Shultz or slaves like Django have any morals. While entertaining, this movie helps to further condemn the South in the eyes of the rest of the world. It is clear though, that Tarantino's main goal was to degrade the institution of slavery, but he dragged the South down, as well, by not putting in a single moral or redeemable southern character.

The Hateful Eight

The Hateful Eight is a Western that follows eight people trapped in a small cabin to escape an intense blizzard in Wyoming just a few years after the Civil War. Out of the eight characters, two of them are southerners: Captain Chris Mannix and General Sanford Smithers. In typical Tarantino fashion, neither is a “southern gentleman.” Both are officers from the Civil War who did not take defeat gracefully. Captain Chris Mannix is a young gun, a hot shot whose claim to fame was that he helped lead his father’s rogue cavalry after the war was over to continue the killing of northerners and African Americans. When we first see Mannix, he is helpless on the side of the road with the blizzard approaching. He begs for a ride, but he is a southern man with pride and will only beg to a certain extent. Mannix refuses to put on handcuffs in the wagon and even calls out the man offering the ride by saying, “You sure sound tough talking down to a desperate man knee deep in the snow.” Once aboard, he instantly gets in an argument with the only black character in the movie, Major Marquis Warren, who also happens to have fought for the North. The Major doesn’t recognize this southern captain so the other man on board, John Ruth, explains who he is. Ruth says that Mannix is a “nigger hating son of a gun” who led Mannix’s Marauders who were “the scourge of South Carolina.” Mannix quickly defends himself by

saying he was fighting for “dignity in defeat, and against the unconditional surrender.” Ruth continues to insult Mannix, so Mannix says “Well Mr. Ruth, you sound like you got an axe to grind with The Cause.” Tarantino capitalizes The Cause in his screenplay, clearly referencing *The Lost Cause*, which is important to understanding the characterization of Chris Mannix. Ruth responds again discounting Mannix’s work in the Cause saying, “The Cause of a renegade army? Bunch of losers gone loco, you bet I do. Wrapped yourselves up in a rebel flag as an excuse to kill and steal.” The conversation takes another interesting turn when Mannix replies with, “Sounds to me you been readin’ a bunch of newspapers printed in Washington D.C.” Tarantino then steers the conversation subtly to allow the audience to truly wonder whether or not all of the things Ruth said about Mannix’s Marauders was true or made up in the northern press.

However, Mannix then puts his racist sentiments on full display by saying, “When niggers are scared, that’s when white folks are safe.” Of course, the black northern Major on board finds this offensive and pulls a gun on him as a warning. Captain Mannix quickly backs down and says, “Oh come on now y’all got me talking politics. I didn’t wanna” with a large smile on his face. The Major himself, despite being the most sympathetic and likeable character in the film, lowers himself in this conversation. He says he joined the war not to free enslaved African Americans but instead “to kill White Southern Crackers.” Captain Mannix

talks down to not only The Major but to every other person he encounters as well until General Sanford Smithers is introduced.

As soon as Captain Chris Mannix lays eyes on General Sanford Smithers, his demeanor completely shifts. He is ecstatic to see him and asks “Is that General Sanford “don’t give a damn” Smithers I see?” He follows with, “Can I get you some coffee? How about a blanket? You know what you can have mine.”

General Smithers is an old white haired man who sits in the same chair for the entire movie without getting up once. Captain Mannix tends to his every need like a child with a sick parent. He asks permission to take a seat by him and General Smithers jokes, “well according to the Yankees it’s a free county.” They discuss the war as Captain Mannix says his father used to have different ideas about how Jefferson Davis should have used the armed forces of the Confederate States of America. General Smithers replies, “I never knew your father son, but I always respected his resolve.” Both clearly have an extremely hard time accepting the defeat of the South in the Civil War, and both still hold very racist sentiments. The Major is enters the cabin shortly after the conversation between the Mannix and Smithers, and General Smithers looks completely disgusted to see him. Captain Mannix asks him if he knows who that black man is and General Smithers replies with “I don’t know that nigger, but I know he’s a nigger and that’s all I need to know.”

Finally, Major Marquis Warren attempts to have a conversation with General

Smithers. As it turns out, they shared a battlefield in the Battle of Baton Rouge. General Smithers, who is wearing his confederate uniform, will not converse directly with Major Warren, who wears his coat from his northern uniform, and uses Captain Mannix as a middleman in conversation. Captain Mannix is very protective over General Smithers with this northern black soldier present. The Major asks him about a group of northern black soldiers that were captured in the Battle of Baton Rouge but were killed. General Smithers says that he doesn't acknowledge "niggers in northern uniforms." He also screams at Warren, "We didn't have the time or the food nor the inclination to care for northern horses and least of all for northern niggers, so we shot them where they stood!" The black man then says that is how General Smithers got the nickname "bloody nigger killer of Baton Rouge," and then Captain Mannix breaks up the conversation.

General Smithers represents the South, The Old South that is too far-gone. He is an old man who has all but given up on life. While Captain Mannix fought on the same side as General Smithers and shares similar sentiments, Tarantino portrays him slightly more progressive. Captain Mannix is able to have calm, normal conversations with Major Warren and even ends up partnering with him towards the end of the film. General Smithers, however, never sets his hatred aside, which seals his fate. The tension is so high between the southern and northern officers that one of the characters that is not from America suggests, "Now gentleman, since we may be trapped here close together like for a few

days, may I suggest a possible solution? We divide Minnie's in half. The Northern side and The Southern Side." They all agree that this may work, but it does not seem necessary once Smithers is gone. It is clear that Major Warren cannot forgive General Smithers for all of the innocent black lives he took in the Battle of Baton Rouge, and it is also clear that even if General Smithers does not desire forgiveness nor does he express regret. Warren taunts General Smithers by putting a gun next to his hand and then telling a story that may or may not be true about The Major torturing and sexually exploiting General Smithers's son. General Smithers listens in utter terror and disgust as he imagines his own son being forced to give oral sex to a black man while naked in the freezing cold snow. Finally, General Smithers cannot bear to listen any longer, so he reaches for the gun and is shot dead by The Major before he has a chance to aim.

Tarantino's use of these two Confederate officers encourages the audience to see the differences between the two. If Tarantino had put just one racist Confederate soldier in the film, the audience would by and large dislike him. However, portraying General Smithers to be the ultimate hate monger allows Tarantino to carefully craft Captain Mannix as hopeful and almost misunderstood. Captain Mannix lives until the end of the film because of his partnership with The Major while General Smithers dies because of his unyielding hatred for the same Major and black people in general.

Captain Mannix, representing the New South, goes through a character shift

after Smithers dies. Mannix does not attack The Major as one would expect. Shortly after, The Major has the remaining characters up against the wall with their hand up with his guns pointed at them because someone poisoned the coffee. Finally, The Major decides that Mannix was not the one to poison the Coffee, so he says “Chris Mannix, come over here on this side. Take this gun out my holster.” Tarantino’s choice of the word “side” here very deliberate. Mannix is nervous that it is a trick at first, but then accepts Major Warren’s offer and finally goes over to the “good” side of the room, finally leaving the Old South behind. Tarantino continues to show Mannix’s character shift when both Mannix and The Major are shot. Mannix asks The Major, “How you doing old boy?” very sincerely. After Major Warren answers his question in detail, he then asks Mannix “How you doin?” However, as soon as Mannix goes to answer, The Major cuts him off and says, “I was just being sarcastic. I don’t give a fuck about your leg.” The New South in America represents hope and promise for a better future that never came. While Mannix was definitely less racist and despicable than his Old South counterpart, he still ends the film far from redeemed. When someone mentions an army, he snaps, “My daddy led an army. He led a renegade army fightin for a lost cause! He held up to four hundred men together after the war with nothing but their respect in his command.” He clearly still has no reservations or regrets in supporting a cause that continued to kill after an ended war.

Tarantino's South

Quentin Tarantino's South is not one based in reality. Never receiving a true education, he learned about the horrors of slavery and about southern culture not from a history book but movies. He chooses to continue to further degrading stereotypes of the South instead of learning more about the place he is representing in film and giving fair or accurate representation. Tarantino films are filled with murderers, psychopaths, bank robbers, and assassins, but Tarantino uses the South to create even his most vile or idiotic characters. When creating characters such as Zed and Maynard from *Pulp Fiction* or Buck and Jasper from *Kill Bill*, Tarantino uses the South to make the rape more believable or realistic. In his mind, only southern hillbillies would savagely rape a man because these are the things he learned when getting his education from movies like *Deliverance*. When creating his dumbest character to date in Sheronda, he used the South to make it understandable why she would be so dumb. When creating savage brutes with a sense of honor like Budd or Raine, he uses the South to establish not only the negative qualities of being overly violent and unsympathetic but also the sense of pride that Tarantino views the South as having. Hate filled racists such as Big Daddy, Calvin Candie, and General Smithers simply had to be southern in Tarantino's creations. He has northern or western characters say the N-word many times throughout his films, but they are almost never established as racists. Finally, the one character that somewhat

sticks out is Tarantino's final southern character to date. Captain Chris Mannix is a vile racist murderer in the beginning of *The Hateful Eight*, but Tarantino intentionally shifts his character. Though the shift is small, Mannix is Tarantino's first and last glimmer of hope in southern representation. Maybe this is a very small crack in the armor, a sign of growing maturity and responsibility for the area he is portraying that Tarantino never showed before.

As Dr. Kathryn McKee and Dr. Deborah Barker write in their book, *American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary*, I "do not mean to suggest that we have access to a real, historically knowable South or an authentic southernness that has somehow been corrupted or romanticized by Hollywood" (2) The exact definition of the American South will and can be debated for the rest of time. However, Quentin Tarantino's portrayal of people from the geographic South still very much affects the national perception of what the South truly is. I also wish to make clear that while I do believe Tarantino's portrayal of the South is unfairly stereotypical, I understand there are things he accurately portrayed in some fashion. The South still very much suffers from a lack of education and wealth. Misogyny stemming from past traditions still exists in parts of the South and in certain generations. Racism has not gone away – in the South or in America. The clear issue is not that Tarantino chooses to put these negative qualities in some of his southern characters. It is that he chooses to *only* put these qualities in his southern characters. *Django: Unchained* could have featured a southerner as the intelligent and kind Dr. King Shultz. In *Jackie Brown*, Sheronda could have been the girl who is just wisely using Robbie for his money. However, Tarantino's own

lack of education, knowledge of the South, and interest in exaggerations lead him to continue his extremely negative southern stereotypes. Quentin Tarantino is frequently quoted as saying he will only make ten films in his lifetime, so he will make two more total if he sticks to his word. It is still to be seen whether or not Tarantino's slight shift with southern representation seen in Captain Chris Mannix will continue in his next and final works or if he will succumb to his routine and continue to unfairly stereotype the South.

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