

Kill bill as a feminist statement assignment



Feminism, in general terms, is a movement for women's empowerment. It comprises a wide range of social, cultural and political movements and is concerned with gender inequalities and equal rights for women. Feminist movement has generated feminist theory which puts feminist ideas into theoretical background. It aims at understanding the nature of inequality and focuses on gender politics, power relations and sexuality.

It explores a broad scope of themes such as discrimination, stereotyping, objectification, especially sexual one, oppression and patriarchy. Feminist literary criticism derived from feminist theory and it deals with traditions and conventions of patriarchy, a social system in which, from the feminist point of view, men hold all the power. The dominance and superiority of men over women which result from this social construct exist in literary, historical and cultural contexts.

Feminist criticism studies texts and considers the approaches to women's portrayal and position in the text. From this particular point of view, a feminist text, a work of literature or a film, needs to possess certain features and stress particular issues such as encouragement of female empowerment and abandonment of the stereotypical way of portraying a woman, it should challenge gender role model and a patriarchal system of society. In 2003, an American film director Quentin Tarantino, "Reservoir Dogs" his fourth film "Kill Bill", which was released in two installments, "Kill Bill: Volume 1" in 2003, "Kill Bill: Volume 2" in 2004. During the press conference before the premiere of "Kill Bill: Volume 1" in August 2003, Tarantino was asked if he considered his film "a feminist statement" since it was dominated by strong women. He answered "Erm, I would probably use the word 'girl power' (www. Camera.

Co. UK) which has generated a great deal of heated debate among feminists. The structure of “ Kill Bill” is based on the structure of a novel. It is divided into two volumes, with five chapters each.

It tells the story of The Bride aka Black Mamba aka Beatrice Kiddo, who takes revenge on Bill, her former lover and master at the art of assassination. , and also on his subordinates , the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad (D. Iv. A. S) for trying to murder her and her unborn baby during her wedding rehearsal (volume 1, chapter 2). They kill everybody present In the church and The Bride is the last one to be assassinated. Before she manages to tell 8111 he Is the baby’s father, he shoots her In her head. However, The Bride survives and falls Into coma of which she comes out after four years.

She finds out that she had lost her baby and Is determined to take revenge on the assassins who led her to that point. In order to analyses the film from the feminist point of view, It Is necessary to mention the term of “ the male gaze”, Introduced by feminist film theory. The term “ the gaze/ look” generally refers both to the way all audience views he people presented In different forms of visual culture and to the gaze of those appearing in visual texts . Feminist film criticism theory has pointed to ” the male gaze” predominantly present in Hollywood cinema.

Laura Mulled, a British film theorist and maker, in her essay “ Visual Pleasure And Narrative Cinema” argues that a cinema provides a spectator with different pleasures, like chipolatas, (587) which Is a pleasure Trot looking an a Intercalation Walt n ten male actor appearing In a value medium, however, she believes it is only true for a male spectator . “ The male gaze” roses the

audience to perceive the action and characters from the male perspective , which sexually objectifies women and exhibit unequal power relationship.

She points out that “ In a world of sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/ male and passive/ female. “(Mulled 589) In this regard, cinema oppresses women , not only those being looked at, but also female spectators who do the looking. Taking it into consideration, “ Kill Bill” seems to be quite innovative. Although it is an action film which is traditionally directed at a male spectator, it does not employ “ the male gaze”. Female characters are portrayed in a manner that may be viewed as breaking the convention of the genre.

The stereotypical image of a woman in an action film is reducing them to the position of sexual objects rather than subjects with their subjective way of thinking. As Mulled notices: The determining male gaze projects its phantasm onto the male figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-news. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle... Olds the look, plays to and signifies male desire “(Mulled, 589) Women are generally portrayed as flat characters, constructed in a way that would meet a male heterosexual spectator’s expectations and epiphanies. The role they perform is simply decorative. However ,” Kill Bill ” moves away from this practice. Female characters are very attractive but, at the same time, they are not reduced to the status of sex symbols. Their sexuality is hidden in a way, it is not

overemphasized and does not create an opportunity for a male spectator to get sexual pleasure from looking at them.

The clothes the women are wearing are not gendered, they resemble rather a kind of elegant modern armor and do not evoke any sexual connotation. The Bride's most memorable outfit is her yellow and black jumpsuit, which seems to suggest she is deadly dangerous, like poisonous animals. An interesting example of playing with "the male gaze" in "Kill Bill" may be found in the scene in which Bud (Michael Madsen), Bill's brother manages to enable The Bride from killing him and shoots her in the chest with rock salt (Volvo, chapter 7). While The Bride is lying on the ground, Bud is kneeling beside her and "the gaze" appears- they exchange looks. The whole scene is constructed in a classic western film manner. Beatrice looks very fragile, Bud is masculine, the position of their bodies suggests male dominance and female passivity. When Beatrice spits into Bud's face, a spectator expects him to wipe his face with a superior smirk, however, he does something else. He spits back with a heavy load of thick saliva and makes a comment "I win".

Paradoxically, it reveals his weakness and feeling of inferiority, he is very proud to have captured a dangerous woman and cannot resist the temptation to humiliate her. The whole scene does not evoke any sexual connotations and is a kind of the reversal of "the male gaze". The issue of power relations present in the scene mentioned above, is frequently accentuated in "Kill Bill". The most explicit example is the relation between The Bride and her male counterpart Bill (David Carradine), who has all the features of a patriarchy figure.

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Bill is a very authoritarian person, he manipulates people, especially women, cynically slung tenet emotions to make them moment to Nils orders, like it is illustrated by his relationship with Ell Driver(Daryl Hannah). Beatrice Kiddo used to be his pupil whom he mastered in the art of assassination and was his lover as well, however, she managed to free herself from dependency on men and become a self- assured woman who do not need a male authority to help her create and define herself.

The moment she does that, she assumes the power and takes the dominant position. Bill's weaknesses are exposed, it is him who is driven by emotions and " overreacts", as he calls it. His attempt at killing Beatrice was caused by his hurt leaning, after she abandoned him to start a new living with another man. Their last (Volvo. 2. , last chapter) meeting, preceding their duel, reveals his real nature, ruled by male ambition. In order to find out the true reason for her betrayal he shoots her with a dart filled with truth serum.

After she reveals the truth about her pregnancy and decision not to let her child be born into the world of crime and violence, a spectator could expect they will resolve to stay together especially bearing in mind that The Bride's daughter, B. B. (Pearl Haney-Sardine) was saved after the massacre in he church and lives with Bill. Nevertheless, The Bride has freed herself from an influence of Bill, she also rejects the typical model off family and after a fight she kills him. In the end he salutes to her and seems to admit it is her who has a superior position in their relationship.

Bill is only one of the examples of male inferiority in comparison to moral and physical supremacy of women. The Bride is obviously the strongest

female character, nevertheless, she is only one of the whole gallery of dominant female figures. They are portrayed as multidimensional harassers, with their past and psychological profile. Their cruelty is in a way explained by the story of their lives and a spectator sympathizes with them whereas the overall image of the majority of male characters in " Kill Bill" is fairly negative. They are full of vices, they are driven by primitive forces and lack any respect towards women.

Moreover, they are punished by women for their inappropriate attitude towards women. The examples are numerous , including Beatrice killing Buck (Michael Bowen) who has been selling sexual access to her body as she laid comatose, as well s assassinating a man who had just paid Buck for raping her(Volvo. L, chapters) . Furthermore, another illustration of female empowerment is the case of O-Rene Sushi (Lucy Lieu) who becomes the leader of Tokyo gangs. After one of the bosses Tanana (June Kumara) expresses his disagreement and offends her, she decapitates him, stressing her new dominant position in the world of Japanese crime.

The only positive male figures appearing in "Kill Bill" are Hatters Hanna (Sonny Chubb) , a swordfish who breaks an oath he has made not to produce any tools that kill, urges a sword for her. Another positive figure is Pap Me (Gordon Lieu), a legendary martial arts master who trains her and whose tutelage turn out to play a crucial role in The Bride's life twice - once, she is able to rescue herself from the buried coffin, second time she uses Five Point Palm Exploding Heart Technique, to kill Bill.

What needs to be emphasized, is the fact that Hatters Hanna and Pap Me do not belong to the Western culture and simultaneously, are not representatives of the patriarchal structure of society associated with Western world by feminists. In contrary to the active relations between men and women, the relations between women are embedded with mutual respect, even if deeply hidden, and to some extent, a feeling AT loyalty related to Dealing a woman. In an aspect AT women's solitary is illustrated in numerous ways, for example in the scene of the duel between The Bride and O-Rene (Volvo. , chapter 5), when the latter apologizes for underestimating and mocking at the former one. Moreover, even The Bride's enemy, Ell Driver (Darryl Hannah) who is jealous of Bill, reveals her respect and admiration for The Bride, by means of assassinating Bud(Volvo. 2, chapter 9) . As she explains to Bud before he dies, The Bride , whom she considers dead , was the greatest warrior Ell has ever known and did not deserve to have been killed by such a pathetic figure as Bud. Another good illustration of the point is the scene in which Beatrice finds out she is pregnant(Volvo. 2, last chapter).

The woman she is to assassinate, Lisa Wong, Aviatrix's last assignment, agrees to withdraw simply because of the fact Beatrice is pregnant. If it was a man it would never be possible for Beatrice to convince him to give up on the clash. "Kill Bill" is innovative not only by means of creating a new image of a woman in an action film, it breaks new ground in terms of presenting a new image of a mother. Throughout the whole film, the main driving force giving The Bride the strength and determination is the will to take revenge

for, as she believes, killing her baby. The issue of maternity is highly debatable among feminists.

One of the aspects is single motherhood, still condemned by a society. "Kill Bill" presents a new image of a single mother, who would do anything in order to be with her child, regardless the amount of pain she has to bear. One could even claim that it is the motherhood that moves the plot and signifies the most important moments in the film. The first one is the moment Beatrice finds out she is pregnant. In the aforementioned scene, in which Beatrice is supposed to kill Lisa Wong, she appears at the door the moment Beatrice interprets the result of the pregnancy test to discover she is going to have a baby.

The woman breaks into the hotel room and, while Beatrice and Lisa are aiming at each other with their guns, Beatrice reveals to Lisa she is pregnant and begs her to go away. At this particular point she makes her first sacrifice on behalf of her unborn daughter, because she is aware that not fulfilling the assignment is highly unprofessional and will not be easily forgotten by Bill whom she decides to leave in order to save her child from the influence of the crime world. Another moment, in which maternity unifies women hostile to each other is the fight between Beatrice and Veering Green (Vicar A.

Fox). In the middle of their vicious fight, Veronica's daughter arrives home and it makes the two women stop in order to enable the little girl from eyeing her mother in such a situation. Furthermore, the moment The Bride finds her daughter B. B. Perfectly safe, living with her father Bill, she is so determined to keep her only for herself that she does not hesitate to kill Bill

in order to protect her daughter from the negative influence not only of the criminal world of hired assassins, but also from the patriarchal concept of a family.

The next morning after her fight with Bill, she cries hysterically on the motel bathroom floor and she seems to suffer after her lover's death, but as the camera moves closer it turns out that she is constantly repeating "Thank you", happy and grateful for staying alive and having her daughter back. The importance of motherhood in the film is very much stressed by the exit quote : " The lioness has rejoined the cub. All is right in the Jungle. "(Kill Bill Volvo. 2, Last Chapter) To summaries, " Kill Bill" has all the features of a feminists statement.

It presents the dominance of strong impressive women who are contrasted with weak, morally inferior men. The Tamale snatchers are assuming their position of power and finds a new place in the patriarchal world of men. The film rejects gender stereotypes and seems to redefine a woman by merging two aspects-being a warrior and a mother. However, it would be difficult to call it an iconic feminist film, bearing in mind the words of the director, Tarantino, who asked about his popular success replies:" I don't think about the audience.

The audience is above all me; I'm my own audience. I make films for film lovers like me. The question I ask myself is,' What would I pay \$7 to seeer([http://www. Festival- Cannes. FRR/en/newarticle14/42898. HTML](http://www.Festival-Cannes.FRR/en/newarticle14/42898.HTML)).

Probably it would be more reasonable not to treat the message of the film too seriously and instead of that, simply enjoy the play with stereotypes and

genre conventions. BIBLIOGRAPHY Mulled, Laura. “ Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema. ” Literary Theory : An Anthology.