TARANTINO'S PEOPLE: DECONSTRUCTIONS IN POSTMODERNISM

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Tarantino's People:
Deconstructions in Postmodernism

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Candidate of **Doctor of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the dissertation **Tarantino's People: Deconstructions in Postmodernism** submitted by me in partial fulfilment of PhD degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

Thesis Title: Tarantino's People: Deconstructions in Postmodernism

The present study analyzes Quentin Tarantino's characters in three of his films in the light of Fredric Jameson's theorization of postmodernism to show that Tarantino's characters are postmodern. The study looks at the characters in *Reservoir Dogs*, *Pulp Fiction*, and *Inglourious Basterds*, and contends that they illustrate the death of the subject through their lack of uniqueness and depthlessness. The subjects that Tarantino creates are ordinary, if not less than ordinary, individuals who strive to raise themselves above the ordinary. They may pick up fights or pretend to be somebodies but they fail to make any impression on the world around them. Tarantino's characters lack depth and hide the lack of depth by putting on elaborate masquerades. Despite the power of the simulacra they create and are surrounded by—strong enough to make the characters believe it to be real—the reality remains that there is no reality to the subjects and thereby shows the waning of affect. The characters are also products of pastiche whereby they are modelled after images of the past and their meaning is actually a carryover from the meanings of the relatively original creations. The characters occupy hyperspaces that turn them into consumers of not just appliances but also the media, information, and knowledge.

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LIST OF FILMS AND CHARACTERS

Reservoir Dogs: 1992 film by Quentin Tarantino about a diamond heist gone wrong.

Joe Cabot: The leader who hires conmen to rob a diamond dealer and who hatches the plan.

Mr. White: One of the robbers who reveals his true identity to the undercover policeman

Mr. Orange: One of the robbers who is, in fact, an undercover policeman Freddy Newendyke

Mr. Blonde: Joe Cabot's longtime associate who kidnaps and tortures a policeman

Mr. Pink: One of the robbers

Pulp Fiction: 1994 film by Quentin Tarantino, presenting in non-linear manner a restaurant robbery, a gang hit, a gangster's date with his boss's wife and the aftermath of a thrown boxing match.

Vince Vega: Played by John Travolta, Vince is a gangster who is killed at the end

Jules Winfield: Played by Samuel L. Jackson, Jules is a gangster who feels he has achieved enlightenment

Marsellus Wallace: Marsellus is a crime boss who is all powerful but who still cannot save himself from being raped

Butch Coolidge: a boxer who double crosses Marsellus but wins his pardon

Fabienne: Butch's partner

Mia Wallace: Played by Uma Thurman, a presumably failed actress, and Marsellus's trophy wife

The Wolf: One of Marsellus's crew who helps gangsters when things go wrong (a problem solver)

Captain Koons: A Vietnam veteran who brings Butch his father's watch

Ringo aka Pumpkin: A robber

Yolanda aka Honey Bunny: Ringo's wife and also a robber

Zed: A hillbilly who rapes Marsellus

Inglourious Basterds: A film about American soldiers on a mission to kill Nazi soldiers who accidentally become part of the plan to kill Hitler

Aldo Raine: The leader of the Basterds, the group of soldiers tasked with killing Nazi soldiers. Played by Brad Pitt

Hans Landa: An Austrian who is hired by Hitler to hunt Jews but switches sides to kill Hitler and bring the war to an end

Private Zoller: A German soldier famed for killing American soldiers and who also acts in Nazi propaganda films

Shosanna: A Jewish girl who spared by Landa from execution finds refuge in her aunt's home and inherits her cinema. She bombs her cinema with the intent of killing Hitler

Bridget von Hammersmark: A British spy who cooks up a plan to kill Hitler

LaPadite: A French farmer who hides a Jewish family

Hitler: German Nazi leader

The Bear Jew: An American soldier famed for killing Nazis

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DEDICATED

To books, their writers, and to tea that makes sense of books

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The study, for me, did not start with the approval of my synopsis. It started two decades ago when I watched *Pulp Fiction* for the first time. Admittedly, the film did not make much sense to me back then, but a certain—at that moment indefinable—quality of the film impressed me and something told me there was much more to it than I could see at the moment. Thus was born my absolute fascination with *Pulp Fiction* and Quentin Tarantino. Tarantino is an ace director in his own right, but somehow, for me, *Pulp Fiction* has remained bigger than Tarantino. This is not to say that the other works chosen here for the study are any less important, less artistic or deep. It is just that my interest in Tarantino started developing with *Pulp Fiction*.

Years later, when I came across literary theories, Tarantino's movies started appealing to me in newer ways and got my interest piqued in analyzing his movies from the perspective of a theory. An interest in postmodernism with an opportunity to teach it offered me a chance to come up with a fascinating perspective to analyze Tarantino's films.

The present study is geared toward analyzing Quentin Tarantino's characters from the perspective of Fredric Jameson's postmodernism. A few words about the title of the study will help clarify the intentions of the study. "Tarantino's People" is a play on *Peschardt's People*, a program hosted by senior correspondent Michael Peschardt that started airing on the BBC in 2006. Other than exhibiting pastiche, a key feature of postmodernism and a main point that will be discussed in detail during the course of the study, the title is also slightly ironic because Peschardt interviews "some of the most interesting and influential personalities" (BBC) and the study is aimed to show that Tarantino's characters are interesting and fascinating as they exhibit the death of the subject. Tarantino's people refers to the characters that Quentin Tarantino has depicted in his films. So the study will be an analysis of the characters to show that they are postmodern in their makeup.

The term deconstruction has been used in the sense of taking apart. It rings of Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction, but it has not been employed in Derrida's notion of the term. Here it simply means taking the characters apart and analyzing their characteristics.

The term postmodernism also needs a little explanation. There is a multiplicity of the notions of postmodernism and key theorists chart their unique courses in the description of postmodernism. To be specific and to do justice to the topic, the study is based on the American Marxist, cultural critic, academic, and prolific writer Fredric Jameson's theory of postmodernism.

The study contends that critically acclaimed and financially successful director Quentin Tarantino's oeuvre has been labelled postmodern without much light being shed on how exactly he is postmodern. Tarantino's labelling as a postmodern director is not grounded in any strictly defined theory and is more of a pop culture gimmick by the media to casually categorize Tarantino's work. Moreover, the existing literature does not discuss Tarantino's characters from the lens of postmodernism. The present study, using Jameson's postmodernism as a reference point, will analyze Tarantino's characters to show that they exhibit the death of the subject, depthlessness, pastiche, waning of affect, nostalgia, and influence of consumer culture.

The rationale for the study also lies in the desire to put Pakistani research alongside the research in the international arena. Working on mainstream American films and using an American theorist's ideas is the outcome of the desire to show the people outside Pakistan that Pakistani scholarship is in tune with the trends in the world and is capable of interpreting contemporary works.

A key reason for undertaking this venture is to discuss Jameson's postmodernism and, through the analysis of Tarantino's characters, explain his conceptualization of Postmodernism—which is viewed as a difficult read—to the Pakistani students of the field.

The significance of the study lies in a number of areas; the foremost being that it discusses Jameson, a pioneer in the thinkers of postmodernism, who is a difficult read, particularly for Pakistani students who lack background knowledge regarding the different movements, theories, and works of art and artists that Jameson alludes to in his theory of postmodernism. The present study discusses Jameson's theory with an explanation of allusions and references to relevant works, thereby making it easier for Pakistani students to grasp Jameson better. This is also significant because of the way

Jameson writes. He has been considered a difficult writer because of his long sentences and complicated flow of thought, so the theoretical framework of the current study will help learners understand Jameson better. The illustration of Jameson's notions and elements of postmodernism through relevant examples from Tarantino's films also explains Jameson's notions and is highly likely to help students understand Jameson better.

The present study is significant in that it raises an issue, which has been touched tangentially in pop media, to academic heights. As the literature review shows, Tarantino's postmodernism has received some attention in terms of being labeled postmodern and his films being referred to as postmodern, but there has been little truly academic debate regarding Tarantino's postmodernism. The present study approaches the issue of Tarantino's postmodernism and armed with Jameson's profound and seminal work in literary theory discusses the issue of Tarantino being a postmodern director through the different characteristics that his characters depict at various times and in varied situations. Thus the study is significant in discussing and establishing Tarantino's postmodernism on academic lines.

What adds to the significance of the study is the fact that it illustrates that films can be employed as texts for academic research at PhD level. While this may not be groundbreaking in terms of the international academic environment, it does hold significance in the Pakistani context where academic research has traditionally been chained to literary texts and more specifically novels. The present study shows that film texts carry meaning and are neither any inferior in quality nor second-grade in terms of the stylistic means through which meanings are conveyed in a work of art. The interdisciplinarity of such research cannot be ignored since such studies will straddle the fields of filmmaking and literature.

The study is also significant in the sense that Pakistani opinion makers are generally against foreign (read Western) influence and present Hollywood films as ideologically white-centered discourse meant to aggrandize the white man and to assert his superiority over the lesser races of the East. It shows that the issues that the films talk about are the issue of every citizen of the globalized world. A Pakistani is as much a victim of simulacra as an American. A Pakistani is as much steeped in consumer culture as an American: an instance of which is that the American Black Friday sales are now part of the Pakistani shopping experience with multiple outlets and online stores offering attractive discounts on Black Friday (which is odd for a

largely Muslim nation, the majority of which does not even know what Black Friday or Thanks Giving signify). The study also shows that Tarantino's discourse is counter discourse since it questions the legitimacy of the historical accounts of slavery and the depiction of the Holocaust as the only genocide ever committed, conveniently sidelining the genocide of the Native Americans at the hands of the white man. Thus the study shows the Pakistani viewers the need to be liberal and to approach Hollywood films with an open mind.

At a personal level, I would assert that the study is significant also in that knowledge is for the sake of knowledge. Not every idea in the world is meant to make the world a safer or a more convenient place to live in. Not every work is meant to make the communities of people integrate better. Sometimes, a study may arise out of the desire to explore knowledge and offer interpretations, and I would contend that the present study is significant for the very fact that it shows that such a study can be undertaken.

1.2 Postmodernism: Origin, Terminology, and Link with Modernism

I will not undertake to define what even the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* states as "indefinable" and what has been labelled "ghostly" (Docherty 1), what one of the earliest theorists of postmodernism Ihab Hassan terms "a ghost…[that] eludes definition" (*From Postmodernism*) and what Baudrillard refused to attempt to define: "I cannot explain and I will not explain [postmodernism]" (Watson 54). What adds to the "*semantic* instability" is the "relative youth" of the term and its "semantic kinship to more current terms, themselves equally unstable" (Hassan, *Toward* 87). I will attempt to outline a history of the origin of the term and the phenomenon postmodernism and then mention the views of key theorists of postmodernism over the last few decades to give an idea of the general contours of postmodernism. This will also provide a solid background to set Jameson's postmodernism against.

For the origin of the term and its first uses, the study relies on Hans Bertens, Best and Kellner and other commentators because the goal here is to outline the general history of postmodernism and not to investigate the origin or early uses of postmodernism. When it comes to the key theorists of postmodernism, the study will rely more on the readings of the theorists' works and rely less on the commentators and experts.

Best and Kellner trace the first instance of the earliest precursor to postmodernism proper to John Watkins Chapman, who in 1870 labeled a painting that he considered "more modern and avant-garde than French impressionist painting" (5) that is postmodern. Rudolf Pannwitz's use of the term in 1917 called for a postmodern man, constructed on the lines of Nietzsche's *Ubermensche*, to overcome the nihilism of the contemporary European culture (Best and Kellner 6). Zima interprets Pannwitz's use of postmodern to signify a postmodern effort to overcome nihilism and decadence by "superman" (Best and Kellner 8). A more widely recognized source of the term and phenomenon postmodernism is D. C. Somervell's summary of the first six volumes of Arnold Toynbee's *A Study of History* and Toynbee's later adoption of the term to differentiate between a time of wars, social turmoil and revolution, and anarchy that set-in, in 1875, as per Toynbee, as opposed to the progress, rationalism and stability of the previous modern age (Best and Kellner 5). Charles Jencks also acknowledges Arnold Toynbee for making the first move towards a proper theoretical description of postmodernism even though he cites the first uses of postmodernism to "a throwaway challenge in 1875" and to Federico de Onis's *Antologia de la Poesia Espanola e Hispanoamericana* in 1934 (*What* 20). Ihab Hassan also finds that the term postmodernism owes its origin to de Onis and that Dudley Fitts used it for his *Anthology of Contemporary Latin-American Poetry* published in 1942 (*Question* 31). According to Hassan, Toynbee only picked up the term in 1947(*Question* 31). Jeanne Willette, however, awards Toynbee the honor of coining the term post-modern. Thomas Docherty credits Toynbee with using the term in 1939 having prefigured it in 1934(2). Whether or not Toynbee coined the term he did not develop any detailed notion of postmodernism because he was more interested in history. Also, his timeline for postmodernism was off the mark, but he clearly identifies a feature that became essential to the later figurations of postmodernism, i.e., a rupture with the previous age and pluralism and a world culture" (Jencks, *What* 20).

According to Tim Woods, the term Postmodernism originated in the field of architecture and appeared in an article *The Post-Modern House* by Joseph Hudnut in 1949 (99). Margaret A. Rose takes the date of the first use of postmodernism by Hudnut back to 1945 and adds that Hudnut was more ultra-modern than postmodern (8). She also says that Hudnut was not really anti-modern because his postmodernism was "an ultra-functionalist version of the modern" (M. Rose 8). The second

occurrence came after more than a decade, courtesy Nikolaus Pevsner. Charles Jencks later brought the term into the mainstream. Moore, for one, attributes the origin of the term postmodernism to architecture and to the proliferous author Charles Jencks. Jencks himself was aware of the people's perception that he was the first to coin the term because he had incorporated the term postmodernism in the title of his work. He clarifies that he "theorized, popularized and made it the name of a book" (Jencks, *What* 22) as his *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, "was the first book to thematise [sic] a post-modern movement" (Jencks, *What* 22) but he did not coin the term.

In 1957 Rosenberg used postmodern to explain the changes taking place in contemporary society whereby the postmodern man was becoming a dispensable part of a universal and commodified mass culture (Best and Kellner, 12).

Hans Bertens is of the opinion that the inquest into the origin started with the publication of Michael Köhler's *Postmodernismus: EIN begriffsgeschichtlicher Überlick* in 1977 (20). Bertens summarizes the results, as reported by Wolfgang Welsch, "'postmodern' was used as early as the 1870s and 'postmodernism' made its first appearance in the title of a book in 1926 [*Postmodernism and Other Essays* by Bernard Iddings Bell]. 'Postmodern' resurfaced in 1934, in 1939, and in the 1940s. From then on sightings begin to multiply" (20). Stuart Sim acknowledges Bernard Iddings Bell's use of postmodern but feels that his notion of anti-modernism did not survive in the later theories of postmodernism (viii). Bertens feels that Olson after participating in a radically anti-modern manifestation staged by John Cage at Black Mountain College in 1952 went on to repeatedly use the term postmodern in his attempts to identify anti-modern strains in artistic and cultural works. Olson's anti-modern revolt was meant to "recapture the possibility of pristine experience" (Bertens, H. 21). His was essentially an anti-humanist view which wanted to see man free of rationalist tradition and thereby able to have an authentic experience of the world and being. Publishing *Mass Society and Post-Modern Fiction* in 1959 Howe did not share any optimism regarding Olson's view of the possibility of freedom in postmodernism rather he found the breakdown of "social and intellectual categories", fluidity and "shapelessness" of the fiction of the 1950s to be a cause for concern as postmodern was happy to report the fragmentation without attempting to outline a way to redemption (Bertens, H. 22). Howe sees in postmodernism "an erosion of traditional centers of authority, a neglect or debasement of traditional ceremonies, a

widely shared passivity, a loss of strong beliefs, of ‘causes” (Fokkema and Bertens 13). Like Jameson would do, later on, he pointed out that postmodernism creates a situation where representation becomes extremely difficult as order can be represented easily but shapelessness not so.

Economist Peter Drucker did not have a name for the phenomenon but identified a shift in contemporary society. In his 1957 publication, he states that, "At some unmarked point during the last twenty years we imperceptibly moved out of the Modern Age and into a new, as yet nameless, era" (Best and Kellner 7). Strangely, he labels it a nameless era although he uses the term postmodern in the title of his work, *The Landmarks of Tomorrow: A Report on the New Post-Modern World.* He took a positive rather optimistic view of the emergence of this new society and pinned hopes on it to end poverty and to usher in an era of peace and prosperity. Technology and technological innovation were, for Drucker, a key feature of this new society and these were meant to be agents of affirmative transformation.

While Drucker did not take a negative view of technology in terms of the dangers it poses, he nevertheless acknowledged that there was a negative face to technology. C. Wright Mills, in 1959, took a negative view of the postmodern society. Drawing a similarity of the times with the changeover from Antiquity to The Dark Ages, he opines that the world is witnessing a shift from the modern to the post-modern period. In this new era, previously valid thoughts, feelings, and notions such as Marxism and liberalism, would be useless and a new set of sensibilities would be required to grapple with the realities of the new world. He feared personal liberty would diminish and the world would see human beings becoming mechanical beings that only follow directions. Toynbee and Drucker had a sociological bias in their work and did not focus theoretical dimensions of the upcoming postmodern age. It was left to Huston Smith in 1961 to talk about the emergence and salient characteristics of the "post-modern mind" conceptual paradigms in science, philosophy, theology and also the arts. He asserted that reality is "unordered and ultimately unknowable" (Best and Kellner 9) in the post-modern world. But even Smith did not unravel the features of the new society in any detail.

British historian Geoffrey Barraclough, in 1964, underscored the need to set difference as the key to ascertaining the characteristics of the postmodern age. He said that theorists should stop looking for continuity between the modern and the post-modern and instead look for differences. "What we should look out for as significant

are the differences rather than the similarities, the elements of discontinuity rather than the elements of continuity" (Best and Kellner 9). He proposes the term postmodern for the new era and identifies revolutionary developments in science and technology, resistance in the Third World against imperialism and transition from individualism to mass society and new forms of culture.

After occasional uses in the 1940s and 50s, the term postmodernism gained relatively widespread usage in the 60s with the explosion of pop art, rock music, film culture, and similar cultural forms. These new ways of artistic expression forced theorists and critics to come up with a new set of values to explain the emerging trends as the modern theoretical frameworks could not explain these works and this was the rise of the theories of postmodernism proper.

While Ihab Hassan takes credit for using the term with Fiedler albeit with "a touch of bravado" (Hassan, *Question* 31) and giving it "premature approbation" in the 1960s, J. W. Bertens is wary of Hassan's claim of using the term in the 1960s and says it was some years before the term became mainstream (37). Postmodernism's maturation as a theory took off with Hassan, Leslie Fiedler, and Charles Jencks and later dominated the world of literary theory and cultural studies.

The views of different theorists regarding the origin of postmodernism show the elusive nature of the "complex cultural mesh" that is postmodernism (Berry 169). Though Philippa Berry is talking about the impact of postmodernism on religion, her views can be applied to the various notions of postmodernism to say that "neither of these contrasting perspectives, of despair and of hope, can be unequivocally dismissed, since each represents a relative form of truth or value" (169). Postmodernism is like a mural to which a number of artists have contributed and it has to be understood as an amalgam of different views instead of attempting to reduce it down to being only the notion of just one theorist.

The diversity of opinion that postmodernism imbibes is mirrored in the multiplicity of the way term is presented orthographically. The study will now offer a look at the chief ways of writing the "disputatious moniker" (Jencks, *What* 22) and the shades of meanings they refer to. The study will also attempt to choose one orthographic way it would want to represent postmodernism. This is not to side with a particular side of the theorists but this desire to arrive at a consistent spelling is for the sake of clarity. The matter is not limited to the spelling. Each way of writing the name of the theory represents a particular perception of the theory. Arriving at a standard

spelling for the study will also reflect the study's view of postmodernism and help the reader understand better.

Charles Jencks summarizes the attitudes various spelling, capitalization, and hyphenation of the term exhibit. It is hyphenated as post-modern to show its pluralism. It is written as Post Modernism to mean "cultural movement [Jencks's italics]" (*What* 21). When it is written in the lower case as post modern it refers to "the social and economic condition" (Jencks, *What* 21). It is also streamlined as postmodern, as Ihab Hassan and Fredric Jameson do, to the scathing displeasure of Jencks who finds it "streamlined like a rocket" (*What* 21). At times it is written as Po-Mo which Jencks finds to be "sarcastic even dismissive" (*What* 21). It is also written as PoMo. Ihab Hassan scoffs at this and also at the "Yuppies" who use the term like this "insouciantly" (Hassan, *From Postmodernism*). The lower case term, pomo, is also used. Elise Salem Manganaro talks of "pomo speak" to show that sometimes postmodernism is derided for its vague debates (304).

Decio Torres Cruz notes the lack of consensus on writing the term that it is either hyphenated or elided by theorists, put in the lower case, or capitalized by still others and offers a detailed explanation of the meanings contained in each orthographic representation. He says that postmodernism written as the elided lower, i.e., postmodern refers to the Deconstructivist movement and when it is capitalized and hyphenated as Post-Modernism or Post-Modernists it refers to the movement and its protagonists (Cruz 9-37).

The present study will use the orthographic representation postmodernism as this is the way Fredric Jameson, the theorist the study bases its discussion on, prefers the orthographic representation and term to other representations and terms.

Orthography is not the only problem of postmodernism. The very term postmodernism is a topic of debate. Ihab Hassan finds the word "awkward [and] uncouth" (*Toward* 87). The problem lies in the fact that the term postmodernism "evokes that it wishes to surpass or suppress, modernism itself" (Hassan, *Toward* 87). Ihab Hassan is so uncomfortable with the term that he even plays with the possibility of using such designations as The Atomic, Space, or Television Age, and the Age of Indetermanence for the phenomenon (*Toward* 87).

Berry Sandywell has a unique and interesting take on the term. In his definition of postmodernism, he stretches the term out to PMC PMC, “As a large part of the theoretical output of postmodern culture is produced, disseminated and

consumed by the 'professional middle class' (PMC) domiciled in the advanced economies, the full acronym should read PMC PMC ('Postmodern culture of the PMC)" (Sandywell, *Postmodernism* 479).

The word modern, in its Latin form "modernus", can be traced back to the fifth century when the word was used to refer to the Christian present and differentiate it from the heathen past of the ancient Rome (Habermas 3). The word came into English either via the Latin modernus or the French moderne in the fifteenth century. Merriam-Webster Dictionary traces the first known use of the term to 1558. The term came into prominence with the Renaissance as the original meaning of 'just now' (Jencks, *What* 20) was invoked to differentiate the then bright present with the dark past and has continued to be in use to refer to a consciousness of an age that shows its transition from the old to the new by relating itself to antiquity (Jencks, *What* 20, Habermas 3). This sense of just now has since then been integral to the uses of modern and even today modern in so many situations refers to the present.

Postmodernism came into being when so many of the art movements had faced decline. Surrealism, nihilism, Dadaism had seen their glory-days and were turned into dust. The advent of postmodernism was mingled with the fear of its death. The just now of modern meant transience in a world that changed too suddenly and too frequently and too fast. The prefix post added a sense of longevity by playing with the very notion of time. Modern was 'just now' and the addition of post turned the time into 'just now plus the future' (Jencks, *What* 20). This was certainly paradoxical, but it was also immensely clever as it arrested the march of time and offered a protection against the cruelties of aging into a bygone concept.

Italian critic Remo Ceserani feels that there is a need for a "careful distinction" (375) between postmodernism and postmodernity. He feels that thinking of the postmodern as an ism, i.e., postmodernism would give the connotation that postmodernism is a movement "with a process of awareness and the need to express this awareness as well as call others to share it" (Ceserani 376). This also gives it’s the connotation of having manifestos, reviews, and programs. Seen like this it will stand with other isms like futurism, modernism, surrealism, etc. But postmodernism despite its architectural and literary trends is not really a movement and the contemporary

cultural scene does not allow agendas or manifestos. So Ceserani prefers postmodernity as a more appropriate term for postmodernity refers to a historical period and also to

> changes that have taken place not in our awareness of them or in our ideologies but in the material structure of a society, in its economic organization, in its modes of production, and therefore in the organization of work, the perception of time and space, of the human body and mind, the relations between the sexes, the family and community life, the conception of death—and also in the collective imaginary, that is to say, in the way people see themselves, assess their experiences and project their dreams and utopias, and represent them in stories, poems, pictures, and films. (Ceserani 376)

Thus far there seems to be a simple way to differentiate between postmodernism and postmodernity, but Ihab Hassan explains the two terms in a vastly different manner and the difference between the two terms becomes as murky as the term postmodernism. He uses the term postmodernism "to refer to the cultural sphere, especially literature, philosophy, and the various arts, including architecture", and he employs postmodernity to refer to "the geopolitical scheme" that came into being after World War II (Hassan *Postmodernism*). Seen like this postmodernism is a cultural phenomenon as work in technological, rich societies where the media play a central role. Postmodernity is a global process where opposites like myth and technology, margin and center contest each other.

Ian Buchanan says that despite attempts to standardize the use of postmodernism and postmodernity as meaning "the aesthetic dimension" and the "historical period" respectively have failed to bear fruit (*Periodizing* 375). They may serve a pedagogical function or hold value in the academic environment but have not become universal. Following this lack of unanimity on the views regarding the two terms the study will use the terms the way Jameson uses them. Jameson retains the word postmodernism for the "socio-economic periodization and the cultural designation" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 25).

Any discussion of postmodernism cannot be thorough if it does not delve into the link between postmodernism and modernism. There are multiple views as to how postmodernism relates to modernism, which is why the study considers it suitable at this juncture to present an overview of these views before presenting what theorists like Hutcheon, Eagleton and Jameson’s take postmodernism to be. Ihab Hassan’s

tabular presentation, in *Toward a Concept of Postmodernism*, of postmodernism as a binary opposite of modernism carried a disclaimer that "the dichotomies this table represents remain insecure, equivocal" (592). But the disclaimer was ignored and, to Hassan's regret, the general conceptions of postmodernism were based on using modernism as the axis of postmodernism. The very term postmodern carries modern in it and thereby gives modernism centrality in any understanding of postmodernism. How postmodernism relates to modernism is a "highly contentious" (Nicol 2) issue and a number of possibilities are presented: postmodernism is "a dramatic mutation and rupture" (Best and Kellner 6) with modernism, postmodernism is a continuation of modernism or a unity of opposites, i.e., "postmodernity is a radicalized modernity which remains faithful to itself, and [also that] postmodernity betrays the essence of modernity" (Zima, *Modern* 12). This part of the study will outline some key views regarding how postmodernism relates to modernism.

For William V. Spanos modernism, captured best in the works of Marcel Proust, Stephane Mallarme, W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, and Virginia Woolf, was a revolt against western humanistic tradition and the Aristotelian tradition. Modernism emerging towards the end of the nineteenth century put up a narrative against that of the European middle class. It did not subscribe to the view that man's purpose in the world was to control nature. It also rejected the linearity of narratives and preferred the simultaneity of action. Spanos asserts that postmodernism shares this anti-Aristotelian view, but the reason for postmodern anti-Aristotelianism is different from the one for modernism. Postmodernism's stance against Aristotelian linearity comes from its existentialist critique of the European ethos not, like modernism, an aesthetic rejection. So for Spanos, both modernism and postmodernism are anti-Aristotelian and anti-Western-humanism, though for different reasons.

Spanos mentions Sherlock Holmes as an analogy of the humanistic western ethos. Holmes sets out to solve things and to find out the cause of some aberration. Something has gone wrong and it can be set right and Holmes establishes the cause and sets things right. This is the essential plot of detective stories. Dostoevsky in *Notes from the Underground* and Eliot in *Sweeney Agonistes* deny their audience the traditional Western experience of order being established in the form of a conclusive ending, but their opposition is not on existential grounds and is therefore not postmodern. It is in absurdist writers like Ionesco, Beckett, and Pinter that the

postmodern resistance that is existential in nature begins to take shape. Doyle's Holmes always captures the criminal and solves the most mysterious of crimes, but Mallot in Ionesco's *Victim of Duty* evades capture or even comprehension. A similar issue can be noticed in Beckett's more popular *Waiting for Godot* where nothing happens and Godot remains as elusive at the end of the play as at the start. Spanos's point is that postmodernism is different from modernism as it does not have any remedial agenda that can set things right and also that postmodernism is an elusive concept, unlike modernism which is a clearly -identifiable phenomenon.

Charles Jencks acknowledged by Moore to be among the first proponents of the term postmodernism in architecture takes the view that postmodernism is anti-modernism in that it aims to act against the "hegemony of Modernism (largely a western and late-capitalist formation)" (Jencks, *Notes*). But, for Jencks postmodernism should not be taken as a complete renunciation of all that is modern. Postmodernism should be seen more as "a slide away from its parent rather than an act of patricide, a sometime loyal opposition rather than an anti-modern movement" (Jencks, *What* 16). Jencks asserts that there are differences between modernism and postmodernism, but the two also share features and exist simultaneously. It is because of this line of thinking that he refers to postmodernism as "deepening of Modernism" (Jencks, *What* 16). Madonna is truly postmodern, but her iconic hit *I'm a Material Girl* is an open admission of the materialism of Modernism. This illustrates that postmodernism and modernism are interlinked. The heinous atrocities of the Nazi concentration camps of Auschwitz are not radically different from the indiscriminate killing through "shock and awe" that George W. Bush championed in the Iraq conflict. Jencks's point is that Modernism and Post-Modernism are not watertight compartments. They are "interdependent and mutually defining" (Jencks, *What* 16) He even goes to the extent of saying that the contemporary times can be defined as modern and postmodern and the question of it being either one or the other should be got rid of.

For Brian McHale defining postmodernism for different fields is directly dependent on the conceptions of modernisms for those fields. McHale's assertion is that postmodernism cannot be regarded as a one-size-fits-all explanation of the world. It means different things for different domains as each postmodernized itself in different ways and at different times. This creates an essential link between modernism and postmodernism: "fields where modernisms have been sharply-

defined, conspicuous, aggressive and successful give rise to comparably well-defined postmodernisms. In other fields, those with heterogeneous and contested modernisms, such as film, painting, or literature, the term ‘postmodernism’ is correspondingly optional, dispensable, or problematic” (McHale, *What*).

Ihab Hassan sees an inherent link and connection between modernism and postmodernism. Writing in *Toward a Concept of Postmodern* Hassan says that the term postmodern is a poor choice because it "contains its enemy [modernism] within, as the terms romanticism and classicism, baroque and rococo, do not" (88). Hassan posits that modernism and postmodernism are not poles apart where the later phenomenon or period has no trace of the earlier period. Because "postmodernism, and modernism, even more, are beginning to slip and slide in time, threatening to make any diacritical distinction between them desperate" they should not be thought of as mutually exclusive (Hassan, *Toward* 88). In another place he asserts, "Modernism and postmodernism are not separated by an Iron Curtain or Chinese Wall … . We are all, I suspect, a little Victorian, Modern, and Postmodern, at once” (Hassan, *Toward* 88).

For Hassan critics are governed by their impulses when they seek to define the relation between postmodernism and modernism and this dependence on the impulse leads to "intellectual miseries" (*Postmodern Turn* 214). Critics start looking for sameness and differences governed by their impulse and become blind to the fact that any notion of similarity or dissimilarity, continuity or discontinuity has to come from historical presuppositions and this means that every assertion that critics make is only the subjective opinion of a particular person or school of thought. The critics let themselves be ruled by impulses and arrive at opinions that they want to arrive at and then go to great lengths to try to justify those conclusions. Hassan also believes that difference from modernism is not a measure of postmodernism the way it is of modernism as opposed to Romanticism. Hassan's conclusion regarding modernism and postmodernism is that one should not look at them as two entirely different and distinct or unique phenomena. Postmodernism "polemicizes modernism" (*Postmodern Turn* 215) in a good way that it makes people rethink and reevaluate modernism. So it has opened up the debate regarding the understanding of modernism.

Morawski presents a different point of view on the relationship between postmodernism and modernism as he feels that modernism is not as stable a notion as it is usually taken to be and because it is not a stable notion it causes problems for

thematizing the differences between modernism and postmodernism and it also creates problems for theorizing postmodernism. For Morawski part of the "semantic fuzziness" (1) of postmodernism can be put down to the "ambiguity of the oppositional concept: modernism" (2). Modernism evades a strict definition and, consequently, so does postmodernism. Talking in terms of the art world Morawski traces five distinct versions of Modernism none of which can be merged with another. Modernism 1 is found in the works of the likes of Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier in the 1920s and 1930s that were based on the notion of artistic purity, Modernism 2 is associated with personal style and ornamentation as illustrated by Antonio Gaudi's elaborate Templo Expiatorio de la Sagrada Familia rather than Adolf Loos's simple function-driven buildings (Collins G., "Adolf Loos"), Modernism 3 encompasses all the major avant-garde masterpieces produced between 1890 and 1930s and Modernism 4 is encapsulated in the Theatre of the Absurd and lasts till the 1970s. The confusion is enhanced when Morawski talks about the possibility of another Modernism—Modernism 5—which embraces all the previous modernisms "under the umbrella of the secular cultural trend" (Morawski 2). In this context, it is not surprising that postmodernism has evaded a succinct definition that everyone agrees on.

For Morawski "postmodernism is rather a negative off-shoot of a modern culture" (20). The word negative here is as important as off-shoot. The modern culture promised "Promethean triumphs", but when these became difficult to materialize the "counter-measure" of postmodernism was sought, but this postmodernism due to its "utter conformism" led to "even deeper darkness" (Morawski 20). Whereas modernism sought to lift the civilization to new heights postmodernism pushed it into an abyss because of its characteristic of maintaining the status quo. With its rampant consumerism postmodernism leads to "even deeper darkness" and brings with it "spiritual and biological de-generation" (Morawski 20).

The link between modernism and postmodernism has been discussed keeping in mind the key proponents of the critical debate on the issue. However, due to the wide use of the term, the study feels it important to discuss the notion of the death of modernism separately to showcase the various views that talk in terms of the analogy of death and birth.

The isms have all become wasms. (John Lukacs)

Toynbee, with whom is associated the origin of the term postmodernism, asserts that the death of modernism occurred in 1875. Coming from the one who introduced the term postmodernism the assertion holds strong value. While everyone may not agree with the date Toynbee declared modernism to be dead on, there is a general agreement regarding the death of modernism. Many use the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe, a housing complex initiated by the St. Louis Housing Authority commissioned and designed by Hellmuth, Yamasaki, and Leinweber to offer a residential solution to the city's population, as an event that ushered in postmodernism. Charles Jencks writes in *The New Paradigm in Architecture: The Language of Post-Modernism*: "Modern Architecture died in St. Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972 at 3.32 pm (or thereabouts) when the infamous Pruitt Igoe scheme, or rather several of its slab blocks, were given the final coup de grâce by dynamite" (9). Though Jencks seems to be giving modernism a funeral send off with "Boom, boom, [sic] boom", he sees the economic melt-down of the seventies as evidence of the fact that modernism was not obsolete. Jencks believes that the way the economic crisis was handled by "propping up only the biggest players such as AIG and General Motors" reflected that "Bigness Inc" was a mighty empire in the world and that modernism was still strong (Jencks, *What* 26). Jencks's conclusion regarding modernism's relation with postmodernism is that the critical strain in modernism reflected in works like Eliot's *The Wasteland* may well be labelled "proto-Post-Modern" (28) and it is this "golden thread of continuity" that bridges modernism and postmodernism. Postmodernism is not a "rupture or an anti-modernism" (30). Postmodernism gains from its knowledge of the past for instance of Marx, Darwin, and Ford. It does not buckle down to the oppressive weight of these theories but uses the knowledge to its advantage. So modernism has not really died but continues to live in another form.

C. Wright Mills claims, "We are at the ending of what is called The Modern Age. Just as Antiquity was followed by several centuries of Oriental ascendancy, which Westerners provincially call The Dark Ages, so now The Modern Age is being succeeded by a postmodern period" (165-6). Leslie Fiedler is more explicit about the notion of end and succession and uses the analogy of death and birth to explain the relationship between modernism and postmodernism. One's decay and ultimate death give birth and life to another. He writes, "We are living, have been living for two decades-and have become acutely conscious of the fact since 1955-through the death

throes of Modernism and the birth pangs of Post-Modernism" (Fiedler, 344). He marks the 1950s as the time period when modernism came to an end.

While discussing the various notions of the death of modernism it must be mentioned that not everyone readily accepts the so-called death of modernism. For instance, Amy Hungerford and McGurl do not even recognize postmodernism as a valid tag let alone as the death of modernism. Hungerford writes, "Perhaps it would be better to call this period long modernism, in keeping with McGurl's sense, and my own, that the second half of the twentieth century sees not a departure from modernism's aesthetic but its triumph in the institution of the university and in the literary culture more generally" (416).

The debate on the death of modernism has a sort of parallel in the debate on the death of postmodernism.

It's over (Hutcheon, *Postmodern Afterthoughts* 5)

Andy Warhol is said to have coined the phrase 'fifteen minutes of fame' though there are those who talk about it being a misattribution (Sherwin). Warhol is central to representations of postmodernism in art and his phrase in a way ironically typifies a challenge to postmodernism. The phrase has been applied to postmodernism since it too was famous for fifteen minutes like pop celebrities, trends, and works it engendered and now it is to be condemned to a museum to become like the mummy of Ramses that Baudrillard talks about. Brian McHale offers an interesting explanation of the genesis of the debate on the death of postmodernism. He opines that while modernism was conceived retrospectively in the 1960s—about forty years after the moderns had hit the "high-water mark" (McHale, *What*)—postmodernism always constructed itself as an ism. The question as to what postmodernism entailed started a raging debate as soon as the term postmodernism became popular. Some take this debate to classify the period that postmodernism was to mean that postmodernism was "already over", but this debate is only the outcome of postmodernism's consciousness "from the very outset that it would one day be over" (McHale). Nevertheless, there are a plethora of views regarding postmodernism being a thing of the past so this section intends to look at sample assertions of the debate on, to use a cliché, the death of postmodernism.

Linda Hutcheon is regarded as a key figure in theorizing postmodernism. So it is of immense importance when she takes a 180 degrees turn on her earlier position regarding postmodernism and says in the epilogue of the second edition of her

seminal work *The Politics of Postmodernism* that postmodernism "may well be a twentieth-century phenomenon, that is, a thing of the past" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 165). Her reason for this assertion is that postmodernism has become "fully institutionalized, it has its canonized texts, its anthologies, primers and readers, its dictionaries and its histories" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 165). Moreover, the increase in the digitalization of the world and globalization has transformed the world, the experience of the world and also the experience of language (Hutcheon, *Politics* 181).

Hutcheon is not the first one to ring the death knell of postmodernism. In fact, Josh Toth and Neil Brooks find Hutcheon to be "somewhat late" (209) to hop on the bandwagon of claiming the death of postmodernism. Linda Hutcheon's epilogue to the second edition of her work acknowledges that postmodernism's health—so to speak—was already in question when it was still being theorized. John Frow, for instance, was using the past tense for postmodernism even as Hutcheon's *The Politics of Postmodernism* was almost a year old. With the passage of time, Terry Eagleton and Christopher Norris's views against postmodernism gained traction and it being "passe," "failure [and an] illusion" (Hutcheon 166) started becoming a strong view. This is in addition to a view that postmodernism was not thought by some—Mark McGurl and the Post45 group for instance—as a valid designation or explanation of the changing times after the war. For instance, McGurl classifies the era after the war as "technomodernism, high cultural pluralism, and lower-middle-class modernism" which Delaney terms "the three bastardized, and … institutionalized, descendants of both the experimental high modernism of Joyce and Faulkner and the professionalism and craft of James and Hemingway" (Delaney).

Toth believes that postmodernism has to be thought of as dead because "it was ultimately unable to be what the majority of critics claimed it was: post-ideological" (*Passing* 13). Toth and Brooks feel that postmodernism started waning in the eighties and the death of Beckett in 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Socialist Empire or the terrorist attacks in New York in 2011 can be said to be markers of the death of postmodernism. The point is not which one is the most accurate marker the point is that there is a body of critics who believe that postmodernism is over. Alan Kirby opines that postmodernism is alive in the academy, but outside, in the real world, it is dead. The academy fails to realize that "the terms by which authority, knowledge, selfhood, reality and time are conceived have been altered, suddenly and forever" because of the emergence of new

technologies that reconfigured "the nature of the author, the reader and the text, and the relationships between them" (Kirby, *Death*).

Hutcheon referring to postmodernism writes in her essay *Postmodern Afterthoughts* "But it's all over now—even if the postmodern shadow will be a long one" (10). The categorical tone of the essay is missing when she transforms the same into the epilogue of *The Politics of Postmodernism* second edition. The sentence I quoted at the start of the para is substituted with a relatively meek one, “I now find myself once again wondering if times have changed, if the postmodern is indeed over" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 181). Also, she questions if the changes in the world are a sign of what is to come next. But, right at the end, the proclamation comes again "The postmodern moment has passed" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 181) and she tinkers with the idea if it may be labelled may be a "Net' aesthetic” (*Postmodern Afterthoughts* 10). She ends the epilogue as she does her essay by asking the readers to find an appropriate title for post-postmodernism. It will be interesting to see what is offered as a substitute to postmodern.

Robert Samuels gives the notion of automodernity with the key of this "cultural epoch" being "the combination of technological automation and human autonomy" (175). The youth do not look at pre-programmed technology and human independence as binaries, they turn to automation in order to express their autonomy, and this bringing together of former opposites results in a radical restructuring of traditional and modern intellectual paradigms" (Samuels 175). This idea is akin to Alan Kirby's notion of digimodernism. Moving away from the term post-postmodernism that he had used in *Death of Postmodernism and Beyond* in 2006, Kirby coined the term digimodernism in 2009 (*Digimodernism*) to reflect the impact of computerization on the world. He believes that the digital, be it the internet, computers, films, TV or art has transformed the very notion of textuality. This restructuring of textuality means that the move from postmodernism to digimodernism has been made.

Josh Toth has one of the most vivid views regarding what may supplant postmodernism. He explores an idea in *The Passing of Postmodernism* published in 2010 where he discusses the possibility of a new episteme renewalism as an alternate to postmodernism, but the problem is that despite postmodernism's "much-vaunted death" (Rudrum and Stavris, 207) postmodernism is still alive. The cotemporary, including Toth's "emergent episteme *renewalism* [author’s italics]” (Toth 60),

“continues to be informed by the postmodern” (Rudrum and Stavris, 207). In fact the very basis of renewalism, its eclecticism, its penchant for “perhaps” over the “definitely”, its value for open-endedness echo postmodern ideas. Also, Toth believes that renewalism contains the wake or the mourning of postmodernism and in that postmodernism continues to live on despite its death. So even in renewalism postmodernism lives on. This is the same idea as in *From Postmodernism to Postmodernity: the Local/Global Context:* "What was postmodernism, and what is it still? I believe it is a revenant, the return of the irrepressible; every time we are rid of it, its ghost rises back" (Hassan).

Adam Kelly summarizes the various possible nomenclature for the literature of younger American artists as hybrid fiction by Grassian, American literary globalism by Adams, cosmodernism by Moraru, late postmodernism by Green or post-postmodernism Burn. He is not interested in declaring a winner. He is interested in the deeper message the proliferation of terms conveys that "the narrative of “postmodernism, then” is already under construction" (Kelly).

Postmodernism arouses a variety of emotions ranging from extreme reverence to sheer spite. Ihab Hassan notes that once critics and academics shrugged off postmodernism as "they might shrink from the shadiest neologism" (*Postmodern Turn* xi), but postmodernism withstood the critics condemnation and has now become “a shibboleth for tendencies in film, theater, dance, music, art, and architecture; in literature and criticism; in philosophy, theology, psychoanalysis, and historiography; in new sciences, cybernetic technologies, and various cultural lifestyles" (Hassan, *Postmodern Turn* xi). He says that postmodernism cannot be dismissed as just "another instance of the drecks, fads, and folderol of a consumer society" (Hasan, *Postmodern Turn* xi). It is extremely important because of its eminence in so many walks of life. It was not a fashion that would disappear.

The purpose of mentioning the debate about the relevance of postmodernism in the middle of the second decade of the twenty first century is to acknowledge that a viewpoint exists that postmodernism may not be the most appropriate explanation for the culture and state of affairs in today’s world and refutation of this alleged demise also exist. It is not a purpose of the present study to offer a judgment on these views in terms of an acceptance or a refutation. Just as there are many postmodernisms, just as there are many views regarding the key tenets of postmodernism, there are views about postmodernism being a thing of the past or as relevant a notion to contemporary

society as can be. Ihab Hassan, in *Postmodernism? A Self-Interview* says: "In most lives, there are themes and variations …But we don't really know what perdures, what suffers a sea change" (228). Only time will tell if postmodernism continues beyond the present or it has met its end as I write.

1.3 Key Theorists

Hans Bertens calls it an "undeniable fact" that postmodernism is not a "monolithic phenomenon" and it will be enlightening to see, to use his words, "the various critical constructs called Postmodernism" (10). The study will discuss briefly the concepts of postmodernism given by key theorists of the phenomenon to develop an understanding of postmodernism that will provide the context for deliberating on Jameson's postmodernism.

Architectural theorist and critic Charles Jencks describes himself as protagonist and definer of postmodernism" (*A Short Narrative*) while relying mainly on the manifestations of postmodernism in architecture. His ideas regarding postmodernism are important for he is an influential figure regarding the debates on postmodernism and postmodernism's link with architecture is crucial enough to merit the reader's attention here. Andrea Gern believes him to be instrumental in establishing some definite meaning for the term. Annette Kuhn and Westwell acknowledge the inextricable link of postmodernism with architecture and attribute establishing respect for postmodernism as an important concept to Charles Jencks. Indeed Jencks is a noted scholar on postmodernism and has written a number of respected works such as *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture, Critical Modernism - Where is Post-Modernism Going?, The Story of Post-Modernism, Five Decades of the Ironic,* and *Iconic and Critical in Architecture,* on postmodernism and architecture shedding light on among other things the difficulty of defining the postmodern. Writing in 2010 as part of his attempt to offer some sort of clarity on postmodernism he begins by noticing the irony that percolates underneath all attempts to define postmodernism after so many years. The attempt is made more difficult by the fact that the audience for such attempts at defining the postmodern is so young that it is not aware of the socio-political and economic context that led to the postmodern era and which also asks the question: What is modernism?.

Jencks looks at Post-Modernism (his preferred style of writing the term) as a "plural concept" (T. Woods 99) which blends the demands of function with beauty.

Also important is the notion of "dual coding" whereby the architects present their idea to the other architects who understand the significance of the work and to the general public who look at the utility and function of the building. Jencks employs the method of comparing Modernism and Post-Modernism to arrive at his notion of postmodernism. For Jencks postmodernism is not a "rupture [in Modernism] or an anti-Modernism" (Jencks, *What* 30). It contains within itself the essence of Modernism and also pre-Modernism. There was within Modernism a critical strand, seen in *The Wasteland*, *Ulysses* and *Guernica* that did not acquiesce to the eliminative strain of Modernism. It is in these works that post-Modernism raised its head. Jencks calls them proto-Post-Modern. They link the present with the past and this is what Post-Modernism is for Jencks: a collocation of past, present and future and drawing the links among them. Jencks' postmodernism is steeped in Modernism, a deepening of modernism, but also "the loyal opposition to its father [Modernism]" (Jencks, *What* 36). Modernism and Post-Modernism are "two different orientations [that] complement each other and are often synthesised [sic] or else hybridised [sic] together [to such an extent] that classification becomes difficult, even pedantic" (Jencks, *What* 34).

It is important to note that Jencks does not agree with Jameson's conceptualization of postmodernism. He dismisses Jameson's logic of late capitalism as Late Modernism for he feels that Jameson failed to see that the architecture proliferating through corporations did not have any specific meaning and was deliberately abstract because "a global culture does not know what to signify much beyond the power of capital" (Jencks, *What* 24). The public art of architecture serves some examples of sheer postmodernism, but overall it is late-modernist because of the money to be made by making the building pleasing to the sight. According to Jencks, Jameson erred by failing to see the issue in terms of volume.

Literary theorist Ihab Habib Hassan comes at a crucial juncture for postmodernism. Voices about this "new fiercely contested category" (*Postmodern Turn* xii) were already reverberating in the social and cultural spheres and along came Ihab Hassan to raise some important questions about postmodernism, questions "that postmodernism itself has taught us to raise about itself" (Hassan, *Postmodern Turn* 214). He is not an autocrat forcing his views on people. He has the manner of a philosopher thinking aloud, raising questions which he himself or others would do well to ponder on and answer some day. In 1986 Hassan in the essay *Pluralism in*

Postmodern Perspective is still shy of defining postmodernism, "I can still propose no rigorous definition of it, any more than I could define modernism itself" (503). Hassan never advocated a hardcore theory of postmodernism, but he thought long and hard about it and shaped the debate on postmodernism. His thinking and questions also give a fair idea of the essence of postmodernism “at once signifier and signified, altering itself in the very process of signification" (Hassan, *Postmodern Turn* xii), i.e., postmodernism. Hassan accepts in *The Postmodern Turn* that his work will not provide a satisfying definition of postmodern as his aim is not to define but to outline a theory of the postmodern.

In his seminal essay, *Toward a Concept of Postmodernism*, Hassan adopts the method of asking questions about postmodernism to get the creative juices of critics flowing. In his questions one thing is apparent and that is that he links any conception of postmodernism with modernism. He asks: "how would this phenomenon—let us call it postmodernism—relate itself to such earlier modes of change as turn-of-the-century avant-gardes or the high modernism of the twenties?" (Hassan, *Toward* 84). Hassan believes that "traditions develop, and even types suffer a seachange [sic]" so the prevalence of postmodernism does not suggest a cut-off from the previous ideas. It may be "a significant revision, if not an original *episteme*, of twentieth-century Western societies” (Hassan, *Toward* 84).

Hassan's first thoughts of postmodernism occur in *The Literature of Silence* where he talks about the future of literature that seems to be appearing on the horizon. He feels "whatever is truly new in [the new literature] evades the social, historical, and aesthetic criteria that gave an identity to the avant-garde in other periods” (5). The new literature includes a silence at its roots, but it also springs up into a bundle of immense noise that shows outrage. Both the outrage and the silence are means of rejecting Western history, civilization and also "human identity, the image of man as the measure of all things" (Hassan, *Literature* 5). There is a sense of imminent apocalypse in the violence. The previous way will suffer a great blow and a new one will take its place. As he discusses in *Dismemberment of Orpheus*, the head was dismembered, but it continued to sing. The silence is the absence of sound, but it is the voice of another sort, a voice that shows the distress of the self and that announces a new turn of things. Hassan's later works build on this prefiguration of postmodernism.

A look at the proponents of postmodernism makes Hassan feel that postmodernism cannot be classified as "a movement, paradigm, or school" for the proponents "are far too heterogeneous" as Lyotard, Ionesco, Borges, Marquez, Pynchon, Deleuze, Jencks, Bernhardt and Pinter are too varied in their fields and works to be classed together as a single movement (Hassan, *Dismemberment* 260).

Ihab Hassan is wary of going the way of calling postmodernism a strictly time-bound period or a periodizing concept. He says that any period is not a period in that the discontinuity is accompanied by continuity. A period may end, so to speak, but it also lingers on. He also feels that it is difficult is to put an inaugural date on a period. 1939 is given as the inaugural date, but this makes people reinvent modern writers such as Gertrude Stein, and the later works of Ezra Pound and James Joyce as postmodern because their works were published after this date.

Hassan is also aware of a change in postmodernism. Since the advent of thinking regarding postmodernism, postmodernism has changed. From an "avantegardist strain" it has moved to a reflexive, parodic bent. Later still it transformed into "various eclectic tendencies: some—in music, art, and architecture—neoromantic, others kitsch, camp, pop, deconstructionist, neodadaist, hermetically reflexive, or simply otiose" (Hassan, *Postmodern Turn* 216).

Writing in 2006 Ihab Hassan feels vindicated that his premonition that "postmodernism would become a media phenomenon, involving pop and kitsch" (*Interview* 224) came true and postmodernism did become just another topic that the media created a hype about. Hassan feels that this mediatization of postmodernism threatens its very existence as it may fizzle out as all media hypes are doomed to fizzle out.

Best and Kellner identify three periods in French philosopher Jean Baudrillard's intellectual life where he starts off with modernity, moves on to postmodernity in the 1980s and then to metaphysics in the same decade. Paul Hegarty feels that the "modern never went away" in Baudrillard (5). Despite Baudrillard's lack of avowed allegiance to postmodernism, his views are important in the development of and debate on postmodernism particularly in terms of simulacra and hyperreality. Best and Kellner say that postmodernism for Baudrillard is a move away from production—creation—to an era of simulations: "an era of information and signs governed by models, codes, and cybernetics" (118). Baudrillard writes, "[S]imulation … is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal"

(Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 1). Baudrillard also gives the concept of implosion which is the erasure of traditional boundaries, for instance, the boundary between the simulation and the real (Hegarty 59). As an illustration of this implosion Best and Kellner cite the example of people who start believing that a TV actor playing a doctor is a real doctor and approach him for diagnosis. Hyperreality, thus seen, is "more real than real" because "the real is produced according to a model" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 119).

Simulacra is perhaps Baudrillard's most outstanding contribution to the concept of postmodernism. Baudrillard feels that an image was at one time "the reflection of a profound reality" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 6). However, in postmodernism, it has turned into "its own pure simulacrum" because it is just a created image which does not refer to any reality (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 6). For Baudrillard, Disneyland represents America "down to the morphology of individuals and of the crowd" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 13), but this is only a made up reality, one made up after models so Disneyland is hyperreal. The construction of this hyperreal is per design, "Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 13). He develops this theme in *America* where he writes that America “is neither dream nor reality. It is a hyperreality” and later labels America “the perfect simulacrum” (Baudrillard, *America* 28). Americans do not have the capacity to realize the simulacra of their existence and so the simulacra continue and the objects, activities, culture, and consumption continue to be given the value of reality.

This is part of Baudrillard's broader argument on the "emergence of a popular culture that breaks down the difference between the real and the artifice" (Gane 96). For Baudrillard, the media in postmodernism are very strong and through their slogan of Live TV, docudramas and infotainment are collapsing the boundaries between information and entertainment and also are bombarding people with trivial images and information. The massive amount of information that is heaped on the audiences is important for Baudrillard because it leads the audience to become apathetic and then everything from a message to class distinctions to political ideologies to the reality ceases to mean anything. This is why Baudrillard sees postmodernism as oppressive as does not see any possibility of resistance in it.

Baudrillard's postmodernism accords a vital place to the consumer culture promoted by postmodernism. He believes the postmodern man is "loving the period of the objects" (Baudrillard, *Selected* 29). The objects rule the postmodern subject and these objects are profuse. Streets crowded with shops, giant malls housing every object or commodity imaginable are a regular feature and cultural centers of human existence. Baudrillard writes, "Not only can anything be purchased, from shoestrings to an airline ticket, or located, such as insurance company, cinema, bank or medical service, bridge club and art exhibition, but one need not be the slave of time. The mall, like every city street, is accessible seven days a week, day or night" (Baudrillard, *Selected* 34). The postmodern existence revels in this display of abundance and it looks at the consumption of material goods as the axis of its being.

Baudrillard mentions the United States of America as an example of the "obesity, saturation, overabundance" (Baudrillard *America* 39) engendered by consumer culture. It is an "ob-scene" (Morawski 8) world where "everything is available in profusion" (Baudrillard, *America* 40). Though it is easy to imagine that Baudrillard overlooks the poverty and hunger of the land, yet he is also right about the symptoms induced by the over-abundance of commodities and by giving centrality to the commodities and their consumption and rightly points to the pivotal place of consumer culture in the postmodern world.

Professor Emeritus Linda Hutcheon approaches the theory of postmodern from a different perspective. Owing to the indefinability of postmodernism she proposes a poetics of postmodernism which, "more than a fixed and fixing definition" will be "an open, ever-changing theoretical structure by which to order both our cultural knowledge and our critical procedures" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 14). This poetics of postmodernism will transcend literary discourse and take up the study of "culture practice and theory" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 14). But it will not seek to determine causal relationships between art and theory but instead concern itself with reading literature through its surrounding theoretical discourses rather than as contiguous with theory (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 14).

As far as the features of postmodernism are concerned Hutcheon takes a different route than other theorists (She classes Jameson as a *theorist*.) looks at postmodernism as attempting to "de-naturalize some of the dominant features of our way of life; to point out that those entities that we unthinkingly experience as 'natural' (they might even include capitalism, patriarchy, liberal humanism) are in fact

'cultural'; made by us, not given to us" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 2). Another feature of postmodernism for Hutcheon is its "self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-undermining statement" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 1). Post modernism for Hutcheon is "a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 3). This challenge to notions like "value, order, meaning, control, and identity" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 13) is in all fields of life e.g. architecture, film, TV, linguistics etc. One particularly noteworthy contradiction is the postmodern idea of "the presence of the past" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 4). She also thinks that postmodernism is a challenge to institutions. Dance moving out into the streets is a contestation of the theatre. When Michael Asher sandblasted a wall in Toselli gallery as his exhibit, he was challenging the conventions of art and also questioning the boundaries between work of art and place of art. The blurring of boundaries is an important aspect of postmodernism for Hutcheon and she sees instances of it in *Lives of Girls and Women* that blends novel and short story, *Coming through Slaughter* that merges novel and long poem, and *China Men* that combines novel and autobiography. But, the most important boundary that postmodernism blurs, for Hutcheon, is that between "fiction and non-fiction and—by extension—between art and life" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 10). Parody, "a perfect postmodern form" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 11), is another crucial trait of postmodernism which she sees as a positive because of its critical perspective and changes of creativity it offers. Postmodernism's inquiry into subjectivity leads it to take the subject as someone who no longer constitutes "a coherent, meaning-generating entity" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 11). Linked to the breakdown of a totalizing coherent unified subject is the notion of the breakdown of "*any* [author's italics] totalizing or homogenizing system" (Hutcheon, *Poetics* 12).

It is important to note that Hutcheon looks at contemporary artistic work, novels, poems, paintings, and films etc. and also architecture to outline the features of postmodernism and also to explain the various components of her theory of postmodernism. She feels that though her theory has been informed by architecture, as has been Jameson's, it is photography that is "the perfect postmodern vehicle" (Hutcheon, *Politics* 120). She chooses photography over film—Jameson's choice—and TV—Baudrillard's choice—because the inherent paradoxes of photography "make it ripe for the particular paradoxes of postmodernism" and it suits her campaign to define postmodernism in terms of its contradictions.

Terry Eagleton sees postmodernism as an outcome of a number of factors such as modernism, postindustrialism, political forces emerging after World War II, a reduction in the autonomy of art as art, but most importantly he sees postmodernism as "the child of a political rebuff" (Eagleton, *Where* 66) for postmodernism has dented the white male's hegemonic power. Eagleton is also aware of inherent contradictions in postmodernism as he thinks that postmodernism adopts a stance where it values culture at the cost of the importance of capital, a concept he elaborates in *The Contradictions of Postmodernism*. Eagleton also feels that postmodernism contains contradictions in the sense that while it is daring and shocking it is also complacent, while it has made bold political statements it has also given in to populism.

Eagleton finds a place for parody in postmodernism, something that Jameson does not do. Eagleton believes that postmodernism is parodying the avant-garde of modernism as with the erasure of the boundary between art and not-art postmodernism is mocking the practice and the very possibility of avant-gardist works.

For Brian McHale, it is important to give up the big tent view of postmodernism that Jencks and Jameson offer. He says that theorists look at postmodernism as a blanket term that captures every domain and field in the world. These theorists paint a picture where the same sort of postmodernism exists in diverse genres and fields and where postmodernism is spread evenly across regions and cultures. He asserts that to understand postmodernism one must realize that postmodernism may not exist in all genres, it may have different traits in one genre as compared to another and it may not exist as an equally strong force in all regions. Brian McHale rejects Charles Jenck's view of postmodernism as a big tent, an over-arching phenomenon that covers every domain. McHale asserts that postmodernism is after all a construct and each theorist constructs a version that suits what the theorist intends to do with the postmodernism they are constructing. He admits that his definition of postmodernism in fiction is limited to just that genre.

For Brian McHale, postmodernism is ontological rather than epistemological. Postmodernism works under the assumption that there is nothing definite. Even the world that the writer or their characters live in is not necessarily a given. So many postmodern works like Pynchon's present a world where reality is elusive: the inhabitants do not know for certain if the world they take to be real is indeed real and

this, in turn, raises questions about the nature of the world, the nature and purpose of existence and similar issues of being (McHale, Constructing 147-52).

1.4 Postmodernism and Literature

A significant part of the opening argument of the study as to the advent and characteristics of postmodernism was derived from architecture and the arts. The study had to do that per force as "the contours of the postmodern paradigm are much less clear in literary studies than elsewhere" (Connor 112). Part of the reason is that modernism pitted itself as a revolt against the norm. When the same thing happened in literature it did not have the same effect. The avant-garde rose but was quickly incorporated in the mainstream. This is illustrated by the Off-Broadway theatre scene which was a revolt against the staleness of Broadway, but pretty soon it too was considered the same as Broadway, stagnant leading to Off-Off-Broadway. The modern-era writers who can be said to have rebelled against modernism are Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, and W. B. Yeats, but these writers were accommodated within the cultural and political mainstream. Moreover, these writers offer a paradox as even when they rebel against modernism in terms of the form they revere modern ideology. Literary criticism too helped take the edge off of the avant-gardist trends in literature when through New Criticism it offered new ways of reading the modernist literature of Pound and others so that readers were not baffled by them.

All this is not to say that postmodernism did not affect literature. Connor notes a strong urge in literary circles to embrace and celebrate postmodernism which has led to the creation of the simulacrum of modernism as for postmodernism to exist it required "there to have been something called modernism in the first place" (Connor 113). Through back-formation, a concept of modernism was created so that postmodern could be set up against it. This notion of modernism attributes the following characteristics to the literature of the era: Modernist literature does not rely on its form to prove its literariness; it relies on the styles and conventions it uses in itself to assert its literariness. The essence of modernist literature is not sounds and shapes—"the materiality of language", but the way the work draws attention to its form and makes the reader appreciate the form (Connor 114). This is the key concept of the Russian Formalists, but it is not the only notion of literary modernism. Modernism is also classed as a move away from a belief in a world of ideas or

substances which may be objectively known in themselves, to the apprehension of a world which can be truly known and experienced only through individual consciousness" (Connor 114-5). This is the notion Joseph Conrad espoused in the preface to *The Nigger of Narcissus* and which can be found in the works of the later Henry James and Virginia Woolf, but this facet of modernism is accompanied by another—ironically contradictory—facet: the "announcement of the end of individual subjectivity" (Connor 115). T. S. Eliot sounds like a prophet preaching writers to curb their personality and bow before tradition. Joyce's Stephen Dedalus in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* stresses the need for the author to distance themselves from the work. However, both these notions, impersonality and subjectivity in a literary work, share the same idea that the work of art needs to be a "well-wrought urn". This is the title of Cleanth Brooks's work on literary criticism where he asserts that a literary work must be complete in itself. This is the modernism, postmodernism setup for itself, through backformation, to rebel against (Connor).

Postmodernism in literature as described by Leslie Fiedler in *Cross that Border—Close that Gap* is a questioning of the generic integrity of high culture through bringing in elements of mass culture thereby resulting in works where high and mass culture reside simultaneously.

Ihab Hassan's *Dismemberment of Orpheus* is a major step towards a clear enunciation of what postmodernism is for literature. Using the myth of Orpheus, Hassan creates the argument that modern literature is a literature of silence with a voice, it is silent, but like Orpheus's head continued to sing after being dismembered, this literature of silence continues to sing. Here silence is not just a lack of utterances. Silence is a refusal to being subverted, alienation from reason and society or even history, subversion of language and the exploration of extreme states of feelings and also a look within. For Hassan, the Marquis de Sade's works capture this silence and the spirit of modernism. Interestingly for Hassan, Beckett, the harbinger of postmodernism, is not that different from de Sade.

For Ihab Hassan, Performance is one of the catenae that is crucial to postmodernism. He writes, "the postmodern text, verbal or nonverbal, invites performance: it wants to be written, revised, answered, [sic] acted out. Indeed, so much of postmodern art calls itself performance, as it transgresses genres" (507). The film is the setting where postmodernism comes to life more than any other to exhibit

its characteristics and a number of theorists attest to the primacy of films to illustrations of postmodernism.

Kuhn and Westwell see postmodernism influence films in terms of the spectacle, simulacra, and advertising images in addition to a rejection of history accompanied by a simultaneous adoption of nostalgia. They also mention the introduction of pastiche due to postmodernism as an important practice in films.

Steven Connor observes that films illustrate the erasure of the boundaries between high and low culture which is a feature of postmodernism. "[P]ostmodernist films may evoke the complexities of high theory, but this is at odds with the apparent accessibility and box-office success of such decidedly postmodernist films as *Blade Runner*, *True Stories*, *Dive*, and *The Draughtsman's Contract*" (Connor 200). This has been true for films like *The Matrix*, the *Bourne Series*, and more recently *Inception*. *Inception*, in fact, talks about the erasure of boundaries between reality and dreams and dreams of different individuals and despite being highly philosophical it was a roaring success.

Colin MacCabe finds film to be "properly the postmodern art" (xiii) because it is inextricably linked to the first stage of capitalist development. This is because "cinema is a product of the most sophisticated forms of industrial production; it is, in Hollis Frampton's memorable words, the last machine" (xiii). However, not all film is postmodern. MacCabe feels that the classic Hollywood cinema was realist, the European cinema of the 1950s and 60s was modernist and *Contempt* serves as an example of this and it was only in the early 1970s that cinema started seeing postmodern works.

Hutcheon uses Siska's article to create her argument that when parody is introduced into what characterizes modernist Hollywood films—"the rupturing of the chain of causation upon which character and plot motivation depend, spatial or temporal fragmentation, or the introduction of 'alien forms and information' (*Politics* 107)—the result is postmodern film. The postmodern film, like postmodern architecture, exhibits "both a respectful—if problematized—awareness of cultural continuity and a need to adapt to changing formal demands and social conditions through an ironic contesting of the authority of the same continuity. (Hutcheon, *Politics* 107)" She feels that parody is an inherent part of postmodern cinema and this parody is consistent with her view of postmodernism as a contradictory phenomenon. Hutcheon prefers the term parody to pastiche because of its inherent quality of

criticism and feels that postmodern films parody the modern beliefs and established canons and offer a venue of subversion.

Stefan Morawski cites Robert Glinski's *Swan Song* as a prime example of postmodern film. He feels that postmodern film, like postmodernism, has "nothing to tell us" (37). All it does is indulge in pastiche which Morawski calls "ostentatious parasitism" and because of this, it leans towards becoming a mass culture phenomenon. But, despite this inclination towards mass culture it does not want to associate itself with mass culture. It approves of mass culture because of the profit it is able to rake in because of it, but at the same time it "mockingly grimaces at its own cultural substratum" (Morawski 38). Morawski places postmodernism in film in an "interzone" of high and mass culture where the film makes use of both to succeed (38). This is exactly how Jameson sees postmodern film and art: commercially successful ventures that contain elements of high culture.

Val Hill and Peter Every feel that postmodern cinema is aware of the limits of its flight and chooses to work within these limits often making the limits explicitly obvious yet never taking away the thrill of flight. In other words, postmodern cinema knows that codes that it has to work by and postmodern cinema is comfortable with working within these codes and even makes these codes obvious to underscore its awareness of the codes. In following the codes postmodern cinema is the same as modern cinema, but with the postmodern cinema's context of globalization it features "an intensification of its formal specificities and an allowed and necessary address to difference... . Difference is allowed, celebrated and commodified" (Hill and Every 103).

Catherine Constable feels that postmodernism has impacted films significantly and Baudrillard and Jameson have been instrumental in directing the course of film theory and history. Cinema which for Constable is "a symbol of the postmodern" (*Postmodernism* 43) is a living proof of the dominance of the simulacra. Baudrillard's precession of simulacra demonstrates how an image loses its reality and ends up standing for what does not exist. The cinema does the same. By presenting films it makes the real world film-like. The atrocity of the cinematic images is that the real is constructed like the film. It is Baudrillard's basic point that instead of the image succeeding the real the image precedes the real. Baudrillard notes in *America*, "The desert you pass through is like the set of a Western, the city a screen of signs and formulas" (Constable, *Postmodernism* 44). This illustrates the influence of

postmodernism in the world and thereby the connection between postmodernism and film.

1.5 Jameson on Postmodernism

Jameson prefers the streamlined manner of writing the term postmodernism and prefers the term to its competing formulations like "poststructuralism, postindustrial society" (*Postmodernism* xiii) or similar media based terms, for he feels it occupies "the mediatory position within the various specialized dimensions of postcontemporary life" (*Postmodernism* xiv) that the other terms could not because they were "too rigidly specified and marked by their area of provenance" (*Postmodernism* xiii). Jameson feels that the term postmodernism has been successful because it feels like the natural outcome of the developments in the world themselves. Also, there is a natural affinity in the word that makes people feel that this captures their views on the developments in the world and it allows others to understand their views on the developments. It is like naming a baby. It seems that the baby was always supposed to be named that particular name.

Postmodernism, which Jameson calls a "lexical neoevent" (*Postmodernism* xiii) is an apt term because being a neologism, it captures a number of otherwise disparate developments. It has all the "reality impact of a corporate merger" and it reflects the media-centered society, it is an outcome of (Jameson, *Postmodernism* xiii). Also, the vastness of the term is a special quality as it brings the cultural, the aesthetic, the artistic, and the economic within its folds yet allows a rethinking, rewriting and reshuffling of all these areas. It is this "vague, ominous or exhilarating promise to get rid of whatever you found confining, unsatisfying, or boring" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* xiv) that postmodernism offers that Jameson feels that postmodernism is the appropriate term to describe the condition and the workings of the world.

Regarding the scope of postmodernism, Jameson asserts that "everything is grist for its mill" (*Postmodernism* xiv). It definitely covers the arts and herein again its reach spans a number of genres. Jameson says that the postmodernist impulse can be seen in the pop art of Andy Warhol, but it is not limited to just pop art, Photorealism that attempts to capture the image of one medium in another medium and Neo-expressionism that focuses radical subjectivity. Postmodernism is apparent in the music of John Cage in his non-standard use of musical instruments his view

that a single piece of music could be performed in multiple ways depending on the performer. It is also apparent in the minimalist music of Philip Glass and Terry Riley, rebellious and anti-authoritarian punk rock, and the new wave music that was a blend of punk rock, experimental, pop and disco music. In literature, too, the scene is similarly dotted by a multiplicity of style and ideological conceptions e.g. Pynchon and Ishmael Reed as postmodern and so is the French nouveau roman and also the newer notion of écriture. Jameson's point is that postmodernism is a multifarious phenomenon. Not only is it visible in a number of distinct genres it also exists within a certain genre in a number of forms so it is not easy to label it as one thing and not another. While modernism may be a stable phenomenon postmodernism is elusive.

Jameson feels that discussing postmodernism in architecture where postmodernism's theoretical problems have been "most centrally raised and articulated" (*Postmodernism* 2) is central to developing any understanding of postmodernism. Postmodernism in architecture stemmed from a persistent critique of high modernist architecture and its proponents like Frank Lloyd Wright. Criticizing the International Style for its proclivity towards rejecting any apparent ornamentation and preferring aesthetics to the social aspects of the building and its place in the culture of the city, Robert Venturi, though not a postmodernist by confession, contributed to the evolution of postmodernist architecture and theory through his buildings, such as The Guild House in Philadelphia, Vanna Venturi and Seattle Art Museum, and theoretically significant books: *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* and *Learning from Las Vegas*. He coined the term "monumental duck" to criticize the modernists' desire to create a building that was unified and rigidly structured, not very functional, but a work of art. Venturi's buildings, for instance, Vanna Venturi, a house he designed for his mother, breaks modernist rules of architecture with its emphasis on decoration both outside and inside, functionless arches, asymmetrical windows, and inversions of scale. His Guild House at once contains the older ideas of floor plans and the newer emphasis on style, for instance, oversized lettering for the building's name and a gold-anodized TV antenna atop the building. The banality of the darkly shaded bricks contrasted with the black polished granite of the main entrance and offered a representation of Venturi's idea that architecture should contain contradictions and complexities (Wiseman 229).

Jameson identifies the "fundamental ideological task" of postmodernism to be "coordinating new forms of practice and social and mental habits … with the new

forms of economic production and organization thrown up by the modification of capitalism" (*Postmodernism* xiv).

Jameson is not a dictator to impose any single "conveniently coherent thumbnail meaning" (*Postmodernism* xxii) of postmodernism on the people and proclaim the falsehood of all the other theories regarding it. Throughout his works, his tone is of the argument and he asserts that his work is, but one attempt, to make sense of the phenomenon to lay bare its various facets. His caution is because of the realization that postmodernism is not something that "we can settle once and for all" and also because it is "internally conflicted and contradictory" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* xxii). While Jameson is open to the possibility of a number of interpretations regarding postmodernism, he makes it clear that he will not back down on the concept because "for good or ill, we cannot not use it" (Postmodernism xxii).

For Jameson modernism was "a response to a modernization in the West from, say, the mid- to late-19th Century until the Second World War" (Hall 113). Modernization had started, but because of the older era's class segregation, aristocracy and modes of agriculture, modernization was never completed. It took the Second World War to end these old practices and thus complete modernization. "So the real difference between postmodernism and modernism is that postmodernism is a situation of tendentially complete modernization in which those older remnants have been removed" (Hall 113-4). Modernism championed the autonomy of art which implies that there were still forces that wanted to restrain art within certain parameters. When these forces were disposed of modernism too was over and the world moved on to postmodernism.

For Jameson, a defining characteristic of postmodernism is its *coupure*, "a cultural and experiential break" (*Postmodernism* xii)—in *The ideology of the Text* he uses the terms "basic *coupure* or qualitative leap" (204)—with the modern movement. Three factors may explain how this break came about: either the modern movement lost its strength and waned, or it became extinct, or there was a revolt against the ideological or aesthetic philosophy of modernism. Whatever may be the reason of the break, it has put abstract expressionism in painting, existentialism in philosophy, the films of the great auteurs, and the school of modernist poetry on the side of the divide that is past, spent, and exhausted. On the one side of the great divide stand Jackson Pollock, Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce, Wallace Stevens; figures of a "spent and exhausted" "modernist impulse" (Jameson

Postmodernism 1) and on the other side are figures like Andy Warhol, John Cage, Terry Riley, Thomas Pynchon and Ishmael Reed. On one side of the divide is the hundred year old modernism and on the other side is the fledgling postmodernism with its varied genres and many faces. Thus postmodernism is a break with modernism, but this does not necessarily mean that modernism is now completely extinct or that postmodernism is completely distinct from modernism.

Jameson labels postmodernism as the "cultural dominant" of the times and this means that it shares the space with other theories and explanations of the world and whatever is in it, it is just dominant over these other theories. This also means that within this cultural dominant of postmodernism remnants or elements of modernism may continue to exist.

Also, even if it is assumed that postmodernism has the features of modernism the two will still be distinct in their "meaning and social function" (Jameson, *Consumer* 5) because the way postmodernism stands in relation to the economic system of late capitalism and because the very sphere of culture has been transformed. Now what the Victorians would have considered shocking in the modern and the modernists considered rebellious is seen as realistic and has lost its shock value. So much so that postmodernism is not offended by even its own offensive features. All this is the result of the commodification of the aesthetic production.

That the features of postmodernism may be found in modernism is not argument enough to do away with the concept of postmodernism. Jameson feels that breaks, even when they are radical, do not generally involve complete changes of content, but rather the restructuration of a certain number of elements already given" (*Consumer* 123). Elements that were on the margins in one era may take the center stage in the next era and vice versa. Thus, finding features of high modernism in postmodernism is not reason enough to claim that postmodernism is not a separate period.

Jameson points to an essential characteristic of modernism that would show the need to label the present as postmodernism. He says that modernism was an "oppositional art" (*Consumer* 124). It was supposed to shock and scandalize and offend and be ugly and to challenge the conventions. But, now cultural changes have shaped perceptions in such a way that what was once shocking is now accepted, what was offensive is no longer so and what was repellant is now the norm. Duchamp’s *Fountain* which is just a signed porcelain urinal is now not shocking. The abundance

of similar art pieces has led to the idea of common even disgusting objects as works of art to be accepted. Eagleton notes, "To place a pile of bricks in the Tate Gallery once might be considered ironic; to repeat the gesture endlessly is sheer carelessness of any such ironic intention, as its shock value is inexorably drained away to leave nothing beyond brute fact" (60). Picasso is not repulsive any more he has been assimilated into the culture. So the label modernism does not work anymore because its oppositional quality is not present. Also, the works of modernism now have become the canon and part of the academic institutions which denudes them of dissidence. This is akin to what happened to off-Broadway. Off-Broadway started off as a revolt against the commercialized Broadway, but then it too was thought to have lost its element of dissidence and thus emerged Off-Off-Broadway theatre (Ball).

Jameson's Marxist roots lead him to call his notion of postmodernism "a periodizing hypothesis" (*Postmodernism* 2). He is aware that the very possibility of historical periodizing was being questioned, but he labels it so because he feels that any cultural analysis per force has to be historical. Ian Buchanan defines "periodizing hypothesis" as, "the attempt to delineate and characterize a particular period of history as an 'age" and says that a periodizing hypothesis assumes a difference of "kind" between any two moments in history and that there exists some attribute that gives a particular period "a certain kind of unity (Buchanan "Periodizing" 364). Similarly, for Jameson, a historical period is not "an omnipresent and uniform shared style or way of thinking", but "the sharing of a common objective situation" (Jameson, *Periodizing* 178). Periodizing does not automatically "obliterate" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 3) heterogeneity. It "allows for the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate features" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 4), but it looks for a dominant strain among those features that may be taken to represent the period since "it is surely against a certain conception of what is historically dominant or hegemonic that the full value of the exceptional … can be assessed" (Jameson, *Periodizing* 178). Postmodernism being a periodizing hypothesis then means that it is a "segment of time" that exists with other features, but is the dominant feature of the time. Shreds of the older avatars such as realism ad modernism "live on, to be rewrapped in the luxurious trappings of their putative successor" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* xii).

Jameson associates the advent of postmodernism with the works of Andy Warhol, and John Cage etc. Andy Warhol started his career in the early 1950s, but it was only in the early 1960s, the factory years, that he started pop art and created

works like *Campbell's Soup Cans* and the portraits of celebrities like Marilyn Monroe and Elvis Presley. John Cage was producing music in the 1950s, but it was 1960 when he was appointed a Fellow at the Wesleyan University. Godard's most fruitful period was the 1960s. It is the "end of the 1950s or the early 1960s" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* xxii) that Jameson marks as the start of postmodernism. He also finds "one way of marking the break" (Jameson, *Consumer* 124) between modernism and postmodernism as the time when modernism and its aesthetics was made part of the curriculum and discussions at universities and this time is the early 1960s. This canonization of the radical modern thought for Jameson is the turning point and leads him to mark the early 1960s as the start of postmodernism.

Postmodernism's break with modernism is not just a "cultural affair" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 3) it is in addition to and "*necessarily*" (author's italics) a political stance on the nature of multinational capitalism—the third of the three epochs of capitalist expansion that Jameson distinguishes, which is characterized by "exponential growth of international corporations and the consequent transcending of national boundaries" (Connor, *Postmodernist Culture* 45) and the "purest form of capital yet to have emerged (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 36). Colin MacCabe notes the primacy of late-capitalism and its commodity production in Jameson's view of explaining the world. For Jameson culture and capital are inextricably linked. He talks about the difficulties involved in cultural production in the age of late-capitalism and this underscores the primacy of the connection between the two.

Jameson illustrates the link between culture and capital through his reading of Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes*. He sees the political message of commodification in the work. The sheer number of shoes and the type of shoes reveal that they are consumer products that were forced onto the consumers with advertisement blitzes and media campaigns. Warhol's other work goes to the extent of comprising paintings of commercially produced and widely available consumer products like soup cans and beverages and thus supports Jameson's reading.

Jameson bases his notion of the cultural periodization, i.e., postmodernism on Mandel's periodization of capitalism and goes on to show that his periodization parallels the periods in the development of technology. He believes that revolutions in power technology hold the key to determining the evolution of technology and its stages. Machine production through the use of steam-powered engines was one era, machine production propelled by electric and fossil fuel combustion was the second

era and then electronic and nuclear-powered apparatuses of the 1940s and later ushered in the third era. It is this period of electronic and nuclear power that postmodernism is parallel to.

The invention of internal combustion and its potential for various walks of life had elicited a lot of enthusiasm from inventors, businessmen, ordinary public and even artists. Marinetti in his work celebrated these machines for their "dynamism, speed, energy, and power" and the consequent "vitality, change, and restlessness" they brought to life (J. White). But, with the evolution of (power) technology, the technology of postmodernism, i.e., Nuclear and electronic power presents a big problem of representation. While Marinetti, Corbusier, Sheeler or even Picabia and Duchamp could express with rigor and fervor the spirit of technology in modernism the postmodern artist faces a problem that the technology of their period "no longer possesses this same capacity for representation" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 36). The computer whose electronic power propels the postmodern world "has no emblematic or visual power" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 37) like the steam engine or the petrol-driven motorcar or furnace oil propelled jet engine. The offshoot of the computer, the television, also "articulates nothing" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 37). The machines of postmodernism being those of “reproduction rather than of production" do not allow easy representation in art (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 37).

Jameson does not believe that technology is the "ultimate determining instance" of postmodernism, but he does see the problems the forms of technology in postmodernism pose for artistic representation (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 37). He says that the faulty representations of some immense communicational and computer network are, themselves, but a distorted figuration of something even deeper, namely, the whole world system of a present-day multinational capitalism. The representation of technology, however, "distorted [a] figuration" it may be, is fascinating because of the possible insight "into the whole new decentered global network of the third stage of capital itself" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 38) it may offer.

Jameson argues that the postmodern world has rung in changes that have transformed the very conception of cultural production. Simulacra is an essential part of this postmodern cultural production. An outline of Jameson's argument will clarify the point.

The language poets, though not a school with a manifesto, began in the 1970s to "theorize their work in the terminology of the cultural and philosophical ideas

which have formed postmodern theory" (T. Woods 71). Their work is built on the premise that "the most important task of poetry is to make us hear the ways in which the media pervade the most private recesses of our psychic lives" and due to the influence of this line of thinking their poetry tries to reveal "the alienating imposition of cultural codes" (T. Woods 72). Perelman's *China* is of interest to Jameson also because it exhibits the postmodern notion of simulacra. The poem talks about China, but the poet did not have any firsthand knowledge of China. He picked up a book from Chinatown that contained photographs of China and later he sat down to write a poem on those photographs. Each verse of the poem is the caption Perelman wrote for a photograph in the book. Seen from the perspective that Baudrillard furnishes, it appears that Perelman was representing what was already a representation of China. It is akin to the copy of a copy. Because nothing original was associated with the poem Jameson classes the poem as simulacra.

Jameson, using his earlier method of pitting Warhol against Van Gogh, pits Hanson—who for Jameson represents postmodern cultural production—against the precisionist Sheeler and the realist Hopper. Sheeler along with Georgia O'Keeffe and Charles Demuth made famous Precisionism, a style of painting, that employed "a reductive, formal aesthetic of clarity, geometry and order" (Marter) with the purpose of glorifying America's modern technology and cityscapes—skyscrapers, bridges, docks, chimney-stacks and barns. Edward Hopper was a realist painter who modelled himself after the French impressionists (Brigstocke). His "urban, American subjects" bring out the "loneliness and detachment" (Marter, Hopper) of life. So many of his paintings—*Hotel Lobby*, *Automat*, *New York Movie*, *Office at Night*, show "solitary figures" who are often melancholic, depressed and isolated (Marter, Hopper). Hanson also sculpts human figures, but his subjects stand radically apart from the loners of Hopper's works. Hanson is part of a generation of artists who "revisioned a tradition of Realism in the plastic arts" and this revisioning "took the forms of Photo-Realism, Hyperrealism, and Superrealism" (Elias 23). Elias notes that "these revisionings of Realism were distinctly postmodernist" (24). The artists created works that were "about artworks" and in addition to frequently using mundane topics for their works painted from photographs rather than the actual object or location. Duane Hanson is a sculptor who "encodes middle-class consumer values" in his figures "representing mundane types [such as] down-and-outs, exhausted shoppers[…] and a pair of fat, ageing and garishly dressed sightseers" (Chilvers and Glaves-Smith). Not only are

Duane's sculptures simulacra for Jameson they turn the real people looking at them into simulacra too. This echoes Baudrillard's notion of Disneyland. Baudrillard says that Disneyland presents itself as a land of images so that when people come out of it, they imagine that they have stepped into the real, but what they are stepping back into is not real, it is a simulacrum and Disneyland's purpose is to prevent the people from realizing this. Hanson's sculptures showcase people and reveal that the ordinary people have been turned into simulacra. The sculpture of the two tourists mimics the tourists who enter the gallery to look at the sculpture. The statue reveals how the life and blood tourists have made themselves up after an image of tourist they have—a tourist wears this sort of clothes, takes photographs, lugs around shopping bags full of souvenirs—and the sculpture mocks this real-life tourist for being like the sculpture, i.e., a simulacrum.

Jameson's argument is that the cultural production of postmodernism has been reduced to producing simulacrum. "For Jameson, postmodernism means being lost in image culture and trapped in the 'cave' of the simulacrum, where realism's oppositional textual, 'inside' and worldly 'outside' collapses" comments Radstone on Jameson's notion of simulacrum (133). The image without a reality is depthless and existing merely on the surface, it cannot point to a truth. This is a major difference between modernism and postmodernism: in modernism, the work had a deeper significance, but in postmodernism, the surface is all there is to a work.

Jameson feels that postmodernism is basically an American or North American phenomenon. He is supported by Andreas Huyssen who also looks at postmodernism as an essentially American phenomenon as the term accrued its emphatic connotation in the United States, not in Europe. He argues that at the time of the advent of postmodernism Germany was still reeling from its Nazi past and rediscovering the modern artists and thinkers whom the Third Reich had banned as it attempted to free itself of the stigma of the Nazi regime. Postmodernism became known in Germany and France only after it had established itself and its broad contours in the USA and Huyssen also asserts that Lyotard and Kristeva’s views on postmodernism were “prompted” by American theorists (214). Remo Ceserani’s view supports Huyssen’s assertion as he says that though Italy moved into the postmodern age “with the greatest ease” the Italian academics, intellectuals, and literary critics have been “inflexible in their refusal to recognize the new trend and to give it some credit or simply to describe it” (375).

Ihab Hassan offers a vaster conception where he says that postmodernism should not be seen as a Western phenomenon, but as a phenomenon of "high-tech, mass-media, omni-consuming societies" (*Interview* 224). He feels that due to cultural postmodernism engendered geopolitical postmodernity, which exists throughout the world either as globalization and its many faces or anti-globalization and its many faces.

1.6 Delimitation

The study has been delimited to three works of Quentin Tarantino namely *Reservoir Dogs*, *Pulp Fiction*, and *Inglourious Basterds*. These films have been selected on the basis of the critical acclaim they received and the box office performance. Put together they comprise a runtime of 9.51 hours and, therefore, provide the study with sufficient scope.

1.7 Research Objectives:

These are the objectives of the research:

a. Explain Jameson's postmodernism through Tarantino's movies.
b. Discuss Quentin Tarantino's characters to showcase their postmodernism.

1.8 Research Questions:

These are the research questions that the study aims to answer:

a. How do Tarantino's characters signify Jameson's death of the subject?
b. What role does waning of affect play in shaping Tarantino's characters?
c. To what extent are pastiche and hyperspace present in the lives of Tarantino's characters?

1.9 Significance

The study is significant because it attempts to discuss Tarantino's characters as represented in his films. The characters are analyzed in the backdrop of Fredric Jameson's theory of postmodernism. Jameson is notorious for his style and this combined with the essential difficulty of postmodernism makes postmodernism a difficult notion for students.

The study is also significant because it discusses Tarantino's characters from the perspective of a literary theory and this will also show that films are much more than just entertainment since they have so much meaning in them.

The present study discusses one aspect of Tarantino's art from the perspective of Jameson's postmodernism and is significant because it will contribute with substance/substantially to the notion of Tarantino being a postmodern director and his works being postmodern works. The study will help establish Tarantino's stature in the academic world too, as it shows the profundity of meaning and art in his works.

The study is also significant in that it will show researchers that films can be used as texts and help future researchers in the area. This is important as Film Studies is moving towards becoming an integral part of the curricula at Pakistani Universities. So the present study is significant in that it will serve as a model for other researchers to learn from and it will contribute to attracting researchers towards taking films as texts.

For Charles Jencks figuring out the times humanity is living in is important not just from a perspective of history, but it is also important because it will reveal the answer to the question "[W]ho are we? (*What* 14). Part of the significance of the study lies in that talking about the characters will have ramification and implication for the identity of the human species in the present world. What is true of the characters is also likely to be true of what is usually referred to as the real world. Seen in this way the present study is not just an analysis of characters but an analysis of the character of the human species in the postmodern world. Barlow's observation that Tarantino's films "are designed to lead audiences not only toward [an] examination of the point of the movie but to the point of themselves" also lends strength to this way of looking at the study (78).

This generalization does not mean that the study is under any illusion of grandeur. I realize that it is just one study that is limited and delimited by a number of factors. The study just wants to point to a connection that it feels exists but does not imply that it is the ultimate say on the issue of human beings in the world. Also, this connection to the world is not contradictory to or alien to the analysis of the characters. The characters and the idea that they stand for the people of the planet Earth are intricately and inextricably related so the study is not trying to overreach only that a number of conclusions can be drawn from the same analysis.

Catherine Belsey notes that the originality of a research does not reside in that it is such an entity that it has no reference to "any previous account" (163). The originality of research, according to Belsey, lies in that it is independent, though it assembles ideas that have not been "brought together in quite that way before"

(Belsey 163). It may not be paradigm shifting and the contribution can be small but it is research of "a piece of the jigsaw" and contributes to the larger body of knowledge in a meaningful way (Belsey 163).

1.10 Chapter Breakdown

The thesis comprises seven chapters the first of which serves to develop an understanding of Postmodernism, and its origin and evolution. The views of various theorists, including Jameson, have been presented here to present the context for the later explanation of Jameson's view of the characteristics of Postmodernism. The second chapter reviews the existing literature with the purpose to justify the topic of the research as a gap in the current body of knowledge and to shape the study with input from the existing researches and analyses in terms of the analysis and the research method. The third chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study and explores in detail Jameson's views on the characteristics of Postmodernism. The chapter also details that research method and procedure of the study. Chapter Four looks at Tarantino's characters in light of Jameson's notion of the death of the subject and its constituent parts. Chapter five analyses Tarantino's characters in terms of depthlessness and waning of affect. Chapter six discusses the characters vis-a-vis pastiche, nostalgia, and hyperspace. The last chapter concludes the study by answering the research questions and also makes recommendations regarding future research.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter detailed the context of the study and the problem that it aims to explore. Most of the chapter was devoted to establishing a basic but thorough understanding of Postmodernism. This meant looking at the very term Postmodernism and also the phenomenon Postmodernism. Outlining the phenomenon of Postmodernism also meant looking at the difference between modernism and Postmodernism. A key aspect was Jameson's view of the origin of Postmodernism and this was included to provide an appropriate context for Jameson's notion of Postmodernism that would be explained in the theoretical framework in the third chapter.

The study will now move on to review the existing literature to shape the contours of the study in terms of its precise content and method.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This part of the study reviews the related literature with a view to providing a background of the various elements of Tarantino's films and the claims of postmodernism that have been made regarding his work. My purpose here is also to account for the significance of both Fredric Jameson and Quentin Tarantino to show that work on them merits academic attention. Another aim is to show the gap in the existing literature to justify the present study. I have been particularly careful to use the literature review to inform my research method. I have skipped the discussion of Jameson's postmodernism in the literature review to allow for a detailed discussion of his postmodernism and its features in the succeeding chapter. I feel this segregation will result in a more thorough discussion of both Tarantino and Jameson and provide a sound context for the discussion on Tarantino in light of Jameson's postmodernism later in the study.

2.1 Jameson's Significance

Academic Paul A. Bove labels Jameson's *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* "a magisterial work" (1) and a "great work" and goes on to laud it as "the touchstone of all thinking in the area" (4) that offers a comprehensive definition of the narrative of postmodernism that he acknowledges surfaced in the realm of architecture and theory propounded by figures such as, Portman, Venturi, and Stirling. Jameson is important for Bove because of his "carefully discriminated analyses of many schools of thought about postmodernism" (4). Postmodernism is not a single theory. Various views, some radically different from others abound and Jameson's significance lies in the fact that he offers a "mapping" of the different views to bring out "their systemic consistencies and the differences in their relations" (Bove 4). Also important is Jameson's "powerful belatedness" that allows him a look at the scene from a good vantage point (Bove 4). Another important aspect of Jameson's theory of postmodernism is Jameson's grasp of Marxism, which may be the "the most comprehensive grasp of Marxism among living American critics" (Bove 4).

Resultantly Jameson creates a work that is ideologically objective and that allows for a greater and deeper understanding of postmodernism.

For British academic, writer and film producer Colin MacCabe Fredric Jameson is probably “the most important cultural critic writing in English today” (ix). He reasons, “The range of [Jameson’s] analysis, from architecture to science *Fiction*, from the tortuous thought of late Adorno to the testimonio novel of the third world, is extraordinary it can truly be said that nothing cultural is alien to him" (Maccabe ix). Although Jameson's works do not make for easy reading let alone analysis and MacCabe notes that in addition to the difficulty of linking the smaller, more specific parts of the theory, to the broader framework Jameson's work is "particularly difficult" because of the way he writes using "long and complex sentences in which the sub-clauses beat out complicated theoretical rhythms" (ix) employing Jameson as a theorist is useful because of the vastness and the depth of his analysis. He talks of modernism and postmodernism, also of cyberpunk, architecture, and film always with detail and attention. What the study learns from MacCabe’s views is the need to approach Jameson carefully and will, therefore, approach him in a manner that involves multiple readings and looking at his views in light of the comments observers have made on Jameson. This also points to the fact that it will be all the more exciting to work on Jameson's theory. Also MacCabe’s assertion of Jameson being a difficult read points to the significance of the study.

Jameson, who for Dino Felluga is one of the "players" of postmodernism, is not just a Marxist or thinker on culture and capitalism. He was trained as a linguist and a literary analyst. This makes his comments on the postmodern culture and film informed by a deep understanding of literary theory and meaning making processes. It also provides a validation of working on films because if he with his background is working on them, then films can be incorporated into a study in the field of English literature.

James F. Austin opines that "Jameson has continued to be at the heart of the current understanding of postmodernity" (131). Jameson has faced criticism, but his thoughts on postmodernism form the cornerstone of the theoretical formulation of postmodernism and this is why he holds significance. Ian Buchanan considers Jameson to be "one of the great synthesizing minds of our time" (*Reading* 242). He feels that Jameson has attracted a lot of flak despite being one of the key theorists of postmodernism. He puts it down not to flaws in Jameson or the difficulty of his style,

but to the "the inability to read in any way except critically" (Buchanan, *Reading* 242). He laments that theorists and critics have lost the "dogmatic dimension" (Buchanan, *Reading* 242). There is criticism on Jameson particularly by Linda Hutcheon but criticism does not automatically become justified or correct. The study will include Hutcheon's criticism of Jameson when it discusses his theory to point out the ideas for which Jameson received a negative reaction and also to enable the readers to see for themselves how valid the criticism is.

Catherine Constable notes that Jameson's importance lies not just in terms of outlining a theory of postmodernism or in terms of his impact on film-making, but that "Jameson's aesthetic model has gained ascendancy"(*Rethinking* 3) in work that approaches Film Studies from the perspective of work on the postmodern within Film Studies.

The study is informed by these comments in that Jameson's view of postmodernism commands centrality in debates on postmodernism. Although not everyone agrees with Jameson's perspective; critics, theorists, and writers on postmodernism agree on how indispensable Jameson is to any notion of postmodernism. Therefore, the study's choice to look through Jameson's perspective on the postmodernism of Tarantino's people will yield valuable insight into the issue.

2.2 Films as Texts for Scholarly Discussion

Alan McKee defines text simply as "A text is something that we make meaning from" (4). For McKee "a book, television programme, film, magazine, T-shirt or kilt, a piece of furniture or ornament" may be a text, as long as meaning is derived from it.

Paul A. Bove notes that literary scholarship has moved away from specialization in a particular area, era or genre. This too is a product of postmodernism. Postmodernism has dealt another blow to literary studies, a field that was already suffering from a surge of theory. Postmodernism has moved attention away from the significance of studying literature to studying mass culture and the productions of the marginal communities. To bring recent studies in literature within the scope of what is conservatively and traditionally thought of as literature the definition of literature may need to be expanded so that it includes "newly recognized objects of cultural analysis" (Bove 2) such as cartoons and productions such as cookbooks. Only now such studies will have some relevance to the present world.

Bove acknowledges that there have been efforts to rekindle interest in traditional literature studies and to "reestablish" (Bove 3) the status of literature and conservative literature studies, but such efforts constitute an "enterprise hopelessly outdated by the general disregard a nonliterate culture has for verbal complexity and ‘high’ aesthetic accomplishment" (Bove 3). Such efforts are both doomed to failure and irrelevant in the present context.

Fredric Jameson in *Reification and Utopia* discusses examples of Godard, *Jaws* and *The Godfather*. In *Postmodernism and Consumer Culture,* he uses examples of films to illustrate his points or draw his conclusions from. His very notion of postmodernism as a distinct phenomenon uses the example of Godard’s films. To explain pastiche he goes to works like *American Graffiti* and *Body Heat*. So Jameson also shows that film can be the ground of scholarly or literary discussion. This gives strength to the study’s choice of films as a genre for analysis. As opposed to traditional literary genres like novel and poetry, films offer a depiction of the contemporary world as well as any traditional literary genre can. The study does not want to enter a debate about whether films outrank literature or conservative literature studies. The study only establishes that work in the field of film is possible within the scope of literature and this work can offer good insight into the social and philosophical pinning of the world. Films can also be said to be literature because films contain the ingredients of the traditional literary genres: like poetry, films are open to interpretation and pack a lot of meaning in a short space, like novels, they reflect the society (of any given time) and contain plot and characters and, like drama, they contain a move towards the climax, the dénouement, spectacle, and music. The film is a serious art form now and exploring films will create awareness about the potential of films for analysis and encourage research in this field (Monaco).

Robert Stam believes that when the term ‘text’ was used for film texts it brought over “the respect traditionally accorded sacred word” of religion and literature (185). Developing this thesis further Stam says that a film “has its quantum of ‘revelation” like religious texts. “When films are texts rather than movies they become worthy of the same serious attention normally given to literature” (Stam 185-86). He also feels that film as the text has overcome the limitation of it being not quotable with a number of options of playback being available now.

Tom Simone feels that the contemporary world “abounds in the visual representation of human activity” (80) and though traditionally English studies have

concerned themselves with written texts these visual representations are increasingly gaining the attention of researchers and academicians in English Studies. Simone takes up the issue that a film is not a text in the conventional sense of the term and says that as soon as a film “comes under our investigation … it shifts from object to text” (Simone 82). He also asserts that films share “many aspects of narrative art common to drama and fiction” and finds that what Aristotle said was crucial to a tragedy, i.e., plot, is true of films as well. Even if a film is a fantasy like *Star Wars*, there is “a represented world of places, action, and character that claims a kind of parallel reality to our own normal world” (Simone 82). Therefore, the film can serve as a text for scholarly literary analysis.

Stephen Prince cites the example of *Rambo* to describe the purpose of film criticism. *Rambo: First Blood Part II* ends with Rambo's speech on behalf of the Vietnam War veterans that the veterans want America to love them and honor their sacrifices. Prince says that generally the viewers responded positively to the speech, but some—including many veterans—were offended at Rambo taking over their voice and because they did not think him to be a good representative of the veterans. This for Prince illustrates the "principle of polyvalence" (320). He describes the task of criticism and interpretation as, "Because film images and narratives are extraordinarily complex, that is, polyvalent, debates about their meaning are inevitable. Herein lies the need for criticism and interpretation" (Prince 320). Scholarly criticism "explores the significance of a given film in relation to issues of theory, history, or technology" (Prince 326).

Prince also holds that criticism of a film is "a rhetorical act"—because the critic works and persuades by virtue of the power and sophistication of his or her rhetoric—accompanied by an empirical dimension because the critic must reference ideas against the evidence of the film (320). Interpretations must always be grounded in a careful description and selection of evidence from the film under discussion" (Prince 321).

2.3 Tarantino as a Director

Tarantino is the post-modernist (Jon Ronson)

Tarantino has often been declared a postmodern director. Angela Watercutter, writing for *Wired*, opines that Tarantino has "a hybrid style that is as postmodern as it is period. His martial-arts assassins are white girls from the States, his gangsters

idolize Elvis, and his Westerns take place in the pre-Civil War South" (Watercutter). Her view is echoed elsewhere as: "He [Tarantino] excels at delivering his special brand of deeply referential, post-modern cinema with provocative insights into the history of the medium" (Kohn). But these pronouncements lack the backing of any detailed analysis of the ways Tarantino is postmodern in.

Aaron Barlow finds it to be quite arbitrary that Tarantino is tagged as postmodern with little explanation given as to the reasons or the validity of the tagging. He declares that Tarantino is "*not* [author's italics] postmodern in sensibility" but he has been "absolutely associated" with postmodernism for "it is an easy catch-all phrase for that which is and that which we don't completely understand" (Barlow 5). He uses Fredric Jameson's conception of postmodernism as the litmus test of Tarantino's postmodernism. According to Jameson a work influenced by the French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard is postmodern and Tarantino has certainly been influenced by Godard. He admits to it in his interviews and has even based the name of his production company A Band Apart on Godard's film *Bande à part*. In *Pulp Fiction* Mia draws a square on the screen thereby making the viewers realize that it, after all, is a movie, a characteristic of Godard's style. But Barlow says that Tarantino does not come up to Jameson's other marker of postmodernism, erasure of the boundary between high and low. He says that for this boundary to be broken, there has to be "an anger" against the cultural snobbery that relegates some forms of art as low culture and because Tarantino does not have this anger he is not postmodern. He also says that Tarantino "does not efface genres or other delimiters; he simply uses them without constraint and as he might see fit" (Barlow 5).

Aaron Barlow does not classify *Pulp Fiction* as postmodern or "hard-boiled pulp stories by the likes of Raymond Chandler and Dashiell Hammett" (87). Instead, he terms it "an extremely old-fashioned and moral movie, distinguished only by the particulars of its storytelling and direction from any number of movies from the past" (Barlow 90).

He, in fact, goes to the extent of saying that Tarantino's choices in his film-making only make him "*seem* [author's italics] postmodern" whereas Tarantino makes sure that he does not become part of a "postmodern' universe of […] artifice signifying artifice" (Barlow 3).

Aaron Barlow's point that there is a perception of Tarantino's postmodernism is actually a contention and concern the study shares. Part of the basis of the study

comes from the idea that there is a perception that Tarantino is postmodern, but this is not backed by intense scholarly inquiry and has not been debated enough. The study also agrees with him that the appellation postmodern is applied to Tarantino without properly defining what it means to be postmodern. However, the study disagrees with him in that that Tarantino does not show anger against the cultural snobbery. He delights in using genres and aspects of genres that are considered to be less artistic or inferior by the audiences and the filmmakers and makes the viewers revel in them. Naming his film *Pulp Fiction* and giving a definition of pulp is also his way of saying that he realizes the status such works are reduced to in the society. It is his anger against this disparagement of pulp that he not only brings it right into the mainstream but also takes it to the height of an Oscar and a Palm d'Or in addition to worldwide critical acclaim.

For Barlow, if a Tarantino film deserves the epitaph postmodern it is *Inglourious Basterds* because it leaves Hollywood "shot, stabbed, bludgeoned, choked, and blown" (139). Barlow also credits Tarantino with being postmodern here because he makes "his cheap and naïve art that is never cheap or naïve" (140). But then this is what he does in all his movies. *Pulp Fiction* almost mocks the norms with its non-linear structure and both *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs* revel in what is typically considered cheap. Gore films have had a poor reputation in terms of their artistic quality but *Reservoir Dogs* has Mr. Orange lie in a pool of blood for about an hour and still it is an artistic film.

Glyn White also feels that Tarantino-esque is used as a substitute for postmodern because postmodern is a weighty and vague term in the field of journalism. He takes Tarantino’s postmodernism to constitute intertextuality, self-referentiality and the blurring of genre distinctions. However, his discussion of Tarantino’s postmodernism is only spread over a couple of paragraphs and lacks detailed analysis.

Godfrey Cheshire in 1994 writes about Tarantino's typical characteristics as a director and points out that his movies play out in stylish spasms that reference everyone from Jean-Luc Godard to Sergio Leone and that this may become "postpomo shtick" (89). Taking a similar line Graham Fuller writes that Tarantino is "not so much a post-modern *auteur* as a *post*-post-modern one" (49) because he refers to ideas that stem from earlier incarnations.

Michael Rennett cites Bernard Schutze's definition of the contemporary society as "a culture that is constantly renewing, manipulating, and modifying already mediated and mixed cultural material" (392) which has a similar argument as Fuller's—that Tarantino recycles material that has already been recycled—but he labels this postmodern. Instead of seeing post-postmodernism in this he sees only pastiche and compares Tarantino to a Disc Jockey who is an artist on the basis of using materials that already exist. The Disc Jockey also goes against the established norms of giving credit to the original creator and promotes himself to install himself as a star. Rennett looks at the same basic situation—"Tarantino's "cut-and-paste, mix-and-match directorial style" (392)—but, unlike Graham Fuller, sees only postmodernism in terms of pastiche and consumer culture and not post-postmodernism.

John Joseph Jess, in *Quentin Tarantino and the Paradox of Popular Culture in Michael Chabon's* Telegraph Avenue, refers to Fuller's assertion, but the thrust of his argument is Tarantino's pastiche and the influence of popular culture in his films and his comparison with Michael Chabon. Tarantino has been billed as a postmodern director, but I feel that there has been little effort to showcase his postmodernism. So often it seems that the label postmodern has been used to refer to what may be Tarantino's eccentricities.

"There is only one Quentin Tarantino" Cat Knell (Bernard 165).

After showing that the application of the label postmodern to Tarantino is rather ubiquitous, but without solid argument, the study would like to discuss some key features of Tarantino's direction. This will establish Tarantino's significance as a director and also help the study showcase the contours of the existing work on Tarantino and determine a gap in the existing criticism.

With his directorial career starting in 1992 Tarantino has won a number of prestigious awards despite directing only a relatively small number of films—eight with *Hateful Eight* being the latest. Tarantino's movies have also received critical acclaim. Roger Ebert calls *Pulp Fiction* "the most influential" movie of the 1990s (Seal). Even Jon Ronson who is almost vitriolic against Tarantino's *True Romance* and calls it a "travesty" and who rates even *Pulp Fiction* poorly credits Tarantino with redefining the art of movie-making. Cavellero notes in 2011 that "few call his auteur status into question, even though his output seems meager" (128). Skirting the auteur debate the researcher will list the major awards Tarantino has won.

Award	Year	Category
Academy Award, USA (Oscar)	1995	Oscar Best Writing, Screenplay Written Directly for the Screen *Pulp Fiction* (1994) Shared with Roger Avary
	2013	Best Writing, Original Screenplay *Django Unchained* (2012)
Golden Globe Award, USA	1995	Best Screenplay - Motion Picture *Pulp Fiction* (1994)
	2013	Best Screenplay - Motion Picture *Django Unchained* (2012)
BAFTA Award	1995	Best Screenplay - Original *Pulp Fiction* (1994) Shared with Roger Avary
	2013	Best Original Screenplay *Django Unchained* (2012)
American Cinema Editors, USA	2007	Golden Eddie Filmmaker of the Year Award
Austin Film Critics Association	2009	Best Original Screenplay *Inglourious Basterds* (2009)
Australian Film Institute	2013	Best Screenplay *Django Unchained*
Cannes Film Festival Palm d'Or	1994	*Pulp Fiction*

In addition to these wins, he secured two Academy Awards, two Cannes, three Golden Globes, and four BAFTA nominations. Tarantino's films have also been commercially successful. Made for just 8.5 million *Pulp Fiction* earned $214 million worldwide becoming the highest grossing independent film of the time. *Django Unchained*, made for $100 million earned a gross of $425 million, the highest for a Tarantino direction. Put together, Tarantino's films have grossed $1319.3 million (boxofficemojo). Tarantino's success in terms of critical acclaim is backed by success in monetary terms too.

Artists love to work with and for Tarantino. Samuel L. Jackson met Tarantino on Sundays to get to play Jules in *Pulp Fiction*. Though Travolta was Tarantino's choice for Vince, Travolta ended up spending $30000 out of his own pocket for *Pulp Fiction*. Bruce Willis was so happy with the film that he organized a victory party when the film was awarded the Palme d'Or at Cannes and this party cost him about $100,000 (Bernard). That acclaimed actors want to work with him shows how good Tarantino is.

“Tarantinoesque” and “Tarantinian” are words coined to describe Tarantino's stamp or signature style and Joshua Mooney uses the term “Tarantinomania” to describe the fan following Tarantino started with his very first film (71). It is not just that his ideology of film and film making deserves a distinct appellation, it is also that he inspired "countless imitations" and that too as early as the "subversive cine-literate" *Reservoir Dogs* (Parkinson 283) that he has to be considered a great filmmaker. Booker hails *Pulp Fiction* as the harbinger of "complex, nonlinear narrative, with multiple plot strands" (15). The film made possible Doug Liman's *Go*, Paul McGuigan's *Lucky Number Slevin* and Guillermo Arriaga followed *Amores Perros* among others. Peter Biskind remarks on the rampant adoption of Tarantino’s aesthetics, “If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, Tarantino quickly became the most flattered director on the planet” (191). Glyn White notes that “Tarantino-esque … has become a ‘byword for both pop-culture reference and popular post-modern cinema’, that is, the space between *Forrest Gump* and Kieslowski” (341). The fact that copycat scripts, productions, and non-linear narratives sprang up following his early hits is an indication of Tarantino’s success.

After the resounding critical acclaim that *Reservoir Dogs* received *Pulp Fiction* was under the intense scrutiny of the critics to determine whether or not Tarantino was a one-hit wonder. Jim Smith feels that *Pulp Fiction* is "easily the best film of the 1990s and among the best dozen American movies ever" (*Gangster* 188).

Tarantino's association with Miramax, labelled “The House That Tarantino Built [sic]" (Carradine 132)—John Haynes quotes Biskind to give a different version, i.e., “the house that Quentin built” (189)—created a view that Tarantino makes independent movies or indies, movies that operate independent of the major Hollywood players—production houses, distributors and movie houses (Roxborough, Crucchiola). But Alter, Pierson, and Haynes feel that this label is not right. *Reservoir Dogs* is a true indie but even before *Pulp Fiction* was launched Miramax was taken

over by Disney and this made *Pulp Fiction* less of an indie and more of Indiewood—independent films launched through Hollywood channels—and reduced Tarantino to Miramax's "Mickey Mouse" (Haynes 927). But Haynes is wrong in insinuating that Tarantino sold himself to Miramax. Tarantino's acknowledgment that he was Miramax's Mickey Mouse was only in the sense of describing the strength of the bond. In fact, Tarantino cites the creative freedom he enjoyed at Miramax as the reason he stayed with Miramax (Biskind). Nevertheless, Tarantino opened the field for independent directors. Also, despite working with corporate-structured studios, he has not compromised on his artistic sensibilities and in that he remains an independent director.

Pop culture figures heavily in Tarantino's films. Cavallero classifies Tarantino's "witty dialogue on all things popular culture" (128) as a chief characteristic that defines his movies. Tarantino's job as a movie store clerk in addition to his childhood with parents who gave him a movie education furnished him with a vast knowledge of films and TV, both American and International—Japanese *Yakuza* films, Hong Kong's Triad/Kung Fu films, Melville's *policiers*, Italian mafia movies. The result of this is the innumerable references to pop culture in his films. Talking to the BBC about his education in film-making Tarantino says, "When people ask me if I went to film school I tell them 'no, I went to films' (Walker).

The abundance of pop culture in Tarantino's work is the outcome, in part, of a personal fascination with pop culture. One of the initial scenes in *Pulp Fiction* contains a conversation about what a Quarter Pounder is called in France. In an interview, Tarantino reveals that that thought was his own during his first visit to Europe. This is the outcome of 'his unabashed romance with American pop and junk-food culture" (Peary viii). Tarantino is far from apologetic about his predilection for pop culture. He tells Peter Brunette that pop culture is what gives it [America] its charm, part of its personality" so he has no hesitation in giving it an important place in his films (32).

M. Keith Booker says that *Reservoir Dogs* is "sprinkled" (92) with allusions to popular culture like the rest of Tarantino's films. The gang debates as to who was the star of the TV series *Get Christie Love* among other pop culture things like Madonna and comics and listens to pop songs from the 70s.

For Janet Maslin Tarantino's avid embrace of pop culture references manifests itself in "fresh, amazing ways" and despite the rehash of the material the work is "absolutely new" (Yaquinto 229).

Tarantino shares with Camille Nevers that the "gas" scene in *Reservoir Dogs* "unfolds in real time" (7). This is similar to Mr. Orange bleeding out in real time. Tarantino informs Michel Ciment and Hubert Niogret, working for the French magazine *Positif*, that Mr. Orange bleeding out because of his gunshot wound is "realistic. When somebody gets shot in the stomach that way, they bleed to death. It's the most painful place a person can get shot…Yes, the blood in that scene is realistic. We had a medic on the set controlling the pool, saying, 'Okay, one more pint and he's dead" (16). On a larger scale, all the action in the safe house takes place in real time as Tarantino wants to create suspense. He says, "The real time of the movie is an hour, the time, they're in the warehouse. …every minute for them is a minute for [the viewers] (Ciment and Niogret 15). Here is a postmodern element, but the writer does not draw the link with postmodernism using the feature is used only as a characteristic of Tarantino's film-making style.

Jameson uses experimental video as a representative postmodern work because the experimental video does not use fictive time. In films "reality is always foreshortened" but experimental video presents reality in real time—"measurable time, a product of rationalization and reification" (Bertens, H. 175). Jameson feels that experimental video is "the only art or medium in which this ultimate seam between space and time is the locus of the form" (76). Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs* exhibits this trait of experimental video in all of the safe house scenes, particularly the torture scene where the song plays out in real time. This provides an argument to study Tarantino's films as postmodern as per Jameson's concept.

Pastiche is a characteristic Tarantino evokes frequently in his works. In *Pulp Fiction* Tarantino makes use of pop cultural references. He describes he set of the Jack Rabbit Slim's restaurant as "In the dance hall, there's an explosion of color with all those lyrical posters of '50s films, the convertibles and the shots of Los Angeles streets on the video monitors. And also the fake Marilyn Monroe and Mamie Van Doren" (Ciment and Niogret, *Interview* 86). But Tarantino's angle is that of the director. He looks at the set in terms of shooting it. He talks about how he shoots the scene by initially following Vince into the restaurant so that the viewers discover the restaurant at the same time as Vince and then as the conversation starts the set recedes

into the background as the camera zooms in on the characters. The cultural references are important for the director. The study will determine the characters' reaction to these references and see how they relate to them. Also, the study will not look at the cultural references from the perspective of direction. The study will confine its analysis to the value the references hold for the characters and what they reveal about the characters.

Hirschberg writing for *Vanity Fair* notes Tarantino's style of film making as being "half rooted in some long-ago cool-guy world that may never have existed except in movies, and half stuck in the 70s pop culture that has resurfaced in the 90s". There is an inundation of references to these in his films and Tarantino has never been shy of admitting being influenced by films and making use of references to works of other writers and directors in his works. His personal life too seems to have influenced his films. *Natural Born Killers*, Tarantino's 1994 hit as a screenwriter, is replete with references to his real life. The lead character Mickey Knox is named for Mickey Rourke, an actor Tarantino loved and Knoxville, Tennessee where he spent part of his childhood with his parents. The camera crew vying for a chance to interview the Knoxes refers to Tarantino's friends at the video archive where he worked: Roger Avary, Scott McGill, and Julie. The crew's leader is Wayne Gale, who is modelled after Geraldo Rivera, a well-known TV host. Tarantino's girlfriend Grace Lovelace also finds her way into the film, or rather Tarantino also finds ways to incorporate references to Grace Lovelace: Grace Mulberry is a victim of the killer couple. Also, in *Pulp Fiction*, Butch rides off on a chopper named Grace. The *Pulp Fiction* reference worked and Grace who was estranged from Tarantino started the relationship again (Bernard 196). His personal love for directors, films, and songs has shaped his films significantly. Tarantino always refers to his days as a video store clerk as an educational experience that allowed him to develop a vast pool of references to draw from for his films.

Like Murphy, Ian Penman takes Tarantino's reliance on other works as a negative trait. He talks about Tarantino having built "an entire career on pastiche" and hence having just one card trick up his sleeve" (Cavallero 127) but Cavallero sees more than mimicry and homage. He sees in Tarantino's pastiche the development of the artist's understanding of the ethnic self.

Reservoir Dogs gives a nod to De Palma's *Casualties of War* in the dialogues between Mr. White and the wounded Mr. Orange in the car, Stanley Kubrick's *The*

Killing, and also John Huston's *The Asphalt Jungle* and *City on Fire* in terms of the basic premise of the film (Bernard 150).

The dance sequence in *Pulp Fiction* is constructed partly on the dance sequence from Godard's *Bande a part*. The cats dance on their tiptoes with their paws pointing downwards (Bernard 193). The Mexican standoffs are from *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly, and For a Few Dollars More* and the list can go on and on.

Jonathan Cavallero's discussion of Tarantino's use of homage leads him to find links to Italian directors Mario Brava, Scorsese, Brian De Palma, Francis Ford Coppola, and others. He feels that *Pulp Fiction* is inspired by Mario Brava's *Black Sabbath*. *Pulp Fiction* also references Francis Ford Coppola through *The Young Racers* poster in the restaurant Mia and Vince visit and also by evoking *The Godfather* through Marsellus and even the Wolf who resembles Vito Corleone. Captain Koons draws on Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter*. He also traces the Italian heritage of Vince Vega and sees a deliberate link with Travolta's previous performances as Johnny Manero and Danny Zuko, both of which are Italian characters.

Tarantino's use of reference, Cavallero calls it homage, though Tarantino himself does not accept the word, is not limited to storylines and characters or scenes. He also relies on previous works for camera work. Cavallero finds an instance of this sort of homage in *Pulp Fiction* where "the camera follows Travolta and Thurman to their table with a Steadicam long take that invokes Scorsese's similar shot of Henry and Karen Hill at the Copacabana in *Goodfellas*" (136). In these illustrative homages, Cavallero reads a deeper significance of racial identities and indeed a link with Tarantino's own racial ancestry. He is commenting that in the postmodern America one's Italian-ness is an assumed trait, one that "privileges the consumption of pop-culture products over lived experience (Cavallero 140). It does not come from experience, it comes from knowing representations of Italian-ness through films and TV. It may be shallow to some, but this is for Tarantino "the way of being Italian in the postmodern era" (Cavallero 140).

Tarantino also nods to Hitchcock when he replicates the scene of Marion Crane, making good on her escape, comes across her boss, with Butch running into Marsellus just when he thinks he is home free. The boxer Butch kills is not shown, but the reference is unmistakable to Floyd Wilson in *On the Waterfront* (J. Smith *Gangster*).

Talking about Tarantino's ability to lift pieces from the works of other directors, journalist, critic and documentary maker Jon Ronson makes an interesting observation that Tarantino also steals from himself. This just goes to show the extent to which Tarantino goes to link works. Indeed, his films are interconnected. Vince Vega in *Pulp Fiction* is the brother of Vic Toothpick Vega in *Reservoir Dogs*. Joe Cabot mentions Marsellus Wallace who is the crime boss in the world of *Pulp Fiction* and also Alabama who features in *Natural Born Killers*.

Tarantino's use of pastiche has faced a critical reaction as well as support. Generally, the feedback has been positive as critics have been impressed by his wide knowledge of film history and his creative use of references. An indication of the acceptance of pastiche is the fact that Johnson laments that Tarantino seems unaware of the Western before the civil rights movement that talked about slavery and involved African Americans in the Western genres. So instead of pastiche being a sore point, it is the lack of pastiche that is a sore point. This speaks volumes about the acceptability of pastiche.

Mary Ann McDonald Carolan finds that Tarantino "cites other directors and films prodigiously" and cataloguing the references is likely to be a futile exercise (75). The breadth and the sheer volume of the references are such that it becomes a mammoth task to list all the influences in Tarantino's work and the references to other works that Tarantino's work makes. The present study will not attempt this. The purpose of the study is to discuss the characters as postmodern characters and will necessarily involve looking at pastiche inherent in the characters' makeup, but the study will not limit itself to becoming an exercising in tracing the influences that shape the characters. The study will look at pastiche, but instead of chronicling all instances of pastiche and in consequence becoming an encyclopedic study, the study will look at the pastiche to show the postmodernism of the characters.

Tarantino erases the boundary between high and low, between the refined and the base, the cute and the disgusting. He told Manohla Dargis in 1994 that his work falls into what he considers to be pulp fiction. He goes on to explain the idea of pulp as "a paperback you don't really care about. You read it, put it in your back pocket sit on it in the bus, and the pages start coming out, and who gives a fuck? … You don't put it in the library" (Dargis 67). Tarantino has hit the spot when it comes to describing pulp fiction. But his *Pulp Fiction* is the erasure of the boundary between high and low because his work is cheesy but also a work of art. *Pulp Fiction*, which

he describes on screen as, "A magazine or book, containing lurid subject matter and being characteristically printed on rough, unfinished paper" (*Pulp Fiction*) earned an Academy Award, two BAFTAs, a Golden Globe and the prestigious Palme d'Or. It was also a mainstream success, grossing a meaty $107.93 million just within the USA against a filming budget of $8.5 million. Such a measure of success cannot be dismissed as pulp that has no place in the library or what "you don't really care about" (Dargis 67). This is exactly what makes the work a postmodern work. It is not classically refined, but even then it is a work of art.

Bruce Willis comments that Tarantino works on two levels: critical and corporate a proof of which is that his movies cost a little but bring in huge revenue. This is one aspect of Tarantino's blend of high and low. His movies cannot be classed only as art films that play on a particular tour or at special gatherings. His movies are mainstream blockbusters that do well at the box office. Thus Tarantino is able to blend the craft of an artist with the business acumen of a corporate mogul.

Tarantino's films move in and out of the sheer sublime and the less than ordinary. McGrath notes: "His films are apt to allude to Godard in one frame and a movie like 'Candy Stripe Nurses' or 'Dead Women in Lingerie' in the next." Tarantino makes movies that are "simultaneously stylish, exciting and knowingly cheesy" and it is a mark of Tarantino's artistry and no doubt clout that he can get away with it (McGrath). Paul A. Woods notes in a similar vein that *Pulp Fiction* comprises "an affection for the basic guns, gals an' guts sensibility of the lowest grindhouse movies and paperbacks" but refines that sensibility to raise the film to the level of an artwork (7). *Pulp Fiction* won the critics over with its "abundance of hackneyed stories, stereotyped characters, and general genre clichés" (P. Woods 100), but because Tarantino had added a sense of refinement to them, and this combination led the film to be nominated for seven Academy Awards beside the Palme d'Or it won at Cannes. On the one hand, the film is gore, and over the top theatrics, but on the other hand, there is enough refinement to merit critical acclaim. *Pulp Fiction* in among every list of best movies of all times. This is Tarantino's erasure of high, and low culture. The base gimmicks of film noir, B-grade films are combined with the artistry of the best kind, and the result is a work that is popular and refined at the same time.

Aaron C. Anderson comments on how the characters in Tarantino's film *Death Proof* erase boundaries. Stuntman Mike is a sadist, deriving pleasure from killing Pam, and then Arlene, Shanna, and Julia. About a year later when he starts a sadistic

game with a group of actresses, and stunt persons he blurs the boundary between sadism, and masochism, becoming a "true sadomasochist" (A. Anderson 19). Now he derives pleasure from hurting the girls, and also from the injuries he receives. One of the stunt persons also blurs the boundary of the victim, and the aggressor, as she rear-ends Stuntman Mike's car, and takes pleasure in it. This pleasure, like Stuntman Mike's, is partly sexual, which signifies the erasure of the boundary between human, and machine, real, and technological.

Tarantino's films attract both the refined audience, and those who just like slashes, blood, and guts. Lynn Hirschberg calls *Pulp Fiction* "the first coffeehouse action movie", and observes that "people who thought they were too cool for *Lethal Weapon* would see this film." Tarantino says that he wants refined audiences to watch his films so that they understand the references that his films contain, and thereby understand what he is trying to portray, but his films despite the abundance of references they contain they appeal to those too who do not have a good movie education. Tarantino reportedly asked people who had not watched certain classics to leave the screening of *Pulp Fiction* because they would not be able to appreciate the film as it should have been appreciated. He expresses his frustration with audiences not grasping the meaning as “sophisticated audiences are not a problem. Dumb audiences are a problem” (Brown). He fills the films with references and needs an audience that can appreciate those references.

While he may at times class his work as pulp Tarantino looks at his films as literary works, novels to be particular, interspersed with poetry. Typically, Hollywood films are linear, moving in a chronological manner, drawing the least on the viewers' attention, but a Tarantino film is "more like a novel in the way it's put together" as there are no flashbacks, "just chapters" (Nevers 7). He feels this approach of providing answers before asking questions is inspired by Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in America*, and it is also "the way it is in novels" (Nevers 7). This is another way Tarantino erases the difference between pulp and good literature. It is in the same spirit of elevating his work to the status of literature that Tarantino uses J. D. Salinger's *Glass Family* to serve as a basis for the interconnected stories, and characters in *Pulp Fiction* (Dawson). The individual episodes may seem trashy, mundane or schlocky but the arrangement makes them rise above the mediocrity, and join the ranks of literature.

Jeff Dawson notes of Tarantino that he desires to get filmmakers the same freedom as novelists have enjoyed for decades. More particularly he is interested in "the liberty to not only play about with chronology but to allow characters to float in and out of different stories" and so he tries to make his films as much as possible like the "work solely on paper" (Dawson 141). Barlow also agrees with the idea that "Tarantino sees himself as a novelist in a cinematic age" and that he shows "the consistent influence of the novelist's art" in the way he marries the attributes the pen gives him with the possibilities the electronic media open up to him (Barlow 36).

Tarantino employs pastiche and therein too, he erases the boundaries between works. Gavin Smith notes that *Pulp Fiction* draws on several genres. When the audience is introduced to Butch the knowledgeable know that they are in Body and Soul but then comes Butch's capture by the hillbillies and the viewers find themselves in Deliverance. Smith believes that this is not "a cheap postmodern stunt" it is part of Tarantino's bag of tricks. It lifts his work to a literary work.

Discussing Tarantino's *Kill Bill* series Booker notes that these films despite their bloodiness and fight sequences are not about violence, "but about movies" (93) echoing Jameson's view that "postmodernist art is going to be about art itself" (Jameson, *Consumer* 115). "But this kind of reflexive self-consciousness, often associated with the strategies of high modernist art, is here pure pop culture" (Booker 93). Tarantino is able to pick strategies from the modernist cinema of Godard and apply them to his themes and subjects that are built around and that figure pop culture and the result is a blend of high and low culture.

Pulp Fiction was not allowed a release in the UK for being allegedly violent, but its screenplay was published in October 1994 and became "the biggest, bestselling screenplay in British publishing history as if it were a work of literature" (Dawson 13). What interests me is the last part of the quote which shows that *Pulp Fiction* blurs the boundary between high and low culture.

Moon Charania reads an erasure of the boundaries between fact and fiction in the period film *Inglourious Basterds* and criticizes Tarantino for “freely manipulate[ing] history” and his “audacious fusion of gratuitous violence, clever pop culture” (58). For Charania Tarantino blends history with pop culture knowledge and representation and thus prevents an understanding of serious issues like the Holocaust and slavery.

Tarantino's work is unique because "the verbal set piece takes precedence over the action set piece" (J. Smith, *Quentin* 98). In Tarantino's long dialogues "truth, even reality, become verbal constructs. More than what they do, what the characters say [is important]" (J. Smith, *Quentin* 98). McGrath finds Tarantino's language to be "Pinteresque" with an air of literariness and the way it goes about the meaning-making process. Tarantino presents meaning as an entity open to interpretation. A central motif in *Pulp Fiction* is Marsellus Wallace's briefcase. Tarantino never reveals the content of the briefcase. This was a deliberate decision because he wanted the viewers to debate the contents and come up with their interpretations. The interpretations vary from gold to Wallace's soul and all of them are possible plausible interpretations. Tarantino achieves the same effect in his language, for instance, he does something similar to the title of his "talk-fest" *Reservoir Dogs* (P. Woods 46). He offers no explanation or insight into the title and leaves it to the viewers to come up with their interpretations, each of which he believes is a correct interpretation.

J. Hoberman writes that Tarantino's style, which is his invention, may be called "talk-talk, bang-bang" which he explains as "an actor-driven shoot'em up in which each character has a rap or a riff, if not a full-fledged theory of life (153). He also echoes Smith's evaluation of Tarantino that the language is "as much a tour de force as the action" (Hoberman 153).

Gavin Smith finds that *Reservoir Dogs* confronts "crisis of meaning and the limits of the knowable" (98). Tarantino's dialogues such as Mr. Brown's reading of Madonna's *Like a Virgin*, "express final, definitive denial of meaning's presence" (G. Smith 98-99). Tarantino's dialogues are always powerful and it will be useful for the study to discuss the characters' language in detail to see how their language relates to the postmodern conventions of language.

Tarantino's use of the word nigger has been the subject of much debate and criticism on the director. *Pulp Fiction* and *Jackie Brown* are laced with the politically incorrect nigger and Negro. As is the case with so many of Tarantino's idiosyncrasies this too has come under fire. People see this as racist and even fellow directors who hold Tarantino in high esteem have been uncomfortable with this faux pas. Spike Lee, an African American director of high critical acclaim feels Tarantino is "infatuated" with the word (Archerd). Lee opines that while the word is part of the language of the African Americans it is not as excessively used as Tarantino would have people

believe. Also, Lee thinks that it can still be avoided to eschew any hurt to a large community.

Tarantino has been unruffled by the criticism of his use of the alleged slur. *Pulp Fiction* has 13 instances of the use of the word nigger (Bernard), *Jackie Brown* uses the alleged slur 38 times (Archerd)—and though Cavallero happily noted in 2011 that the "infamous n word" (127) had not appeared since 1997—but the word made a comeback in his later works which points to the fact that the word has value for Tarantino. Even when *Pulp Fiction* was released Tarantino was barraged with questions about his use of the word nigger. His response has been calm and always pretty much the same, i.e., the “word 'nigger' is one of the most volatile words in the English language and anytime anyone gives a word that much power, I think everybody should be shouting it from the rooftops to take the power away" (Mooney 77).

Chris Vognar feels that Tarantino's use of racial slurs is difficult to document because of the many different uses of the slurs. The slurs at times show bonding and at times exalt the characters and of course at times denigrate them to the lowest of the low. His conclusion is that the racially politically incorrect language is meant to engender debate and to make viewers and critics "as still more questions" (Vognar 31).

Barlow feels that the use of offensive language or profanities does not necessarily relegate the work from the level of art. Writers like Stephen Crane, Tennessee Williams, and Eugene O'Neill assimilated the language of the streets and they were still considered good writers. While many writers have reflected the ordinary language, but "none reaches quite as far or accurately as Tarantino does" (Barlow 61). Sugar coating or hiding a profanity is no longer a strict requirement and Tarantino makes use of it without compromising the quality of his work. The profanities in *Pulp Fiction* and other films do not dent the artistic merit of the films.

It is also reflective of the language of the real world. Just as it is the case with violence, his films contain abusive, profane language because such language is a feature of the real world. Jim Smith feels that Tarantino is comfortable with using the n-word because he is a post-racist, for whom the word has lost its derogatory meaning and has been appropriated by the African American community. Also, the language of the characters in Tarantino's films is fairly obscene and this is an aspect of the pastiche in his work. De Palma's *Scarface* "remains the model for the modern

American gangster film—frenetic, foul-mouthed … to the point of absurdity" (P. Woods 38).

S. L. Price writing in *The Observer* notes that the language in *Pulp Fiction* is part of the revival of "nothing" that was initiated by Barry Levinson's *Diner* in 1982. The film did not do well commercially, but it paved the way for *Seinfeld*, *Pulp Fiction,* and *Reservoir Dogs* to showcase the lives of characters who talk a lot and whose conversations are about trivial things like TV shows and whether foot messages are sexual or not. M. Keith Booker notes that Tarantino's employs "cool, snappy dialogue, generally about nothing more than the trivialities of everyday existence" (92).

The Observer critic notes that the characters in Tarantino's films "relish language" and engage in dialogues that are not always functional. The characters are "self-conscious; they live in close proximity to Hollywood and are fed by its myths" (Booker). Tarantino's dialogues are built on dialogues from other films an instance of which is Jules's famous speech about the shepherd and the Lord.

The peculiar language that is heard in Tarantino's world is an outcome of his desire to talk about the real world and the people who inhabit it. Tarantino does not depict an alternate universe, a parallel universe or a bizarro world. His world is the real world he inhabits. It is exactly the world where people

> are having this conversation [about Tarantino's films] — a world, I mean, in which viewers collate the last names of minor characters in Hollywood movies and then publish their family trees and provide clickable footnotes to win over doubters — is the Tarantinian world in which people analyze Madonna lyrics over lunch-counter coffee. (Watercutter)

Late Tony Scott, a great director, who produced Tarantino's scripted *True Romance,* and who asked Tarantino to polish the dialogues of his *Crimson Tide* considers Tarantino's to be a "world of words" (vi). It is a world where people interact with phrases that are "so fresh and full of surprises" that hearing the speech becomes a joy in itself. Tony Scott credits Tarantino's dialogue with changing his perception of people by giving him "a whole new focal point" of language. He also says that Tarantino's language is poetic, "He can elevate a seemingly normal conversation into a fascinating exchange with a poetry only he is capable of giving" (Scott vi).

Ethan Alter feels that the attention pop culture in *Pulp Fiction* has received has pushed the language to the margins, but the language of Tarantino's film contains

a lot of the artistic accomplishments of the film. The "instantly quotable, strangely poetic dialogue" (Alter 96) is reminiscent of *Reservoir Dogs* but is "richer and more varied, partly due to the shift in the premise … [and] grander thematic ambitions" (Alter 97).

Barlow finds in Tarantino's dialogues "real poetry" (88). He opines that Tarantino "has become something of the poet of the ordinary, creating dialogue that, though sounding mundane, raises the quotidian to the level of poetry" (Barlow 60). He cites the characters' discussion in *Reservoir Dogs* of Madonna's song as an example of poetry. He reads the rhythmic structure of "Toby … Toby … Toby … Toby Wong … Toby Wong … Toby Chung … fucking' Charlie Chan" (Barlow 60) as a rhythmic and whose repetition through the dialogue makes it poetic. The dialogue is ordinary and may even be considered "a thoughtless use of language" but it is orchestrated like the symphony of a poem (Barlow 61).

The language that Tarantino gives his characters has been generally appreciated and even accepted as poetic. It will be interesting to offer another view of the language of Tarantino's characters where the thought content is focused and the language is analyzed to determine if it involves pastiche, is profound and the allusions to pop culture.

Cavallero notes of Tarantino's camera work in *Pulp Fiction* that "form highlights the film's concern with theatricality" (129). When Jules and Vince arrive early for their mission to take out Brett, Tarantino emphasizes the performative aspect of his characters' identities. In the middle of a long take that lasts almost three minutes, Jules and Vincent walk away from their target's apartment door and the camera moves from a medium shot to an extreme long shot. As they complete their discussion of foot massages and what happened to Antwan offstage the camera sort of waits for them onstage close to the apartment. They complete their conversation, get into their roles of murderous thugs and their close proximity to the camera as they walk past it reveals the murderous scowls on their faces. (Alleva 31) The camera work adds to the drama of the scene and presents the thugs in all their ferocity.

Jim Smith sees Godard in Tarantino's camera work when he parodies and subverts the conventions of film-making to make the viewers notice those very conventions. The oft-talked about square, drawn by Mia, underscores the point that she is a character in a film. The conversation, after Jules and Vince are shot at and survive, regarding the miracle/freak occurrence is shot in profile, "the two men don't

get into the same shot, because they're no longer close" (J. Smith *Gangster* 180). When Lance is searching frantically for his black book, the camera does not follow him into the room and when the audience does not get to see the search, it develops the fear that he may not be able to find the book. Tarantino repeats this use of the camera when he keeps the camera outside the bathroom where Fabienne and Butch are getting ready. This gives them privacy and establishes their intimacy. The camera work also contributes to Tarantino's pastiche as Tarantino uses the camera like his favorite directors. The camera cuts back and forth during Koon's monologue aping ace director Michael Cimino's *The Deer Hunter* thus evoking Christopher Walken's role in that film as a Vietnam war veteran. Lighting is another key part of Tarantino's work where he uses light to reinforce the message. The scene where Mia is brought back to life is shot in the available light which gives it the effect of a documentary and thus underscores the perils of drug use by making the audience see the effects of the overdose realistically. Butch's dilemma of choosing between his options as Marsellus tells him to throw the fight is brought out by the light and dark areas cause on his face by the lighting. (J. Smith *Gangster*)

David A. Cook also sees pastiche in Tarantino's use of the camera and shots. Godard's *Breathless* captures all the features of his style and also those of the French New Wave cinema and these include the "use of shaky handheld 35mm camera shots, location shooting, natural lighting, improvised plot and dialogue" (*Narrative* 444-5). Tarantino also employs the same techniques. An example is that Mr. Pink's getaway scene in *Reservoir Dogs* was shot in real life and real time as the crew could not get the police to cordon off the area.

While Tarantino is a technically accomplished director the study will not talk about this and confine itself to the discussion of characters.

Any discussion on Tarantino as a director is bound to have a part of it devoted to violence in Tarantino's films. Opinions vary on Tarantino’s use of violence. Toby Young captures the view of the anti-Tarantino camp when he says violence exists in Tarantino’s work “for no better reason than because he thinks it’s cool” (Cavallero 126). Such charges started circulating with Tarantino’s directorial venture *Reservoir Dogs*. It was met with shock due to the violence perpetrated by Mr. Blonde and it's enjoyment of blood and gore throughout its spool. Nevers, for instance, notes the "dense violence, in itself, and for itself, and without a trace of self-consciousness" (6) is at the core of the "unrelentingly violent saga" *Reservoir Dogs* (Edelman 1244). The

ear-slicing scene has come to signify the movie for many, and the question of social responsibility has hounded Tarantino in interviews. There have been reports of audience members fainting during screenings due to the graphic violence. Wes Craven the director of the infamous *The Last house on the Left* that features graphic rape, disembowelment, intense torture and is banned in many countries for its graphic violence, walked out during the torture of the policeman because it was too much for him (P. Woods 40). *Reservoir Dogs* garnered a reputation for violence. Tarantino laments that this badge of violence has been affixed on *Reservoir Dogs*: "They talked about *Reservoir Dogs* as if it was one of the most violent…the most violent movie ever made," but it is not. It carries less violence than the typical action films, but the label that it is 'that movie where the guy gets his ear cut off; (Tarantino 145) has stuck to it. *Pulp Fiction* too has a reputation of being a violent film and Fintan O'Toole of *The Guardian* labels *Pulp Fiction* "Exhibit A in the museum of moral vacuity" (Dawson 181). Aaron Barlow agrees with Tarantino that his films have a reputation of being violent, but are not actually violent, at least not as violent as the typical action film. The killings and deaths that occur in *Pulp Fiction* are often off-camera, but, as Roger Ebert says it "*seems* [author's italics]" (2) violent because Tarantino brings in rather lengthy humorous dialogue to play with the viewers just as in *Reservoir Dogs* the torture scene is stretched to the length of the song (Barlow 77).

Piers Handling rates Tarantino's handling of violence among that by Coppola, Arthur Penn and Sam Peckinpah (Bernard). The secret to this is "incorporating violence into the actual work itself" (Bernard 165). This insight is shared by Dawson, who says that the violence in *Reservoir Dogs* is not gratuitous because "it is *always* integral to the plot" (86).

Nanay and Schnee find the charge of the celebration of violence incorrect and indicate to Jules's action of pardoning Ringo as evidence that *Pulp Fiction* is not as much about violence as it is about forgiveness, the fact that the forgiveness scene is the climax also means that the film is about forgiveness.

Travis Anderson offers an interesting angle on the debate regarding violence in Tarantino's films. He says that classing *Reservoir Dogs* in a particular genre is difficult. It has comic elements but is not a comedy, it does not contain enough action to merit a place in the action genre. It is a crime drama, but the actual crime is never shown. James H. Spence asserts it is "a heist film" (43) but there is no actual heist in the film. It is so many things that it cannot be placed in one genre. Tarantino reveals

in a discussion with the director of *Forrest Gump* that his appreciation for *Forrest Gump* and also *Reservoir Dogs* is partly due to the fact that the two films avoid easy classification in a genre. So his films are violent, but they are not only violent. *Pulp Fiction* too has violence—murders, and a forced sodomy—but it refuses easy classification because of the plethora of elements in it. Violence in Tarantino's movies is mitigated by other concerns and subjects like forgiveness and redemption.

Carl Boggs and Tom Pollard (*Imperial*) list 236 killings in Rambo IV, 83 of them at the hands of John Rambo, the hero of the film. This comes to 2.49 deaths per minute of the film. Compared to this sort of violence Tarantino's films are not likely to appall anyone for their content. Tarantino represents killings but does not have a voracious appetite for it.

Mary Ann McDonald Carolan defends Tarantino against the charge of violence asserting that Tarantino's concern is not including gratuitous violence just for the sake of it, but for making the viewers focus the "ideological motivations" (131) of perpetrating the acts of violence. The director uses the violence to underscore how "American expansionism, hegemony, [and] colonial power" have worked over the centuries to further the stronghold of the powers that be (Carolan 131).

Tarantino's view regarding violence in his films has been more about social possibility than social responsibility. He rejoices at the possibility of showing violence, reveling in it and getting away with it. He absolves himself of the social responsibility of eradicating violence because he feels violence in films does not engender violence in real life. His films do not contain as much violence as other films. Violence is an essential requirement of the film and his films only depict what goes on in the world. So the on-screen violence is there only because there is violence in the real world. Moreover, if he is to show violence, his job requires him to show it well, and because it's cinematically exciting (Bernard, Peary, J. Smith).

Tarantino defends the violence in his films as a literary quality. He feels that movies suffer from a desire of making the characters likeable and getting the audience to root for the characters, but in a novel one can create a bastard and it will be okay with the audience as they know they are reading a story about a bastard and they will keep reading (Dawson 86).

Tarantino's use of music is another hallmark of his directorial style. *Reservoir Dogs* is littered with songs from the seventies and songs accompany scenes to bring out the meaning of the scene or to enhance the effect. The song *Little Green Bag* that

accompanies the *Reservoir Dogs*' walk out of the restaurant at the start adds to the glamour of the group, and presents them as cool guys. Matching a sweet song like *Stuck in the Middle* to a scene of horrible violence provided the right juxtaposition to make the audience realize the gruesomeness of the violence. Tarantino says, "I think the right combination of the right scene and the right visual and the right piece of music is as close as you get to pure and simple" (Dawson 80). The music in *Pulp Fiction* is also an intricate part of the plot and the cinematic effect. The rape scene merits special mention here. Tarantino wanted to film it to the accompaniment of *My Sharona* as the song had "a good butt-fucking beat to it" but it did not materialize, but it still shows how Tarantino matches the music with his scenes (Mooney 73).

Peter Romanov observes that Tarantino's use of music is not just a matter of using music that is appropriate to the scene to create a mood. In his films, music speaks for the characters when they are silent, whether by choice or per force. The music acts "as a signifier of what the character may be feeling at a particular moment in the film" (Romanov 6) or bring "clarity to emotions not fully expressed by the characters" (Romanov 59). He also sees a shift in Tarantino's use of music. From expressing emotions and shocking audience's expectations in *Reservoir Dogs*, he moves on to employing music to control the tone of the scenes, and then to using it to duplicate themes from other genres of film, in *Jackie Brown*.

Tarantino's casting—"one of his major strengths" (Dawson 56)—is also a trait that sets him apart from other directors. While other directors cast bankable stars he casts on the basis of his likes and dislikes. Casting Travolta, known for good boy, singer, dancer roles, as a junkie hit man was a gamble and surprised critics. Carolan finds Tarantino's habit of breaking established rules of filmmaking and genres to be true of casting too. She thinks that Tarantino knows the rules of film making and its genres, and he revels in breaking them. His fascination with working with Samuel L. Jackson has seen the actor make appearance after appearance in his films.

The casting in *Jackie Brown* serves to provide a way to give meaning to the characters in the film (Booker). The decay of Gara is made apparent by De Niro's earlier performance as a young Vito Corleone, who sets out to build the empire that he will later rule as the Don. If it had not been for De Niro, if some other actor had played this character, this decay would have been partially lost on the viewers (Booker). Booker also notes that casting Pam Grier is significant as she brings the

aura of her past powerful roles of *Foxy Brown* and *Women* in *Cages* and this contributes to the meaning of her character Jackie Brown in the film.

The casting choices are important for the study. Initially, the study was hesitant to include brining the previous roles of the performers in the discussion and wanted the study to be solely concerned with the characters but looking at Jameson's view and the links between roles that critics have drawn I will make this part of the study. The study will note, for instance, Travolta's previous work while analyzing the character he plays in *Pulp Fiction* to determine if Travolta's past performances reveal any aspect of his character Vince Vega.

Tarantino feels that a film can be like a novel in that it does not have to be always a linear arrangement of incidents. He distorts chronological time in both *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs* vehemently stressing that there are no flashbacks in the movies but a non-linear arrangement of incidents. Horsley finds its structure to be the "most interesting and innovative thing" about *Pulp Fiction* which is divided into three sections, each of which has material enough to be an independent story "but all arranged in a nonlinear fashion" (239).

Nanay and Schnee look at Jules and Vince in the light of Nietzsche's superman. James H. Spence tries to understand the moral lives of the Ramblers in *Reservoir Dogs* and comes to the conclusion that they live according to a different code of conduct than is usual but they do have a code of conduct. Travis Anderson reads *Reservoir Dogs* as a tragedy in the Nietzschean vein where the characters seek redemption. This is redemption in the Nietzschean sense where the discordant element fuse and multiple identities come together to form a united whole as the characters each having good and bad qualities die.

Tarantino in a 1992 interview with Peter Brunette explains the relationship between a writer and the characters as one where the characters are independent of the will of the writer. The writer may decide the overall structure, but only "with the characters deciding what will happen" (Brunette 30). For Tarantino, characters overpower the will of the writer. "If a character does something real that doesn't fit with the plan, well, that's what he does" (Brunette 30). Tarantino admits the power of his characters and admits he doesn't "play God" to try to force his characters to do something that he feels they should go. In fact, it is the characters who give him "a new reality" and he is "like a court reporter writing it down" (Brunette 30).

Ella Taylor sees that the characters in *Reservoir Dogs* are independent of the writer and traces it to Tarantino's style: "Tarantino doesn't so much write his characters as hover over them, protecting their freedom of expression" (45). She quotes Tarantino from an interview she conducted: "I don't know what these guys are going to do. I set up the situation and they start talking to each other and they write it" (Taylor E 45). It is the same thought that he shares with Graham Fuller: "When I start writing I let the character take over" (52) and he reveals that it is the characters who are "telling" the story (53). Tarantino also feels that if the writer makes the characters talk "then that's phoney baloney" (Fuller 65). Things have to come from the character and the character may surprise the writer. The character may even surprise the writer with information about their (the character's) lives and Tarantino accepts that his characters surprise him with information and emotions.

Tarantino in an interview with Henry Louis Gale Jr., a leading African American critic, talks at length about how his characters are independent of him. The characters have a life of their own and he as a writer or a director cannot force them into living a life he wants them to live. For the sake of clarity, it is required to reproduce a lengthy excerpt from the interview so that the reader may understand that Tarantino's characters are free of his influence as a writer/director. Tarantino says,

> I follow the characters wherever they want to go. The most I have anything to say in the matter maybe happens in the first half of the story, because I have to plan it out a little bit, build the road a touch, but I don't try to figure out much more as far as the story is concerned from the second half on. Because I know by that time — and you're trying to predetermine something before you're actually writing — by the time I'm actually writing, I've gotten to half of the story.
>
> Now everything's different. I'm now those people. I've learned more about them. I am them. They are going their own way. And I might have some places I want them to go. Usually, they take their time about getting there. But sometimes they get there. And if they don't want to go there, if they want to go their own way, that's them telling me it's bulls—t. So I follow their way. For better or for worse.
>
> All my characters are coming from me. I don't think twice about my female characters or my male characters, my black characters or my white characters. And when I come into it, it really is to clean up plotting. (qtd. in Gates 50)

In a conversation with Jeff Dawson Tarantino talks about the infamous ear-slicing scene as a result of not him as a writer or director but as the result of who the character is. He says that he did not write the scene thinking that he needed "a really bitchin' torture scene" (Dawson 84). He reveals that he did not even "know Mr. Blonde had a razor in his boot until he whipped it out" (Dawson 84). He says of his creative process, "I just get the characters talking to each other—whatever happens, is what happens and what they say is what they say" (Dawson 84). Mr. Blonde does what his nature, not Tarantino, tells him to do: "The truth of it is that was what Mr. Blonde would do when left alone in a room with this cop"(Dawson 84).

Yaquinto sees redemption as a central motif of *Pulp Fiction* where Mia, Marsellus, Butch, and Jules achieve redemption. Jules voices this redemption and in achieving redemption becomes what Yaquinto terms “the thinking man’s gangster” (230). The reason for this label is that he realizes his limitations and does not become an avenger or a crusader. He does not try to make Pumpkin and Yolanda mend their ways and is satisfied with keeping himself from meeting the fate of a gangster that Vince meets.

Joseph Shaw, the editor of *Black Mask* magazine, writes that the writers for his magazine abiding by "the cardinal principle" "did not make their characters act and talk tough; they allowed them to (viii). They gave the stories over to their characters, and kept themselves off the stage, as every writer of *Fiction* should" (J. Shaw viii). He continues on to describe the philosophy of the writers as "They did not themselves state that a situation was dangerous or exciting; they did not describe their characters as giants, dead-shots, or infallible men" (J. Shaw viii). Everything must come from the character and the writer must write with "greater and greater restraint" (J. Shaw viii).

Angela Hague's compilation of views regarding the role of ego vis-a-vis the creative process leads her to conclude that the willingness to surrender ego boundaries is important. Whether it is the "elastic ego" of Jung or a "receptive passivity" that Maritain holds responsible for the creation, or "self-surrender" of Ghiselin or Koestler's "fluid ego boundaries" the ego plays a big role in the artistic process (Hague 70). The erasure of the ego boundaries is accompanied by "a loss of will" on part of the artist (Hague 71). This allows some writers to penetrate the character they create and "become" the characters (Hague 71).

Hague points to the fact that the creative process of a writer taking place without a conscious will is paralleled in the fields of science and mathematics too. Einstein, mathematician Henri Poincare, and chemist Fredrick von Kekule reveal that their method of thinking about discoveries is closer to Coleridge's process for creating *Kublai Khan* than logic. Kekule feels that a dream led him to a theory of atoms and he told his audience to learn to dream. Einstein also talks about a gift from the imagination as a major contributory factor in his work.

Hague says that characters already live in an "autonomous, preexisting reality" which their creators are "*made aware of*" (106), a point that Alice Walker seconds. This is borne out by established writers. Gide says that characters "thrust themselves" upon the writer. A famous dramatist of the Theatre of the Absurd, Harold Pinter says that he does not conceptualize the characters in any way, the characters just come into existence (Hague). Edward Albee, who is more aware of his characters' genesis in his research and thinking still has to wait for the characters to tell him what they are going to say or do and without this, the work will not be a work of art. Joseph Conrad and Joyce Carol Oates say that they follow their characters. The characters chart their route and they just follow. The character's power can be ascertained from Forster's comment that at times a character just "run[s] away" (Hague 108) with the writer because the character is that strong. Joyce Carol Oates says that she had trouble controlling her character Hugh Petrie in *The Assassin*. William Faulkner says that after a point in the work "the characters themselves rise up and take charge and finish the job" (Hague 108). All these views compiled by Hague make the point clear that the characters can be independent of the writer.

Before bringing to an end this discussion for fear of becoming repetitive I would like to quote Virginia Woolf from her essay *Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown* to stress the importance of realizing that characters are pretty much independent of the writer. Woolf writes,

> … what demon whispered in my ear and urged me to my doom, a little figure rose before me—the figure of a man, or of a woman, who said, “My name is Brown. Catch me if you can.
>
> Most novelists have the same experience. Some Brown, Smith, or Jones comes before them and says in the most seductive and charming way in the world, ‘Come and catch me if you can.’ And so, led on by this will-o’-the-wisp, they flounder through volume after volume, spending the best years of

> their lives in the pursuit, and receiving for the most part very little cash in exchange. Few catch the phantom; most have to be content with a scrap of her dress or a wisp of her hair.
>
> My belief that men and women write novels because they are lured on to create some character which has thus imposed itself upon them. (3)

Tracy R. Gleason notes in *The Oxford Handbook of the Development of Imagination* that sometimes authors may imagine not just a character, but they imagine a relationship with the character too. And in these cases, the characters become powerful to the extent of "dictating" the narrative or arguing with the author about where the plot treads (Gleason 260). Watkins believes that characters may become such a strong part of the imagination that they may comment on the real-world life of the writer.

Ruth Ozeki, writer, filmmaker and Zen priest, talking about her novel *A Tale, for the Time Being*, speaks of the writing process as one where the characters are very independent. She says, "A character speaks—whispers, mutters, shouts—breaking the silence and, in so doing, calls the writer into being. And the writer responds" (Ozeki). She adds that "nothing could be further than the truth" that a writer is a "godlike being who wields omniscient and absolute authority over his creations" (Ozeki). She believes that writers are subservient to the characters, they are "at the mercy of their creations" (Ozeki). The character being a hijacker may seem an exaggeration and of course, a writer does have some control over the situations, but characters too have "a disturbing amount of agency" and should not be seen as clay that can be molded into any form by the writer (Ozeki).

I have dwelled on the issue of the character being independent of the creator to circumvent the objection that the characters are just reflections of the author and that their postmodernism is only the postmodernism of their creator. I want to assert that Tarantino's characters exhibit postmodernism and this is not just because of Tarantino, but also because they, the characters, are like this. I feel this will enhance the scope of the study and allow me to make generalizations regarding the characters' postmodernism. This also indicates to an interesting possibility in the analysis part of the study, i.e., some aspects of the characters' postmodernism may be traceable to Tarantino the director and some will be the outcome of the characters themselves. The review shows me that I need to discuss the characters not just as created beings, but also as beings who create themselves. In the next section, I show that Tarantino's

characters are human. This, together with their independence of Tarantino, will allow me to assert that the characters stand for the real life human beings and their postmodernism can be related to the real world people.

Tarantino holds that his characters are "real people talking" (Brunette 32). They are not just made up or crafted beings. They are not even limited to being gangsters for that matter because they have "normal, childish, *human* responses (my italics)" (Brunette 32). They cannot be dismissed as mere types, referring at best to a particular category. They are childish in that they carry the essence of humanity and represent every person for they are in Tarantino's words "insanely human" (Taylor E. 46) "have a heartbeat to them" and there is a "human pulse" to them (J. Smith, *Gangster* 100).

It is not only that the characters are human. More importantly, Tarantino asserts they reveal "who we are as people" and sometimes show "our dark side" (Cheshire 96). This is of immense importance to the study because through studying the characters in the films the study will be able to generalize the findings to the people sitting in front of the screen which will give the study a broader scope and relate it to the real world.

Owen Gleiberman feels that Tarantino's characters use language that is like the language of the ordinary people. When they make pop culture references they are making them because people in the real world make such references and this similarity of language and topics is "Tarantino's way of humanizing them" (Dawson 184). Barlow also feels that Tarantino humanizes his characters through dialogue" (88). Ace director, Late Tony Scott is impressed that Tarantino's characters are real. It is not just pop references that pour from the characters' mouths, they are real figures with "full 3D foibles, quirks and histories [divulged] within a few lines of dialogue. He mentions his directorial venture *Crimson Tide* for which he enlisted Tarantino to polish the dialogue and remarks that Tarantino made every character into a real person" with the strength of his dialogue. "Who would ever have thought of an executive officer on a nuclear submarine having an in-depth conversation about Lipizzaner horses? Yet it worked brilliantly—so much so that it became the book-end for the movie" (vii).

Jeremy Carr discusses that Tarantino introduces key characters through other characters and builds their impression before introducing them. Mr. White and Mr. Orange talk about Mr. Blonde and create his first impression for the viewers before he

appears. A similar thing happens for Mia who is introduced by Jules. This is the director's way of introducing characters and while the study learns from it to look at the clues other characters may provide about a character the study will not concern itself with discussing the way characters' appearance on the screen is built up.

Jeremy Carr's other observation, "Many in Tarantino's films operate under the artificial influence of one purpose or another, pretending to be someone they are not" is closer to the study's objectives and the study will look at the performances the characters put on and what it reveals about their reality.

It would be a mistake to dismiss Tarantino's characters, particularly in *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs* as only gangsters and criminals. They are human. Aaron Barlow concludes after his detailed analysis of *Pulp Fiction*, "The characters in *Pulp Fiction* may be lowlifes, but they are still human and deserve, in Tarantino's presentation, to be treated as carefully as any real shepherd would, as anyone would, who has become what Winnfield claims he now wants to be" (90).

This rather lengthy discussion of characters being independent of the writer or at least the possibility thereof is deliberate. I want this discussion to provide the rationale for the conclusion that the traits of the characters are generalizable to the people outside the cinema screen as Nanay and Schnee assert that "the cinema intrudes on us only by revealing to us who are the viewers are, as if the screen before us were a mirror in which is reflected our own individual virtues and vices, desires and fears, longings and failings" (59). Geiger and Rutsky also believe that analysis of film informs not just in terms of insight into the film, but also about "the culture or time that produced them" (1042). So, while generalizations can be made, it must be made clear that generalizations about man in the contemporary postmodern world is just an outcome of—and not—the main aim of the study.

Tarantino says that he introduces gangsters in *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs* and then spends the remainder of the film "deconstructing these characters. … They literally decompose right before your eyes" (Ciment and Niogret, *Interview* 87). Deconstruction for Tarantino is taking something apart like the folds of an iceberg lettuce or the layers of an onion. Each peeling reveals something new. The gangsters start off as sinister creatures and little by little more information is provided about them and their humanity is revealed and the audience relates to the characters.

It is in this sense that the study uses the term deconstruction in the title. The characters will be taken apart to reveal their inner workings, desires, and psyche and to discuss the impact of postmodernism on them.

The existing literature discusses Tarantino's style as a director and his contribution to Hollywood. The literature sees Pastiche as a major feature of Tarantino's repertoire and declares that despite only relatively limited work to his credit, he has carved a niche for himself in the industry. The critics and commentators see language as a major tool for Tarantino who loves dialogues. The existing literature does label Tarantino as postmodern, but there is little discussion on any link with a theory of postmodernism. Also, the existing literature is limited to discussing Tarantino's art as an auteur and does not go into discussing the postmodernism of his characters.

2.4 Research Methods Employed by Previous Studies

The study will now look at the literature regarding research in films to learn from them to choose and craft the research method for the study.

Stephen Prince lays down the basic rules for a scholarly analysis of a film. He says that the focus is not to reveal the story of the film. A "minimal" plot summary may be provided to help the reader understand the context, but revealing the plot or even commenting on the artistic merit or lack thereof of the film is not part of a scholarly work (328). While a newspaper review is consumer-oriented or at the most only partly analytical a scholarly work on a film is "entirely analytical" (Prince 328). "Scholarly criticism seeks to analyze how the narrative or audiovisual design of a film works with reference to existing traditions of cinema or other arts and with reference to basic critical concepts of models of film theory" (Prince 328-9). Prince mentions an analysis, in *Cinema Journal*, of Kenneth Branagh's *Dead Again, as* an example of a scholarly analysis. Here the writers Marcia Landy and Lucy Fisher analyze the film from the perspective of pastiche and comment on the ways the film refers to past cinematic works.

Landy and Fisher's article is not just a collection of the instances where *Dead Again* refers to the past films like *Rebecca*, *Dial M for Murder*, *The Stranger* etc. The article also talks about the purpose of such references e.g. giving clues to the audience to solve the mystery, playing with the audience's expectations, and to offer insight into the characters.

My study is also based on a scholarly analysis and will stay away from commenting on the artistic merit of the success or failure of different devices. Like Landy and Fisher's study, the present study too has a theoretical perspective and will analyze the film from only this perspective. For the sake of providing context, some description of the scene or the plot will need to be given, but it will always be the bare minimum as Prince advises and demonstrates in his examples of film analysis.

Also, Geiger and Rutsky advise that a study in film analysis must not limit itself to a description that may at best demonstrate, comprehension of a film's apparent or manifest content because it cannot be a good study unless it delves "into more complex ideas and meanings" (1016). So the study will describe parts of the films only to create its argument about the "subliminal aspects" of the films (Geiger and Rutsky 1017).

Warren Buckland advocates using descriptive statistics for analysis of films. Buckland feels it can offer a "more detached, systematic, and explicit mode of analysis" as compared to an analysis of the mise-en-scene (103). This sort of descriptive statistics can be used to point out the particular styles of directors or trends in eras for instance by calculating the shot lengths. One can, by comparing the shot length of a particular shot against the average shot length of the scenes, talk about the meaning of the scene as created by the change in the shot length. While Buckland's desire to remove subjectivity is understandable, I do not want the study to become about shot lengths or even shots and camera angles. However, his views inform the study regarding the importance of subjectivity. The study will try to achieve objectivity, not statistically, but by creating arguments that are backed by what Geiger and Rutsky call "filmic evidence" (1017) from the films under study and also other films and support the interpretation with views of eminent critics. In fact, Geiger and Rutsky consider film analysis to be "constructing an argument about a film or films and supporting that argument with evidence and examples" (1017).

Geiger and Rutsky identify formal analysis as being the groundwork of any study. This means that a key part of the research is to identify "key scenes or sequences" (1032) that may contain material for possible analysis. They also advise to "Watch and rewatch these scenes, taking careful notes" (Geiger and Rutsky 1032). This is how the study will go about the analysis. In the initial few viewings, key scenes will be identified and these will become the subject of intense focus. This is not to say that that the study will be limited to only those scenes. The study will look

at the entire film, but some scenes may prove to be more beneficial in terms of providing insights into the characters.

To Geiger and Rutsky theoretical analysis means "interpreting or understanding films through the lens of a particular theoretical method or set of methods" which may be from other fields: anthropology, art, philosophy, psychology, political science, and literary analysis" (1042). They believe that the approach matters less than the aim to question conventional assumptions and to discover new insights" (Geiger and Rutsky 1042). As far as Geiger and Rutsky's assertion that "[t]heory should not be rigidly applied [author's italics]" is concerned I would say that this may work for a study in film studies, but because the present study is not part of film studies exactly and is using film as text it will ignore Geiger and Rutsky's point here and be rigidly confined to Jameson's postmodernism (1047).

Gillian Rose terms the "cross-border traffic in images and analytics" seen in the blend of images and audio, images and history, images and language, to name just a few, visual culture (70). She allows that there is a multiplicity of meaning associated with the term, but no amount of differences in meaning can shadow the fact that visual culture is becoming an increasingly bigger part of discussions and owing to the "resolute attention paid by cultural studies to popular culture in all its diverse forms, including film, television, graphic books, advertising, comics, and so on has considerably broadened the kinds of visual imagery now considered acceptable for academic study" (G. Rose 70).

Marquard Smith also feels that there is a lack of consensus as to where exactly visual studies belong because they inform so many disciplines. Visual culture for Smith ranges from "high culture to popular mass culture" and everything in between (M. Smith 2). The subject and objects that can be studied in visual culture include "painting, sculpture, installation, and, video art, to photography, film (terrestrial, cable, satellite) television, the internet, and mobile screening devices" (M. Smith 2) and many more. Smith notes that in many situations "images and objects and subject and environments overlap, blur, converge, and mediate one another. Language may come together with the image and form an inseparable bond as it happens that cinema always comprises sight and sound, viewing and hearing at once" (M. Smith 3).

While the study does not aspire to be a work in visual culture, it learns from the views regarding the visual culture that language and image occur together, and that looking at just one is unlikely to reveal the whole truth. If I am to talk about the

characters I cannot focus only their dialogues and hope to reach a good understanding of their being. I must look at the image they present of themselves. This will necessitate looking at the visual presentation of the characters, i.e., dress, hairstyle, etc. Also, this will include a look at the race of the character. Although this is not a study in racism, yet from the perspective of creating characters, race may warrant a look. Looking at the characteristics of the image, I will be able to get a better understanding of the characters.

Barry Brummett defines close reading as: "*mindful, disciplined reading of an object with a view to a deeper understanding of its meanings* [author's italics]" (28). He asserts that to be a "meaning detective" (27) one needs theory, method, and technique to give structure and discipline to the close-reading. He describes a theory as "*a map to a text* [author's italics]" (28), methods as "*the vehicle you use to get around a text* [author's italics]" (29) and techniques "*as habits, tricks, and knacks you use 'on the ground' once inside the text* [author's italics]" (Brummet 29). He goes on to say that the "[c]ritic and reader dance together on the floor of the text to the music of the theory and its methods" (Brummet 35). The study will follow this simple yet informative analogy of theory, method, and technique. It will employ Jameson's theory of postmodernism and using textual analysis and visual analysis as method attempt to read the postmodernism of Tarantino's characters. The study takes its rationale for using both textual analysis and visual analysis from Brummett's assertion that methods are "friendlier" in that a theory may require a number of methods and while two theories can't hang together two or more methods can for working on a theory (43).

Gabriele Griffin voices a view similar to Brummett's regarding the importance of having a theory to direct and inform the research, but she chooses the word "methodologies" which she says are "perspectives you bring to bear on your work such as a feminist or a postcolonialist one" (6).

Martha Shiro says that "communication is basically inferential, in other words, language used to communicate cannot be totally explicit" (169). She goes on to assert that "interpretation of both explicit and implicit information requires inferencing" (Shiro 169-70). She also says that the generally held distinction between explicit and implicit information and consequently between inferences drawn from explicit information and inferences drawn from implicit information needs to be given up as clear-cut differences do not exist. She proposes that "it would be more appropriate to

consider the difference as only a matter of degree, closer to the textual information when ‘more explicit’ and relying more on the reader’s contextual knowledge when “less explicit” (Shiro 171). She cites an example that “raising his rifle” has to be interpreted as “shooting” and it is so strong that it does not seem to be an inference but seems explicit information (Shiro 171). She says that a reader draws inferences based on the general narrative and validates these assumptions against information in the larger body of the text and many inferences may be changed or abandoned. Shiro’s assertion provides the study the justification for making inferences regarding the character’s motives and understanding their makeup. The study will draw inferences about what the characters mean when they say or do something and these inferences will not be just my opinions. These will be based on information given in the text.

Catherine Belsey shares Shiro’s view that inferences are personal but being personal does not make them necessarily subjective and just the opinion of one person. Belsey says that the text “is by no means an empty space, a vacancy into which we pour whatever we like” (167). The reading of a certain part of the text has to be validated by another part of the text for it to hold.

Belsey also advises that textual analysis requires inferences and interpretations, but secondary sources should not be used too heavily in drawing inferences. She admits that secondary uses have their utility and may inform the study in a number of crucial ways, but they must be used in a way that they lead to further analysis. She also says that secondary sources may cloud the researcher’s judgment and prevent them from looking at newer perspectives than those that have already been discussed. She advises consulting secondary sources only after provisional personal interpretations have been made. This is exactly how I intend to employ secondary sources. I will use them only to substantiate my argument. Because I will not look at the secondary sources before making my own interpretations I will not be blindly toeing their line. Also, when my reading brings me across an interpretation that I do not share, I will make that a part of the study and argue against that view. This is how I will be able to avoid the pitfalls of using secondary sources.

Bordwell and Thompson in *Film* Art provide a sample of analysis of characters where they show that interpretations can be based on the characters’ motives evident in their actions and can be justified on the basis of events that occur in the film. In their discussion of *Do the Right Thing*, they identify the characters’

goals and use the events to show that the characters really have these goals and then comment to what extent these goals are achieved. They show that dialogues and simple actions can be full of meaning. They interpret a character Mookie walking in the street to show that "he may really visit his son more regularly in the future" (Bordwell and Thompson 425). Bordwell and Thompson's analysis shows that the study can walk in their footsteps and make interpretations based on dialogue and actions and justify them by referring to other dialogues and actions in the films. This is also what Peter Zima suggests: "Only when an individual begins to speak or to act do we recognize a subject" (6). My analysis of Tarantino's characters will be in line with the suggestions given by Bordwell and Zima. I will look at both dialogues and actions to interpret the characters' thought patterns, motivations, and decisions.

McKee feels that texts are "the material traces that are left of the practice of sense-making (15). They are "the only empirical evidence we have of how other people make sense of the world" (McKee 15). He cites the example of forensic experts that when they arrive the crime has already been committed and what is left for them to do is find and investigate the evidence that has been left behind to "make an educated and trained guess about what happened, based on that evidence" (McKee 15). This is what textual analysis does. It looks at the evidence in the text and gives it meaning. McKee's thoughts are in line with those of Shiro and Belsey that interpretations need to be made. McKee also says that "sense-making practices" are not "infinite", "arbitrary" or "completely individual" (McKee 18).

Analysis of film or a TV program may be from the perspective of the consumption or reception of the text. Jostein Gripsrud undertook a study to discuss the reception of American TV program *Dynasty* when it was aired in Norway. He used a statistics-based approach to conduct a survey to come up with figures as to how the two genders reacted to the program and what percentage was attracted to the program for a certain aspect of the program. This is one method of analysis, but the study does not want to become a statistical chart as the study aims to understand the characters and how they make sense of their world. It is because of its desire to make meaning of the text that the study will not involve the viewers or their reactions to the films under study.

Arthur Asa Berger's study of the popular TV series *Cheers* contains two important lessons for the present study: that signs may be interpreted differently, but to be objective a researcher can find out codes that can lead to impartial

interpretations. Berger also says that meaning is always there and while it may be hidden from the ordinary people a researcher can bring this meaning out. For instance, in Cheers Diane's blond hair may not mean much to an ordinary viewer, but Berger says that the color of her hair signifies innocence, the attitude of men towards her who her interested in her as for her being a sexual entity rather than an intellectual entity. This interpretation is backed by Sam's consistent efforts to woo her into a physical relationship. His study informs my study in the use of textual analysis and provides a way of making interpretations of the filmic texts.

Prince also identifies a possible way of how to go about the "The critic selects and identifies relative features of the film under discussion and describes them in sufficient detail to communicate to the reader their important features and then relates these elements of cinema to the critical interpretation being developed" (339). This is how I will progress the discussion of the films. At the end of the day, the interpretations that I make are mine. I have employed the views of theorists and critics and commentators to substantiate and support the arguments I make but I realize that there may be other interpretations—which is exactly what postmodernism is about—and I do not refute the possibility of these readings. That a number of readings are possible is a "proof of the creative and conceptual richness of the cinema and the many ways it addresses an audience" (Prince 339).

Stephen Prince posits three stages through which criticism or interpretation of film may be accomplished. These are "identification and description" which are "strategic tools" that help the critics to identify the relevant data and omit unnecessary details, "employing a deductive method" whereby the critic proceeds to collect the supporting evidence under the goals (themes) that the study wants to establish (Prince 339). Having clearly defined themes or ideas allows the critic to narrow down and select appropriate data efficiently. Also, the critic must label the elements of the film structure accurately e.g. the critic must label the camera angles and shots correctly. The next stage is "Creating rhetorical force" (Prince 339). He says, "The critic's descriptions become a part of the interpretation being developed" (Prince 331-2). The interpretation stems out of the descriptions and seems to follow inevitably from them" (Prince 332). The third of Price's stages is "interpretation … the assignment of meaning to a scene or film that it does not immediately denote" (Prince 332). The critic interprets the polyvalent signs to underscore the latent meanings of films.

Prince offers the example of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* to show that a film may have a number of latent meanings, and that it is the critic's job to bring out the meanings, such as the film not being about aliens, but about the dangers of communism or that the film is actually about how the fear of communism started a witch-hunt in the 1950s' United States. These are latent meanings of the film, but they can be brought out and argued for using instances and incidents from the film. Thus the critic scholar's "act of interpretation involves a reconfiguration of a film's narrative and images in order to draw out the implicit dimension of meaning" (Prince 332-3). It is not sufficient to address the film's manifest meanings, the study of a film has to go beyond the surface meanings into the latent meanings of the film and also attempt to reorganize the film's narrative point to draw out meanings that an ordinary viewer is likely to miss.

Lisa Schnell feels that those seeking to work in English need to look at it as a discipline and to understand this discipline they will need the knowledge of the language of this discipline and for her literary theory is “a language, or languages, that allow us to work within a discipline” (99). Working in English to her is like working as an anthropologist of language and literature. Just as an anthropologist needs to learn the language of another culture to understand their culture and habits the English researcher needs to learn the language of literary theory. She underscores the importance of literary theory for any research initiative by saying that “The different models of literary theory are nothing less than the languages—or lexicons—we need to acquire to be able to ask good questions of the texts we read (questions that might elicit surprising answers), to be able to engage in conversation with the texts …” (Schnell 100-1). For Andrew Barnaby, films, despite being a popular and hence accessible medium, require a critical approach to be read, and this critical angle provides the interpreter with the ability to read into the work. The study realizes the importance of a theoretical framework for the study and will choose Jameson’s postmodernism as its theoretical grounding.

The research is mindful of the pitfalls of a research, i.e., reducing research to “a mindless series of tasks, of collecting, documenting, organizing, and regurgitating a variety of existing resources” (Sweterlitsch 196). The research aimed to avoid becoming a compilation and be analytic. It attempted to offer an original discussion on the films to generate a debate on the subject. At many places opinions and views of critics and theorists were used to supplement the point I was making, but here too the critics’ comments were used as part of an

argument and debate and not just a compilation of views about the subject. It was because the study was my reading of the films and my arguments on the subject that I chose to retain the personal pronoun. He opines that "The voice of the writer—"I"—should come through loudly and clearly expressing "I's" personal insights. "I think" and "I believe" have a place in a humanities research paper, along with "I read" (Sweterlitsch 196). Hence the dissertation uses the personal pronoun throughout.

2.5 Conclusion

A number of critics and commentators have produced incisive, thought-provoking work on Tarantino and some like Booker and Barlow have drawn their understanding of postmodernism from Jameson. They have commented on Tarantino taking postmodernism to stand for pastiche, nostalgia, and fragmentation and blurring of genre-boundaries. There has been some analysis of characters too, but with the focus being a philosophy like Nietzsche or Jung.

Most of the existing literature tends to focus Tarantino as a director and does not take into account his characters. For instance, when they talk about pastiche they take it to be a characteristic of the director and do not discuss it with reference to key theories of postmodernism. The death of the subject, depthlessness of the characters, pastiche, whether the characters' own decision to model themselves after someone or Tarantino's to incorporate characteristics of a past icon are not really discussed in detail. I look at this as the gap that the study will work to contribute to filling.

The existing literature seems cavalier in its assigning of Tarantino to the postmodern realm. The claims seem superficial and are not backed by detailed analyses. Also, the comments on Tarantino's characters lack depth and detailed analysis. The study feels that there is a considerable gap in the existing literature in its failure to discuss Tarantino's postmodernism in depth and more particularly to account for the postmodernism of his characters. Critical, academic, and incisive inquiry into the postmodernism of Tarantino's characters with reference to Fredric Jameson has not been undertaken and the present study will work to illustrate how such a study may be undertaken and what it may show about Tarantino's characters.

Having reviewed the existing literature to determine the gap and to inform itself of the method of research in the area the study will now outline, in detail, its theoretical perspective and research method in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to briefly outline Jameson's theory of postmodernism to highlight the key notions of his theory to provide the necessary context to situate the discussion in. The first part of the chapter will detail Jameson's postmodernism. The second part of the chapter will lay out the research method of the study and address the issues of analysis.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

3.1.1 Features of Postmodernism

Just as Jameson differentiates between modernism and postmodernism on the principle of dominant cultural logic, he defines the postmodern on the basis of the dominant strains. Because every "cultural production" cannot be blindly labelled postmodern he looks towards his principle of "hegemonic norm" (cultural dominant) to arrive at the key features of postmodernism (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 6). These are a new depthlessness, weakening of historicity, a whole new type of emotional ground tone—intensities, the deep constitutive relationships of all this to a whole new technology, mutations in the lived experience of built space itself.

Jameson being Jameson does not delineate the features of his postmodernism as segregated components. His discussion merges one feature in the other and even the enumeration of what he classes as the features of postmodernism becomes a hard task. I have derived the following features of Jamesonian postmodernism from the analysis of his essays *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late-Capitalism* and *Postmodernism and Consumer Society*.

i. Death of the Subject

One of the key traits of postmodernism that Jameson attributes it is the death of the subject. He identifies it as the "fragmentation" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 14) of the subject and later explains it as "the end of the autonomous bourgeois monad or ego or individual" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 15). Jameson opines that the period of high modernism was one where the subject suffered from alienation and anxiety, but

these concepts are “no longer appropriate” in the postmodern world (Jameson, *Postmodernism 15)*. The dynamics of the cultural pathology have necessitated a change in the conception of the subject and the result has been the death of the subject. Jameson arrives at his notion of the death of the subject by tracing the characteristics of the subject in the high modernism era and then determining how the changed cultural environment lead to the fragmentation, i.e., the death of the subject.

Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late-Capitalism is not the first instance of Jameson's notion of the death of the subject. He had discussed the idea earlier in a talk at Whitney Museum in 1982 in *Postmodernism and Consumer Society, where* as a starting point in his discussion of this piece of the postmodernism puzzle he takes the death of the subject to mean "the end of individualism as such" (114). The great modernisms rested on the foundations of a style unique and "unmistakable as your fingerprint." The conception of "a personal, private style" signifies that there exists "a unique self and private identity, a unique personality and individuality, which can be expected to generate its own unique vision of the world and to forge its own unique, unmistakable style" (Jameson, *Consumer* 114). But with the advent of postmodernism, this kind of individualism that modernism espouses is being questioned in a number of ways and in a number of disciplines such as culture, psychoanalysis, linguistics. He goes on to describe two positions that are taken regarding the subject being "a thing of the past" (Jameson, *Consumer* 114). The first one acknowledges that in the "classic age of competitive capitalism … there was such a thing as individualism, as individual subjects … [but that] older bourgeois individual subject no longer exists" (Jameson, *Consumer* 115) the second position is more radical and it asserts that that the bourgeois subject "*never* [Jameson's italics] really existed" (Jameson, *Consumer* 115). It was just a construct to get people to believe that there were unique subjects. Jameson does not get entangled in the debate of which of the two is correct. For him, what matters is that the old individualist subject is dead, a fact that neither explanation attempts to deny.

The death of the subject leads to "an aesthetic dilemma." “[W]ithout a unique private world and style to express" the artists have nothing to express and the artists cannot now create a new style or world because "they've already been created" (Jameson, *Consumer* 115). In the postmodern world, all that remains possible for the dead subject to do is "to imitate dead styles (Jameson, *Consumer* 115).

As far as the agency of the subject is concerned Jameson feels that postmodernism does not allow the subject any agency. Things are structured in such a way in the postmodern world that the possibility of resistance or revolt does not exist anymore. The subject, as a consumer, is powerless to face the industry and advertisement giants and there is no scope for him to rebel against the consumer culture or the mega corporations that rule the world. He said to Stuart Hall in an interview that the "great North American notion of the 'lonely rebel' who challenges society" is not valid in postmodernism and that "[t]here aren't any lonely rebels anymore" (Hall 115). So the subject in the postmodern world lacks agency. Jameson says that postmodernism has "the great multinational corporations on the one hand and the collectivization of all the oppositional groups on the other" (Hall, 115). This collectivization of groups still does not translate into power for the subject. The subject remains powerless, as now it is a battle between giants. More importantly, these groups are organized and work through the same principles as the corporations so they deny the individual power just as the multinational corporations do. Peter Zima strikes a similar note when he says that the postmodern subject is "a pseudo-subject …devoid of personal autonomy" (Zima 49-50). Dean also supports Jameson by saying that Jameson's view is echoed by modernists, existentialists, phenomenologists, structuralists, and also poststructuralists whose musing spread over a century lead to the conclusion that the self has lost its agency and has been turned into a product of the culture.

Jameson's view of the subject is closer to the point of view of French postmodern philosophers than the American pragmatists. He feels that the decentralization of the subject has taken away the subject's agency and the subject now is incapable of uniqueness or action.

Jameson feels that the Lacanian concept of schizophrenia explains the subject’s essence in postmodernism. For Jameson, the subject who is suffering from "the crisis in historicity" is unable to form a coherent experience of time (Jameson, *Consumer* 35). The subject's thought processes and cultural productions become "randomly heterogeneous, fragmentary and … aleatory" (Jameson, *Consumer* 25). These are negative terms and Jameson asserts that "more substantive formulations" are "textuality, *ecriture*, or schizophrenic writing" (Jameson, *Consumer* 26). The same holds true for any postmodern subject even one who is not a writer. Their thought processes too become fragmentary and the person starts suffering from schizophrenia.

Ecriture is variously defined as "writing as style"—a concept given by Barthes—"which attacks the illusion of a blank or neutral writing on the grounds that all writing has some style or discourse that shapes our view of the world", "writing as an intransitive activity where it is self-directed, about itself as language"—again a concept by Barthes, writing as difference and *ecriture feminine* a concept by Hélène Cixous which Ian Buchanan defined as "a kind of writing that would, in Jacques Lacan's terms, reside or take place in the realm of the real rather than the symbolic" (Baldick, *Ecriture* Buchanan). Briefly, it involves experimentation and play to describe the indescribable.

Jameson, however, prefers the term schizophrenia to the term *ecriture*. Schizophrenia for Jameson is not a diagnostic concept where he would diagnose artists like Warhol or even the culture as schizophrenics. He bases his notion of schizophrenia on Lacan's concept who differing from Freud conceived schizophrenia as a language disorder. Andrew M. Butler writes that in a postmodern text "style and fashion" are more important than content or depth (141). The artist's self-identity is not a stable one and when it combines with the fact that the text is only a simulacrum, it results in schizophrenic ecriture, "where there is a breakdown in the meaningful connections between the words of images", which at its extreme can become "a bewildering collection of fragments of different voices" (Butler 141).

Jameson follows Lacan and not Freud in establishing the link of language and schizophrenia through a summary view of Lacan's model of language —"the now orthodox structuralist one" (*Consumer* 118)—finding himself in a position to be able to declare schizophrenia "the breakdown of the relationship between signifiers" (*Consumer* 119). Jameson bases his view on Lacan's notion that it is language that gives its users "the experience of temporality, human time, past, present, memory, [and] the persistence of personal identity" (Jameson, *Consumer* 119). Jameson concludes that the schizophrenic is denied "a concrete or lived experience of time" that is available to other people because the schizophrenic lacks language ability (Jameson, *Consumer* 119). What the schizophrenic has is "an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence" (Jameson, *Consumer* 119). This leads the schizophrenic to lose the sense of personal identity. The outcome of the loss of personal identity and the failure to experience the world in terms of moving time is that the schizophrenic is "given over to an undifferentiated vision of the world in the present" (Jameson, *Consumer* 120).

Jameson feels that that loss of temporality also has what may well be called a positive effect on the subject. The loss of temporality means that the subject is aware of the present with "undescribable [sic] vividness" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 27). Being able to perceive the present world and the material signifier[s] therein leads the person to feel "euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 27). The impact on the subject is that the subject is confined to the present, but perceives the present with a clarity that other people cannot conceive it with. Thus, schizophrenia induces fragmentation, but a positive is that it makes the subject aware of the present in a manner that another person cannot approximate and being aware of the present intensely gives the schizophrenic a high that too is unavailable to the ordinary person.

Sarup summarizes Jameson's assertion regarding the postmodern subject being a schizophrenic in the following way.

> On the one hand, then, the schizophrenic does have a more intense experience of any given present of the world than we do, since our own present in always part of some larger set of projects which includes the past and the future. On the other hand, the schizophrenic is 'no one', has no personal identity. Moreover, he or she does nothing since to have a project means to be able to commit oneself to a certain continuity over time. The schizophrenic, in short, experiences a fragmentation of time, a series of perpetual presents. (147)

While Jameson feels that the reduction of the subject to a schizophrenic is a triumph of late capitalism as it has eliminated any possibility of resistance against capitalism, a schizophrenic attitude can offer "some level of resistance" (Peretti) evidence of which may be found in the works of queer political movement, slackers and postmodern artists. The schizophrenic postmodern artist uses pastiche and is frequently based on images from popular culture including advertisement. A painting like Warhol's soup cans can induce the schizophrenic subjects, the TV viewers to look at the advertisement as art and when the advertisement is viewed as art it will no longer elicit a desire to consume. It is in this elimination of the desire to consume the product that the postmodern artists can and probably are resisting capitalism.

Schizophrenic language is the outcome of the subject's schizophrenic "breakdown in the signifying chain" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 26) where the signifying chain refers to the Saussurean concept of the one-to-one correspondence

between the signifier and the signified. The inability of the subject to cohere the past, present and future of their biographical experience into a united whole is not merely accompanied by but is, in fact, the result of the person's inability to "unify the past, present, and future of the sentence" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 27). Jameson mentions as examples of schizophrenic language *The Autobiography of a Schizophrenic Girl* by Pseud Renee and the poem *China* by Bob Perelman. His point in these examples is not just to exhibit the loss of temporality, but also to show that schizophrenic *ecriture* generalized as a cultural style becomes a sort of positive thing, at least in comparison with the morbid alienation of schizophrenia, as a means of euphoria.

Jameson holds fragmentation to be a key attribute of the postmodern subject. Jameson's subject moves away from the alienation of modernism depicted in *The Scream*. Carefully avoiding labelling it as positive or negative I will just say that for Jameson the move is from alienation to fragmentation. The modern alienated subject was alone, isolated, alienated and also paranoid, but the subject was a self, a united entity. But, the postmodern subject is not a cohesive self, and his schizophrenia contributes in a major way to this. Without an ability to put events in sequence, postmodern citizens have no agency, and without an ability to understand themselves temporally, they do not “know personal identity in our sense” (Jameson, *Consumer* 119). The postmodern schizophrenic is incapacitated by “the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents,” and so becomes an agent-less non-self (Jameson, *Consumer* 125). Jameson’s vision, therefore, is not just a diminishing of agency and identity, but a total removal.

Jameson's reading of Munch's *The Scream* leads him to assert that the alienation, paranoia, anomie that Munch's painting reflects, "are no longer appropriate in the world of the postmodern" (*Postmodernism* 14). If Marilyn Monroe, whom Warhol painted using silkscreening, is taken as a postmodern subject, then it is clear that hers was a case of drugs and schizophrenia, not paranoia, isolation or madness.

Even an ordinary person is fragmented and overwhelmed in the postmodern world. Judy Lochhead gives a brief account of a few hours in her job where she has to correspond with colleagues and former students, coach current pupils, go through and answer emails, faxes, attend to phone calls and people. "All of this, and some days still more, within the space of two or three hours! Fragmentation. Discontinuity. Lack of connection. Lack of linear logic. Postmodernism" (20). Thus the subject is overwhelmed with chores to do and tedious tasks to attend to. The consequence is the

fragmentation of the subject, isolation, and a lack of the ability to think in a linear manner.

Jameson ties up expression with the subject to determine if the subject can have a distinct style of expression in postmodernism. Munch's painting teaches him that once the individual decides to be an expressive subject, the individual shuts himself off from the world and is thereby condemned to live inside the monad. While this is true of modernism, postmodernism with the death of the subject eliminates the very possibility of expression. There cannot be an expression of feelings when the individual who is to feel and think is not there. There cannot be a *The Scream* if the monad isn't there to feel the isolation. Sandywell's quote from Schopenhauer, "style is the man…style is the physiognomy of the mind" (*Dictionary* 557) illustrates the issue well. The style is the outcome of a united, whole subject and when the subject is fragmented and is schizophrenic the subject cannot have a personal style.

The death of the subject also marks "the end, for example, of style, in the sense of the unique and the personal, the end of the distinctive individual brush stroke" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 15). Andy Warhol's great masterpieces, particularly his Marilyn Monroe express this lack of the individual brush-stroke. He silkscreened his paintings and this is a mechanical process. Any repetition would produce the same effect. So the individual brush stroke that was unique to each artist is not possible because of the machine-based production and reproduction of art that has been commodified. All these are responsible for the birth of pastiche.

ii. Erasure of Boundaries between High and Mass Culture

Italian philosopher Remo Cesereni, whom Jameson mentions in *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* supports Jameson's notion that the boundary between high and low culture has been erased in postmodernism. Cesereni says that the postmodern cultural life "is no longer distinguishable in categories such as high-brow, low-brow, or middle brow, but has been transformed into an undifferentiated mass of consumers of cultural products in such a situation there is no room anymore for phenomena like Kitsch, or Camp…" (374).

Jameson feels that postmodernism differs from modernism in that it harbingers the effacement of the boundary between high and mass culture. Jameson notes that Venturi's work contains contradictions in that it contains elements of high artistic value and also the less artistic but more contemporary and popular even commercial elements. This blend of high and mass culture runs through the various notions of

postmodernisms in the diverse fields of music, literature, painting and the media. The "effacement of the frontier between high culture and so-called mass or commercial culture, and the emergence of new kinds of texts infused with the forms, categories, and contents of that very culture industry so passionately denounced by all the ideologues of the modern" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 2) is a recurring point in the manifestations of postmodernism in divergent fields. To be able to understand Jameson's notion regarding the effacement of the boundary between high and low art it is worth looking at the view of the Frankfurt School and particularly Theodor Adorno whom Jameson sees as the defenders of the supremacy of the modernist high art.

Jameson asserts that a key characteristic that connects the postmodernisms in various fields is the celebration of the high and the low art coming together in a single work. The condemned and "degraded' landscape of schlock and kitsch" (Jameson *Postmodernism* 2) is now fascinating to artists who incorporate schlock and kitsch elements in their works. Motels which were considered to be inferior are now acceptable and routine. Advertisement which was considered cheap, with the advent of postmodernism material, became art that was commercially available e.g. Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans*.

Though Jameson takes a stance different from that of Adorno when it comes to postmodernism's effacement of the boundary between high and low culture, it is at the same time "congruent" to it (MacCabe), and he does not condemn Adorno's view. In fact, he takes the ideas of the Frankfurt school into consideration and uses them as the starting point when he develops his notion of mass culture and high culture in his 1979 essay *Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture* where he stresses the need to look past the elitism of the radicals, the proponents of mass culture and the counter perspective of the Frankfurt School. The radicals cite the "sheer numbers of people" (Jameson, *Geopolitical* 130) exposed to mass culture as proof of its superiority and condemn high culture as "a status hobby of small groups of intellectuals" but they do not offer any way of objectively studying the works of mass culture. The Frankfurt School takes a more theoretical position whereby they exalt high culture and condemn mass culture for being a commodity. Jameson looks at the Frankfurt School's view as essentially a Marxist view and this is why he does not go against the Frankfurt school. He says that the advent of Capitalism has reconfigured human activity on rational models of efficiency and has reconstructed human activity along the lines of a

differentiation between means and ends. Traditionally speaking "the value of the activity is immanent to it" (Jameson, *Geopolitical* 130) and this value is different from the values of other activities and makes each activity incomparable to other activities. Capitalism with its "commodification of labor power" (Jameson, *Geopolitical* 131) has eliminated the difference of one activity from another, by looking at all activities in terms of "sheer means or instrumentality" and by giving all activities value in terms of money it has made them comparable. A work of art that traditionally had immanent value as it was "finality without an end" has now become a commodity, something produced under the best principles of efficiency (Jameson, *Geopolitical* 131). At the same time, it is beset by another factor too which is the result of the commodification of the activities, i.e., consumption. Just as means, ends too have been quantified and have been made comparable through money. This necessitates looking at the means/end differentiation in a different way, i.e., the commodification of activity has reduced it to a means for its own consumption. For instance, tourism is no longer, say, an idle stroll to take in the environment mentally. Tourism under Capitalism means consuming the environment and turning it into personal property by capturing it as photographs. This means that works of art under Capitalism too have rationalized and quantified ends and the end of a work of art is its own consumption. The reading process, as the Frankfurt School suggests, "is itself restructured along a means/ends differentiation" (Jameson, *Geopolitical*, 132). Reading *Odyssey* was not about the end, it was about the pleasure of reading. But reading a detective story, an "emblem" (Jameson, *Geopolitical* 132) of commodification, is about the end. The pages are consumed so that the mystery is resolved and it is not just about pages, the entire narrative with its situations, twists, drama, and chapters is about consumption. The commodification of the narrative is supplemented by "a quasi-material 'feeling tone'" (Jameson, *Geopolitical* 133) which aids the consumption of the narrative. This is only an advanced stage of the "fetishism of hearing" (whereby the refrain becomes the instrumental means of the consumption of the entire melody or song) that Adorno condemns.

Jameson feels that the work on theorizing commodity reification is in its infancy and needs to be approached from many perspectives before judgments about correctness or incorrectness of approaches can be made. Jameson proposes that the "valorization of traditional modernist high art as the locus of some genuinely critical and subversive, 'autonomous' aesthetic production" (Jameson, *Reification* 133) that

the Frankfurt School promotes needs to be reconsidered. Jameson believes that there needs to be a movement away from looking at high and mass culture from the traditional view of evaluation towards one that ends up with the judgment: mass culture is popular and therefore more authentic, "high culture is autonomous and therefore incomparable to a degraded mass culture" and making an aesthetic judgment regarding mass and high culture towards "a genuinely historical and dialectical approach" (Jameson, *Reification* 133). This necessitates realizing that mass and high culture are "objectively related and dialectically interdependent phenomena [and] twin and inseparable forms of the fission of aesthetic production under late capitalism" (Jameson, *Reification* 133-134). This also necessitates redefining high and mass culture. High culture cannot mean Shakespeare or Dickens because it will be absurd to measure John Ford, Hitchcock and the likes against them. "[F]rom a historical point of view, the only form of "high culture" which can be said to constitute the dialectical opposite of mass culture is that high cultural production contemporaneous with the latter, which is to say that artistic production generally designated as *modernism*" (Jameson, *Reification* 134). It is with Wallace Stevens or Jackson Pollock, not Balzac or Moliere that mass culture can be contrasted. As far as mass culture is concerned, it cannot simply be defined as popular culture because "the 'popular' as such no longer exists" because of the disintegration and atomization of previous distinct and unified communities and groups initiated by capitalism (Jameson, *Reification* 134). Mass culture is not popular culture; it is the work produced under the "all-informing structure influence" of commodity production. Jameson goes to the extent of saying that even modernism can be defined through commodity production. Looked at this way modernism is that which believes "its formal vocation to be the resistance to commodity form, not to be a commodity, to devise an aesthetic language incapable of offering commodity satisfaction, and resistant to instrumentalization" (Jameson, *Reification* 134-35).

iii. Depthlessness and Waning of Affect

Jameson notes that postmodern works suffer from "a kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense" and classes this depthlessness as "the supreme formal feature of all the Postmodernisms" (*Postmodernism* 9). Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes* seems to Jameson a work that has only a surface and no story underneath it. The painting does not try to tell a story like Van Gogh's painting *A Pair of Boots*. A look at the shoes in Van Gogh's painting

reveals to Jameson the life story of the peasant who wore the shoes, but he cannot tell anything about the shoes that Warhol has painted. He is at a loss, even to guess whether the shoes are from Auschwitz or a dance floor, such being the superficiality of the painting.

For Jameson, the waning of affect is a condition of the world, a feature of the artworks of postmodernism and an attribute of the postmodern subject. He also says that the waning of affect leads to simulacra. For him, the waning of affect is the loss of "feeling and emotion, all subjectivity" from the artwork (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 10). Warhol's painting does not exude much emotion and that which it does seems "compensatory, decorative exhilaration" more the product of a repressed desire and less as a genuine effort to infuse it with meaning (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 10). The glazed shiny appearance of the painting does nothing to add to the meaning and because it does not convey meaning this "gratuitous frivolity" has nothing to say to the person who comes to look at it in a gallery (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 10). Jameson's reading here is in line with the deathly tones of Warhol's painting since Jameson feels that the deathly tones do not reflect a subject matter. The painting is not about death or any anxiety regarding death so the photographic effect is only for the sake of appearance. In other words, it is sheer superficiality.

Jameson sees in Warhol's *Diamond Dust Shoes* and also in Magritte's *The Red Model* a lack of expression and asserts that this marks a feature of postmodernism. He also states that this sort of creation can only be the work of a schizophrenic who is lost in the present. That the shoes have a past and can tell the story of a life, whether lived in labor or on the dance floor, does not occur to the schizophrenic because he does not have the notion of the past-ness of the past.

Jameson also argues for the end of style. The subject in Jameson’s view is devoid of an individual style and therefore has to rely on what others have produced.

It is not just the world that the Warhol image comments on; it is also the postmodern subject that the painting comments on. Jameson says that there has been a mutation in "the disposition of the subject" and this is the waning of affect (*Postmodernism* 9). This means that the subject in postmodernism is also just an appearance without any inner or hidden meaning. The subject may have a particular appearance, but the appearance is only for the sake of the appearance and is not a reflection of or for that matter a subterfuge for something else. The subject is superficial and this is all there is to them.

It is not only that objects lose any inner or deep meaning. Human subjects also are transformed into commodities and "turned into their own images" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 11). While the modernist masterpiece *The Scream* by Edward Munch expresses alienation, isolation, and solitude, the paintings of Elvis or Monroe do not. They are just images, mass produced without any deeper significance. *The Scream* is based on a hermeneutic model of inside and outside: there is isolation, despair, and anomie inside which realizes cathartic expression and comes outside as the scream. Postmodernism repudiates the inside/outside model and therefore there is nothing to express and no expression of something that had been building up. In contrast with *The Scream*, the silkscreens of Marilyn Monroe are just what they are: paintings. They are not the cathartic expression of some hidden despair and express nothing, for there is nothing to express.

Jameson reverts to architecture to drive the point home. He says that the Wells Fargo tower in Los Angeles County is a prime concrete (and glass) example of depthlessness. The tower appears as a great wall, a monolith rising suddenly out of the ground. It is just like a wall and just as characterless. It is a physical manifestation of the concept of the waning of affect. There is a surface to the tower, but no meaning to it.

The waning of affect is also characterized by the change from a diachronic society to a synchronic one that is stuck in the present and has no conception of the past. This leads to an individual who is stuck in the present and this makes the subject free of the horrors of the past and any anxiety for the future. He has no conception of the past to be burdened by its baggage or to delight in its glory or to even hanker after it and no conception of the future to dread it or to aspire to it. Stuck in the present the subject loses his feelings. Here Jameson gives the concept of "intensities" which as a starting point can be taken to mean "free-floating, impersonal" feelings that are "dominated by a peculiar kind of euphoria" (*Postmodernism* 16).

Jameson feels that the waning of affect leads to simulacra; without any emotional involvement of the subject the work does not represent a reality but comes to represent just an image that does not have a corresponding reality. Warhol's painting reveals this in the way they were produced. Warhol used silkscreening where he would just reproduce copies of what he had painted once reportedly because he did not want to go through the real process of creating an image (MOMA). Warhol also said about *Orange Car Crash Fourteen Times*, "The two are designed to hang

together however the owner wants. …It just makes them bigger and mainly makes them cost more." Jameson notes that Warhol's paintings lack depth and the meaning is confined to the surface; it may even be said that his use of the photographic negative in his work is illustrative of simulacra in postmodernism. *Diamond Dust Shoes* has the effect of a photo negative or an X-ray to it. A similar effect can be observed in *Orange Car Crash Fourteen Times*, Warhol's silkscreen about a car crash from a phase in which he reproduced pictures from newspapers about tragic events. The repetition of the event makes the artist distant from the occurrence he is painting and the repetition also contains deterioration. But the meaning of the painting is not death. It is also not that the repetition of the painting gives the meaning of a casual indifferent attitude towards such tragic accidents or death. The meaning of the X-ray affect is that it comments on the world. Turning the picture into a deathly X-ray or photographic negative reflects that the world is a simulacrum, just an image without a reality, not a reality.

iv. Pastiche

> [T]he imitation of dead styles, speech through all the
> masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture.
> (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 18)

A key feature of postmodernism that Jameson outlines is pastiche. He says, "[Pastiche] is to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum" (Jameson, *Consumer* 115). He traces its birth to the death of the subject. With the death of the subject, it became impossible for an artist to have a unique individual style. This engendered pastiche, which Jameson finds to exist in the work of novelist and Nobel laureate, Thomas Mann. Mann's *Doktor Faustus* contains instances of pastiche, though he did not use the term pastiche as Jameson claims (Wood, *Impossible*, Cobley). Cobley writes that the "aesthetic breakthrough" (193) in Mann's novel shows the "triumph of 'postmodern' pastiche over 'modern' parody." Cobley sees a negative depiction of pastiche as the fictional composer in the novel, Leverkuhn, attributes the origin of pastiche to the devil and sees a similar negative attitude towards pastiche in Jameson.

Pastiche for Jameson is "the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 17) but imitation of a peculiar style may also be a parody as parody is an "imitation of the style of a literary work or works, ridiculing the stylistic habits of an author or school by

exaggerated mimicry" (Baldick, *Parody*) for instance *Don Quixote* and *Joseph Andrews*. This is why after defining what he means by "the well-nigh universal practice" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 16) of pastiche Jameson sets about differentiating it from parody. His argument is that pastiche is without satire. It does not ridicule the work it is borrowing from. He labels it "blank parody" (17) because it does not satirize which for Jameson is a crucial component of the makeup of parody. In this, his notion of satire is *Don Quixote,* which ridiculed the Romances or *Joseph Andrews* which ridicules *Pamela*.

Jameson employs Wayne Booth's notion of stable irony to offer a comparison of stable and blank irony with a view to clarifying his concept of pastiche. Wayne Booth lists four characteristics of stable irony: it is intended, i.e., "deliberately created by human being to be heard or read and understood with some precision by other human beings" (5); covert, i.e., "intended to be reconstructed with meanings different from those on the surface" (6); stable, i.e., once an interpretation has been made it is not demolished; and finite, i.e., the reconstructed meanings are limited. In his review of Booth's book, Wimsatt says stable irony means that "the author offers us an 'unequivocal invitation' to see an unstated meaning, and this meaning is not 'later undermined" (512). This stable irony is a characteristic of modernism where there are definite and ultimate meanings, but in postmodernism, the reader cannot depend on the writer having imbued something with a particular irony. In blank irony, the reader cannot be sure of what irony is there if any at all. Jameson's point is that pastiche lacks the bite of parody. "[A]mputated of the satiric impulse" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 17) is a strong phrase and it shows how much Jameson feels about pastiche's lack of satiric power.

Pastiche refers to the past and invokes the past in newer ways, but it should not be assumed that this provides a tangible or an adequate link with the past. Architectural historicism for Jameson is "the random cannibalization of all the styles of the past" and this cannibalization turns the past into mere images (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 18). The people under the onslaught of postmodern capitalism have developed an appetite for simulacra and readily accept these images. They take the images to be everything and do not realize that these are simulacra: images without a corresponding reality.

Jameson's second reason for arguing for pastiche is that parody is not possible in the postmodern world. It has lived. Its time is over and the postmodern world does

not have what it takes for parody to survive. Jameson argues that Faulkner's long sentences were characteristic of his way of writing. His was a distinct style where with long sentences, first person narrative and monologues he was celebrating the chaos brought about by the World War I. Steven Wallace too had a distinct style which William Bevis terms "cubist collage" (87) because of his transitions and improvisations. Heidegger's etymologies even when they were flawed were a characteristic of his style (Ziarek 24). These writers were going against the currents of the time and thus had a distinct style which could lead to "a systematic mimicry of their willful eccentricities" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 16), i.e., their style could be parodied. But with the advent of postmodernism, the linguistic fragmentation produced a host of idiolects and styles with the result that "the advanced capitalist countries today are now a field of stylistic and discursive heterogeneity without a norm" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 16). In the absence of a norm, "parody finds itself without a vocation" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 16). Put simply, Pamela's existence enabled Fielding to come up with a parody, but in the postmodern world a unique style does not exist, so it cannot be parodied. Seen in this way it is not a question of labelling something as parody or satire, here the very existence of parody is not possible. All that is possible for writers to do, is to create pastiche.

Pastiche is made necessary by the very technology of postmodernism. While modernists like Marinetti could represent the machines of the modern times the artists in the postmodern world have machines which, though they do not exactly evade representation, need to be represented in a different way compared to the representation of the machines in modernism. Jameson describes the shift in representation as "the shift from Antinioni's modernist *Blow-Up* to De Palma's postmodernist *Blowout*" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 37). His point is that postmodernism "The Third Machine Age" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 36) makes different demands on the artists and they have to resort to pastiche to create art.

Pastiche is connected to a crisis in historicity. Pastiche refers to the past and invokes the past in newer ways, but it should not be assumed that this provides a tangible or an adequate link with the past. Architectural historicism, which, according to Jameson, is pastiche, is a rehash of the styles from the past and this rehash turns the past into mere images. The people under the onslaught of postmodern capitalism have developed an appetite for simulacra and readily accept these images because they

have lost any notion of use value. They take the images to be everything and do not realize that these are simulacra: images without a corresponding reality.

That pastiche turns the past into certain images, and that too, images that are not reflective of any reality is another reason why Jameson thinks lowly of pastiche. Jameson reads in Doctorow's historiographic novels particularly *Ragtime*, the postmodern fate of "real history" and historical novel (*Postmodernism* 21). *Ragtime* is fragmentary in terms of its characters who inhabit the historical, fictional and intertextual realms. It makes it "virtually impossible" (23)—and it is by design—to string together in a united whole the topics of the novel. Doctorow has deliberately held out definitive interpretation and reading. He has also crafted the characters in a way that make the readers recall their textbook knowledge of the characters and issues and the readers get a sense of *deja vu* when they read the text. Doctorow plays with grammar to produce the effect of a verbal past tense, which transforms the stream of time into finished, isolated chunks that have no link with the present. *Ragtime's* message is not representation of the past, but that the past cannot be represented, it is only our ideas about that past that can be represented. Thus Doctorow has been misunderstood, the novel is not a historiographic novel, it is an assertion that historiographic novel is not possible in postmodernism.

Jameson added a couple of paragraphs in the essay when it came out as part of his book in 1991 to address Hutcheon's objections. He says that Hutcheon is right in pointing out the political meaning in the novel, but he feels that the novel owing to its incommensurate characters, decentered narrative and difficulty of thematization is a “postmodern artifact" and cannot be read as any other novel (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 22). The incommensurate characters, the decentered narrative, and the language mean that the novel "not only resists interpretation, it is organized systematically and formally to short-circuit an older type of social and historical interpretation which it perpetually holds out and withdraws" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 23). Doctorow's purpose was not to represent the past in any authentic way but to show that the "historical novel can no longer set out to represent the historical past; it can only 'represent' our ideas and stereotypes about that past (which thereby becomes 'pop history')" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 23). Thus, for Jameson, the waning of affect is linked with simulacra and engenders a desire for images and those too images that are modelled after images. In the postmodern world, things are created as images and from images.

For Jameson pastiche in terms of the mass culture of films needs to be looked at separately, as mass culture works differently from high culture and is closely linked to the market. In *Historicism in The Shining* Jameson traces the move from genre films to metageneric production to nostalgia films. Genre films had the stamp of the artist and were reflective of an individual style, whereas metageneric productions came into being when postmodernism eliminated the possibility of individual style. Nostalgia films are different from metageneric films because they "confuse content with form" (Jameson, *Historicism* 84) and set off to "reinvent the style, not of an art language, but of a whole period" (Jameson, *Historicism* 84). These films are "celebrations of the imaginary style of a real past" (Jameson, *Historicism* 85) and are inauthentic because of their subscription to "the cult of the glossy image" (Jameson, *Historicism* 85). This image of the past that the nostalgia film creates is of interest to Jameson and he is critical of nostalgia film for it reduces the past to mere images.

Jameson talks about the "omnipresent" nostalgia film as example of postmodern pastiche (*Consumer* 18). Nostalgia Film or *la mode retro* in French "restructures the whole issue of pastiche and projects it onto a collective and social level, where the desperate attempt to appropriate a missing past is now refracted through the iron law of fashion change and the emergent ideology of the generation" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 19). Nostalgia films "lay siege either to our own present and immediate past or to a more distant history that escapes individual existential memory" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 19). These films appeal to the people because they present to the audience typical images that signify the eras and make the people immediately recognize the era. Pastiche here does not consist of repeating a plotline but in crafting images that make the audience recall the era and its general spirit (or at least the made up spirit). Also, pastiche must not be thought of as having anything to do with genuine historicity and nostalgia film realizes its incompatibility with actual history. This self-realization is accompanied by an awareness that it is expected not to represent the past, but to approach the past through "stylistic connotation" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 19). Thus, what a nostalgia film does, is not to convey the past, but "pastness" mainly by the "glossy qualities of the image" and tries to capture the -ness of the era by the attributes of the fashion (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 19).

Jameson reads the futurist *Star Wars* as a nostalgia film, despite the fact that the action of the film does not take place in the past. What makes *Star Wars* a nostalgia film is that it recalls the experiences of watching TV series about "the Buck

Rogers type—alien villains, true American heroes, heroines in distress, the death ray or the doomsday box" (Jameson, *Consumer* 19) through pastiche. There is no hint of parody or satire in this pastiche as there is no use in satirizing what is now dead. But the pastiche works because it satisfies the desire "to return to that older period and to live its strange old aesthetic artifacts through once again." However, the film does not evoke the past in images the way other films that Jameson classes as nostalgia films do.

v. Hyperspace

One of the key differences between modernism and postmodernism is that postmodernism is more spatial than temporal. Society has stopped giving importance to history, whereby the concepts of duree and temporality have come to evoke little interest. Stuck in the eternal present society has moved from being diachronic to being synchronic and in this situation society perceives everything mainly through "categories of space rather than by categories of time" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 16).

Perhaps it is to this perception in terms of space that the Americans' obsession since the World War II with big cars can be attributed. James May notes in his attempt to define the best people's car that Europe and Japan conceived of the people's car as a compact car. In the case of Europe, it was the micro car. But in the United States, the post war era ushered in sleek long cars with big engines. These cars were not reliable but they were big and because reliability is an issue of time, not space the Americans did not care for reliability or for that matter speed—European speedsters have traditionally had small engines, with their performance coming from the way more power is extracted from the engine and the design, while Americans have tended to put bigger engines in cars without toning down the body. Their perception led them to perceive cars in terms of space and thus American cars were and still are huge. American trucks compared with their Japanese or European counterparts are huge. Hummer, F150, Chevy Super Duty and are examples of this.

Jameson finds Portman's Westin Bonaventure hotel to be postmodern, though uncharacteristic of the postmodern architecture of the proponents he had listed earlier, namely Robert Venturi, Charles Moore, Michael Graves, and Frank Gehry. Jameson proposes that Westin Bonaventure is "mutation in built space itself" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 38). The implication is that human beings have failed to stay abreast of the evolution in this mutated space. While the hyperspace—Jameson's label for the mutation in built space—has mutated, the subject has not witnessed or experienced a

similar mutation and has not developed the perceptual habits specific to hyperspace and is forced to approach this new hyperspace with the habits formed in and suited to high modernism.

Westin Bonaventure was commissioned in 1974 and completed in two years. It features a six-floor atrium, 1354 rooms, and suites, the largest ballroom in LA and over a hundred thousand square feet of meeting space. Richard Alleman describes the hotel as a "cluster of five thirty-five story towers, each sheathed in mirrored glass" (211). He also notes that the hotel has had cameos in a number of TV series and Hollywood films due to its iconic stature and the futuristic interior of sky-bridges, mirrored fountains, and glass-bubble elevators" and because it "captures the spirit and look of contemporary L.A" (Alleman 211).

The way the hotel connects with the city outside it is complicated. Unsuspecting visitors walking in from the back gardens find themselves on the sixth floor when they were assuming that they had walked in to the first floor. Even from the sixth floor, they need to go down a floor and then take an elevator to reach the lobby. The Figueroa looks like the front entrance, but inside it, the visitors find themselves on the second story among shops. An escalator ride is required to take the weary traveler to the reception. This complication which is enhanced by the passages being unmarked—they have since been marked—is a deliberate act to turn the hotel into "being a total space, a complete world, a kind of miniature city" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 40). Jameson goes as far as to say that the Bonaventure should not have had any entrance because it aspires not to be "a part of the city but rather its equivalent and replacement" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 40). While the modernist architecture sought to present itself as a space distinct from the city, a city which it hoped to later transform, the postmodern Bonaventure does not disturb the city or aspire to lift it from its squalor. The Bonaventure uses its glass outer surface to repel the city and dissociate itself from the city (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 42). In a way it hides its existence in the images of the city, as when visitors look at the hotel they find themselves staring at the city, the hotel is a part of. Bergson observes that Jameson clearly differentiates the Bonaventure from Disneyland, for Disneyland is a "deterrence machine" (Baudrillard, *Simulacra* 13) meant to set up the rest of the world as real the Bonaventure is designed to be a part of the city—economically and also physically—which it reflects through its glass surfaces.

The atrium of the hotel that goes six floors up creates an empty space that is difficult to analyze in terms of its volume. The hotel tries to keep the visitors from feeling this emptiness by making the space seem busy, thus trying to lull the visitors into thinking that it is not empty space. For Jameson, the suppression of volume in the Bonaventure is the architectural equivalent of depthlessness in painting and literature. This suppression of depth shows that the Bonaventure hotel is "a form of postmodern art or expression, similar to other forms of art" (J. Berger). At the same time, it exceeds the representation that is possible on a canvas or in a page because the Bonaventure is three-dimensional. The Bonaventure's hyperspace, as Berger explains Jameson's view, "*is* [author's italics] art itself." It disorients people because "it lacks the regular world forms or references with which to stabilize or ground the viewer's perceptions" (J. Berger).

The fact that the Bonaventure eludes comprehension through the parameters of normal perception makes Berger read resistant to late capitalism in the design of the iconic building. Jason Berger sees the element of resistance in "the fate of businesses within this postmodern space" because the Bonaventure's hyperspace puts the shopkeepers in a "notorious dilemma" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 44) with the dilemma being that the potential customer is disoriented by the hyperspace and cannot find their way to the shop a second time. This forces them to keep the prices extremely low to attract new and more customers. This financially adverse effect of the hyperspace "signals a potential problem for capitalism within postmodernism, but it is the manner in which capitalism responds to this situation that reveals the fact that postmodernism encompasses an aspect of resistance" (J. Berger). Capitalism's response, which Jameson labels "pitiful and revealing, rather desperate" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 44) is the installation of "directorial signals" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 43) to help the people get their bearings in the hyperspace. The hyperspace is a product of capitalism and because it desires to be a city in itself it is capitalism itself. Capitalism has a strain of resistance in terms of hyperspace, which may ruin capitalism by disrupting the process of consumption and therefore capitalism subverts the hyperspace by introducing color coding and signs. Postmodernism is a product of late-capitalism, but it threatens capitalism because of it being decentered and capitalism needs to re-establish centers to keep postmodernism from harming it.

The same element of resistance can be found in the narrative stroll and the elevators. The hyperspace of the Bonaventure does not direct movement along specified lines. The visitor needs to pick their own way and this shows agency. The visitor is free to move about in a manner that they like. But the hotel also offers escalators and elevators which are a significant feature of the hotel. These elevators create an impression of rapid movement. They create the impression of agency as the visitors use them to move around freely and rapidly. The subjects that make up the hypercrowd feel that they are being served by these marvels of technology and may get a sense of agency but they would be wrong. The elevators move the people around in a controlled manner. They move only on a certain path and allow only certain types of movement. When they land the passenger in the lounge, the passenger continues to be a passive subject as the revolving lounge moves the visitor around to show them the view of the city below. I see the elevators as an attempt to subvert the freedom of movement and direct the movement to particular places which may be shops in the balconies or the images of the city that the revolving restaurant offers. This interpretation is in line with Deleuze and Guattari's opinion that capitalism deterritorializes only to reterritorialize. It frees the schizophrenic only to bind the schizophrenic because the schizophrenic may be the death of capitalism. Seen in this light the Bonaventure gives the impression of a free narrative stroll only to confine the subjects of the hypercrowd within the gondolas that the elevators actually are.

The escalators and elevators in the Bonaventure are for Jameson more than engineered solutions to practical issues of ferrying people to the various floors of the hotel. These "gigantic kinetic sculptures" take the place of walking and designate themselves as new reflexive signs and emblems of movement proper" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 42).

The hyperspace of the Bonaventure is inhabited by hypercrowd— a "collective practice, a new mode in which individuals move and congregate" (Jameson, *Postmodernism* 40). This hypercrowd does not have the schemata to make sense of the hyperspace and it remains lost within it. The subjects that make up this hypercrowd are steeped in the culture of the hyperspace they occupy. The Bonaventure is much more than a hotel. It is not a mere place to come to stay and spend the night. It offers a wide range of commodities and services that the visitors can buy. It has shops in it which the visitors visit and spend in. It sells itself as a place to visit and tell people that one has been to the landmark hotel. The fact that consumer

culture is a major part of the experience that the hotel gives its visitors is borne out by the need of and eventual installation of signs to direct people to shops. The subjects are reduced to consumers who must spend and buy commodities and who must spend to retain their images as subjects.

Nicola Pitchford reads implications for literature in Jameson's description of the Bonaventure. Just as the hotel does not impose a particular way from the entrance to let's say a particular shop and leaves the visitor free to find their way, postmodern literature does not impose a particular way of reading on the readers. The readers are immersed in the narrative and they can move around, in a direction of their choice, making interpretations and creating associations of their choice and work their own way to the end. Like the towers of the hotel, the various parts of the text are open to the reader to be visited in any order the reader chooses.

Also, just as the hyperspace of the Bonaventure cannot be perceived using the traditional notions of volume that the subject is equipped with, postmodern literature cannot be interpreted using notions developed in modernism. Postmodernism requires a new set of skills and strategies to make meaning out of its texts.

3.2 Research Method

This part of the study outlines the research method I have chosen and also the way the text is analyzed.

3.2.1 Textual Analysis

The study aims to employ textual analysis as the research method.. As was shown in chapter one, film can be treated as text and because, as Robert Stam says, “textual analysis is applicable to any object” (193), the study chose to use this method. The study would now briefly discuss the various aspects of textual analysis, as a way of offering the rationale for using it, in the succeeding paragraphs.

Kuhn and Westwell assert that textual analysis is strong and widespread enough to “lay claim to being the preferred method in film studies” (425). They define textual analysis as “any more-or-less detailed breakdown or close reading of a film” (Kuhn and Westwell 425). While some textual analyses emanating from an ideological point of view like feminism or Marxism may produce against the grain readings it is not a necessary outcome of textual analysis.

Catherine Belsey feels that textual analysis as a method of research is not limited to film studies, but is “indispensable to research in cultural criticism, where cultural criticism includes English, cultural history and cultural studies, as well as any

other discipline that focuses on texts, or seeks to understand the inscription of culture in its artefacts" (160). In her example of a textual analysis, it is clear the interpretations she makes are her personal interpretations, but she backs them up with references to the text to create valid arguments. So the very text that is being analyzed also serves as the justification for the interpretation.

Belsey asserts, "it is the textual analysis that poses the questions which research sets out to answer" (171). She says that the text has priority; ideally, the text "sets the agenda." This is true of the present study. It was my interest in Tarantino's films and his characters that set the agenda of the research. The characters posed the questions in terms of their interest in pop culture, their appearance, superficiality, and their language etc. that the scholarship of the study is trying to answer.

For McKee, textual analysis is "a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world. It is a methodology—a data-gathering process—for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live" (Mckee 1). Textual analysis can be used to interpret films, TV magazines, clothes, and graffiti among other texts. McKee's focus in textual analysis is the subject. He feels that textual analysis can help understand how different cultures—both local and foreign—understand their world.

The study uses textual analysis as method and technique because it allows for a historical positioning of the text. John Hanson Saunders feels that authors create texts for particular audiences, keeping in mind how the historical context of the audience will make them approach the text. Saunders cites the example of the use of diction according to the taste and understanding of the twentieth century audience even when the society being talked about is the eighteenth century and these terms were not used in the eighteenth century. For his study, Saunders discusses how three different versions of the fairy tale, Snow *White* relate to the periods they were produced in. Saunders's views are important for the study because they show that textual analysis allows for a historical positioning of the text. This means that using textual analysis allows me to discuss how Tarantino's characters are shaped by other cinematic, literary and historical personalities. This, in turn, allows me to discuss pastiche. Also, it provides the basis for the assertion that even when the characters are situated in the past, they are created from an awareness of the present and can be commented on in the context of the present situation. This means that I can overrule

the possible objection that two of the films under study are situated in the historical past and therefore did not represent the postmodern notions or the postmodern world.

The selection of textual analysis as research method and technique was beneficial in the sense that it allowed discussing the characters' appearance too. Catherine Belsey uses a painting—*Tarquinius and Lucretia* by Sir Peter Paul Rubens—as text to offer an example of textual analysis and this points to the utility of textual analysis for interpreting visual objects. I employed textual analysis to discuss the characters' dress, hair, facial expressions, and gestures etc. and gained valuable insight into their postmodern traits, actions, and thought processes.

A common thread in the various analyses of films that I studied for the literature review based their interpretations on the personal readings of the texts and these were at times backed by similar readings of other writers but not always. Jonathan Culler says, "signs do not have essences, but are defined by a network of relations" (4). I also gave meaning to the parts of the texts on the basis of their relationship with other parts of the texts, making sure that my interpretation of a single part was borne out by other parts of the text. Also, I backed my readings with the comments of commentators and critics on the issues.

Edward Mendelson in his analysis of *Mrs. Dallow*ay proves his interpretations regarding the text—the death of Clarissa—through the text. The text is a connected whole where one part explains another part, no matter what the spatial distance between the two may be. He even says, "interpretation can be stated largely in words taken from the book itself" (Mendelson 276). Such an interpretation must guard against making interpretation based on particular parts of the text "by making nonsense of everything else" (Mendelson 276). He advocates not being minutely close to the text for it may make one lose sight of the other parts of the text and suggests adopting "middle distance" over close reading (Mendelson 276).

The textual analysis of Tarantino's characters is informed by Jameson's theorization of postmodernism. Jameson theorizes that postmodernism consists of death of the subject, schizophrenia, waning of affect, depthlessness and simulacra, pastiche, and hyperspace. These concepts that constitute postmodernism for Jameson become the categories under which the study analyses Tarantino's characters. These categories also serve as the organizing principle for the textual analysis of the four films. An important aspect of using these categories is that the study intends to avoid repetition that discussing the traits in terms of the films may entail. Thus discussing

similar aspects of the characters spread over the four films under one overarching heading is meant to help avoid the feeling that any given point is essentially the same as elsewhere. This also offers the additional benefit of offering material for easy comparison between and among characters and is likely to contribute to showing that the characters are similar in their postmodernism.

To ground the study in film theory the study was based on the ideological model of film theory. A film theory involves "application of some previously existing philosophical, social, or aesthetic framework to the film medium rather than a true medium-specific theory of meaning or effect" (Prince 342). The ideological model allows critics to "examine the relationship between movies and society and, specifically, how film represents social and political realities" (354). Postmodernism attempts to explain the state of the subject and the world in the technologized, consumer, pop culture driven world and therefore met the criteria of being a theory that could be used to study films according to the ideological model of film studies.

3.2.2 Tarantino's Works and Analysis

For the study, the researcher selected three of Tarantino's films that feature him both as a writer and a director. Tarantino is a versatile artist and has acted, directed, and produced a number of films. Because the study was approaching the characters as Tarantino's constructs it found it appropriate to choose films where he is both the writer and the director. This would dispel any objection that the characters cannot be attributed to Tarantino, but should be attributed to the writer.

The study selected the following films: *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), *Pulp Fiction* (1994), and *Inglourious Basterds* (2009). The choice was not arbitrary. The study selected the top three films that had been rated the best on Rotten Tomatoes. The site ranks films according to its freshness on the Tomatometer. "The Tomatometer™ rating—based on the published opinions of hundreds of film and television critics—is a trusted measurement of movie and TV programming quality for millions of moviegoers.

The Tomatometer™ rating represents the percentage of professional critic reviews that are positive for a given film or television show." (Rottentomatoes.com) All these films have good box office earnings too, and they have the highest rating on the Tomatometer, i.e., Certified Fresh. Rotten tomatoes explains certified fresh rating as:

> To receive a Certified Fresh rating a movie must have a steady Tomatometer rating of 75% or better. Movies opening in wide release need at least 80 reviews from Tomatometer Critics (including 5 Top Critics). Movies opening in limited release need at least 40 reviews from Tomatometer Critics (including 5 Top Critics). A TV show must have a Tomatometer Score of 75% or better with 20 or more reviews from Tomatometer Critics (including 5 Top Critics). If the Tomatometer score drops below 70%, then the movie or TV show loses its Certified Fresh status. In some cases, the Certified Fresh designation may be held at the discretion of the Rotten Tomatoes editorial team. (Rottentomatoes.com

It speaks highly of Tarantino's prowess that his films have retained their freshness over so many years.

Rank	**Title**	**Tomatometer Score**
1.	*Pulp Fiction*	93
2.	*Reservoir Dogs*	92
3.	*Inglourious Basterds*	89

While Pauline Kael, film critic for *The New Yorker*, infamously said that she never watched a film twice for reviewing it and was proud of it, the researcher watched the films a number of times to arrive at interpretations and to find justifications for making those interpretations. The study approached the films without first reading the secondary sources about the films and made its plausible interpretations which it then verified, modified or rejected in the light of the other meaning-making aspects of the narratives and the films. It was only later that the study consulted secondary sources to find support for its arguments and to determine how its interpretations compared against the views in the sources. The study also incorporated the sources to validate its arguments where necessary. Even when the secondary sources did not confirm its interpretations the study included the views and offered its argument as to why the study chose to make the different interpretations it made.

The study did not rely on the screenplays for the dialogues of the characters as it found the screenplays to be different from the actual movies. They contained parts of dialogues and scenes that did not make the final cut and at times the dialogues too had been changed. So the researcher transcribed the dialogues, when it came to quoting them in the thesis, as they occurred in the films. Contractions were used

where the characters used the short forms of words or where they elided certain sounds.

The analysis of the films was meant to study Tarantino's characters with particular attention to the notions of death of the subject in its various aspects e.g. lack of uniqueness, schizophrenia, depthlessness, pastiche, consumer culture, and hyperspace. The analysis was hinged to Jameson's theory of postmodernism and stayed true to his theory. The analysis also involved interpreting the characters' appearance and sought to incorporate meanings proffered by visual clues into the discussion of the characters' postmodernism. Lack of uniqueness for Jameson means the lack of any trait that might raise the character or person above being just another person out on the streets. It also means that there is no heroism associated with the characters and try as they might characters and people cannot become heroic. Also, the notion of uniqueness disallows the possibility of the existence of an autonomous monad. Schizophrenia is a loss of temporality where the schizophrenic loses any sense of past and future and becomes a prisoner of the present working without any ambition or hopes only to relish the present. A related aspect of this schizophrenia is erratic language. Waning of affect is the loss of emotion and feeling from a work thus resulting in a work that is replicable and that does not convey any deep emotion. Waning of affect leads to simulacra where images are all there is. The implication for subjects is that in postmodernism waning of affect means that the subjects are just images without any deep meaning, emotion or any link to reality. The study intends to prove the characters as mere images (simulacra) and without any deep meaning. Pastiche is a harkening to existing works to incorporate their meaning in the present work but without any intention of ridiculing the earlier work. It just points to the new work being reduced to an amalgamation of existing styles and tropes. Nostalgia is the subject's proclivity to look at history as only the images of the past that the subject has been made to perceive. Thus, nostalgia is not a longing for the past, but a longing for the images of the past. The study carries out its analysis in terms of these categories. Taking these as the key aspect of Jameson's postmodernism the study will analyze the characters in Tarantino's selected works in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 4

ZED IS DEAD, BABY. ZED IS DEAD. (BUTCH COOLIDGE IN *PULP FICTION*)

This chapter is the first of three that constitute my discussion of Tarantino's characters. I have previously presented the notion of postmodernism and its origin and the various views regarding postmodernism, how it is related to modernism and what key theorists posit about the features of postmodernism. This led to a detailed discussion of Jameson's notion regarding the genesis of postmodernism and the justification for using this periodizing hypothesis. The discussion then moved to Tarantino and his place in the film world and his characteristics as a director. In addition to outlining the method of research Jameson's postmodernism and its key features were discussed in chapter three in detail to provide a background to the discussion of Tarantino's characters in the current chapter.

This chapter discusses Tarantino's characters in light of Jameson's notion of the death of the subject to show that Tarantino's characters are postmodern as per Jameson's notion. The chapter specifically discusses Tarantino's characters in terms of their lack of uniqueness to show the death of the subject.

Jameson posits that a key shift in the dynamics due to the move from high modernism to postmodernism is what can be captured in the "fashionable" (*Postmodernism* 14) term death of the subject. The study interprets death of the subject to comprise their lack of uniqueness, fragmentation, depthlessness, and waning of affect.

4.1 Lack of Uniqueness

Just because you *are* a character, doesn't mean you *have* character. (The Wolf in *Pulp Fiction)*

Lack of uniqueness, simply put, means a lack of individualistic style and individuality. Jameson's discussion of the postmodern subject is linked with modernism's conception of the subject and this he discusses with reference to the key artists and works of the two isms. He asserts that modernism occupies itself with the

expression of the subject and it assumes that the expression of the subject is due to the subject being a monad, a centered individual with all the constraints of a monad—the closed cell of individual subjectivity that condemns the self to the mindless solitude of the monad. The subject is limited and confined to the psychopathologies of the ego. But this lack of egress changes with postmodernism where the subject is not a centered monad-like creature and the subject liberated from the confines of the monad has also lost the uniqueness of the monad and the psychopathologies of a particular ego. The subject loses the distinguishing brush stroke that nobody can replicate. The loss is also of an individualistic style and identity. With this loss comes a dilemma that while the modernist subject had something to express the postmodernism subject has nothing to express since there is no self to see, feel, fear, hope or aspire to. This lack of individuality becomes the bane of the subject's existence leading to what has been declared the death of the subject. The study will now discuss the characters in the light of this concept of the lack of individuality.

Vince Vega, Marsellus's thug in *Pulp Fiction*, is sent on two key missions: retrieving the boss's briefcase and killing his nemesis Butch. He also undertakes two missions unusual to his role as a gangster which show agency and substance. These are taking the boss's wife out for a good time and saving her when she overdoses. It is in terms of these roles that I want to discuss Vince. At the same time, I will also be refuting a possible reading based on superficial analysis that presents Vince as a man of substance. With his stylish appearance, laid-back demeanor and great dance moves he seems to be better than an average thug and a man of substance. That he is assigned important missions particularly that of taking Mia out may tempt the viewer to believe that he is better than the average criminal. The attraction Mia feels for him may also suggest that he has a strong personality and is a man of substance. In my discussion, I aim to prove that in spite of all these Vince is not strong, refined or any better than the others.

Looking beyond the dress and gelled back hair all there is to Vince is hollowness. He is just another "heroin-addicted hit man" (De Vries 120) making a living doing dangerous jobs for his boss, Marsellus. There cannot be any substance to a "heroin junkie" (*Wild* 125) or a "junkie hit man" (P. Woods 37). He has let the fine powder conquer him. He is high more of the time than the others. This interpretation of Vince as a useless addict is supported by John Travolta's—the performer who plays Vince in the film—description of Vince as "someone who's on heroin, who's a

little overweight" and also as a "heroin addict hit man with a gut" (Bernard 199). Vince is a caricature of a refined and suave gangster. He is likeable, there is little doubt about it, but so is Disney's Pluto. Paul A. Woods terms Vince "gloriously fucked-up and gracelessly charming" (106). Foster Hirsch, despite being critical of the film, likes Vince for though he is "absentminded" yet "how can the viewer dislike a hit man in the guise of such an appealing bumbler" (271). So Vince does have a charm, but this charm is superficial and thus does not give Vince any individuality as a refined gangster.

Looking at Vince as a hit man in comparison with Jules does not reveal a picture of a strong man. At Brett's apartment, Jules is clearly in charge. Even when the time comes to fire back at the shooter who surprises them, he is one step behind Jules. His incompetence and utter lack of responsibility is revealed when he shoots and kills Marvin in the car and exposes himself and Jules to the real and present danger of being spotted by the police. He immediately puts the blame on Jules for hitting a bump on the road and triggering the gun. When this does not work he just blames the gun: "The gun just went off, don't ask me how" (*Pulp Fiction*). Even a layman knows not to point a gun, even if it is empty, at someone and also to keep the safety on but here is a hit man, a professional, who is waving his gun without the safety on with his finger on the trigger. This also connects with Vince being a junkie. He is spaced out and does not really know what he is doing.

Vince's incompetence is not a one-off thing. He also proves his incompetence when he is sent to kill Butch. He leaves his gun in the kitchen as he goes to the restroom where he takes his time as can be ascertained by him reading a novel in the restroom. While the hit man is thus engaged, Butch enters the apartment, finds his watch and even pops a treat in the toaster. Vince comes out of the restroom unaware of Butch's presence and is killed. It adds insult to injury that Vince is killed with his own weapon. I am aware that there is an interpretation by fans that Marsellus and Vince are staking the house together and Marsellus goes to get breakfast, leaving his gun behind on the counter top (IMDb, Pulp Fiction Movie FAQ). This interpretation is supported by the fact that Jules has retired so Marsellus has to step in himself. Even if the ridiculous premise that Marsellus has just two hit men working for him and with Jules out he has to step in, is accepted, it does not prove that the gun belongs to Marsellus. Marsellus is carrying his gun when he runs into Butch. Indeed, he uses it to shoot at Butch. So the gun on the countertop cannot be Marcellus's. Also, even if

Marsellus was with Vince it still does not excuse letting down his guard so carelessly when he knows how dangerous the situation is and that with Marsellus out he has to be extra vigilant as he waits for Butch to show up.

On a philosophical level too Vince remains behind his accomplice, Jules. I do not think Jules achieves redemption, but at least he is alive to the signs. He is trying to give occurrences meaning, but Vince remains spaced out and ultimately pays the price, with his life, for remaining ignorant. Nanay and Schnee opine that Butch and Jules are alive to the world around them and are geared to take up the challenges of the world, but Vince does not get it; he is high a lot of the time and this has clouded his judgment. He spends a lot of time in the restroom: when Mia is overdosing Vince is in the bathroom, when Ringo and Pumpkin take over the diner Vince is in the restroom with his book. His car is keyed the firsttime in three years he takes it out of the garage, yet he cannot link it to Butch who is likely to have keyed it for Vince calling him Palooka. Vince remains unaware of the importance of the incidents and events happening around him and does not take precautions to save himself. The result is he is killed, not due to a great conspiracy but because of his refusal and more importantly his inability to read the signs.

That Vince is refined or that he has character becomes a weak argument when the link between Vince and Toothpick Vic Vega aka Mr. Blonde in *Reservoir Dogs* is perceived. The background story is that the two characters are brothers. Tarantino also thought about doing an entire film on the Vega brothers, but the film did not materialize. Vince's link with Toothpick Vega only strengthens the argument that he is a lowly person who is not refined. With a jailbird brother, who starts his illegal activities right after being released on parole, Vince cannot be said to be from a refined family. Because both of them are working for other people on small jobs, any notion of Vince's strength of character can be laid to rest.

There is no doubt that Marsellus chooses Vince to escort his wife for an evening. But there is no real merit here. It is not that Marsellus thinks that Jules's refinement is worth appreciating or that his refinement will ensure a good evening for his wife. He owns Vince and therefore knows that Vince will not take any liberty with his wife. If he can have Antwan Roccamora thrown out of a window he can do anything to Vince. Marsellus thus is so sure of his power over Vince that he is comfortable with him taking Mia out. Also, Vince is effeminate. His drawl and his appearance do not show the picture of virility, which is also brought into question by

his choice of wearing an earring in the right ear. It is for these reasons that he comes across as a "vulnerable hit man" (French). That he is reading *Modesty Blaise,* a 1966 novel about a female hero named Modesty, in the restroom when he is supposed to be on the lookout for Butch supports this hypothesis. Thus Vince's lack of machismo must have led Marsellus to prefer him to the others.

For Vince to take Mia out is not a task that he enjoys or one that will take him upwards in the hierarchy of the mafia. Vince becomes the butt of jokes for having to take Mia out and is so fed up with it that he snaps at Paul at the bar. On the contrary, it shows his lowly position since he can be asked to do anything and there is nothing he can do to avoid it. Mia too rubs it in his face: "I do believe Marsellus, my husband, your boss, told you to take me out and do whatever I wanted, Now, I want to dance. I want to win. I want that trophy … So, dance good" (*Pulp Fiction*). This clearly shows Vince has no power in the situation. There should not be any doubt as to what Vince is doing. It is not a heroic endeavor or a chivalrous rescue of a damsel in distress: he is only baby-sitting. There can be nothing more embarrassing than baby-sitting the boss's wife and a bossy one at that. This shows that Vince is not a subject with grace or authority and can be asked to do anything, even by the boss's wife, and he has to oblige.

Earlier in the day, Vince had carried out another task for Marsellus. Along with Jules, he had retrieved a briefcase, protected it from harm and returned it to Marsellus in the bar. It would be informative to look at Mia's date in comparison with the retrieval of the briefcase. The briefcase has value because Marsellus has given it value. Vince takes a look at the contents when he takes custody of the briefcase and he becomes enamored with the contents. He takes a couple of moments before he can reply to Jules' query that they are good to go ahead. A sort of smirk on his face betrays his fascination with the contents of the case, but nowhere does he betray a desire to possess the contents of the briefcase. He remains steadfast to his duty. When he takes Mia out he is enamored of her beauty and her personality, but he reminds himself of his loyalty to Marsellus and his mission: "It's a moral test of yourself, whether or not you can maintain loyalty…So you're gonna go out there, drink your drink, say 'Goodnight, I've had a very lovely evening,' go home" (*Pulp Fiction*). There is little difference between Vince completing the mission of delivering the briefcase to Marsellus and taking Mia out and bringing her back safely thereby

showing that the *date* is not really a date, it is just a "shitty job" (*Pulp Fiction*) assigned to him.

Back from their date, Mia mistakes the heroin, Vince is carrying, for cocaine and inhales a quantity greater than she can handle. When Vince finds out he is petrified and rushes her to Lance so that they can revive her. While Barlow credits Vince with the "heroic" (Barlow) act of saving Mia's life the driving force behind this line of action is not sympathy for Mia, or a desire to be heroic but the desire to save himself from Marsellus's wrath. Vince's appeal—a logical one not an impassioned one—to get Lance to help him, clearly shows that his seemingly noble actions are actually driven by fear of Marsellus: "This fucked up bitch is Marsellus Wallace's wife. Now if she fuckin' croaks on me, I'm a grease spot. But before he turns me into a bar soap, I'm gonna be forced to tell 'im about how you could've saved her life, but instead, you let her die on your front lawn" (*Pulp Fiction*). This appeal is not the action of a heroic savior and clearly shows Vince for the superficial man he is, since he has no aspect of sympathy, guilt or compassion for a dying human being. The appeal also contains a threat for him to save his skin. Once again Vince does not create any high standard of humanity and instead shows only the ordinariness of a weasel.

Another angle of approaching Vince is looking at him in terms of the actor who plays him, i.e., John Travolta. Travolta playing Vince is hugely responsible for the viewers' inclination towards the character. He evokes the good feelings of his roles and success in films like *Grease, Saturday Night Fever,* and TV series *Welcome Back, Kotter* and brings innocence and suavity which are not really part of the persona in *Pulp Fiction*. Jacob Leigh opines that when viewers see characters they "also see actors; and …respond to them" (2). He takes this to mean that "the character does not exist without the actor" and mentions that the character of Ethan Edwards is inextricably linked with the performer John Wayne and it is Wayne who attributes meaning to the character through his aura (Leigh 2). *Face Off* also illustrates how the association of the performer and the character help the audience make meanings out of situations. In the film, things go horribly wrong when Agent Sean Archer undergoes cosmetic surgery to look like the villain Castor Troy so that he can extract information related to the location of a bomb Troy had planted. Things go wrong when Troy finds this out and forces the doctor to perform a similar procedure on him. After the procedure, Troy starts leading Archer's life. He is now in close proximity of

Archer's family and a scene shows Troy looking lecherously at Archer's daughter when she is alone in her room. The character's look, suggestive dialogue, and moves do not evoke a response of fear in the audience, for the girl. Despite all the sexual innuendoes, the audience is calm because they are looking at Travolta and in their minds, Travolta will always be the young innocent dancing college student of *Grease*. The invocation of *Grease* achieved through Travolta's link and with music playing in the background helps keep the audience from feeling the enormity of the situation or from feeling repelled at the overt sexuality of the scene. I find it to be true of *Pulp Fiction* too. The link with *Grease* and other Travolta hits, and the lovability of Travolta may delude some to associate star power and grandeur with Vince but my reading is that the star connection—pastiche in a way—is meant to make Vince's ordinariness stand out in stark contrast. Michael K. Johnson notes in his comments on *The Book of Eli* as science fiction,

> Many filmgoers will bring the memory of [former roles the actor has played] to the theatre with them, and the knowledge of those earlier performances will provide part of the context for interpreting the character the actor plays in a given film, even when, and maybe especially when, an actor performs against type, as [Denzel] Washington does in playing the villain, a rogue cop, in *Training Day*. (255)

Johnson is talking about how African Americans appropriate the Western genre in a post-apocalyptic setting in *The Book of Eli.* He feels that among other things in the film, the character of Eli is open to interpretation and the fact that it is played by Denzel Washington nudges the viewers to make certain positive interpretations because of Washington's previous roles as the anti-apartheid leader Steve Biko in *Cry Freedom*, the African American rights leader in *Malcolm X*, the African American soldier in *Glory* and the intelligent policeman, marine, and navy officer in *The Bone Collector*, *The Manchurian Candidate* and *Crimson Tide* respectively. "Washington's presence and performance suggest possible meanings and significations" that otherwise would not have been possible (Johnson 220). While Johnson's comments are about *The Book of El*i, they have a general application too and work for *Pulp Fiction* because Travolta's past performances as a good guy cloud viewers' judgment. He will forever be Tony Manero, Vinnie Barbarino, and Danny Zuko, an innocent dancer. This clouded judgment may render a rosier reading of Vince than the reality. It is worth noting that Randall E. Auxier refers to Vince as Vinnie in his article giving

the rationale, “No one calls Vincent Vince “Vinnie” in the movie. This is by design, I suspect. Tarantino knows we will think of him as Vinnie Barbarino from *Welcome Back, Kotter* in any case. I am calling him “Vinnie” because that’s who John Travolta is and always will be” (131). I find support for Leigh’s view in a 2015 production of *Hamlet* at Wilma Theater in Philadelphia starring an African female artist Zainab Jah as Hamlet. Because of this casting choice, this Hamlet becomes more than "the conflicted Prince of Denmark” (Lamour) as he is now realized as an "outsider" (Torre). This shows that the actor brings the baggage of previous performances, roles, and personalities to any new role they play. Tarantino uses this baggage slyly by turning Travolta’s character into an inefficient addict and thereby insinuating that Vince, despite the Travolta connection, has no depth of personality and Travolta’s past great personalities are not reflected in Vince.

Jules Winfield is a thunderous thug in *Pulp Fiction* who awes his opponents and dominates them through his terrifying personality and equally terrifying language. Superficially, he is a unique man with agency as he kills efficiently and also allegedly sees the light, but a deeper look reveals that he exhibits the death of the subject through lack of uniqueness.

While Jameson's death of the subject is easy to notice in Vince—his attempts to seek attention are thin and betray the underlying decay of his person—Jules proves to be a trickier prospect, which is not to say that he is an entirely different equation. There are obvious allusions to Jules’s attempts to carve out a niche for himself as a unique individual and these are most visible in Jules adopting a philosophical approach towards life. At Brett's apartment, he and Vince come under straight fire from a man hidden in the next room. While Vince casually dismisses their escape as "We was lucky", Jules classifies it as "divine intervention", a miracle (*Pulp Fiction*). When Vince continues to be derisively skeptical about it nonchalantly dismissing it with a "shit happens!" Jules cannot hold back his anger and says, "What just happened here was a fucking miracle and I want you to fucking acknowledge it" (*Pulp Fiction*). This cloak of philosophy that Jules puts on needs to be analyzed if I am to decide on Jules’s individuality and this is what I intend to do in the following section.

There is a case, superficial definitely but appealing too, for looking at Jules as the “Preacher Man” (Dusty Springfield). The escape at the apartment from a certain death has the immediate impact of making Jules's eyes "wide fucking open" (*Pulp Fiction*). Jules's enlightenment seems to be an argument against the death of the

subject. It means the blandness that Jameson associates with men is not universal. There are still sparks of exceptional ability. Not everyone is without individual thinking and there are still those who can rise above mediocrity and claim excellence. By proclaiming to have been enlightened Jules is asserting that he is special. He is different from all those who were not chosen to see the miracle or like Vince were blind to the miracle when it took place. He feels special in having gained insight into the world and it is a result of his pride at having been blessed with a miracle that he lets Honey Bunny and Pumpkin go with the money and decides to put up his holster for good. Right after the escape, he confides to Vince: "That's it for me. From here on end you consider my ass retired. . . . Look, I'm telling Marsellus today I'm through" (*Pulp Fiction*). Now he plans to "walk the earth" waiting for God to tell him where his real vocation lies (*Pulp Fiction*). Vince is skeptical of this, but Jules remains adamant that he has been blessed and cannot ignore his blindness anymore.

Later in the restaurant, Jules explicates on his newfound enlightenment and says that he has arrived at the correct interpretation of the lines he was so fond of saying. Jules arrives at the conclusion that he thought he was the righteous man setting evil right in the world, but the events of the morning tell him that he has actually been the “tyranny of evil men” and now must redeem himself by becoming the shepherd (*Pulp Fiction*). He even buys Pumpkin's life by giving him $1500 from his wallet. If he had allowed Pumpkin to rob him, he would have had to kill him so he just gives him the money so that Jules does not have to kill him. This is one example of his changed ways and attempts to become a shepherd.

Jules expresses his new-found insight into the life he has been leading, and the villainy thereof, in an exchange with Pumpkin. Pumpkin wants to know what is in the briefcase Jules is carrying.

PUMPKIN. What's in the case?

JULES. My boss' dirty laundry.

PUMPKIN. Your boss makes you do his laundry?

JULES. When he wants it clean.

PUMPKIN. Sounds like a shit job.

JULES. Funny, I was thinking the same thing.

The symbolism here is unmistakable. Jules has come to accept that he is carrying Marsellus's evil deeds with him. The contents of the briefcase are never revealed, but one can surmise that they must have something to do with Marsellus's criminal

enterprise. Jules is a hit man for Marsellus so his crimes and murders are akin to cleaning Marsellus's clothes. Jules accepts that he is a cold-hearted professional killer when he says that Wallace uses him when he wants the job done really well. The parable reaches its conclusion when Jules accepts that his job is not good. This is Jules's moment of enlightenment: from taking pleasure in killing people, feeling powerful when he has someone staring down the barrel of his handgun, toying with them as he does with Brett, reciting verses to scare his victims to death to his acceptance that his is a bad job.

Mark Conrad is among the writers (J. Smith, Nanay, and Schnee, and Russell) who see in Jules a story of redemption and transformation. He feels that Jules makes the interpretation that "he himself is the evil that he's been preaching about" (Conrad 131). This leads him to decide to "struggle with himself not to revert to evil" and thereby shows his enlightenment.

Jules's claim to uniqueness finds support in Terry Eagleton's view of the subject. Eagleton posits that the "dispersed, schizoid [postmodern] subject is nothing to be alarmed about" because he is free of "all that fantasy of interiority, that pathological itch to scratch surfaces for concealed depths" (70). But Jules shows a desire to look into things. A contrast with Vince will clearly show that Vince is limited in his approach. When Vince is in Paris, he does not go to Burger King and back on the job he does not look into the mystery of the bullets missing them and remains caught up with the surface meaning. But Jules is not content; he may not have arrived at an absolutely correct explanation, but he is certainly looking into it as he says to Ringo that he is "trying" to be the shepherd (*Pulp Fiction*). These readings of Jules's philosophizing open up the possibility of looking at Jules as a unique individual who achieves redemption, but things are never as simple as this in a Tarantino film.

To me the readings of redemption ring hollow. When Jules is debating the value of appreciating the miracle he outlines his plan of action: "to walk the earth, like Caine in *Kung Fu*." (*Pulp Fiction*) This reference to *Kung Fu* is a big warning light telling me not to read too much into Jules's conversion. Just as one cannot be a martial artist just because one has watched a number of Kung Fu films, one cannot claim enlightenment just because one has seen it in films. This point will be discussed in detail under the heading of depthlessness and simulacra to avoid redundancy.

While Jules certainly puts up a strong case for the death of the subject not to be a universal affliction and for the possibility of the subject to find uniqueness—for he finds redemption, allegedly—he is, after all, basing his interpretation on a made-up text of Ezekiel 25:17 that he is so proud of quoting and which does not exist in Ezekiel the way he recites it. Also, the fact that he has been taken in by a simulacrum, combined with the fact that he captures his so-called enlightenment in pop culture terms, shows that the case for his enlightenment is not strong enough to raise Jules to a pedestal.

Jules is able to create an impression of a thundering bad guy, but Jules's posturing as a tough guy is dealt a blow in Jimmie's house. That he is hiding from the police is understandable, but a careful examination of the situation reveals that he and Vince are afraid of Bonnie. His strength in committing three murders and the trunk-load of weapons are not a match for a woman on her way to the house. Being afraid of Bonnie shows how little of a unique threatening force he is.

Mia Wallace illustrates the death of the subject through her lack of uniqueness. She is an ordinary, in fact, failed actress who has latched on to Marsellus for a good life. With her habit of drug use, she is like any other gun moll but she still tries to rise above the ordinary by visiting swanky restaurants and displaying her authority because of being Marsellus's wife.

It is not a far-fetched interpretation that Mia is a trophy wife, a thesis supported by Jami Bernard in *Quentin Tarantino: The Man and His Movies* (207). The difference in Marsellus and Mia's ages, coupled with the difference in their races may make for a love conquers all hypothesis but they are never shown to be intimate. The fact that Mia opens the door when Vince and Paul arrive to take Marsellus's instructions regarding revenge on Butch only shows that Marsellus keeps her around as an ornament to show off. If he had truly loved her or if she had been refined she would not have been found in Butch's locker room with low-life thugs. Jules mentions that Mia is Marsellus's "new bride" and in light of this information, it is strange that the newly married couple are not intimate (*Pulp Fiction*). It gives Marsellus "the big, black bald-headed fuck" who has been "oppressed, suppressed, and depressed by the white man" a sense of power to be with "the white man's most prized possession" (Bernard 207). My reading is also supported by the painting atop the mantelpiece "expressive both of the idealisation [sic] of the figure, and a reminder that she, like her portrait, can be thought of as an exquisite, valuable possession"

(Gallafent 73). Hence my interpretation of Mia as a trophy wife holds water and I can assert that Mia is not a unique person with real agency, talent or power but an ordinary woman who is making compromises to survive.

Mia is a failed actress. Her portfolio consists of only the pilot of a cheesy play where she was one of the five heroes of the play. Her ordinariness points to the fact that she was not extraordinary or refined, to begin with. Marsellus, with his big money, presented to her a way out and she took it even though it meant mingling with common criminals. Like Vince, she is a junkie. She takes drugs before going out on the date, she takes drugs again in the restaurant and when she gets home she needs another shot. I fail to see any refinement in this. Mia's attraction to Vince is because of her lowly status and lack of refinement. She is Marsellus's wife, but she is not a refined lady and this, not Vince's refinement, is why she goes out with him and is attracted towards him. All these point to a character who lacks uniqueness and therefore exhibits Jameson's death of the subject.

Marsellus, the crime boss in *Pulp Fiction,* is not very different from his goons. His power is only for show and he is as weak as the rest of the characters that share his world. My discussion of Marsellus will revolve around his being a husband, and a mob boss and I will attempt to prove that beneath the stern macho exterior lies a dead subject who is not unique in any aspect.

When I look at the reason Marsellus sends Mia out on a dinner-date with Vince I see not a mob boss, but a henpecked husband who is so fed up of nagging that he is prepared to send his wife out with another man, a goon, so that she does not give him a hard time for being stuck in the house with nothing to do. Barlow quoting D. K. Holm observes that "women rule the roost" in *Pulp Fiction* and that "one of the primary tensions in the movie is between the needs of 'business' and the demands of relationships" (80). When Jules calls Marsellus to request for help to get rid of the dead body Marsellus is at breakfast alone. The plate in front of him and the positioning of the fork and the knife show that he is some way into his breakfast. Mia approaches the table and there is no food for her on the table. This may not be much but this little window into their married life is all there is in the film and it shows a lack of intimacy between the two. Also, when I see Mr. and Mrs. Wallace in contrast with the other couples in the film it is more than obvious that there is a severe lack of intimacy between them. Pumpkin and Ringo are so close they work together in sheer harmony where Pumpkin is crowd-control and Ringo collects the loot. The attraction

between them is so intense that Pumpkin reaches across the table to be close to Ringo and when she looks at him her love for him is hard to ignore. Even Lance and Jody, bickering in their visibly domestic world, show a certain closeness, and many would readily associate this with marriage. Butch and Fabienne are deeply in love and it is their intimacy that forces reading Fabienne's fascination with having a potbelly as a sign of pregnancy. In light of all these arguments, it will not be a baseless conjecture to say Mia is not Marsellus' love so Vince is not on a holy mission of serving a deity at the behest of her god but is merely helping Marsellus avoid being nagged for leaving Mia alone in the house.

Even if the premise that Marsellus does not really love Mia is wrong, Marsellus still comes across as a weak man. He has to stoop to ask a goon to take his wife out. In this, he is very different from Browning's cruel Duke, who chooses "[n]ever to stop" (Browning 2). In order to stop his wife from nagging him, he gets her what may crudely be termed a boy toy. This is not what a man of substance does. Contrast this with the way Vince takes care of his car. He has had his Malibu in storage for three years. This is how protective he is. When someone keys it, he is frustrated and wants to kill the man. It is hard to imagine Marsellus treating his wife with the same care as Vince does his car. Without the angle of love, Marsellus is just an ordinary husband and his status as the mob boss does not give him any special trait as a husband.

Marsellus Wallace is a universally feared crime boss in *Pulp Fiction but* this does not mean that one can ascribe special qualities to Wallace. Like any mafia boss, he is ruthless, vindictive and eager to preserve his pride. He has the Samoan killed and nobody, not even his wife, knows why. When Butch double-crosses him, he sends his goons to find him so that he can restore his pride. He sends Vince to Butch's apartment with a gun to capture or kill him. Sending Vince after the double crossing Butch is understandable. This is what one would expect of a mob boss. But having a man who was among the guests at his wedding killed allegedly for touching his wife's feet is inexplicable. This mystery around the murder is deliberate for it allows Marsellus to draft an image of fear. It is part of his way of keeping people guessing about his conduct and also to become one of those of the lore of cold hearted killers.

Vince's fear of Marsellus, Butch's timidity in front of Marsellus and the fact that he moves things in the world of *Pulp Fiction* hints towards Marsellus's power. Conrad notes that the people in *Pulp Fiction* are in "a hierarchy of power in which

Marsellus Wallace calls the shots" (128). The fact that there is no policeman in the film sows Marsellus's "absolute power and control in the absence of any higher, objective authority" (Conrad 128). But any notion of his dominating power is shredded to pieces by his rape at the hands of the hillbillies and it becomes clear that Marsellus does not have real power and therefore lacks uniqueness. Marsellus's rape becomes all the more assertive that characters, no matter how strong they may seem—Marsellus is "the legislator of values, the ultimate authority" for Conrad—do not really have any power, substance or strength (Conrad 132). Marsellus wears a cloak of toughness like any other mafia boss and at the same time is as powerless as an ordinary person. To compensate for his weakness the mask needs to become sterner and more impregnable—thus Tony's murder and Butch's hunt. But all the while his weakness is hidden underneath the cloak and emerges in the sodomy leading Marsellus to strengthen the mask even further through violence on Zed. Also important is the way Zed selects Marsellus to be the first one they will sodomize, i.e., a children's rhyme: Eeenie, Meenie Minie Mo. This reiterates Marsellus's lack of uniqueness in having power since sodomizing this allegedly powerful man is as trivial as deciding turns using a children's rhyme.

The rescue from rape erodes Marsellus's claim to being strong or being an agent even further. Butch kills Maynard and keeps Zed from getting his gun, thus allowing Marsellus to pick up a gun and shoot Zed. Marsellus has now been reduced to the conventional damsel in distress who has been rescued by a hero. Likes Jules and Vince he too has been feminized: raped by a man and then rescued by a man.

Further humiliation follows for Marsellus since he cannot afford his rape to become known and has to let Butch go with the promise that he will not reveal this secret to anyone. It is not an act of magnanimity, but one of self-preservation which I feel for Marsellus, like the other characters, is the preservation of the image. The threat that Butch should not come to Los Angeles again is a desperate attempt to retrieve this authority. The fact that he needs a security system to keep his house safe also points to a lack of power. When Mia comes back from her date with Vince she disarms the security alarm. A mafia boss, like Marsellus poses to be, should not need a security alarm. Having a security alarm brings him down to the same level of vulnerability as an ordinary person.

Marsellus's voice indicates deeper issues regarding his character. He has a deep reverberating and at times sonorous voice. Even in moments of crises, he does

not let his voice get high, or shrill, or betray a lack of control. Even after being sodomized he can bring himself to keep his voice calm. For me, this calm voice throughout the film shows his focus and attention to one thing, his criminal empire. There is a lack of intimacy between Marsellus and his "new" wife (*Pulp Fiction*) and I take this as a proof of his commitment to his profession. Another thing that supports this reading is that whenever Marsellus figures in the film he is doing something related to the business: telling Butch to throw the fight, trying to avenge himself on Butch and later Zed. He is available even at his breakfast and sends in The Wolf to help Jules. This complete commitment to his profession is the same as that which Booker reads in Willy Wonka's commitment to his chocolate factory. Booker's reading of Wonka, as "a perfect postmodern character, all surface and no depth, his entire life consisting of his economic function as a designer and producer of sweets" is true of Marsellus as well except Marsellus is a designer and producer of crime (xiii).

Butch, in *Pulp Fiction,* is a boxer who is at the end of his career. Though good he is not good enough to make it to the big league and is now forced to take the devil's deal and throw a game to make money. Butch is also a savior in that he rescues Marsellus from being assaulted and killed. An argument may be made about Butch being above the ordinary because he achieves redemption. These are the angles I will take in my discussion of Butch.

Butch makes a deal with Marsellus to throw his boxing match. He is supposed to go down in the fifth round, and for this, he takes money from Marsellus but just before the match, Butch has a fit of pride, just as Marsellus had warned him. He dreams of his father and is probably reminded of the family legacy of heroism, of going to war, of being killed on the battlefield or being made prisoner of war and these make him yearn to assert himself. He realizes that by taking Marsellus's money to fix the match he is proving himself to be a nobody. Marsellus assesses Butch's status that though Butch had talent yet he could never make it big. Butch realizes that his time is gone, but he is a fighter, literally and figuratively, and he decides to go out fighting, as this will prove he is not just a pawn for Marsellus. Throwing caution to the wind, he goes into the fight with fury. It is a fight that will show the world he is not a nobody. So great is his furious desire to rebel against Marsellus, that Butch turns the match into "the bloodiest and hands down the most brutal fight this city has ever seen" and, to show the world he exists, he kills his opponent. Wilson's death is not

just an accident. It is the result of Butch's frenzied thinking which wants to see him come out of the shadows of anonymity and lost chances and assert himself in the world, be it through the death of a man at his hands. The commentators note that Butch knew what he was doing when he was punching Wilson hard enough to kill Wilson and this is why he leaves the ring so fast. The other commentator also notes, "Coolidge was out of there faster than I have ever seen a victorious boxer leave the ring" (*Pulp Fiction*). Also, the commentator notes that Wilson's death, brought about by Butch, "can't help but shake the world of boxing to its very foundations" (*Pulp Fiction*). This is what Butch wanted, his moment of glory. It also shows the extent to which a man can go to prove his existence. Butch makes an enemy of Marsellus in the process, but his self-esteem needed this boost.

Butch lands in Maynard and Zed's dungeon when he is running away from Marsellus. While the hillbillies are sodomizing Marsellus, Butch frees himself from the ropes and subdues the Gimp in the basement of the pawn shop. He is on his way out, to freedom, when he stops in his tracks and decides to go back to rescue Marsellus who, only recently, was shooting at him. Using a sword Butch turns the tables, on the hillbillies, allowing Marsellus to take charge of the situation. Till very recently Marsellus had sent a hit man after Butch and was himself shooting at him so Butch's decision to save him despite this seems ultra-heroic and makes Butch a strong character in charge of his will and out to restore honor (J. Smith, *Gangster*). His actions echo Captain Koons's words: "when two men are in a situation like me and your Dad were, for as long as we were, you take on certain responsibilities of the other" (*Pulp Fiction*). He and Marsellus face the hillbillies' unprovoked degrading violence and come together. Now he must do something for his fellow man. This also attaches grandeur to Butch's actions and makes for a reading that Butch who had degraded himself by throwing the match has now redeemed himself by saving his enemy.

All this is very good, but there is also the thought that Butch is driven by selfish motives. Butch wants a clean chit from Marsellus so that he can start a new life with Fabienne (and probably their child, an interpretation afforded by Fabienne's penchant for a potbelly) and this selfishness motivates him to enter the den again on a rescue mission. After saving him Butch asks Marsellus, "What now?" (*Pulp Fiction*). This allows for the reading that the seemingly heroic rescue of a brother in danger is only for gaining forgiveness and this is exactly what he gets. Thus Butch is not a

subject strong enough to face the odds to achieve redemption; he is only weaseling his way into Marsellus's forgiveness. So far things hang in balance regarding the true motive for Butch's rescue of Marsellus. I feel the conclusive evidence is Butch's choice of escape. He has destroyed Fabienne's Honda and now the only set of wheels available in the vicinity he can use is the soon-to-be-dead-Zed's chopper which ironically has the word Grace painted on the petrol tank. Butch sets off from the pawn shop on the chopper "having achieved his own state of moral grace" (Edward G.). Conrad views Butch's later ride, with Fabienne riding pillion, to Knoxville as "indicating that Butch found, at last, his redemption." (134). Jami Bernard also shares this interpretation, "When his character rides off into the sunset on a chopper named Grace, it ties in with the general themes of honor and redemption that run through the movie" (200). The chopper being named Grace as the vehicle for Butch's journey to safety and prosperity seems strong enough evidence to assert that Butch achieves redemption, showing the strength of his character. However, with Tarantino's characters things can be deceiving and a discussion of the true value of this redemption is placed under the heading of Consumer Culture.

Any reading that Butch is a man of action, taking control of his destiny and waging a war against Marsellus, is fraught with loopholes. When Marsellus presents a logical argument to Butch, that he has left his prime behind him and should now make some easy money to retire on, Butch does not contest the argument. He knows Marsellus is right and that he will age to turn into vinegar, not fine wine. He does not stand up to prove that he will conquer the ring again like Rocky. All he does is try to make easy money by deceiving Marsellus thus he is accepting his fate not challenging it. He is also not challenging Marsellus since he has a plan in place to run away to obscurity. This does not show any strength and I have argued that Butch goes to rescue Marsellus because he needs Marsellus's blessings. Butch's complexion should not fool anyone. Despite being white, and this underscores the point, Butch is Marsellus's "nigger",—Marsellus asks him, "You my nigger?" and Butch replies, "Certainly seems so"— his slave and now is a good opportunity to ask for his forgiveness (*Pulp Fiction*). Butch addresses Marsellus as "Mr. Wallace" and this can be contrasted with Jules, who calls Marsellus "Negro". Also, in the restaurant, Marsellus makes Butch repeat the promise and Butch repeats after Marsellus, "In the fifth, my ass goes down" while in the Bonnie situation, it is Marsellus who repeats Jules's line almost exactly to relieve him that he is sending The Wolf to extricate

them from the mess. These establish the relationship between Marsellus and Butch as being that of master and slave. Butch's plan to go to Knoxville to collect the fixing money and then leaving for Mexico does not guarantee freedom because Marsellus has global reach. Marsellus says to Paul, "If Butch goes to Indo China, I want a nigger hidin' in a bowl of rice, ready to pop a cap in his ass" (*Pulp Fiction*). This shows that Butch cannot be safe anywhere in the world. Butch needs his master to set him free and saving Marsellus is likely to be the leverage he needs. Edward Gallafent notes, "Freedom has to be granted by Marsellus; it is both a reward for his rescue and the price for Butch's silence" (28). Butch has to be content with what he gets. His "L A privileges" are revoked and he does not question it because he cannot. He rushes Fabienne into leaving with all the eagerness of a just-freed slave who wants to get away lest the master change his mind (*Pulp Fiction*).

Butch portrays the death of the subject that Jameson talks about as a characteristically postmodern trait. He may seem to be taking charge of his life, but all he is doing is flailing like a fish out of water. Downing the opponent and double-crossing Wallace are not wise decisions and only reflect his frustration with being a nonentity. Also, his machinations and frenzy do not put him on a pedestal. Only a chance occurrence allows him to earn Marsellus's reprieve. Even in running away, he is not free and remains Wallace's stooge because Wallace orders him to leave town immediately: "And when you're gone, stay gone. You've lost your LA privileges" (*Pulp Fiction*). Henceforth Butch will not be able to set foot in LA and this shows that he cannot rise above the challenges to carve a niche for himself, hence proving the death of the subject.

Pumpkin tries to establish his uniqueness with the idea of robbing the restaurant. Until that point, he has been robbing liquor stores, with Honey Bunny, which does not yield dividends proportionate to the risk they are taking. Banks are similarly high risk jobs that may even lead to being killed at the hands of a guard. Coffee shops, on the other hand, provide not just an easy alternative but also offer Pumpkin a place in the urban lore as the pioneer coffee-shop robber. The manner in which Pumpkin pitches his idea of sticking up restaurants shows he is happy with himself for having thought of catching the customers with their pants down in restaurants as "Nobody ever robs restaurants" (*Pulp Fiction*). He is pleased with himself because of the ingenuity of the idea and seeks Honey Bunny's approval:

"Pretty smart, huh?" (*Pulp Fiction*). Pumpkin is as much interested in proving himself to be unique and above the others as he is in minimizing the risk of their robberies.

The Wolf is presented as the crime-boss's go-to guy for solving problems. In fact, his dramatic introduction, "I'm Winston Wolf, I solve problems" shows that it is a status that he relishes (*Pulp Fiction*). The way Jules reacts to Marsellus's plan of sending The Wolf to their rescue attests to The Wolf's seemingly high status. This is "all" he wanted to hear for he trusts The Wolf to extract them from the mess they are in. But, this is just a smokescreen and behind it lies The Wolf who is just an ordinary person, as I will attempt to prove.

Trying to resolve the Bonnie situation at Jimmie's house The Wolf finds himself in a tricky situation. He orders Vince and Jules to clean the car but Vince stands up against him and demands that The Wolf qualify the order with a, please. The Wolf condescends with a please, albeit a taunting one. I find this illustrative of The Wolf's lack of uniqueness. Vince challenges his authority and he gives in. He could have refused to say please but he does not because he does not want to sully his reputation and his claim to solving problems. The Wolf also fears that if he does not resolve the situation Marsellus will be angry with him.

This reading of The Wolf as ordinary and replaceable and living in the realization of this ordinariness is supported by the fact that The Wolf, Marsellus's Knight as it were, rushes to fulfill Marsellus's order. When Marsellus calls, The Wolf is at an early morning party and he rushes to Jimmie's house covering the distance which would have taken another person fifteen minutes in less than ten minutes. This is agency but it is also eagerness to please and even more so, this is fear—of losing his reputation, angering Marsellus and being replaced. He is at a party and yet he leaves the party without a question because he knows Marsellus holds power over him. I also suspect in The Wolf a fear arising out of the realization that he is replaceable. If the Bonnie situation is typical of the problems he solves then anyone can solve the problems he is solving and this makes him entirely replaceable. When Jules quits Marsellus replaces him with Paul the barman and he partners Vince as they come to the changing room to report progress regarding Butch. The fear of being replaced is the real reason that The Wolf leaves the party in the middle and scurries over to Jimmie's without even taking breakfast. He realizes that beneath the wolf's clothing he is really a sheep and one that can be replaced with another woolly creature.

For all the aggrandizement of the problem that demands the personal attention of The Wolf, it is a trivial situation and the resolution simple. The problem is a bloodied car, a dead body and bloodied killers that need to be cleaned and taken away before Jimmie's wife Bonnie get home. Jules and Vince, who have just killed three men in cold blood, and another accidentally, now stand in fear of a woman. The Wolf joins them not just at the house but also in their fear of Bonnie. The dresses, the talk, and the blood are not enough to disguise the fact that The Wolf for all his swagger, efficiency and the legend built around him is afraid of Bonnie, Jimmie's wife. Being afraid of an ordinary woman does not speak highly of the problem solver and there is no choice but to take this to mean that he is less than ordinary and has no claim to agency, uniqueness or power. The solution that The Wolf claims to bring to the table is a solution that anyone in a similar situation will easily think of. The situation is hyped as a dangerous situation but requires a simple solution and therefore The Wolf can only be credited with telling them to clean the car and to drive to the junkyard — something which they could have thought of on their own too. If Marsellus had told Jules to clean the car and get it to Monster Joe's this could have been achieved without The Wolf ever coming to the house. Beneath the suave exterior and impressive façade, there is nothing and the much hyped The Wolf is not really a miracle worker. A contrast with The Cleaner in the movie of the same name will work to make The Wolf's role in the situation clear. The Cleaner cleans crime scenes and places where deaths have occurred and brings them back to the state they were in, before the murder or the death. In the film he cleans a crime scene, thinking he has been commissioned by the police only to find out that he was exploited and is now involved in removing the evidence of a crime. With this realization, The Cleaner sets about getting to the bottom of the affair and unearths the crime, the murderer and also brings an entire ring of corrupt policemen to light. The comparison between The Cleaner and The Wolf shows that The Wolf's role isn't really important in the Bonnie situation. Consequently, when I look past The Wolf's fast car, curt tongue and suavity I only encounter hollowness and lack of uniqueness that are no different from that of Vince. Hence The Wolf and Vince are on the same level, both doing Marsellus's dirty work for him and this shows that The Wolf lacks uniqueness.

Zed, the security guard in *Pulp Fiction*, is a sadistic hillbilly who in connivance with Maynard apparently rapes and tortures people for fun. My interpretation that they are hillbillies is based not just on the appearance. The name of

the shop which they operate from is Mason-Dixon, which links to the Mason-Dixon Line that was once the marking for the boundary between those states that allowed slavery and those that did not. He and Maynard, who is probably his cousin, have a basement that abounds in equipment they use to torture their captives. They also have a Gimp: a bound and gagged man. Maynard captures Butch and Marsellus when they stumble into his pawn shop. Soon Zed is there and chooses Marsellus to be the first victim of their torture. Zed is clothed in a uniform and it may be said that he is a security guard. His brutal actions can be traced to his lack of substance. My reading is that he has gone down this road to compensate for his lack of power over his life. There is little direct information in the movie about the motives of the rape. But once the rape is seen in the context of John Boorman's movie *Deliverance* the study's argument makes sense. In *Deliverance* hillbillies rape Bobby Trippe, a businessman from Atlanta, on vacation in the northern Georgia. Brutal as it is, it is their way of avenging the rape of their land by the city dwellers. A dam is being built that will flood a large area of their land. Bobby is an innocent victim of the tussle between two populations and the revenge, however unjustified, of the hillbillies. Seen in the context of this, Marsellus's rape makes sense. For Zed, he is not a crime boss. He is just a fly that has been caught in the spider's net. Raping Marsellus is Zed's way of giving meaning to his existence. He is showing himself that he can do something that he has power, but it is not enough to give Zed any uniqueness or to raise him above the ordinary.

Colonel Hans Landa is an Austrian army man whom Hitler has hired to kill Jews. He is a clever man who has earned the feared titled of The Jew Hunter. He is in charge of Hitler's security, but when a better opportunity presents itself, he switches sides and contributes to Hitler's death. Landa seems to have agency and stand out from the rest of the characters. I will delve into Landa's role as The Jew Hunter and his role in ending the war to determine if he is indeed a unique individual.

Col. Hans Landa in *Inglourious Basterds* attempts to be unique in being more efficient at killing Jews than the other Nazis who are doing the same thing. He boasts that he has "earned" the name "The Jew Hunter" and he is visibly proud to have earned it (*Inglourious Basterds*). Being a ruthless and efficient hunter of Jews makes him feel superior to the others around him and he lets Shosanna flee so that she can spread the word about how he killed her family and thus bring more notoriety for him and enable him to stand out. There is no humility in him. He tells LaPadite that Hitler

personally put him in charge because he is special and that he is different from the German soldiers because he can "think like a Jew where they can only think like a German, or more precisely, a German soldier" (*Inglourious Basterds*). He feels himself to be unique because he can think differently. He highlights in his verbal résumé that Hitler's giving him the task of hunting Jews is proof of his being better than the others.

Also evident here is Landa's contempt for the German soldiers; he, as an Austrian, despises them for their ordinary thinking and uses it as a reason to feel superior to them. He is so sure of his superiority that he even expresses his disdain of Hitler's revulsion towards Jews, thereby showing that he feels superior even to Hitler for whom he is working. But finding out that the Jews are hiding under the floor of LaPadite's house—which is Landa's only remarkable feat in the movie as far as being The Jew Hunter is concerned—is not a big thing just as thinking of a more prolonged torture is not that big a thing in Stephen's case. Consequently, his attempt to be different, unique and accomplished—self-satisfying as it may seem to him—does not really amount to much.Landa, The Jew Hunter, gives up his identity of being a Jew hunter when it suits him. Unearthing the spies and the plot to kill Hitler gives Landa the opportunity to seek newer pastures. He decides to switch sides and from hunting Jews turns into Hitler killer. But switching sides does not come with an admission of being wrong or being ordinary. He still prides himself for being extraordinary. While he plays down being The Jew Hunter by saying that he is a detective who found the people he was tasked to find he does not say that he was ordinary, he says he was a "damn good detective" (*Inglourious Basterds*). Landa may admit to not being what he seemed to be but he does not admit to being ordinary. Thus he reveals his desire to be unique, but because he has not performed any feat his claim to being The Jew Hunter is just hot air.

Landa's role in killing Hitler is in large part due to his desire to be special and to be remembered as a distinct individual. He specifically mentions that when the "military history of the night" is written he be credited with killing Hitler and bringing the war to an end as he had placed the dynamite in Hitler's cinema box (*Inglourious Basterds*). There are multiple players who contribute to killing Hitler and ending the war, but Landa feels that Hitler's death and the end of the war should be ascribed to him. He says to Aldo, "[T]he way I see it, since Hitler's death, or possible rescue, rests solely on my reaction … it's as if I'm causing his death, even more than yourselves".

Though he wants awards for all the people involved in the operation, he makes it clear that he is the one "winning the war singlehandedly for the allies" (*Inglourious Basterds*). Because his loyalties lie only with himself and not with the Nazi philosophy or the cause of the Allies, it can be safely said that his actions are largely the outcome of his desire to stand out but there is little evidence to serve as proof of his outstanding qualities.

Landa is not altogether without qualities or special attributes. While there is little in the film that shows him living up to his reputation as "The Jew Hunter" there is enough to show that he is a capable man. He says that he is "a damn good detective" (*Inglourious Basterds*). He proves this when he captures Aldo. He reveals that he has been interviewing every man that Aldo and his crew had marked with a Swastika and thus when he came face to face with Aldo he could see through Aldo's guise of being an Italian stuntman. He immediately catches on to Bridget's explanation of her injury as being from a freak accident. He gets her to try the shoe he had picked up from the bar and after confirming her complicity in the bar episode kills her.

Landa's cunning and intelligence is seen when he ends the war "singlehandedly" (*Inglourious Basterds*). While Aldo has his men in the theatre they can only carry on as per plan because Landa hides their identity. Landa also plants the dynamite near Hitler to kill him and outsmarts Aldo and the Allies by striking a deal that will see him wash away his past as "The Jew Hunter" and become an awarded war hero. This deal shows how intelligent Landa is and in this, he definitely is beyond the ordinary subjects.

The study will now discuss Aldo Raine, the leader of the American soldiers sent in to kill German soldiers, from the perspective of his alleged Native American roots and his trademark cruelty of scalping his victims and branding those he lets live with a Swastika to show that he is struggling to stand out but is not a unique individual.

Lt. Aldo Raine, the leader of the Basterds tries to make himself unique by collecting the scalps of what he calls Nazis. Aldo introduces himself as the descendant of Jim Bridger and argues that he has "a little injun" in him (*Inglourious Basterds*). By telling the soldiers that they will follow the plan of an "Apache resistance" he hints at his Native American roots (*Inglourious Basterds*). Collecting scalps is also his way of linking himself to Native American warriors. But these attempts at becoming

unique fail because despite claiming to be "the direct descendant of the mountain man Jim Bridger" he is a white American whose only link with the Native Americans was that he hustled them and contributed to their killing (*Inglourious Basterds*). Also, scalping is seen as Native American warriors' ritual, but it was employed more by the colonizing Europeans who would give money for killing Native Americans and the killers brought in the scalps as proof of the killing.

Aldo's decision to shoot the radio operator and carve a Swastika on Landa's forehead exhibit death of the subject in that they show his frustration, at not being able to become unique. In Antoine Fuqua's *Shooter*, the powers that be, use Bob Lee Swagger in an illegal mission and desert him in enemy territory. Swagger survives only to face exploitation at the hands of the same people who had exploited him, this time to frame him as a plotter to assassinate the US President. Swagger may be the best soldier, but as Col. Johnson, who is part of the nameless conglomerate that exploits him says he is "expendable" (Fuqua). Unlike Swagger who gets wiser after being bitten Aldo does not realize that he is expendable. He is more like Willy Loman who feels, "You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away—a man is not a piece of fruit!" (Miller). Both Willy and Aldo fail to realize how trivial and disposable they are in the larger scheme of things. They have got it into their heads that they are special and unique and cannot see that they are not unique in any way. Aldo is outsmarted by Landa, but he is also brought down by his failure to realize his ordinariness. I see Aldo's decision, to shoot the radio operator, as part of his desire to be special. He is there with a mission to kill Nazis and is making a reputation for himself as Aldo the Apache but the deal that his superiors make with Landa means that Landa and the radio operator will not be punished. While he cannot kill Landa, he kills the radio operator to assert himself. Also, he decides to mark Landa, which is a pointless move, but which shows his frustration with being ordinary.

Tarantino reduces Hitler to a relatively minor character in *Inglourious Basterds*. This seems strange as the film is about World War II and Hitler's murder is the main motif of the film but it is by design. His first utterance, "Nein! Nein! Nein! Nein! Nein! Nein!" infantilizes him as he is behaving like a child throwing a tantrum because he cannot control the marauding Basterds (*Inglourious Basterds*). Hitler has been a despised and hated figure because he is responsible for the genocide of the Jews in Europe. But Tarantino's Hitler seems divested of his agency to do evil deeds. Although he plans the punishment for the Basterds, he lacks the power to carry it out.

His lack of power is reflected in his absurd order: "The Jew degenerate known as The Bear Jew, henceforth, is never to be referred to as The Bear Jew again" (*Inglourious Basterds*). This is the extent of his power and shows him as a weak man. Hitler appears much later in the film at the screening of *A Nation's Pride*. Here he praises Dr. Goebbels's agency, "Extraordinary my dear, simply extraordinary. This is your finest film yet" (*Inglourious Basterds*). He is praising someone else's work which is the account of Private First Class Zoller's heroics. All this does not really associate much agency with Hitler. Also, this distances Hitler from the genocide of the Jews.

The depiction of Hitler, as weak, and without agency and therefore ordinary is Tarantino's way of depicting the death of the subject. He denies a nefarious villain, agency, to show that it is not possible for a single man to have agency. While the world may seek solace, in creating the image of Hitler as a murderous villain, Tarantino asserts that the subject is dead, without agency and power. He is also negating the concept that a single man can be held accountable for a genocide, something that history finds it convenient to do.

The murder, of one of the greatest villains in history, is certain to exhibit the agency of whoever commits it. This is why Tarantino makes it so difficult to credit any single character with the murder. The plot to kill the Nazi top tier is conceived and set in motion by Bridget but it is a coincidence that brings Hitler to the venue where she has planned to 'take out' the Nazis. Zoller's desire to impress Shosanna, with whom he is infatuated, leads to the change in the venue for the screening of *A Nation's Pride*, from Ritz to Shosanna's. Hitler makes the decision that it would be good if he attended the screening. Thus, it is only fate that takes him there. Bridget, who had facilitated the Basterds' access to the event is discovered by Landa and killed. Shosanna, who had planned to burn the cinema to ground, with Hitler inside, is killed by Zoller and because she is dead when Hitler is killed she cannot be credited with the agency of killing Hitler. Landa plants the dynamite that the Basterds smuggle into the cinema. Eventually, it is the Basterds Donowitz and Hirschberg—the fact that it is not clear which of the two actually killed Hitler supports my point—who shoot Hitler but had it not been for Landa and also those in the United States who had struck a deal with him they would not have been in a position to kill Hitler. All this is Tarantino's design. Because an assassin cannot be identified, agency cannot be associated with any character. Thus Tarantino's characters reflect the death of the subject through their lack of agency.

Reservoir Dogs is populated by a group of gangsters (referred to as Reservoir Dogs and Ramblers) each of whom is hollow and without any quality that would make the individual stand out.

The Ramblers have been modelled after the gangsters of the 1920s and 1930s. They look the part with their set hair, crisp suits, and shiny shoes. They walk the walk and talk the talk, but they do not have the essence of the gangster. The gangsters of the 1920s and 30s were Robin Hood reincarnations who were symbols of the common man trying to make it big against the old system that was biased against him. They were involved in crimes and indulged in enterprises that fell outside the ambit of legal activities. But a redeeming feature was their status as symbols of defiance against the puritanical, orthodox and ultra-conservative policies. Their role as bootleggers during the prohibition strengthened their position as defiant individuals and their success at evading the law enforcers created an aura of awe around them. But they were more than bootleggers, they were challenging the nativist order in America and were the illustrations of the consumer culture that was stepping in to sweep America. They took the capitalist principle of *laissez faire* and used it for their good even if it meant going contrary to the law of the land. "In their confrontations with increasingly desperate and discredited forms of institutional power, gangsters posed awkward questions about the line that separated legitimate from illegitimate Americans" (Munby 2). They also stood for the promise of inclusion and the reality of exclusion for European Immigrants" (Munby 3). They wanted to be part of the society but were turned into "urban ethnic rebels" when the society did not include them in its folds (Munby2). Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* is a story of one such Sicilian immigrant to the US who wants to be part of the mainstream but is condemned to the dark fringes of the legitimate society and the novel traces the Godfather's attempts to become part of the society. Coppola saw in the day's mafia the story of contemporary capitalist America: The Corleone family in *The Godfather* adopts "American capitalist business principles—principles that extend to a monopolistic logic by being willing not only to compete with the other gangsters but by being willing, when necessity demands, to kill their competition!" (Bondanella 243). The Godfather is a fictional figure, but real-life gangsters like Al Capone, Madden and Weiss too were powerful men who had the law enforcement agencies on their payroll and commanded immense authority in their area and it is due to this power that to this day they have their fans. They were average Joes who rose to immense power and wealth and thereby signified a fighting

spirit and a machismo that was later the focus of a number of cinematic and musical ventures like *The Public Enemy*, *The Cotton Club*, The Notorious B.I.G's *Ready to Die*.

While the Mafioso and the Mafia bosses of the 1920s and 30s had some qualities and even in their defiance stood for society's voice for liberty the gangsters in *Reservoir Dogs* have nothing real to show for themselves. Each one is a hair-dresser's dummy, spick and span from the outside but hollow from within. They have fashioned themselves after the gangsters of the 1920s, but they do not stand for anything. Gangsters like Al Capone stood for something, but these gangsters stand for nothing. They are petty thugs who don themselves in business suits to create an impression of suave cruelty, but they do not have any quality that lifts them from the gross baseness of street hoodlums whose inclination towards gruesome violence is an indication and an acceptance of their lack of specialty.

James H. Spence asserts that the characters in *Reservoir Dogs* are thorough professionals who invoke professionalism to influence and evaluate one another's behavior" (49). The gangsters in *Reservoir Dogs* "bullshit themselves thinking it's a regular job, like a carpenter or a craftsperson" (Brunette 33). This is why they wear black suits which make them feel like professionals in uniforms. Pilots, army personnel, and policemen among other professionals have uniforms and the gangsters try to rise above being ordinary by imagining themselves to be professionals. But the reality is that they are not even gangsters. They are like "Dustin Hoffman in *Straight Times*" small-time crooks who hope to be cool gangsters (Taylor E. 45). Hoffman's character Max Dembo earns a release from a penitentiary and gets back into small-time robberies and is eventually on the run from the law for his attempt at going big with a heist. The Ramblers in *Reservoir Dogs* are no different. They are mere pawns to be used and abused by the big players like Joe Cabot. Their talk of professionalism and their suits and tiny ties are silly attempts at aping the big time hoodlums. James H. Spence says that fictional characters give themselves the identity of "soldiers and businessmen" because this minimizes the moral distance between their work and other occupations" but this is true for real life as well: "We often find real criminals invoking ethical codes, referring to themselves as soldiers, and trying to excuse their behavior for the same reason" (50-51). Whether the underlying reasons are true or not it makes a valid argument that these characters are assuming the masks of

professionals although they are not professionals. What follows here is my perspective of how Tarantino's characters try to profess professionalism.

Mr. Pink in *Reservoir Dogs* smells a rat, amongst their midst, who informs the police of the robbery. He keeps telling Mr. White that they were set up, but Mr. White refuses to lend it credence. He even argues, "the plan became null and void once we found out we got a rat in the house" (*Reservoir Dogs*). Mr. Pink does not leave the premises alone because he just does not have the substance to go alone since he's always been a pawn who is used to being told what to do and has therefore choked in this moment of crisis. "A nobody among nobodies", he lacks the agency to act (P. Woods 36). He needs someone to go with him and when Mr. White refuses to leave the warehouse with him, he sticks around due to his inertness. He has the diamonds they stole from the jewelry store. This is another reason to run. The others need one another because that will be their chance at their share but Mr. Pink does not need to stick around. The others, if they survive, can find him once things cool down, but his lack of substance keeps him stuck as if he were fixed in cement. He leaves only when all the principal characters are dead or critically wounded and by then it is too late. The police put a dragnet around the place and Mr. Pink is killed as he tries to run away, a little too late: a victim of his inertness and lack of substance.

Mr. White appears to be a model of the 'honor among thieves' concept. His love for Mr. Orange seems to be the true love of a human being for a friend. When Mr. Orange gets injured, he drives him to the relative safety of the warehouse. He is extremely concerned about Mr. Orange's well-being and keeps giving him words of encouragement that he will pull through this ordeal. James H. Spence finds Mr. White to be "loyal [to Mr. Orange] to the end" (51). Paul A. Woods notes that Mr. White is "the thief with honour [sic], the honest hold-up man who has principles" and whose "sense of honour [sic] and duty towards his dying comrade is so great that it entails his own death" (32-33). This reading is backed strongly by Mr. White's dialogue and actions. For instance, he jumps to Mr. Orange's defense when Mr. Pink insinuates that he may be an informant trying to trap them and even goes to the extent of punching Mr. Pink in the face, kicking him and ultimately pulling a gun on him.

I contend that all this seems heroic, but it is not. Tarantino himself acknowledges that reading Mr. White as a man of honor and substance is incorrect. He attributes the misinterpretation to a careless reading of the film where viewers miss a key line. In a key moment he says to Mr. Pink, "Well, he knows a little bit

about me" (Reservoir *Dogs*). This is a small moment of selfishness, but it is crucial in the overall scheme of things. He could have kept this a secret, but he reveals it to make the case for eliminating Mr. Orange without seeming to betray his friend. By saying this the onus of responsibility is put squarely on Mr. Pink and Mr. White can satisfy himself that he did not betray his friend and that it was Mr. Pink who took the decision regarding Mr. Orange's fate. "White conveniently lets Mr. Pink be the bad guy now and then actually slugs him out of righteous indignation" (J. Smith, *Quentin* 106). Mr. White does defend Mr. Orange going to the extent of shooting Joe for Mr. Orange but this is the real test and Mr. White fails here. He "doesn't rise to the occasion" (J. Smith, *Quentin* 106). Failing this test means he has lost his chance at redemption and has proved himself to be ordinary without any claim to high honor.

Toothpick Vic Vega, who later becomes Mr. Blonde, attempts to rise above the ordinary by trying to be a member of the Cabot family. He works for Joe Cabot's team of robbers, but he is arrested in a raid on a warehouse where they store their stolen goods. Mr. Blonde is sentenced to four years imprisonment. He is offered chances to walk away scot free if he pins all this on Joe Cabot and testifies against him but he "shut[s] his mouth and [does] his time" (*Reservoir Dogs*). Eddie acknowledges his service to Cabot by saying, "He did four years for us … And we were very grateful" (*Reservoir Dogs*). Mr. Blonde's decision can be attributed to his desire to be different from the pack. By abiding by the code among thieves, he wishes to get respect and appreciation from Cabot. Four years in the jail is a long time but he feels this will earn him grace in front of Joe and seemingly it does merit him some appreciation. Joe drops a phone call in the middle of the conversation to greet Toothpick Vega at the office door. Joe tells him how he appreciates his loyalty and together with Eddie figures out a way to secure Vic Vega's true freedom from the watchful eye of the parole officer. Vic Vega does indeed stand out; through his loyalty, he shows that he is different from the other criminals and robbers Joe uses for his schemes and thus merits a higher status and better treatment but this is superficial.

The gestures of appreciation only give Vic Vega a false sense of being close to Joe and Eddie. He follows the code of honor among thieves, but he fails to realize that for Joe, in the words of Captain Barbosa, "the code is more what you'd call 'guidelines' than actual rules" (Verbinski). Joe indeed sends him packages in jail and offers to get the parole officer off his back, but he is doing all this for himself. Fresh out of the jail Vic Vega stands to serve him well as having been out of sight for four

years, so he will not turn heads on the street. Days out of jail Toothpick Vega becomes Mr. Blonde, thanks to Joe, who decides to use him for the robbery at the jewelry store. His loyalty has not made him any special, for Joe as Joe throws him into a risky situation where he can get killed or be sent to jail for a long time. Though Eddie calls him a "very good friend" and asserts that they were making good on their commitment to Vic, the fact is he and Joe are using Vic as a pawn (*Reservoir Dogs*). Vic Vega's loyalty has not exalted him or made him special in any way; he is still among the ranks, a mere tool to make Joe richer.

Mr. Blonde's (At this time he is Vic but for clarity, I call him Mr. Blonde.) repartee with Eddie and the tussle show that Mr. Blonde wants to be part of the inner circle. He wants to be thought of as family and not just "one of Cabot's soldiers" (*Reservoir Dogs*). The way Eddie takes off his watch, prior to the fight, reflects the fact that friendly scuffles are a ritual, for the two. Mr. Blonde's comment to Eddie, "That's what your father and I been talkin' about. … I walk through the door and Joe says "Vic, you're back, thank God. Finally, somebody who knows what the fuck he's doing. Vic, Vic, Vic, Eddie, my son, is a fuck up." And I say "Well, Joe, I could'a told you that." "I'm ruined! He's ruining me!" (*Reservoir Dogs*) is more than playful banter. It reveals Mr. Blonde's desire to be part of the family, to be thought of as part of the inner circle. Gallafent notes, "What we see displayed is Mr. Blonde's feeling that he ought to be a key member of the crime family headed by Joe rather than the humble dependent" (42). This desire is revealed in his interaction with policeman Nash, whom he tortures for insinuating that Mr. Blonde is not part of the family, but a mere worker.

Freddy Newendyke in an interesting character, because of the dual nature of his character. He is a policeman, but he goes undercover and becomes a gang member. The analysis of his character being offered here covers both the aspects and looks at the reasons to show what motivates him and governs him.

The reason Freddy Newendyke turns into Mr. Orange is that he wants to stand out among the police officers by going undercover. The metamorphosis that he has to undergo is not limited to wearing leather jackets and telling concocted funny tales of his adventures. He turns into an actual killer. In the first step, he is akin to an accomplice in the killing of police officers, the first time when he allows Mr. Blonde to continue on his killing spree and the second time when he watches Mr. White kill two police officers in their squad car. Moments later he kills a woman. As Mr. White

flags down a car that he wants to snatch as his getaway vehicle the driver fires at Mr. Orange who responds by shooting the woman in the face. The transformation is complete and brutal for it shows the extent to which Mr. Orange wants to be different from the others. He has taken his role as an undercover officer to the extreme and this is why he is behaving like a robber without morals or scruples. The only thing that justifies his metamorphosis from one of those who serve and protect to one who kills is an outcome of his desire to stand out among the crowd.

Mr. Orange is a deep character whose mystery is made darker by the duality of the roles he has in the film. He is a police officer and a gang member. Mr. Orange slips in and out of these two and consequently his loyalties also change. His loyalties are with the police force, the gang members he has become one of and also with his cover—his assumed persona. He shows some strength of character by trying to be loyal but his attempts at being loyal are defeated by the multiplicity of the things he wants to be loyal to. He wants to be loyal to the police force which is why he undertakes the dangerous assignment of going undercover. This loyalty is countered by his loyalty to his cover which is why he just plays possum when Mr. Blonde is inflicting inhuman torture on the tied policeman. His loyalty to the police force, to his brethren in uniform dictates that he help Jeffery but it is only in the absence of Mr. White and Mr. Pink that he can shoot Mr. Blonde and not be disloyal to his cover. Also, he violates his loyalty to the police force when he does not intervene as Mr. White spray the police car with bullets from two hand guns. When the female driver from whom Mr. White wants to snatch the car, fires at him Mr. Orange fires back. His loyalty to the mission of ‘protect and serve’ is nowhere to be seen as the loyalty to his cover dominates his thinking processes. At the same time, his loyalty to the gang in a way is non-existent as all along he is working to get the gang members arrested along with their boss, Joe. Accused of betrayal by Mr. Pink and later Joe himself he holds his ground, swearing on his mother's grave, and sees the gang members shoot one another. But Mr. White's standing up for him awes him into revealing who he really is. This is an act of loyalty to Mr. White, to a friend and a father figure who has stood by him and who turned against his friends for his sake. But this loyalty is at the cost of the other two loyalties. He betrays his cover and also the police by revealing his true identity. I find it difficult to assert that Mr. Orange is loyal to Mr. White. After getting Mr. White killed he is practically saying that Mr. White was a fool to believe him. The action comes too late. Mr. White is already damned and no matter how hard

he may try Mr. Orange cannot be loyal to him. If he had admitted, to being a cop, to Joe he could have proven his loyalty to his friend Mr. White but he does not tell Joe and lets Mr. White take a bullet trying to defend him. In a way he gets Mr. White killed so this cannot be termed loyalty as Paul A. Woods opines that "[A]ll it adds up to is another betrayal" (33). So Mr. Orange's loyalty does not really exist and the absence of loyalty makes him ordinary.

Marvin Nash, the hostage policeman, is the subject of Mr. Blonde's violence. His major role seems to be to inform about Mr. Blonde's dark side but for some (Russell) he exemplifies loyalty and thereby lays his claim to being different. He knows that Mr. Orange is actually Freddy Newendyke but he does not reveal this despite being subjected to intense torture. For his loyalty, Russell classifies him as one of the "good guys" (5). It is a compelling argument that he faces intense and inhuman torture, but does not divulge the true identity of Mr. Orange. Mr. Blonde's answer to his rationale for not torturing him is crucial in understanding where Nash's celebrated, loyalty is coming from. Mr. Blonde says, "I don't really care about what you know or don't know. I'm gonna torture you for a while regardless. Not to get information, but because torturing a cop amuses me" (*Reservoir Dogs*). In this situation, Nash does not really have a choice. Mr. Blonde puts sticking tape on his mouth so he cannot reveal the information even if he wants to. Also, he knows Mr. Blonde will not let him go since he has seen them. The only path to safety before Nash is sticking it out till the police raid the warehouse. It is not loyalty that makes him silent; it is the instinct of self-preservation that makes him do so.

An African proverb states When elephants fight, it is the grass that suffers and this is true of Nash's predicament. He is caught in a fight that is beyond him. The police is only interested in nabbing Joe Cabot and they will sacrifice anyone for this. Mr. Orange chooses to go undercover but Nash, a rookie of just eight months, is kidnapped and made part of the situation. The police are highly likely to know about Mr. Orange having been shot and also about Nash's kidnapping but they do not act to save them. Mr. Orange says that the police will raid only when Joe Cabot shows up. This means Nash does not mean anything in the scheme of things and is a mere pawn that can be sacrificed without a second thought.

Generally speaking, names point to the uniqueness of the individual as the names makes the person distinct from the crowd and this is why people tend to be too particular about their names, the way the names are spelt and pronounced.

"I got a name" (Jim Croce)

Names point to the uniqueness of individuals for it is with names that a person is set apart from another person. Tarantino's characters lack individuality and this is illustrated through their names. Butch has a poignant answer to Esmeralda Villa Lobos's question as to what his name is captures the lack of worth of names and this lack of worth of names signifies the lack of worth and individuality of the bearers of the names. Butch says, "This is America, honey; our names don't mean shit" (*Pulp Fiction*). There is no organizing principle in the world hence in the void created by the absence of anything overarching or lasting there is no value to people. Also, the lack of "a larger meaning" to their lives results in the characters becoming ensnared in "a hierarchy of power", which sees them being used as pawns (Conrad 128). An instance of this are Jules and Vince on a mission to retrieve Marsellus's briefcase. Whether they know what is in the briefcase or not is beside the point. The point is that the briefcase has worth because Marsellus "says so" (Conrad 128). Their opinion regarding the worth of the briefcase or the effort that is justified by the worth of the contents does not matter. Their opinion, now that Marsellus has declared the briefcase to be important by ordering its retrieval, is not important. They are not important because like their names, they "don't mean shit" (*Pulp Fiction*). If they do not go to get the briefcase, Marsellus will send someone else; if they are killed trying to get the briefcase Marsellus will send someone else. This points to the fact that individual identities do not exist because individuals have nothing to make them rise above the ordinary and be meaningful.

The reading, that names do not mean anything, is supported by the fact that the characters use a number of names for other characters in *Pulp Fiction*. The robbers in the restaurant call each other Honey Bunny and Pumpkin even when there is no danger of anyone overhearing them. Later it comes to light that Honey Bunny's real name is Yolanda. Also important is the fact that Jules takes to calling Pumpkin, Ringo. When Pumpkin wants to take the briefcase Jules thwarts his attempt by pointing a revolver at Pumpkin. He calls Pumpkin Ringo for no apparent reason and Pumpkin does not object to it or proffer him his real name. Pumpkin, like Butch, knows that names do not mean anything so Jules can call him whatever he wants to. The Wolf calls Vince, Lash La Rue despite knowing his actual name. Lash La Rue was a Western movie character who used his whip to capture bad guys, but Lash La

Rue always remained a B-grade character. Perhaps The Wolf is pointing out to Vince that he is not capable of moving up the ladder to being a capable and tough guy.

Vince in his attempts to provoke Butch into a fight calls him "palooka", and a bit later "punchy" (*Pulp Fiction*). When Vince uses these names he is giving them meaning as he is deliberately using racist words and slurs that connote Butch's lack of sportsman spirit and sportsman skills. Butch is incensed and only Marsellus's intervention stops him from going at Vince. Here the names carry meaning--negative meaning in the sense that these are slurs--but they also show that a character's name is not the only label the character has. He can be called other things too and this shows the lack of individuality. The person is Butch, but for others, he is also Punchy, and for some Palooka.

In *Inglourious Basterds* Hans Landa is proud of his nickname--at least when it suits him at the start—and clearly relishes being referred to as The Jew Hunter. When he is talking about it a smile plays on his lips betraying the sense of being special that the name gives him. His pride becomes evident when he says to LaPadite, "I…love my unofficial title" (*Inglourious Basterds*). Landa likes this name for it reflects his power, cruelty and the skills he has to offer and therefore he derives a sense of superiority from the name. The name makes him stand out from the others and also among the Nazis as it reveals that he is better at killing Jews than the other Nazis. But the name loses any significance when the horrible The Jew Hunter is seen for his beliefs. Landa is not a Nazi and does not believe in Hitler's ideology of considering the Jews inferior and he shares this with LaPadite. Later Landa dismisses the name with a shrug and dissociates himself from it, terming it a concoction of his "enemies" and "just a name that stuck" (*Inglourious Basterds*). He tells the Basterds that he never liked the name and thus the name and all it allegedly stood for dissolve into nothingness.

Aldo Raine presents himself as part Native American and prides himself on the nickname The Apache that he has acquired for his distinct way of collecting the scalps of his victims. But the name does not mean anything in that collecting scalps was more of a method of the colonial oppression of the Native Americans than a Native American warrior's ritual.

The Bear Jew is Sergeant Donny Donowitz who gets his nickname for bashing his victims to death with a baseball bat. The nickname spreads through the German soldiers and some of them start believing that he is a golem—a magical creature. The

nickname comes to strike fear in German soldiers, which leads Hitler to ban the use of the name. This is evidence that Donny Donowitz has established a mark for himself.

Characters also belong to categories and it belongs to a particular category that determines that character's status in the society. The point here is that categories exist and any individual belonging to the category will be treated in a particular way that has been deemed appropriate for that category. The individual does not matter here, the category does. Aldo Raine's disappointment and frustration at the end of the film is because he realizes he belongs to the category fodder for the guns. His mission of getting back at the Nazis lies in tatters as the authorities strike a deal with no other than The Jew Hunter. He, his crew or what they have worked for does not matter because his category does not matter. Marvin Nash and Freddy also belong to the category dispensable and thus do no matter.

When I turn my attention to the minor characters in *Pulp Fiction* they too seem to depict the death of the postmodern subject in that they are not unique and, therefore, do not matter in the world. The boys in Brett's apartment tried to be big shot players in the mafia world, but couldn't keep up with the demands of the world of crime and are cut down like worthless shrubs. Jules and Vince kill them with impunity and also without any feeling that they are ending human lives. The fact that they casually discuss the interpretations of their escape from death, that they stroll out as if it were a walk in the park, and that they are not followed by the police show that such an important thing as human life does not matter. The way Zed chooses Marsellus to be his first victim using a children's rhyme shows that the powerful are not that different from the powerless like Marvin.

When Vince kills Marvin, it illustrates the death of the subject as Vince just shrugs this off, "Oh man, I shot Marvin in the face!" and for him, the excuse "It was an accident" is enough to put Marvin's homicide behind him (*Pulp Fiction*). Jules too is not concerned about the loss of a life. He is only concerned about getting the car off the road lest they get into trouble. The lack of value of life shows the waning of affect. Jules's comment that Marvin is "nobody who will be missed" seen in tandem with how easily Marvin's dead body is unceremoniously disposed of illustrate the death of the subject in the postmodern world (*Pulp Fiction*).

4.2 Schizophrenia

Jameson, in *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,* describes schizophrenia as comprising a failure to develop mechanisms to deal with the world. Language in this context signifies the codes of the world and the schizophrenic's failure to learn language is a failure to learn the ways of the world. The study will now discuss the schizophrenia of Tarantino's characters in terms of their fragmentation and language to determine if they have failed to learn the codes of living in the world.

4.2.1 Fragmentation

> It was I who willed, I who nilled, I, I myself. I neither willed
> entirely, nor nilled entirely. Therefore was I at strife with myself,
> and rent asunder by myself. (St. Augustine)

Jameson asserts that the change from modernism to postmodernism is in part captured in the difference between the representation in *The Scream* and the silkscreens of Marilyn Monroe by Warhol (*Postmodernism* 14). The difference is alienation versus fragmentation. Jameson asserts that fragmentation is a feature of the postmodern subject. The subject is no longer a united whole, not a monad but has been rent into pieces. Jameson asserts that the loss of the self as a monad leads to fragmentation where the subject is just a composite of varied selves and appearances, more like a cut diamond where there are multiple surfaces each shinning bright, but never giving a sense of the whole like Marilyn Monroe was a beauty, an acclaimed actress, an image, a star celebrity, a jilted mistress, and a lonely person in addition to many more facets.

This part of the study will look at Tarantino's characters to comment on their fragmentation and to show how the characters deal with the loss of self and being rendered into varied selves.

In Reservoir Dogs Mr. Pink's fragmentation, I illustrated in him being torn between his professionalism and his desire to be part of the Ramblers. Mr. Pink wants to be a professional and act according to the best professional acumen—be emotionally aloof from the gang members and act like a gangster—but he is pulled by the opposite feelings of putting his professionalism aside and stick around Mr. White as her nurses Mr. Orange. The profession in him sees the heist as a trap and wants to

run, but his desire to be part of the group forces him to remain with Mr. White. This fragmentation where he cannot make up his mind leads to his death.

However, a similar fragmentation does not exist when it comes to demarcating people as real people and policemen. The following exchange makes part of their conversation about what transpired at their bungled heist.

MR. PINK. Did you kill anybody?

MR. WHITE. A few cops.

MR. PINK. No real people?

MR. WHITE. Uh-uh, just cops.

The exchange reveals that the Ramblers draw a boundary between ordinary people and policemen. The policemen are not worth fretting over because of their profession. It would be childish to take it literally. The point here is that people divide others in categories of us and them and them or anyone who falls among them is automatically turned into a non-human. The profession becomes the man. The gangsters do not show any strife about whether or not policemen can be innocent or if they should avoid killing policemen.

Mr. White shows that he has dealt with the issue of committing violence and has resolved it to arrive at the notion of necessary violence as a result of which there is little internal strife regarding his victims. His condemnation of Mr. Blonde for recklessly shooting innocent bystanders does not show a strife whereby he is caught up between whether to use violence or not. Mr. White is clear about violence: violence can be used in situations that demand violence. Mr. White feels a life of crime does not necessarily involve violence and one can be a criminal with the least amount of bloodshed but Mr. Blonde revels in bloodbaths and this is why Mr. White draws a boundary between criminal—himself—and the mad man—Mr. Blonde. There is a boundary between acting like a "fucking professional" and a "psychopath" (*Reservoir Dogs*). Mr. White and Mr. Pink are professionals who will get the job done with the least amount of violence but Mr. Blonde proves himself to be a "sick fucking maniac" (*Reservoir Dogs*). Mr. White accepts the necessity of violence in certain situations, for instance, the choice between killing someone and jail time. "A choice between doing ten years, and taking out some stupid motherfucking ain't no choice at all. But I ain't no mad man either" (*Reservoir Dogs*). Mr. Blonde has shown himself to be "unstable" because he took a perverted pleasure in killing which is unprofessional conduct. A professional is stable and relaxed who knows how to control his anger and

work within bounds and not lose his head: "What you don't do is shoot up the place and kill everybody" (*Reservoir Dogs*).

Mr. White is not averse to violence. It is only that he is against excessive violence. When they are staking out the jewelry store he tells Mr. Orange, his protégé, that if the manager gives him any trouble "cut off one of his fingers" (*Reservoir Dogs*). Violence as a means of getting something is fine with Mr. White it is only that the does not want to use violence when it is not required.

The other characters in *Reservoir Dogs* also show that they have resolved the issue of using violence and follow the principle of necessary violence. Mr. Pink, for instance, stops at throwing a female driver out of the car as he snatches her car and does not kill her because that will be unnecessary violence. Nice Guy Eddie shows similar respect for the boundary between necessary and excessive violence when he stops the Dogs from beating the policeman Mr. Blonde has kidnapped: "You beat on this prick long enough. He'll tell ya he started the Chicago fire. That don't necessarily make it so" (*Reservoir Dogs*). He also realizes that excessive violence is not the solution to every problem.

Tarantino's characters in *Pulp Fiction* show a similar resolution about the conflict of using violence. Ringo and Yolanda hatch the plan to rob. The brains behind the plan is Ringo, who feels that robbing stores or bank puts them in greater danger than they would like to be in. Robbing a restaurant is good, among other reasons, for the scale of violence it involves. In a robbery, the waitresses and the busboys are not likely to offer resistance because they are being paid a meagre amount and they do not have any sense of obligation towards the establishment to risk their lives and the managers will allow the robbery to go ahead because the places are insured. This is a brilliant idea because it involves only minimal risk. A bank job is an unnecessary risk because the robbery may be easy, getting away with it is not and the usual outcome is that the robbers are raided and killed or arrested and imprisoned for twenty years.

The Bonnie Situation also has the same element. Jules and Vince need to lie low till they can get rid of the dead body in their car and Jimmie's house offers temporary shelter from the police. But Jimmie's wife is set to get home after her night shift at the hospital requiring the gangsters to clear out before she gets back. Vince does not like Jules being servile towards Jimmie but Jules is being guided by his sense of necessary violence. He can assert his power over Jimmie. He can even threaten

Jimmie with Marsellus's connection, but he wants to be "fuckin' delicate" (*Pulp Fiction*) because he does not want things to reach that pitch where he has to use force to take control of the house against Jimmie's wishes. He tells Vince that he will not leave Jimmie's house till the dead body is taken care of but he wants things to remain amicable. Like Mr. Pink and Mr. White, Jules wants to use force only when necessary. He is not afraid of using force, he is clear in his intentions of not leaving the house before it is safe for him to do so, but he wants to avoid confrontation that is unnecessary.

Jules, in *Pulp Fiction,* shows inner strife when he escapes certain death at Brett's apartment. He starts rethinking his life and soon is able to re-interpret the speech he delivered to his victims before disposing them off. He decides to give up killing, but he does not know what he will do next. His plan is to roam the earth to find his real vocation. This shows that Jules has internal strife that at the moment he is unable to resolve.

Mr. Pink is particular about observing the boundary between professional and non-professional. He disapproves of any behavior that is may prove to be an impediment in their functioning. He is on a job and that it is an unethical endeavor does not mean he or his crew members can afford to be lax about their operating procedure. When Mr. White and Mr. Blonde pick up a quarrel about Mr. Blonde's reckless shooting at the store Mr. Pink wants to restore order because their conduct is unprofessional. He yells, "You guys act like a bunch of fuckin niggers. You ever work a job with a bunch of niggers? They're just like you two, always fightin, always sayin they're gonna kill one another" (*Reservoir Dogs*). He wants them to work together harmoniously keeping the success of the job paramount. Discouraged by their continued disregard of his advice he disparages them by saying that they are more experienced than him—ten years—and he's "the only one acting like a professional" (*Reservoir Dogs*). Later, when Joe wants to kill Mr. Orange and triggers a Mexican standoff involving himself, Mr. White, Mr. Orange, and Eddie, Mr. Pink wants to have nothing to do with it. Once again he finds this squabbling as behavior inappropriate in the tricky situation they are in and in a desperate bid to calm things down, he reminds the four of them, "We're supposed to be fucking professionals" (*Reservoir Dogs*). There is a clear boundary between professionals and those who let things like emotions and ego get in the way. Mr. Pink remains a professional throughout and does not get involved in the standoff. Mr. Pink runs out of the

warehouse at the end of the standoff and "possibly" gets away (Holt 36). It is only one of the interpretations, but if the interpretation that Mr. Pink gets away is made, then it is down to his professionalism that he is able to do so. Holt thinks that despite the lack of moral vindication, his escape offers, his "levelheaded 'professionalism' almost justifies it [his escape]" (Holt 36).

No character represents fragmentation, as does Mr. Orange. As Mr. Orange silently witnesses Mr. White massacre the policemen in the squad car Mr. Brown dying of a bullet wound says, "You're Mr. Orange. You're Mr. Orange aren't you?" (*Reservoir Dogs*). The line sums up the conflicted existence of Mr. Orange. Throughout his existence, in the film, he struggles with who he is: Freddy Newendyke or Mr. Orange. He witnesses the shooting of a policeman, albeit with shock and remorse written on his face, but he does nothing to prevent it. He had put on the mask of Mr. Orange to help the police put a criminal behind bars, but now he has become Mr. Orange in a number of ways and, therefore, he does nothing to save the policemen in the car. It takes him only a short while for the tussle between himself as Mr. Orange and Freddy to start again when he kills a woman who is only defending herself. Mr. Orange shoots her in the face and as he lies on the road there is a look of horror on his face, which illustrates his remorse and showcases that Freddy the policeman is not dead. From remorse, he quickly jumps to outrage: "I don’t believe it. She killed me" (*Reservoir Dogs*). Freddy Newendyke feels remorse at having had to shoot the woman but the gangster Mr. Orange feels outraged that a woman killed him. It is too much for his ego to accept.

The scrimmage continues in the warehouse as Mr. Orange witnesses the policeman being tortured. He does not want to blow his cover and just lets Mr. Blonde torture the policeman. Freddy comes out to dominate Mr. Orange literally with a bang as he empties his chamber at Mr. Blonde who was about to set the policeman on fire. This torture was too much for the policeman Freddy to tolerate and Freddy's emergence shows that there is a strong power play going on between Freddy and Mr. Orange. The erasure of the boundary between the two selves is an ongoing affair with the two selves of the personality dominating each other in turns. Ultimately, it is well-nigh impossible to class him as only Mr. Orange or only as Freddy.

Paul A. Woods notes, "Larry's massacre of the squad car cops leaves him stunned, resigned to his own impotence; moments later, the killing of the innocent woman driver, as an instinctive response to his own wounding, means that he's just as

guilty as any of them." Paul A. Woods's comment can be seen in the light of erasure of boundary. The boundary between a cop and a gang member has been erased. He has been so engrossed in playing Mr. Orange that he can no longer differentiate who he is. He is a cop, but he remains inert as Mr. White slays the cops. He shoots the female driver dead without hesitation, angered by her audacity to shoot at him. Both these instances show that he has slipped into the character to such an extent that he fails to realize that he has crossed a boundary.

It may seem that Mr. Orange crosses the boundary to be a policeman when he shoots Mr. Blonde as he is about to burn Nash alive. I find that reading Mr. Orange is a savior makes for a superficial reading. It certainly makes for a heartwarming tale that Mr. Orange overcomes the pangs of death to save Nash, but it is a reading imposed by the desire to feel good. If Mr. Orange had been a savior, he would have shot Mr. Blonde when he was about to sever Nash's ear. Mr. Orange has crossed over to the dark side and is enjoying the torture. Even he is sexually aroused by the spectacle of violence and the gun going off is orgasmic. A comparison with *Death Proof* will serve to illustrate the point. In *Death Proof* Stuntman Mike equates his vehicle with his body and gets off on hitting the girls' car with his. A little later the girls too become sadists like him and they too equate the pleasure with sex. Kim trying to ram into Mike's car uses the imagery of anal rape as she keeps on saying, "I'm 'bout to bust a nut up in this bitch" and then she says, "I can't let you go without tapping that ass" (*Death Proof*). A similar motif of symphorophilia is there in *Crash* by J. G. Ballard where the lead character gets a sexual high from staging road accidents. Mr. Orange views the torture and gets sexual excitement from it and his firing the gun is akin to uncontrolled ejaculation—Gallafent labels it "visceral moment of discharge" (44). He fires off his entire magazine into Mr. Blonde which shows that he has no control over it and that killing Mr. Blonde is a "physical, automatic response" (Gallafent 44). Therefore, Mr. Orange's killing of Mr. Blonde shows that the fragmentation between Freddy and Mr. Orange has become strong and may eventually become so strong that crossing the boundary back to the good side may not be possible.

It is interesting to delve deep into Mr. Orange's last moments. Now that Joe Cabot is there he knows that the entire plot is about to be wrapped up and his goal is near. The police were waiting for Joe to turn up to make their move. Things go awry in the warehouse as soon as Joe arrives. The Mexican stand-off ensues and Mr.

Orange finds himself on the verge of being shot for being a rat. Things play out well for Mr. Orange as all the bad guys shoot one another except Mr. Pink who flees the warehouse. Now Mr. Orange can cross the line one last time and be Freddy Newendyke. Paradoxically, when he crosses the line and admits to his identity of being a policeman he is, in fact, crossing over to the dark side. Admitting his identity to Mr. White is an act of loyalty, the victory of camaraderie. It is a debt that he feels he needs to pay to Mr. White for sticking out for him. It shows that the bond that he had developed with Mr. White is stronger than the relationship he should have had with Mr. White as a policeman. As a policeman, he should have been happy that his mission was successful and that now he can return to who he really he. But when he returns to being who he really is, it turns out that the reality is that his identity of a gang member is stronger than his identity as a cop. This can further be substantiated by bringing in Mr. Orange being a fan of the comic book character The Thing. The Thing is actually Benjamin Jacob a pilot who is exposed to radiation in a space mission and has his body get a craggy rocky plate covering and gets immense power. He becomes part of Fantastic Four, a group of four with super powers, and becomes The Thing. Mr. Orange's life parallels The Thing's life. The Thing assumed another form but hopes to get back to his former self one day, but when that day comes he is hesitant because he is in love with Alicia Masters and actually resists Reed Richard's attempts to transform him back into the human form. Mr. Orange goes undercover to capture Joe Cabot, but by the time when he has to become one of the uniforms again he has fallen so much in love with his adopted self that he does not want to get back. He informs Mr. White of his true identity. This may be a self-destructive act, but it shows that he does not want to give up on the mask he had put on.

Joe attempts to fragment the real man from the robber by assigning his gang of robbers pseudonyms. He forces the Ramblers to make a pact not to reveal their true identities. There is to be a fragmentation between the man and the professional. This is why he comes up with names such as Mr. White, Mr. Pink, Mr. Orange, Mr. Brown, Mr. Blue, and Mr. Blonde. Mr. White feels he has bonded with Mr. Orange and to show his trust in him tells Mr. Orange his real name. This revelation of his identity—his name and where he is from—is a breakdown of the boundaries and shows the internal strife of Mr. White of being anonymous and a professional and being a human being with a desire to be friends with others. Mr. Pink, on the other hand, has no such strife as he says, "Don't tell me your name. I don't want to know! I

sure as hell ain't gonna tell you mine" (*Reservoir Dogs*). This shows that Mr. Pink has no conflict of having to remain anonymous yet wanting to connect at a human level. Mr. White is overwhelmed by his love for Mr. Orange and he tells Mr. Orange his real name, Larry. Thereby he makes himself vulnerable. When Mr. Orange is bleeding to death Mr. White cannot take him to the hospital because Mr. Orange can now lead the police to him.

It can be said that Mr. White's eventual death may be due to the domino effect of his revealing his name to Mr. Orange. Revealing his name furthers the bond that has emerged between the two. It is this personal bond that makes Mr. White blind to the truth. He cannot see Mr. Orange for the undercover agent, he really is. The fact that the Ramblers had drawn this boundary shows that they were aware of the pitfalls of intimacy and wanted to observe a strict boundary to lessen the threat intimacy resulting from any erosion of the boundary may pose.

For Tarantino's Mr. Blonde there is little conflict regarding violence. He has no qualms about getting violent at the least pretext and in fact, considers his violence art. The "cheery sangfroid" Mr. Blonde carries out the policeman's torture with is "ultraviolence [that] transmutes killing into artistry, the corpse a canvas" (Picart 141). For Mr. Blonde the boundary between violence and art has blurred. When I watch him disfiguring the bound policeman I can sense that at the back of his mind he is thinking of himself as an artist creating a masterpiece. That he puts on music strengthens the point that he thinks of himself as an artist taking inspiration from music. He dances to the tune of the music and makes the first slash with his knife in one sweeping motion that is too much like an artist's exuberant brush-stroke on the canvas to be seen as just a swipe. It is definitely a parallel to the artist making an animated brush-stroke. He then proceeds to cut off the ear and his jibe at the now deformed policeman, "Hey was that as good for you as it was for me" is an indication towards the orgasmic cathartic effect of the creative process. Having spent his artistic energy he is now refreshingly spent (*Reservoir Dogs*). The policeman is not a sufferer for Mr. Blonde nor is he himself a vile sadist to himself. He is an artist seeking newer avenues of expression. Van Gogh stands at a fair distance from postmodernism so it will seem ironic if I assert that Mr. Blond is the postmodern van Gogh.

Aldo Raine comes close to Mr. Blonde in that he too indulges in violence and considers carving Swastikas on the foreheads of his victims art, a proof of which is that he comments on the Swastika that he carves on Landa’s head is his masterpiece.

Tarantino's people show the fragmentation of the individual in terms of the racial identity that they espouse to have. While they are mainly white and they seem racist or at least prejudiced against the African Americans, they exhibit tendencies to behave like African Americans. Leslie Fiedler discusses in his essay *The New Mutants* that the mutants; "the non-participants in the past", "beatniks or hipsters, layabouts, and drop-outs" "announce the end of man" as modernism conceived man to be (509). These mutants, as he calls them, try to "become new men, these children of the future seem to feel, they must not only become more Black than White but more female than male" (Fiedler 516). This tendency to try to be Black is a postmodern trait and Tarantino's people exhibit this trait primarily in the way they talk. Whether it is Vince or Eddie, Mr. Blonde or Mr. Brown their language is chock full of racist expletives like nigger and negro and words like bitch that are thought to be trademark of the African American community. Spike Lee's comment on Tarantino will shed some light on the link between this and identity. Spike Lee's angered by Tarantino's fondness for "the n-word" remarked, "Quentin is infatuated with the word. What does he want? To be made an honorary black man?" (Walker).

Cynthia Baron, writing about the life and works of prominent African American actor Denzel Washington remarks that increasingly more white actors are imitating African Americans. Krin Gabbard feels that "it is more difficult to find white performers who do not imitate black people than it is to find those who do" (19). Cynthia Baron substantiates Gabbard's point by quoting Todd Boyd that John Travolta and Bruce Willis fall in "a long line of prominent White male actors who [have] adopted a distinct cultural style…associated with Black masculinity" (11). She goes on to cite the characteristics these white actors borrow as "a detached, removed, nonchalant sense of being. An aloofness that suggests one is above it all (Baron 11). A pride, an arrogance even, that is at once laid back, unconcerned, perceived to be highly sexual and potentially violent" (Baron 11).

Vince certainly falls in this category and the other characters too try to adopt this to various degrees. In Vince, it shows most clearly. He is almost spaced out all the time and the way he talks and is cool about things shows his attempts to become black and this reflects the fragmentation of character.

4.2.2 Temporally Stuck in the Present

Jameson's subjects are schizophrenics in that they have lost awareness of time in its categories of past, present, and future and are confined to the eternal present. As

a consequence, these subjects have lost all emotions. They have no conception of the past, so there is no regret, no weight of the past wearing them down and they have no hopes, fears or anxieties of the future. Stuck in the present everything becomes bland, losing its charm. In this situation intensities replace emotions. The postmodern man according to Jameson has no project because a project entails envisioning the future, which like schizophrenics they cannot do. The postmodern schizophrenic senses intensity, described by Featherstone as "vivid powerful experiences" (57) and by Jameson himself as "a mysterious charge of affect . . . which one could just as well imagine in the positive terms of euphoria, a high, an intoxicatory or hallucinogenic intensity" (28-9).

Jameson's view of the postmodern man being like a schizophrenic, a willing prisoner of the present, is apparent in *Pulp Fiction*. Vince is living in the moment. He is happy to be a foot soldier of the mafia boss and he does not betray any sense of purpose regarding his future. Even when Jules exhorts him to develop as a person, he ridicules him and refuses to change his views. Vince is particularly important for understanding the postmodern schizophrenic subject's intensities, as he is a frequent drug user. *Carpe diem* is his motto and with the passage of time, he has become so used to pleasures that pleasures no longer please him. He is like Captain Barbossa and his crew, in *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl*, who were cursed because they had stolen Aztec gold and were doomed to be immortal but with lusts, they could not satisfy. Barbossa describes his state,

> Buried on the Island of Dead what cannot be found except for those who know where it is. Find it, we did. There be the chest. Inside be the gold. And we took ‘em all. We spent ‘em and traded ‘em and frittered ‘em away on drink and food and pleasurable company. The more we gave ‘em away, the more we came to realize…the drink would not satisfy, food turned to ash in our mouths, and all the pleasurable company in the world could not slake our lust. We are cursed men, Miss Turner. Compelled by greed, we were, but now we are consumed by it. (*Verbinski*)

Vince needs to use drugs to enhance the intensities. He can be seen lighting up a joint or smoking one on many occasions in *Pulp Fiction*. When he and Jules go to get the briefcase from the youth, Jules is conducting the business and Vince is in the kitchen lighting up a cigarette. The account of his trip to the Netherlands makes a strong note of the drug culture there. Marijuana being legal there, impresses Vince, and he is

surprised how one can just take it without it being an offense. He is also glad that one can buy alcoholic drinks in movie theatres and even at a fast food restaurant. This also impresses Jules, who exclaims, "Oh man. I'm going. That's all there's to it, I'm fucking going" (*Pulp Fiction*). Their lives are defined by drugs and the effects of drugs such as high is a normal part of their existence even a desired part of their existence.

Mia is no different from Vince in terms of drug use. She cuts heroin and snorts it as Vince waits for her downstairs before the meet. Being babysat by one of her husband's goons is not a sign of a promising evening so she is trying to relax her nerves for an evening of boredom. Minutes later in the restaurant she feels the need to get more drugs into her. Mia's phrase 'powder my nose' takes on wholly different connotations here. Ironically, even when the evening turns out to be pleasant—they get along well and because Vince is a good dancer they have fun on the dance floor and Mia wins a trophy—Mia takes cocaine to add to the excitement. Nothing is enough for these characters. They always want more. Just as in terms of consumer culture one cannot ever have enough these drug junkies cannot have enough and even when they have had a good time they feel the use of drugs will add to their pleasure. In this case, however, things go terribly wrong for Mia. What she assumed to be cocaine is, in fact, heroin of the highest quality Vince had got from his dealer, something Mia is not used to. The result is that she overdoses. A sum up of her drug use will drive home how big a part of her life drugs are. She takes cocaine before setting off for the evening, she takes cocaine, even before her order is served at the restaurant and she takes another dose right after getting home, even before her chaperon Vince has left. In between all these, she keeps smoking.

Vince's reaction to the overdose shows that this is a normal thing in his world. He does not even have to investigate what caused Mia to collapse on the floor. One look at her and he knows that she is overdosing. His reaction is swift and he takes her to the dealer to revive her. They administer her an adrenaline shot straight to the heart and manage to revive her. That Lance had the shot in his refrigerator and that he knew this would work proves how strong the culture is as it has a protocol for emergency situations too.

Aldo’s scalping of the German soldiers that he enjoys the present thrill killing the soldiers and disfiguring their dead bodies gives him. But Aldo is also aware to an extent of the future. He punishes the soldiers he lets live by carving a swastika on their forehead. His idea is that when the soldiers forsake the army uniform they will

become ordinary members of the society and nobody will know of their Nazi association and war crimes. Carving a swastika will ensure that these soldiers are doomed to live segregated lives under the burden of their sins by being associated with the Nazi regime. This shows that Aldo has the ability to look at the time future.

Col. Landa is quite like Dr. King in that he goes about hunting Jews as if it was just a task without the element of human suffering and the racial, political and human implications it has. He is neither a German nor a Nazi. He does not share the scorn the Nazis have for the Jews. He tells LaPadite that he does not consider the comparison of the Jews with rats an insult. For him, it is not a personal thing. Just as rats have come to be thought of as vile creatures that spread disease and must be killed the Jews have come to be put on the bad side of things and this—not some ideology or religious belief—is the reason he is hunting them. Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* attempts to justify colonization by asserting, "What redeems it is the idea only" (3). Landa does not achieve redemption and stands with the little-more-than-a-voice Kurtz because he has no ideology to spur him. He is killing Jews just as a job and does not believe in the Nazi mission, which, though an evil thing would nevertheless have meant that he believed in a higher purpose.

Landa is unique among Tarantino's characters because he is temporally unbound. He looks at his future and manages his decisions in the present in a way to create a good future. While Jules has a second hand idea regarding his life after the miracle and Butch has a vague idea of life after Marsellus, Landa is very clear what he wants in the future and enunciates his clarity in his terms of surrender where he says he wants a military pension, a mansion, and recognition for bringing the war to an end. Also, Landa switches sides because he could see that the Nazi regime would not be able to retain power for long and Landa was looking for an opportunity to get on the winning side of things and when this opportunity arrived in the form of Operation Kino he quickly switched sides.

4.2.3 Schizophrenic Language

"Oh No, I've said too much/I haven't said enough" (REM *Losing My Religion*)

Jameson mentions the correspondence of a wartime reporter and shows that it is erratic, anxious and inconsistent and goes on to argue that the language of the postmodern subject is schizophrenic. The characters' language does not approximate the language of a schizophrenic. Depthlessness rather than schizophrenia seems to be the dominant feature of the characters' language.

i. Depthlessness of Language

A striking feature of Tarantino's characters is that they love to talk. They can talk on and on and that too in situations that are not conducive to conversation: for example Jules trying to convince Vince that their escaping unhurt from an attack is a miracle while standing in the room they have murdered three men in, as the police may be getting ever closer. Jameson says that the schizophrenic subject's language is sketchy and broken, but this is not what Tarantino's subjects exhibit. They exhibit a facility with language that sees them making puns, carrying on points to its utmost stretches, using references from films and similar media.

Just as Warhol's paintings did not carry much substance and were superficial the characters' language is just stenciled communication. The following exchange in *Pulp Fiction* illustrates the point:

> VINCE. I got a threshold, Jules, I got a threshold for the abuse that I will take, a'right? Right now I'm a fucking race car and you've got me in the red and I'm saying, I'm just saying that it's fucking dangerous to have a race car in the fucking red. That's all. I could blow.
>
> JULES. Oh. Oh, you ready to blow?
>
> VINCE. Yeah, I'm ready to blow.
>
> JULES. Well I'm a mushroom cloud laying motherfucking motherfucker. Every time my fingers touch a piece of brain I'm superfly TNT I'm the *Guns of the Navarone*. (*Pulp Fiction*)

The language is far from bombastic or even highly emotional. The repeated use of expletives does not make it an angry tirade. In fact, the expletives fall flat. Nowhere is there any palpable sense of the two about to get involved in a scuffle. They are mouthing expletives at a rapid rate of speed, but the situation clearly shows that they are as far from a fight as they can possibly be. Their language lacks depth, as it does not have any meaning to the audience. The hollowness of the rhetoric is obvious; they have picked up this tough-guy talk from around them and are using it to create their identities as bad guys.

It is possible to say that just as Warhol's screen-prints of Monroe could be stenciled and reproduced it is very easy to reproduce the language of the characters here because it is like a template. Anybody can pick up this sort of language and start

using it because the media show this sort of abusive language to be one of the main characteristics of criminals.

A similar sort of long winded argument is found in Jimmie's tirade against Jules, for bringing a dead body to his house. The fact is obvious. Everybody present there knows it so it does not require any argument or points.

JIMMIE. You know what's on my mind right now. It ain't the coffee in my kitchen. It's the dead nigger in my garage. . . . I want to ask you a question. When you came pulling in here did you notice a sign in front of my house that said 'Dead Nigger Storage'?

JULES. Jimmie you know I ain't seen no sign.

JIMMIE. Did you notice a sign in front of my house that said 'Dead Nigger Storage'?

JULES. No. I didn't.

JIMMIE. You know why you didn't see that sign?

JULES. Why?

JIMMIE. Because it isn't there. Because storing dead niggers ain't my fucking business. That's why. (*Pulp Fiction*)

This entire exchange is purposeless because it does not prove anything that has not already been established. Jules knows he is causing Jimmie inconvenience and does not need to be shown that it is likely to create problems for Jimmie. Also, Jimmie knows that his tirade is useless. Jules and Vince will stay there till they have made arrangements for a safe passage out of the valley. He cannot throw them out, which makes this superficial verbosity, not just pointless, but absurd thereby showing the depthlessness of the language of the characters in Tarantino.

Jules on his mission to retrieve Wallace's briefcase plays with language to have fun with Brett before killing him. Putting on his most threatening tone and using muscle, as in throwing the table, he tries to create a sense that each word that he says is important and must be complied to while at the same time he builds his overall argument of Wallace's strength and status.

JULES. What does Marsellus Wallace look like?

BRETT. What?

JULES. What country you from

BRETT. What wha . . .

JULES. What ain't no country I've ever heard of. Do they speak

English in what?

BRETT. What?

JULES. English motherfucker, Do you speak it?

BRETT. Yes.

JULES. Then you know what I'm saying?

BRETT. Yes, ye. . .

JULES. Describe what Marsellus Wallace looks like.

BRETT. What?

JULES. Say what again! Say what again! I dare you. I double dare you motherfucker say what one more goddamn time.

BRETT. He's . . . He's . . . black

JULES. Go on.

BRETT. He's bald.

JULES. Does he look like a bitch?

BRETT. What?

(Jules shoots him in the shoulder)

JULES. Does he look like a bitch?

BRETT. No.

JULES. Then why you trying to fuck him like a bitch, Brett?

(*Pulp Fiction*)

Jules's point is that Wallace is not a nobody who can be fooled or disrespected, but the way Jules arrives at this final argument and proves it shows depthlessness. The language and the buildup of the argument is supposed to be grand but it is not because the argument that he creates is a simple one. Wallace is not to be disrespected. To Brett, he must have seemed imposing with his words and his demand for exact answers and annoyance at not being understood. Jules does win at the game of showing his pedantry in that he shoots Brett in the shoulder for saying "what" against his order and he finally brings the dialogue to the point where he can finally say that Wallace isn't a bitch.

A similar case of elaborate reasoning occurs in *Reservoir Dogs* as Mr. White rushes the shot Mr. Orange in his car to the rendezvous with Joe. On the way, he tries to allay Mr. Orange's fear that he will die because of the wound he has sustained.

MR. ORANGE. I'm gonna die, I know it.

MR. WHITE. Oh excuse me, I didn't realize you had a degree in

medicine. Are you a doctor? Are you a doctor? Answer me please, are you a doctor?

MR. ORANGE. No, I'm not!

MR. WHITE. Ahhhh, so you admit you don't know what you're talking about. So if you're through giving me your amateur opinion, lie back and listen to the news. (*Reservoir Dogs*)

The exchange shows the depthlessness of the language used in the discourse. Mr. White concocts a long winded argument that Mr. Orange is not qualified to say with any degree of certainty that he will die. This is similar to arguments created in *Pulp Fiction* and shows depthlessness because there is no real content to it. The discourse is superficial and there is no profundity to it.

A while later when The Ramblers are figuring out what to do next Mr. Pink reverts to making the point that they were set up and becomes repetitive and hollow sounding: "We were fuckin set up! Somebody is in league with the cops. We got a Judas in our midst" (*Reservoir Dogs*). The repetition does not make the argument stronger or the language more meaningful. Bringing in the Judas allusion only makes the discourse seem deep but does not really make it so for the reference is redundant. Not deterred by how hollow and superficial he sounds he uses the slang metaphor "rat" for the police informant among their ranks. But once again the reference is redundant and fails to lift the discourse to any intellectual height.

Col. Landa in *Inglourious Basterds* is like any of Tarantino's main characters in love with talking. A request that can be as short as “Lets talk in private,” is a long winded one for Landa: "Monsieur LaPadite, what we have to discuss would be better discussed in private. You'll notice I left my men outdoors. If it wouldn't offend them could you ask your lovely ladies to step outside?” (*Inglourious Basterds*). Landa's love for speaking is unique among Tarantino's characters because he can talk long in three languages. His admission of having "exhausted the extent" of his French is just humility as when he uses French he keeps true to his long sentences (*Inglourious Basterds*). He uses refined language and does not spare lofty words, even when the audience is a simple person. His love for talking is also shown by his long argument about the negative perception of rats.

COL. LANDA. Consider for a moment, the world a rat lives in. It's a hostile world indeed. If a rat were to scamper through your front door right now, would you greet it with hostility?

…

Has a rat ever done anything to you to create this animosity you feel toward them?

…

Rats were the cause of the bubonic plague, but that was some time ago. I propose to you, any disease a rat could spread, a squirrel could equally carry. Would you agree? Yet I assume you don't share the same animosity with squirrels that you do with rats, do you?

…

Yet, they are both rodents, are they not? And except for the tail they even rather look alike, don't they?

…

However, interesting as the thought may be, it makes not one bit of difference to how you feel. If a rat were to walk in here right now as I'm talking would you greet it with a saucer of your delicious milk?

…

I didn't think so. You don't like them. You don't really know why you don't like them. All you know is, you find them repulsive.

(*Inglourious Basterds*)

This assertion could have been much shorter but Landa loves talking and he elaborates a simple point into an entire exposition.

Aldo Raine situated on the other side of the war front is no different from Landa in terms of the love for words as shown by his address,

> We will be cruel to the Germans, and through our cruelty, they will know who we are. They will find the evidence of our cruelty, in the disemboweled, dismembered, and disfigured bodies of their brothers we leave behind us. And the German will not be able to help themselves from imagining the cruelty their brothers endured at our hands, and our boot heels, and the edge of our knives. And the German will be sickened by us. And the German will talk about us. And the German will fear us. And when the German closes their eyes at night and they are tortured by their subconscious for the evil they've

> done it will be with thoughts of us, they are tortured with. (*Inglourious Basterds*)

This is just one part of his speech but it shows how long he makes a small point. "They will be cruel to frighten the Germans" is his point but like all the other Tarantino characters he does not satisfied with the essential. Another instance of his love for extending the idea into many words is when he commands his soldiers to kill a hundred German soldiers each: “Every man under my command, owes me, one hundred Nazi scalps. And I want my scalps. And all y'all will git me, one hundred Nazi scalps, taken from the heads of one hundred dead Nazis...or you will die trying” (*Inglourious Basterds*).

As in *Pulp Fiction*, Tarantino's characters in *Reservoir Dogs* spend a considerable time discussing trivial matters. The audience's first interaction with the dogs takes place in a restaurant and they get to hear Mr. Brown's rant on Madonna's *Like a Virgin*. Mr. Brown has a fully developed, well thought out theory about the fictional character in the song who is talking about feeling like a virgin again. Mr. Brown's thesis is about what makes her feel like a virgin. He discusses it in sexual terms with evident relish and says that the song's persona has been made to experience what she has not experienced for a long time. Mr. Brown is serious in his reading of the song and he seems to be delivering a lecture at a conference. When it seems the others are not taking him seriously, he is enraged and says, "Hey, fuck all that, I'm making a point here. You're gonna make me lose my train of thought. I was *saying* something" (*Reservoir Dog*s) He is so involved in it that he does not realize that it is something trivial. Also, the thesis that he is presenting is not without argument. He is dismissive of other interpretations and labels Mr. Blue's interpretation as "bullshit [for] tourists" (*Reservoir Dogs*). His interpretation also looks at the other songs of the Pop Queen and shows that he has thought long and hard about the interpretation he has assigned to the song.

Mr. Brown's facial expression—a snobbish smile—and gesture, a short wave of the hand, as he winds up his argument to deliver the final punch line, "The pain is reminding a fuck machine what it was like to be a virgin. Hence, “*Like a Virgin*” reflects triumph and it is this triumph which makes me interpret this as pseudo-eloquence (*Reservoir Dogs*). He believes he is making a solid argument, but what he is talking about is rather silly and not at all worthy of notice except in a pop-culture

fan group meeting. Thus the character shows himself as not just a follower of pop culture, but as an illustration of the depthlessness of language and thought.

The discussion about *Like a Virgin* is barely over when Mr. Pink wants to discuss Tony Defranco's *Heartbeat It's Love Beat* but Eddie starts off with his discussion of *The Night the Lights Went out in Georgia* by Tony DeFranco. He presents his point of view that he feels Vicki Lawrence killed the guy. It turns out that the others had already established this link and it is only he who has just made the connection. Tarantino's characters are not pseudo intellectuals assigning deep meaning to typical pop hits. They represent the contemporary man whose life has a special slot allotted to pop culture and who have been reduced to discussing the trivia related to these songs etc.

Captain Koon's monologue also shows the depthlessness of the discourse of the characters. The monologue is supposed to weave a tale of love into a web of emotions and to inspire gratitude and awe. It presents the history of a watch that was passed down to Butch's father and is now to be handed over to Butch as a family heirloom. The monologue never reaches any real emotional strength, despite all Koon's attempts at rhetoric.

The depiction of the origin of the watch as having been bought from a convenience store presents the watch as an ordinary watch. The monologue does not talk about any great deed that was performed by the successive wearers of the watch and when the watch's stay with Butch's father and Captain Koon is described, the discourse becomes more disgusting than anything else. The focus of the monologue is not the veterans' mission or ordeal in Vietnam, but how they saved the watch from being taken away: “So he hid it in one place he knew he could hide something. His ass. Five long years, he wore his watch up his ass. Then he died of dysentery, he gave me the watch. I hid this uncomfortable hunk of metal up my ass two years” (*Pulp Fiction*). This long-winded account of the watch is not the way to make the watch dear to Butch and the viewer too is left wondering as to what Koon was thinking of when he uttered all this.

Tarantino does not like taking credit for the dialogues for his characters and says that he feels "like a fraud" (Ciment and Niogret 14-15). He elaborates:

> It's the characters who write the dialogue. I just get them talking and I jot down what they say. …and that's why my dialogue is about things that don't have anything to do with anything. They'll go off and talk for ten minutes

> about Pam Grier. Or ten minutes about Madonna, or Coca-Cola, or macaroni and cheese. (Ciment and Niogret 15)

So there is a solid reason to assert that the depthlessness of the characters' language is due to who the characters are and not something that the director imposes on them. Also, the discussion shows that depthlessness rather than schizophrenia marks the characters' language.

Language is a key area through which Tarantino's characters try to assert their dominance. For Peter Aspden "outquipping" the opponents is as important to Tarantino's characters as "outgunning" them. Landa's domination of his opponents is in huge part due to his language.

Farmer LaPadite in *Inglourious Basterds* shows that dominance may also be resisted through language. He cannot resist Landa through force so he chooses to resist him by being as taciturn and elusive about things as he can be. When Landa's earlier attempts to dominate the farmer by making him call him the Jew Hunter fail he asks a more direct question: "Are you aware of the nickname the people of France have given me?" (*Inglourious Basterds*). Landa wants to dominate LaPadite by making him acknowledge the horrible name and the reputation it speaks of. LaPadite skirts the issue by saying, "I'm not interested in such things" (*Inglourious Basterds*). This forces Landa to try anew to get the farmer to utter his nickname, "Are you aware of what they call me?" and again LaPadite resists being dominated by being succinct, "Yes I'm aware" (*Inglourious Basterds*). Landa is forced to push for the nickname harder: "What are you aware of?" (*Inglourious Basterds*). This finally makes LaPadite say the nickname. What is at play here is Landa's attempt to dominate through language and LaPadite's use of the same as a weapon of resistance. Col. Landa counters LaPadite's resistance in his rat argument by firing questions at him. Within the argument he asks him seven questions, forcing him to say something. The proof of the assertion that he is using language to dominate LaPadite is the fact that LaPadite breaks right after this argument and admits that he is hiding the Jews.

Tarantino's characters are talkative but they are not aloof to the semantics of what they say. They are more than just saying stuff; they seem to be in search of meaning. The opening dialogue between Jules and Vince is about "naming" (Conrad 128). They are engrossed in determining what something, for instance, Big Mac or Whopper, is called. Ringo calls the waitress over by addressing her as 'garcon' and the waitress is quick to correct him: "Garcon means 'boy' " (*Pulp Fiction*). Jules uses

the terms "associates" to refer to himself and Vince and this corporate-sounding word hides the fact that he is a foot soldier or a thug for Marsellus (*Pulp Fiction*). In addition to this, his use of the words "business partner" and the phrase "allow me to retort" when he responds to Brett's attempt to get out of the situation, create the impression of a legal prosecution (*Pulp Fiction*). Jules's pedantry is also visible when he refuses to allow Vince to call Tony "fat" for he feels that the word carries a negative connotation and instead offers his alternative "weight problem" (*Pulp Fiction*). Jules and Vince also differ on the semantic label for their escape at the apartment. For Jules, it is a miracle, but for Vince, the appropriate semantic term is a freak accident. At Jimmie's house, the two are at their semantic games again with the definition of washing as getting hands wet or getting the stains off.

Tarantino's characters in *Pulp Fiction* are aware that meaning is open to interpretation and this is why they are particular about the language they use. To Vince's query as to what happened to Antwan, Mia says, "He fell out of a window" (*Pulp Fiction*). Vince knows that this is just one way of clothing the thought and he offers other perspectives: "Well, that is one way to say it. Another way to say it would be that he was thrown out. Another way would be he was thrown out by Marsellus and yet even another way is to say he was thrown out of a window by Marsellus because of you" (*Pulp Fiction*). These possibilities certainly exist and so do rumors about an intimate interaction between Mia and Antwan. Mia responds by asking if the last interpretation is "a fact" (*Pulp Fiction*). Vince is not caught in the trap of committing to a meaning he knows may not be true, so he replies that is just what he "heard" (*Pulp Fiction*). Mia lunges again, by picking up on the source of the information "they", and teases Vince by underscoring that "they" gossip like women and thereby implies that the theories are unfounded. The semantic play, which admits the existence of a number of interpretations and where the characters try to distinguish between what is fact and what is hearsay and the source of information shows that the characters take language seriously and attempt to use language to create precise meanings.

This desire to be precise about meaning is visible in Butch and Fabienne as they take time to clear the semantics even as both are stressed about the outcome of double-crossing Marsellus. Fabienne distinguishes between "a tummy and a pot belly" where a tummy is oafish but a pot belly sexy (*Pulp Fiction*). Later Butch wants to make good time getting away, as he has just recently earned Marsellus's pardon,

and comes to pick Fabienne. She notices that Butch is not using her Honda but is on a two-wheeler and asks as to whose motorcycle it is. Despite the urgency of the situation and the need to make the connection to Knoxville, Butch corrects her that it is a chopper. A chopper too is a two wheeler but it is a particular type of motorcycle, one that has a big engine and which has been made for speed by chopping parts and carries the association of Americana. Butch goes into this fine distinction because this is the way he understands the world. On the one hand, Butch's world is of myths: Captain Koons's world of war heroics, brotherly love, family responsibilities and the real world of making it through the day. "Zed is Dead" is his comment on the mythical or pseudo-mythical world and the distinction between chopper and motorcycle is his way of dealing with the practical world where only such trivialities need to be dealt with (*Pulp Fiction*).

Landa is a master of languages and also of connotations. He talks of the Basterds' plan to assassinate Hitler as being open to interpretation. It is a "terrorist plot" from the perspective of the Nazis, but a "mission" from the perspective of the Allies (*Inglourious Basterds*). He does not choose either word deliberately because that is who he is: on nobody's side. He changes sides when the time is right and stands to gain a lot, but here again, he uses language to cloak his intentions and terms his conditions to help the Allies kill Hitler and win the war as "terms of my conditional surrender" because he knows this phrasing will "taste better going down" as it will help the Allies keep their pride (*Inglourious Basterds*).

Tarantino's characters try to be semantically precise and at times cross over into poetic language due to their use of similes, metaphors, and rhythm. Landa uses the analogy of a hawk and rat for German soldiers and Jews respectively. He indulges in a detailed explanation of the characteristics of hawks and rats and how the rats' vileness is a cultural construct. The fact that he uses an analogy and talks about the vital players in the equation indirectly makes his language poetic. Aldo in *Inglourious Basterds* too has a poetic rhythm in his hillbilly prose: "They will find the evidence of our cruelty, in the disemboweled, dismembered, and disfigured bodies of their brothers we leave behind us. And the German will not be able to help themselves from imagining the cruelty their brothers endured at our hands, and our boot heels, and the edge of our knives" (*Inglourious Basterds*). He continues, "And the German will be sickened by us. And the German will talk about us. And the German will fear

us" (*Inglourious Basterds*). It can even be said that Aldo is approximating Churchill's blood, toil, and tears speech.

Landa's language is also poetic. In addition to using the metaphor of rats for Jews, he uses poetic rhythm in his language, for instance,

> Consequently, a German soldier conducts a search of a house suspected of hiding Jews. Where does the hawk look? He looks in the barn, he looks in the attic, he looks in the cellar - he looks everywhere, he would hide. But there are so many places it would never occur to a hawk to hide. However, the reason the Fuhrer brought me off my Alps in Austria and placed me in French cow country today is because it does occur to me. (*Inglourious Basterds*)

Some of Tarantino's characters have a good command over foreign languages. Col. Landa in *Inglourious Basterds* is a polyglot well versed in German, English, and French and to the Basterds' surprise Italian. Aldo claims to speak a little bit of Italian but does not display his talent much. Bridget, however, speaks English, French, German and also Italian.

The characters use language well. It may not be the language of high literature, but it has its own rhythms, power, wit, and allusions. This shows that the characters are and are not schizophrenics in the Jamesonian sense of the term. They have failed to learn the language, but have learnt their own language. Language stands for the rules of the world for Lacan and Jameson. Not being able to learn language equates to not being able to learn the rules of the world. Here the characters have their own language and their own rules for the world.

With language having been discussed, it remains to see how Tarantino’s characters fare in terms of knowing the rules of the world. Jameson’s schizophrenic subjects have a problem understanding and complying with the rules of the world they inhabit. Tarantino's characters do not inhabit a lawless world or a chaotic anarchic world that the absence of the police in *Pulp Fiction* and its peripheral presence in *Reservoir Dogs* may lead some to believe to be the case. The characters have their own rules which may or may not be congruent with the general principles of religions or rules of humanity.

The world of Tarantino’s characters is not the world of the typical morality play that pits the “virtuous against the craven" (Alter 97). Theirs is a chaotic, "seemingly lawless world", that begs of them the question, "where is the line that separates necessary evil from unnecessary evil?" (Alter 97). The characters in all the

films under discussion come up with answers. Whether it is to differentiate between necessary murder and brazen murder, business or a personal vendetta, forgiveness or revenge the characters come up with decisions according to their code. While it may not be politically correct or a very grand one it is still a code.

In *Reservoir Dogs* Mr. White and Mr. Pink discuss Mr. Blonde's violence and the condemnation of Mr. Blonde's use of violence must not be taken as a condemnation of violence per se. They are only rejecting unnecessary violence. They are not against violence that gets them out of a bad situation. Mr. Pink talks about how he got out of the police set up at the diamond dealer's,

> Mr. PINK. I don't wanna kill anybody. But if I gotta get out that door and you're standing in my way, one way of the other, you're gettin' outta my way. (*Reservoir Dogs*)

After shooting his way out of the dragnet, he shoots even at the policemen chasing him on the street and throws a woman out of a car to make his getaway. These instances of violence show that Mr. Pink is not averse to violence. He will resort to violence and will kill anyone who stands between him and safety. So he too embraces violence. The cold manner in which he talks about killing shows that he is used to it. It can be safely said that violence is Mr. Pink's way of rising above the ordinary. Being a stone cold killer, but with reservations against wantonness, is the stamp that he uses to make himself unique.

Fidelity to a similar code is exhibited by Col. Landa in *Inglorious Basterds*. He has the Jewish family, hiding under the floor, killed, but does not harm farmer LaPadite. A code is at work here which demands killing enemies, but not harming others. Also, it shows that the killing is not the act of a wild man killing without reason, but of one acting under a code which defines friends and enemies.

The characters in *Reservoir Dogs* have made up rules for themselves and the world they inhabit. They feel that this exalts them, but it does not because the rules are about trivial matters. Mr. Pink's decision to not tip the waitress is an outcome of his stand against society's dictates, but it is also an outcome of his *rule*. He says that the waitress filled his cup only three times, whereas she should have filled it six times. Having this rule makes Mr. Pink feel as if he is in charge of his life and the world around him, but it is a silly rule that no waitress is likely to know of. It makes him feel exalted as if his opinion matters, but other than that the rule has no value.

A similar thing can be said about the rule regarding how much to tip. When Joe is getting ready to pay the bill he tells the others that the tip comes to $8. His calculation says so. His son later reveals that the rule is that the tip should be 12% of the bill. Whatever the percentage of the amount that constitutes the tip may be, the point is that this is an utterly unimportant thing. That the characters exalt such trifles to being rules only reveals how desperate the characters are to make their mark on things and to rise above being nobodies. Having rules gives them the illusion of being in control and being people whose opinion matters and this is why they have rules about such mundane things as tipping at restaurants. It is this very thing, that Seinfeld satirizes in “The Wizard” (David) when Morty feels the only use of the digital organizer is that of a tip calculator.

Mr. Blonde's "kill crazy rampage" is the outcome of his being a stickler for rules (*Reservoir Dogs*). He tells Eddie that he started shooting because the people in the shop violated a rule he had laid down: "I told 'em not to touch the fucking alarm. They did. If they hadn't done what I'd told 'em not to do they'd still be alive" (*Reservoir Dogs*). It is his code that he must be followed and when the people in the jewelry store do not follow it, he throws caution to the wind and starts shooting. He jeopardizes their mission and puts his own life in danger—Mr. Pink admits that he thought of killing Mr. Blonde for being what he terms reckless. But this shows his penchant for his rules. Rules are important to him because having rules makes him have substance and thus deny his death, which in this case would be having no rules.

Vince in *Pulp Fiction* comes back from one of his many restroom breaks to find the restaurant being robbed. He takes out his weapon to stake his claim as one of the actors in the unfolding high drama. To his surprise, Jules defuses the situation by agreeing to give Ringo and Yolanda $1500 from his wallet. Vince is incensed at this infraction from his principles. He believes that robbing something from him—he does not seem to be concerned about the others—is wrong and is prepared to go to any length to save his property. Giving someone money because they have a weapon aimed at you means accepting defeat and allowing domination, and Vince does not want to give Ringo the satisfaction of knowing that he had dominated Vince. It is only with difficulty that Jules manages to keep Vince from shooting to preserve his principle. Vince’s code also carries a point of respecting a person’s car. Vince says, and Lance agrees, that a person should be killed for keying someone’s prized car like

his Malibu. It sounds extreme but nevertheless points to a code that exists for these characters.

In *Pulp Fiction* Butch throws a fight, which is against the rules, the law and spirit of the game, but this also shows that the code is self-preservation. He kills Vince and then Maynard because letting them go will have meant his own death. He does not need to look towards the man-made or divine laws because he lives by a code that he has devised for himself and the world around him.

That Tarantino's characters try to live by their own rules becomes apparent when Marsellus sends The Wolf and not a preacher to extricate his men from the Bonnie situation. Marsellus does not feel that a preacher, to take confessions and carve some sort of redemptive path for the gangsters, is the solution. He feels that The Wolf is the solution which means that divine law has lost its power and has been replaced with the codes that the characters have drawn for themselves.

Lord Cutler Beckett’s philosophy for doing what he did, "it's just good business" (*Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest*) is true for Hans Landa in *Inglourious Basterds*. Col. Landa is a Jew hunter, but only because it is good business and he forsakes it as soon as forsaking it becomes expedient. He sees it as something that has been assigned to him by the Fuhrer and goes about it in a business-transaction-like manner as it gets him credit and a strong position. He is more in the mold of a corporate executive in a boardroom meeting with his briefcase, folders, and pens and taking notes of each minute detail. Also, as he shows through the analogy of rat for Jews, he does not have anything against Jews. Their persecution is not a noble mission to him it is just a cultural construct that has come about and which he is abiding by and using to his advantage. His code is not the Nazi code. His code is like Stephen's self-preservation and like Dr. King and Calvin’s good business.

It is his code of self-preservation which makes Landa change sides. He is emotionally removed enough to know that the Nazi regime is not permanent and with its demise will come his bad days. Self-preservation makes him see an opportunity in the Basterds' plot to assassinate Hitler and he switches sides and makes the assassination and the consequent end of the war possible. The code demands loyalty to himself and not to any cause and he follows the code.

4.3 Conclusion

The analysis shows that Tarantino’s characters realize that they are not unique

and adopt different ways and strategies to rise above the ordinary to become special, but these attempts fail and thus they illustrate the death of the subject. The death of the subject is also evident in their schizophrenia. They are schizophrenics slightly differently than Jameson's concept. They are fragmented but are able to deal with their fragmentation and have also come up with codes that help them survive in the world. But these are codes of survival and do not show the characters as strong beings capable of making their own destiny. Their language has clarity, but it is depthless and trivial and points to the triviality of their existence.

The study will now direct its attention to the other chief facets of Jameson's theory: the waning of affect, depthlessness, and simulacra.

CHAPTER 5

WANING OF AFFECT, DEPTHLESSNESS, AND SIMULACRA

5.1 Depthlessness, Surfaces and Simulacra

Jameson asserts that the postmodern subject suffers from depthlessness and waning of affect. All there is to the postmodern subject is surface without any deeper essence or affect being there. Jameson's argument also includes the creator of the work of art. The postmodern subject who creates has no depth and can, therefore, can only create a work that has surfaces. Tarantino ascribes them surfaces and the characters too, in the world of the films, construct surfaces for themselves to cover for their depthlessness. Characters are engaged in crafting surfaces that are often based on what are already images and therefore turn the characters into simulacra, i.e., images based on images that do not refer to any reality. The notions of depthlessness and waning of affect also contribute to the death of the subject.

Jules with his verbosity and the fierce look seems to be a tough guy. He has the built, the swagger, and the scary look backed by some scary dialogue, but in fact, Jules only poses to be a tough guy. Just before entering Brett's apartment Jules says to Vince, "Let's get into character" (*Pulp Fiction*). This shows that he is only putting on a guise that he has envisioned from the real world and from the media. He has learnt from the instances of bad guys on the screen that the bad guy has to have philosophical sounding dialogues and snappy punch lines; Jules's language shows both. Before finishing off Brett he recites a rather long dialogue that he attributes to the Bible. Jules says,

> The path of the righteous man is beset on all sides by the inequities of the selfish and the tyranny of evil men. Blessed is he who, in the name of charity and good will, shepherds the weak through the valley of darkness, for he is truly his brother's keeper and the finder of lost children. And I will strike down upon thee with great vengeance and furious anger those who attempt to poison

> and destroy my brothers. And you will know my name is the Lord when I lay my vengeance upon thee. (*Pulp Fiction*)

This monologue does not mean much and Jules gives more than one interpretation to it signifying that he too does not know what it means; it is just a line that he has picked up to scare people before killing them. The ease with which he recites the line shows that he must have used it on other occasions—he admits later: "I been saying that shit for years" (*Pulp Fiction*). The Ramblers, while discussing a TV show *Get Christie Love,* recall her pet line "You're under arrest sugar" (*Reservoir Dogs*). This shows that punch lines are important and Jules has also learnt that having a punch line will make him sound terrific, hence this entire monologue. This is the manner and custom for tough-guy talk and he has adopted it. Tarantino also asserts that this is also what happens in real life as one hears "stories about gang-bangers doing routines from movies before they do a drive-by" (J. Smith, *Quentin* 112). What Jules does is similar to the instance in *The Satanic Verses* where the Sikh hijackers "behave the way they have seen hijackers behaving in the movies and on TV" and in this, they become "reality aping a crude image of self" (Rushdie 78).

Jules uses the lines to announce the eminent death of the audience of the monologue. "And if you heard it, that meant your ass. . . . I just thought it was some cold-blooded shit to say to a motherfucker before I popped a cap in his ass" (*Pulp Fiction*). For Jules, the line is just a scary seemingly-philosophical thing to say before killing them in cold blood. Tarantino comments on this characteristic "That's Jules's thing, to be a badass. It's a macho thing, and it's like his good-luck charm. He's playing a movie character, he's being the Green Lantern saying his little speech before he does what he does" (J. Smith, *Quentin* 112). Tarantino further says, "They [Jules and Vince] are a cross between criminals and actors and children playing roles" (J. Smith, *Quentin* 112). This shows that Jules has picked up the characteristics of a cool bad guy from TV and movies and is using the clichés to create his persona as a terrifying gangster. Jules is on an extremely scary mission to retrieve Marsellus's briefcase. Without any doubt, he is in charge. The boys are visibly shaken and afraid of him. But at the same time, he is only pretending. In an interview with Gavin Smith, Tarantino informs about Jules, "he's kind of playing good cop/bad cop and he's the good cop he's the guy who sucks you in. He says that speech before he kills him because…that's what he does" (J. Smith, *Quentin* 111). This comment supports the interpretation that Jules is only acting. He has an idea of what a gangster should be

and he is trying to be that idea in person. Even in the diner he withstands the pressure of the situation and gets everyone out of the situation alive, proving that he is not without some degree of competence.

There is another way of looking at Jules playing at will a gangster and that too reveal the character's simulation. Jean Baudrillard discusses his interpretation of Disneyland in *Simulacra and Simulation*. Baudrillard feels that Disneyland is presented as simulacra to make people believe that the rest of America is real. Baudrillard writes, "This world [Disneyland] wants to be childish in order to make us believe that the adults are elsewhere, in the "real" world, and to conceal the fact that true childishness is everywhere - that it is that of the adults themselves who come here to act the child in order to foster illusions as to their real childishness" (130). As soon as the visitors step out of the park they feel they have stepped back into the real world and this is the true purpose of the park: to make the people feel that the world outside Disneyland is real when it is not. Jules puts on this show of being a hardened gangster, but by this he makes it seem as if the rest of him is real. Jules's words "Let's get into character" are a sleight of hand in that by this line he takes the attention away from the fact that he was always putting on an act. It is not only what transpires inside the apartment before Bret, but everything that is an act, i.e., Jules in character.

Jules's wallet carries the words "Bad Motherfucker" (*Pulp Fiction*) and this too ties in with the reading that he is just creating an image of a gangster. These words stamped in his wallet reinforce his image as a tough guy and he draws strength from them. As is the case with the monologue the sign here is just an image of toughness that does not point to any real toughness.

Jameson was inspired by Baudrillard's notion of simulation and simulacra and mentions it in his discussion of postmodernism. Baudrillard's groundbreaking *Simulacra and Simulation* opens with a line, purportedly, from Ecclesiastes,

> The simulacrum is never what hides the truth - it is truth that hides the fact that there is none.
>
> The simulacrum is true. (Baudrillard)

Baudrillard goes on to discuss simulation, dissimulation, the phases through which an image becomes a simulacrum, how Ramses is a simulacrum and how Disneyland hides the fact that America is a simulacrum. The discussion is powerful and thought-provoking and keeps many from realizing the trick that the epigraph contains. Baudrillard's masterstroke here is that he creates a simulacrum to show how easily

people believe in simulacra. The epigraph attributes the lines to Ecclesiastes and the readers engrossed in the meaning of the line—the lines mean that the image hides the fact that there is no fact—are duped into believing in the existence of these lines in Ecclesiastes whereas these lines do not really exist in Ecclesiastes. The image of the text hides the fact that there is no fact of the line in the book.

Jules has memorized a speech that he attributes to Ezekiel 25:17 and utters it as a monologue to scare people. But with the passage of time, he comes to believe that the lines that he says to sound powerful really mean something. He attributes significance to them and assigns them meaning. Jules arouses sympathy when he falls victim to a simulacrum and starts believing in the falsehood he himself created. Like the cartographers, of the Borges fable who created such a realistic map that it covered the entire city, Jules weaves a web of words that he himself comes to believe in. At the diner with Vince, he quotes the lines again, this time to Pumpkin, and goes on to derive a life lesson that he ensconces in the following terms,

> See, now I'm thinking, maybe it means you're the evil man, and I'm the righteous man, and Mr. 9 millimeter here, he's the shepherd protecting my righteous ass in the valley of darkness. Or it could mean you're the righteous man and I'm the shepherd and it's the world that's evil and selfish. I'd like that. But that shit ain't the truth. The truth is, you're the weak, and I am the tyranny of evil men. But I'm trying, Ringo. I'm trying real hard to be the shepherd. (*Pulp Fiction*)

Whether Jules has made a correct interpretation is not the issue here. The issue is that he is taking something that does not even exist to be meaningful. He has fallen in the trap of taking the image, in this case, the verbal signs, to be real whereas it is just a construct.

The characters putting on personalities assume a different form for the characters in *Reservoir Dogs* as compared to that by the characters in *Pulp Fiction*. In *Pulp Fiction* Jules and Vince are henchmen putting on the masks of henchmen. They are thugs doing the leg work for the crime boss but still, they need to put up an appearance so that they are perceived as tough criminals. It is similar to Portland in the postmodernist *Green Grass, Running Water* (King 152) having to put on a fake nose to play an Indian in a Western despite the fact that he is an Indian. This is Baudrillard's simulacra at work. In the postmodern world images are important not the reality. The image of the henchmen, not the real henchmen, scares the people. In

Reservoir Dogs the characters adopt identities to hide who they are. While in *Pulp Fiction* the henchmen are posing to be ferocious henchmen, in *Reservoir Dogs* the henchmen are trying to hide their identities and one of them poses to be who he is not. Mr. Orange is actually a cop, but he puts on the identity of a criminal to infiltrate the gang and is then given the identity of Mr. Orange for the heist.

Mr. Orange is actually Freddy Newendyke, a policeman, who goes undercover in a bid to arrest Joe Cabot. Holdaway mentors Mr. Orange to impart him the skills to pass as a conman. The image of a con artist exists and one has to come up to it to be considered a conman. Just as Jules must simulate an angry thug—being an actual thug does not matter—Mr. Orange must simulate being a thief and this demands molding himself according to the image of a thug that exists in society. What Mr. Orange actually attempts to do is to be the image of a criminal that is prevalent in the society. His mentor Holdaway asserts, "An undercover cop has got to be Marlon Brando" (*Reservoir Dogs*). That he has to act shows that he is simulating. Holdaway gives Mr. Orange four sheets of the script containing "an amusing anecdote about a drug deal" because he thinks telling funny stories about criminal adventures will create the appropriate image of Mr. Orange. He has reduced conmen to simple generic attributes and telling flawless stories is according to him a big part of a conman's identity. Mr. Orange prepares himself to tell this made-up anecdote and he makes it seem real by describing it in minute detail where even a tiny detail like there being a blow dryer instead of tissues is mentioned.

Tarantino attests to his characters playing roles in an interview: "Probably the one recurring line in all my movies is when at some point somebody says to somebody else, ‘We gotta stay in character.’ In “Reservoir Dogs” it’s obvious that Tim Roth is the one pretending to be somebody he’s not. You even get to see the little acting class that he goes through" (McGrath). Tarantino’s characters put on appearances and because these appearances are based on the prevalent societal notions of whichever category they are pretending to be, it has to be said that the characters indulge in simulacra. They have fallen into the trap of believing the image to be real and model themselves not after the real but the image.

Lt. Aldo Raine is in France with the explicit mission of "doin’ one thing, and one thing only: killin’ Nazis" (*Inglourious Basterds*). He makes no bones about being cruel to the Nazis for he thinks they deserve cruelty. Despite his verbosity and the seemingly noble mission he has, he is a victim of simulacra like Jules in *Pulp Fiction*.

He lacks the depth to see beyond the images that are created for the general populace. For instance, Aldo is taken in by the concept of Nazism. Hitler's party was called National Socialist German Workers' Party and the term Nazi was used by expatriates and later picked up by outsiders for Hitler's followers (etymonline.org). Aldo roars that he is not there "to teach the Nazi lessons in humanity. Nazi ain't got no humanity. They're the foot soldiers of a Jew hatin', mass murderin' maniac, and they need to be destroyed. That's why any and every son-of-a-bitch we find wearin' a Nazi uniform, they're gonna die." Soon he substitutes Nazi for German and vows to drive fear into their hearts. Aldo has in fact been taken in by the propaganda that equated every German soldier with a Nazi. The soldiers were not Nazis. Other than the term Nazi being a foreign coinage the Nazis were members of the socialist party and were the top-ranking members who made the decisions. Aldo takes the surface image that was created by the allied war-time machinery and aims to wreak vengeance on the soldiers who have nothing to do with the true Nazis and their decisions. That they are serving in the army is not necessarily ideological, as the Third Reich had brought in conscription. So the ordinary German was not necessarily ideologically aligned to the Nazi regime, though Aldo makes the mistake of looking at every German as an enemy who must be killed. Thus Aldo's depthlessness makes him unaware of the depth of other issues and he takes the surface to be the whole truth.

> Tarantino in an interview *The New York Times* says,
>
> A theme all my characters share is that they're all good actors and use acting techniques. They're always playing a character to some degree or another. There's something going on with at least one of the characters that they have to put on a persona. They have to hide who they are and pretend to be something else. (McGrath)

This is true for Aldo Raine in *Inglourious Basterds* who is playing at being an army lieutenant. Aldo Raine is a hillbilly and a Lieutenant in the army out to collect as many Nazi scalps as possible. Tarantino models Aldo after the typical Hollywood images of hillbilly, Indigenous People of the present United States and army officer and therefore as a simulacrum. The hillbilly part is reflected in the drawling way—stereotypical of hillbillies—of speaking that Aldo has. Aldo presents himself as part Native American and tries to reflect his ancestry through his decision of collecting scalps. It is one of the stereotypes associated with the Indigenous People although their colonizers practiced it possibly more widely (Abbott, Martin). Because scalping

is not a widely used or authenticated Native American tradition and also because Jim Bridger, who Aldo claims to be descendent of, did not have a Native American wife it can be said that he is only using an image that has come to be seen as Native American to pass himself off as part Native American. The fact, he is using an image to base his reality on, proves he is a simulacrum. His credentials as a Lieutenant are brought into question by the rope burn around his neck, which points to an attempted lynching—possibly for a crime he committed—that he escaped. He is no holy warrior out on a noble mission. The war has turned him into an officer and he is only doing what he thinks an army man is supposed to do. In the loud voice of a training sergeant and the speech of a motivating captain, he is trying to approximate the image of an army man.

Aldo's signature move in *Inglourious Basterds* in to carve a Swastika on the foreheads of the German soldiers he lets go. He looks at it as an art of the same sort as exhibited in "Carnegie Hall". The most important carving, the one he calls his "masterpiece" (*Inglourious Basterds*), is the one he makes on Landa. His philosophy is that the world should always know the Nazis. He says, "we like our Nazis in uniforms. That way, you can spot 'em, just like that. But you take off that uniform, ain't nobody gonna know you was a Nazi" (*Inglourious Basterds*) He, therefore, carves a Swastika on his forehead so that he wears it like a sign of his sins. Nazism for Aldo resides in the image: the Swastika. He does not realize that the Swastika has been around for 5000 years (History of Swastika) and has been used all over the globe by various cultures including his own ancestors. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* informs that the Swastika was on Mesopotamian coins, was the sign for Thor's hammer, was used by the Maya and continues to be a widely used propitious symbol of Hindus and Buddhists. Mukti Jain Campion shows the historical use of the Swastika and shows that many cultures and ages embraced it including the Europeans. The Americans used the symbols in advertisements and even the Boy Scouts, the Girls' Club, Coca Cola, and the American military made use of the Swastika. Aldo assumes that carving the symbol on the soldiers' foreheads will mark the people as Nazis and they will not be able to outrun their guilt. But the Swastika is not just a Nazi symbol. Aldo's depthlessness has made him take the surfaces as real and he does not realize that the Swastika is not a Nazi symbol as propaganda would have everyone believe and therefore it cannot serve as a sign of shame. Also marking somebody as a Nazi has to be more than just an image, but Aldo does not realize this.

Tarantino's Col. Hans Landa is a mirage of surfaces and therefore lacks depth. He has specially been called from the Alps to take over the task of hunting Jews and has "earned" (*Inglourious Basterds*) the name The Jew Hunter for his skill in tracing Jews. Despite this he actually does not believe in the Nazi ideology—he tells LaPadite that he differs from Goebbels and Hitler's views in that he does not consider the comparison of Jews and rats "an insult" (*Inglourious Basterds*). He wears a German army uniform, enjoys the rank of a Colonel, investigates on behalf of Hitler but is not a Nazi at heart. The first opportunity of a greener pasture sees Landa take off the cloak of The Jew Hunter and present a new surface. He clarifies to Aldo that the identity of The Jew Hunter was imposed upon him by public perception which he did not control. Landa later takes off the robe of The Jew Hunter and dismisses the identity as being thrust upon him by his "enemies." Earlier on, with LaPadite, he had said that he was proud of the name The Jew Hunter because he had earned it, but now he derides the suggestion that he was a Jew hunter. He says that he is in fact "a detective" who worked with the Nazis but was not a Nazi (*Inglourious Basterds*). He says, "Finding people is my specialty. So naturally, I worked for the Nazi's finding people. And yes, some of them were Jews" (*Inglourious Basterds*). Thus, within a few short lines, he constructs and puts on a new appearance that of a detective adept in finding people some of whom just happened to be Jews. Earlier Landa had prided himself on being specially tasked by Hitler to promote his German agenda, but now he talks of Germans dying in the attack casually "and yes, some Germans will die" as if their deaths do not matter to him (*Inglourious Basterds*). He is not aligned with anyone and has just created a surface of being aligned with the Nazi cause but there is no depth to it.

A word choice that gives a keen insight into Landa and proves his lack of ideological learning towards the Nazis is swifter. He says that he should be acknowledged for bringing the tyranny of the National Socialist party to “a swifter than imagined end" it shows he was under no illusion that the Nazis will continue to run through Europe (*Inglourious Basterds*). He knows that he only hastened the end that was inevitable. So he chose to only be a Nazi by wearing their uniform, not their ideas and this way he could end the pretense when it was beneficial to him.

It soon becomes clear that the neutral surface of being a detective is just a transient identity meant to help him transition to a new surface of being a savior. Adopting the identity of a detective does away with the negative aspect of his former

identity of The Jew Hunter and prepares him to transition to the next role of the savior who saves "countless lives", and a hero for "winning the war single handedly for the allies" (*Inglourious Basterds*). Even before the technicalities of this identity are ironed out the hints of another surface in the distance emerge. This is the surface of a retiree living off a comfortable pension in Nantucket. All this proves that Landa has no depth and is just surfaces. He works for the Nazis but is not a Nazi. He serves Hitler, but as soon as he sees a better opportunity for himself, he plants the dynamite to kill Hitler and changes the side to be a savior of the world. He wins the war, but has no interest in being in the army and wants to retire to a distant but posh place. All these are surfaces that Landa creates to suit the occasion and no surface lasts nor is any with a deep significance.

Butch's heirloom is just another of the simulacra that Tarantino's characters are taken in by. Captain Koons's monologue is meant to create a simulacrum of the watch that he has saved in strange ways for Butch. The real watch exists, but Koons is trying to create an image of the watch that is incongruent with the reality in that it is a glorified image of the watch. Underneath the eloquence, it can be ascertained that Koons is at pains to glorify the watch to mythic proportions. The watch was bought from "a little general store" (*Pulp Fiction*) which means it is very likely that it was an ordinary watch. I feel he immediately realizes that this is a humble origin of the watch and immediately tries to hype the watch by saying that it was made by "the first company to ever make wrist watches" (*Pulp Fiction*). This is not necessarily a good attribute as it does not point to the quality or the beauty of the watch. For all, it matters the first company to ever make wrist watches may have made terrible watches because it was doing it the first time. This is why Koons promotes the watch to being a gold watch during his monologue. This elevation in status is because he comes to realize that the watch needs some alluring quality to appeal to the young Butch who may not value sentimental attachment and the shiny gold is likely to trigger Butch's fancy.

Part of the elevation of the watch comes from Koons' terming the watch "war watch" (*Pulp Fiction*) and associating it with the already established glory of war. Then Koons moves on to presenting the sacrifices that were made to make sure Butch got his "birthright" (*Pulp Fiction*). All this is successful in establishing the simulacrum of the watch as a great watch and Butch's legacy and the proof that Butch regards the watch highly comes from the fact that Butch risks his life and more to get

it back when Fabienne forgets it at the apartment. If Fabienne's penchant for a potbelly refers to her desire to bear a child Butch's quest for the watch means that he has succumbed to the simulacrum of the watch and wants to give it to his son to keep the Coolidge tradition alive.

That Butch overlooks the fact that it was an ordinary watch and that not only is it associated with bloodshed and death but is saved in so utterly disgusting a manner that one would not even want to touch it, shows the power of simulacra over the subjects in the postmodern world. “The way in which Butch receives the watch is, of course, highly significant. His father hides it in his rectum. The watch is a piece of shit; or, in other words, it is an empty symbol. Why empty? For the same reason that the biblical passage was meaningless: it is a symbol with no referent. That to which it refers is missing” (Conrad 133-34). The created image and the reality it has been given is too strong for the subject to resist to succumbing to.

As in a number of Tarantino films and also Hollywood films the gangsters in *Pulp Fiction* are wearing black suits with thin black ties and the same is true for the gangsters in *Reservoir Dogs*. “It’s like wearing armor” and makes them look “sinister and mean” (Ciment and Niogret, *Interview* 87). The Ramblers also look pretty trendy in their suits. The common element in the two films in terms of dresses is that the suits work like uniforms. The suits-uniforms reduce the gangsters to soldiers who are “not to reason why … but to do and die” (Tennyson). This fits in with the reading the study is making of the gangsters as mere pawns. The soldiers in a battalion only follow orders whether they take them into the “valley of death” or take them to glory (Tennyson). Marsellus determines the value of the briefcase and Jules and Vince cannot question him. They only have to obey him. Jules despite his alleged epiphany completes the assigned job. Mr. Pink comes to the warehouse despite being sure that there is a rat among them. He is just a soldier who has to go through the motions he has been taught and cannot think on his own. Soldiers are also replaceable. When Jules quits Marsellus brings in Paul and the work continues. Soldiers also imply officers and those in the films are Marsellus, Joe, and Eddie. They determine what is to be done and how, and then send in the soldiers to implement the plan. The visual elements illustrate the death of the subject. The characters lack the capacity to think on their own and to act on their own. They only follow orders and due to this illustrate the death of the subjects.

The suits are meant to give the gangsters the identity of gangsters. Stella Bruzzi notes, “these suits are covering up for a lack of identity” (87). The characters are not really gangsters, but they want to look the part and the dresses allow them to become gangsters. Mr. Orange’s change of dress from a check shirt, to a white T-shirt and leather jacket and then to a *linea Italiana* suit marks his transformation into a gangster.

Part of the gangster-ness of Vince and Jules in *Pulp Fiction* comes from their hair. The two have different sorts of hair, but both types connect them to the roles of gangsters. Vince’s hair is “Euro haircut, which is sometimes Eurotrash and sometimes elegant” (Seal). Gelled back hair has been characteristic of the Mafioso, as both real life gangster and their filmic counterparts have traditionally supported gelled back hair. So Vince having gelled back hair makes sense, as he wants to create an impression that he is a criminal. Jules's hair is also according to a type as all “the gangbangers had Jheri Curls" (Seal). The two are creating an image of gangsters in as many superficial ways as possible.

The visual elements work subliminally to show the gangsters coming apart and being reduced to naughty children cleaning up for fear of being caught. Their first appearance is classy. Black suits, shiny formal shoes, ties all make for a suave appearance. But then their day goes bad and the viewers come across them with their clothes “dirty, bloody, and wrinkled” (Ciment and Niogret, *Interview* 87). Their tough guy image is coming apart, literally and figuratively. And then they are forced by the situation to wear jimmy’s old clothes and their fall is complete and this fall is depicted visually. Now they are no longer wearing their well-trimmed suits. They are wearing jimmy’s old clothes and “looking a little stupid with their T-shirts and their sloppy dressing.” (Ciment and Niogret, *Interview* 87). The visual elements present them as gangsters and it is again the visual elements which contribute in an immensely significant way to revealing the truth that they only pretend to be gangsters, they are acting and are not subjects with power but are hollow men.

The simulacra of the gangsters in *Pulp Fiction* breaks down to reveal the waning of the affect. There is a gradual decay of the image of Jules and Vince from terrible gangsters to little children. In Brett’s apartment, they are in control of the situation. They kill the three men without any hesitation and without remorse. When Brett is killed Marvin almost faints, but Jules and Vince remain unaffected. It implies that they are used to killing people. But then these macho men are reduced to a

feminine role in a domesticated setting where they head, to find refuge from the blood they have on them. They use domestic cleaning products and scoop and scrape the blood and guts from the car to get it clean. They are therefore no longer the gangsters they were before. Vince is not able to get the blood off of his hands, thus, prompting Jules to reprimand him for turning the towel into a “goddamn maxipad” (*Pulp Fiction*). The feminization is now beyond doubt as the blood has been linked with menstruation.

The next step is that the gangsters after being feminized are infantilized. The gangsters being afraid of the cops is understandable. The gangsters being considerate towards Jimmie can also be rationalized as a part of their value system. But what deals these gangster’s image as gangsters a crushing blow is that these packing gangsters are afraid of Jimmie’s wife. Tarantino offers an insight into the gangsters when he says that Jules and Vince are little children “afraid of their mom coming home” because they will be caught in their role-playing (Ciment and Niogret, *Interview* 87). The naughty children-mother analogy also works at the visual level: the little kids have got their clothes dirty and change into clean, though not necessarily nice, clothes for fear of being caught. It is comical that the gangsters are afraid of a woman. Jules, Vince and The Wolf being afraid of Bonnie only shows that they are not gangsters. They are only little kids playing at being gangsters.

By the end of the Bonnie situation, the suave gangsters of Brett's apartments are reduced to "dorks" wearing silly T-shirts and shorts (*Pulp Fiction*). Thus completes the transformation into children taking away their strength and fearsome aura. Booker notes in this the waning of affect that seems to “flatten” Vincent and Jules “into comic book figures” (15).

Marsellus's bar cum restaurant cum office cum den exudes the prestige of the Godfather’s office in *The Godfather*. The bar is dimly lit and the abundance of wood approximates it with the Godfather's office. The dark bar serves to highlight the mystery of his character and actions, such as no one really knows why he had Tony Roccamora thrown out of a window. Marsellus is trying to be the Godfather as he plays at being a tough boss. This interpretation is strengthened in light of the pastiche that is apparent in his answer to Butch when he asks what Marsellus will do with the hillbilly who had sodomized him "I'm gonna call a couple pipe-hittin' niggers, who'll go to work on Holmes here with a pair of pliers and a blow torch" (*Pulp Fiction*). That this is derived from *Charley Varrick* proves that Marsellus is playing at being a

tough boss as he creates a simulacrum of toughness with his appearances, the look of his den and his language.

Mia's favorite *Jack Rabbit Slim's* stands out from the other restaurants in Pulp Fiction and Reservoir Dogs because of its being a high end place as opposed to the ordinary diners that the characters usually frequent. The restaurant because of its evocation of the Hollywood 1950s is prestigious and Mia goes there because of this image of prestige that going to the restaurant associates with her. The restaurant with its $5 shakes that Vince is surprised at, appeals to the affluent and the classy and Mia wants this association.

The restaurant also shows simulacra in the characters' lives in that it is populated by staff who are images of celebrities such as Marilyn Monroe, Mamie van Doren, and Buddy Hollie etc. It may be said that these celebrities existed and the waiters and waitresses are only the images of the celebrities. But these celebrities, as people know them, are made up constructs and what people know are only the images in the media. Marilyn Monroe trying to keep her dress down as the breeze from an air-vent tries to lift it up is not the real Marilyn Monroe but a crafted image of Marilyn Monroe. People remember this made up image and the waitress dressed like Marilyn is trying to capture this image. Seen like this the waiting staff are simulacra "imitation of images of perfection" (Gallafent 74). Mia preferring Jack Rabbit Slim's because of these images and Vince being in awe of these images show how Tarantino's characters are taken in by the simulacra in their world.

The commodities the characters have are not just objects. These objects are invested with meanings of social prestige, high society, connoisseur, Americana etc. Vince's car is a Malibu, an American classic that is part of the myth of Americana. The reason he has it is not that it is a particularly fast car or easy to maintain. He has it because it makes him part of an exclusive group of people who own classic cars. Lance asks Vince if he still has his Malibu and this launches Vince into a rant about his prized possession. He keeps it so that people will ask him about it and he is able to show off. The Wolf with his Gucci watch and Acura is no different. He has these possessions because they help him to cultivate an image of being suave and belonging to high society.

The actions in the characters' lives are also just surfaces without any depth, no matter how seemingly important the actions may be. Operation Kino in *Inglourious Basterds* for which Landa and the Basterds are set to receive laudations is nothing

more than a simulacrum. Operation Kino starts off as a reality. The British spy Bridget cooks the plan and Gen Fenech states the objective to be to "[b]low up the basket" of "rotten eggs"—top tier of the Nazi regime including Goebbels, Goring, and Boorman in addition to highly ranked German army officers and propagandists—as they get together for the screening of *Nation's Pride*. When Landa kills Bridget and captures Aldo he is in a strong position to fulfil his agenda and so he changes the very nature and objectives of Operation Kino. He says that military history should mention that he was always a part of Operation Kino and his atrocities as "The Jew Hunter" were commissioned by the operation to help him infiltrate the ranks of the Nazis even deeper. He also sets the agenda of killing Hitler and ending the war. Operation Kino never had the objective of killing Hitler or ending the war. Even Aldo was there to kill as many Nazis as he could and not to end the war. The Operation Kino that would lead to Hitler's assassination and bring about the end of the war is not a real operation; it is made up by Landa to create a place for himself in Nantucket and in the history books and is, therefore, a simulacrum.

The study reads Hitler's assassination, a major event in *Inglourious Basterds*, as a simulacrum. The death of the character seems to be cause for cheers and jubilation and is a victory of good over evil, but it is just an image. Hitler's dead body is not enough of a reality here for it to constitute an image and not a simulacrum. A few lines from *Shooter* will help me make my case. Michael Sandor says, "There is no head to cut off. It's a conglomerate. […] What it is, is human weakness. You can't kill that with a gun" (Fuqua). In the same way, Hitler's death does not mean anything. He alone was not responsible for the genocide of the Jews. Also, this is not the only genocide. Since Hitler, there have been countless genocides and there will continue to be such atrocities because when one head is cut off another appears; one single person does not matter. It may be a good image for the public perception, but the image does not represent the reality that evil has been dealt with, in fact, it hides the truth that evil lurks within people, in their societies, and in their world and will come out again. As Marlow tells his listeners, evil is inherent and the killing of a representation is not enough to kill evil. In the light of this, I read Hitler's death as a simulacrum since it creates the false perception of the death of evil when evil prevails.

5.2 Conclusion

Andreas Hoefele's reading of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* reveals that "[i]dentity becomes an untenable concept in a world of surfaces" (76) and this is true for Tarantino's characters. All there is to them is surfaces, in fact, multiple surfaces and one cannot see past them to the core of the character. Tarantino's characters are depthless because they are simulacra and he knows it. He keeps the fact that the character is simulating under wraps and leaves it to the viewers to find out if they can if there is any substance or reality to the character. Not only does he construct his characters as simulacra his characters also construct themselves as simulacra. Either way, they end up being depthless and illustrate the waning of affect. It may also be mentioned that the waning of affect contributes to the notion of the death of the subject.

Having exhaustively discussed the chief features of Jameson's postmodernism in Tarantino's characters, the study is now left with detailing how the characters weigh against nostalgia and hyperspace in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

PASTICHE AND HYPERSPACE

This chapter discusses Tarantino's characters in the light of Jameson's notion of Pastiche and hyperspace. The chapter analyses the ways in which pastiche contributes to the makeup of the characters. It also analyses the spaces the characters occupy and move around in as hyperspace and determines their effect on the characters particularly in turning the characters into a consumer-culture-driven hypercrowd.

6.1 Pastiche and Nostalgia

For Jameson pastiche is a key feature of postmodernism. Jameson feels that postmodernism does not allow for the possibility of a wholly individualistic style. This, combined with the absence of a norm in the world, leads to pastiche which is a re-arrangement of previous styles and evocation of existing meanings in new works. Jameson feels that artists refer back to earlier works and by using visuals, language, and even scenes from earlier works, bring in meanings from those existing works into their new works. His assertion is that the modernist notion of parody where an existing work was ridiculed is no longer possible in the postmodern world and this parody has been replaced with pastiche. Nostalgia is a related concept where the postmodern human being has been so bombarded with images of the past that they start taking the images to constitute the actual past and feel that the past was indeed like the images they have come across in the media. What follows is a detailed look at Jameson's characters in the light of Jameson's concept of pastiche and nostalgia to show how Tarantino's characters exhibit pastiche.

6.1.1 Butch's Weapon

Butch frees himself and is making his escape good when he decides to go back and save Marsellus. He looks around the pawn shop that has all sorts of objects lying around for something that can be used for a weapon and chooses a hammer but decides to discard it as this is just a weapon of murder, the reference being *Friday the 13th Part Two*. Butch discards it in favor of a baseball bat. The bat is reminiscent of

Pusser's handcrafted bat which he used to exact revenge on the criminals who had beaten him in *Walking Tall*, a reference that Glyn White also sees. But Butch realizes that this will reduce him to a "vigilante" (G. White 342) and he discards it for an electric chainsaw. The chainsaw references *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and implies excessive gratuitous violence and psychopathy. His choice of weapon, a Katana samurai sword that Butch wields Takakura Ken-style (Edwards), shows that Butch has chosen to project himself as a man on a mission to restore his honor, a point that is strengthened by the association with movies like *Yakuza* and *Seven Samurai* (G. White 342). Butch's choice of a sword over the other instruments that can be used as weapons supports the thesis that Butch is fighting to restore his honor. The sword transforms Butch from a used-up, cheating pugilist into "a soldier, a warrior, one who is connected to a history and a tradition and whose actions are guided by a strict code of conduct" (Conrad M. 134). His plan to return to Knoxville, Tennessee, the place where his great-grandfather bought the watch that was to become the family's heirloom, also strengthens the reading of Butch's action as gaining honor and redemption. It is the element of pastiche that pitches Tarantino's character as a hero warrior and not just another killer. Jameson's assertion that the subject looks to the previous styles is evident here in that Butch takes the meaning and connotations from the existing works to create a meaning and style for himself.

6.1.2 Language

Marsellus relies on pastiche to create his aura as a mafia boss. It is clearly evident in the way he acts after he has been sodomized. When Butch rescues him from Zed and Maynard's den, he swears revenge on Zed: "I'm gonna call a couple pipe-hittin' niggers, who'll go to work on Holmes here with a pair of pliers and a blow torch" (*Pulp Fiction*). The line echoes what Maynard Boyle, the mafia financier says in *Charley Varrick*, "They're gonna strip you naked and go to work on you with a pair of pliers and a blowtorch." This similarity leads me to assert that Marsellus is trying to play the part of a tough boss. His language is one way of asserting his authority and he borrows this line from a movie because it just paints the right image of a tough boss for him. Jonathan Cavallero's comment strengthens my reading of Marsellus. He writes, "Tarantino's characters mimic the identities of fictional criminals and antiheroes" (130).

Jules's terrifying monologue that he attributes to Ezekiel 25 is more than simulacra. It is also pastiche in that the lines are modelled on lines from the film

Karate Kiba (also known as *The Bodyguard*). Tarantino only brings in minor differences: the lines in *Karate Kiba* are scrolled and there are a few revisions in the words. The fact that the lines beckon to an earlier film constitutes pastiche. This pastiche also supports the point that Jules's portrayal of a terrifying gangster is nothing more than an act based on films. This is an instance of a subject using the existing styles to create their own style as posited by Jameson.

Tarantino crafts his Basterds in true Hollywood fashion on the "screen memory" (Setka, 142) of the holocaust. The Hollywood representation of the holocaust has been favorable to the Jews, but it has appropriated the Jewish identity and turned it into an American identity through a "conflation of Jewish and American identities" (Setka 142). This is what Tarantino also does. His Basterds are as American as they are Jewish and thus are steeped in the pop culture images of the Holocaust and its sufferers. The narrative built by Hollywood and pop culture around the Holocaust has the characters of the suppressed Jews, cruel Nazis and the epitome of Nazi barbarianism Hitler. Tarantino does not depart from this model—on the surface—and makes his characters in a manner that evokes nostalgia and allows the viewers to class the characters into categories.

Jack Rabbit Slim's is for Vince a "wax museum with a pulse" (*Pulp Fiction*). Mia takes Vince to a high-end restaurant Jack Rabbit Slim's which is crafted after the images of the 1950s. It is Vince's first time there, but the references are not lost on him. The restaurant has scalextric cars racing on a scalextric track. The booths are shaped like huge American cars of the 1950s. Video screens playing shots of streets from the 1950s have been placed strategically so that it seems the windows open into the street and cars of the 1950s era are going past the windows. The dance floor is the shape of a speedometer which reinforces the link of the restaurant with Elvis Presley era—due to Elvis's interest in cars. The pop references do not stop at the physical layout of the restaurant. The waiters and waitresses are dressed like film characters of the era. The film shows Jane Mansfield and even Marilyn Monroe who goes to stand over an air duct so that she can mimic Monroe's classic move, holding her dress down as the breeze attempts to flip it over. The waiter who takes their order is dressed as Buddy Holly, a rock and roll musician, and songwriter; Ed Sullivan is the host of the dance contest and Ricky Nelson the singer (Conrad, P. Woods). The nostalgia works in that the characters recognize these images of the past and make it seem to them that they are indeed reliving the past.

The restaurant is made up in the 1950s style and this is its appeal to the characters who feel they are re-living the time. In fact, the restaurant's slogan visible underneath the name says that it is the "next best thing to a time machine" so it is understandable that the characters fall for the ruse (*Pulp Fiction*). Mia is a regular here, but Vince is as much into it as Mia. He recognizes the film stars the staff are trying to represent and thus shows that the characters' view of the past is limited to a few images that the past has been associated with. Marilyn Monroe will always be the image of the 1950s and the characters long for this image. They are prepared to spend on exorbitantly priced shakes because the restaurant gives them a glimpse of the 1950s. Thus the idea of the past Tarantino's characters have is primarily the media images of the past.

Pastiche occurs in another form when Mia and Vince attempt to win the dance contest at the restaurant. Mia dances in her dance competition the way the Duchess—Tarantino calls her Zsa Zsa Gabor's cat in the interview with Graham Norton but the cat was voiced by Eva Gabor—moves in *The Aristocats* (*Quentin Tarantino: Dancing the Pulp Fiction Twist*). She puts her hands with her fingers pointing downwards and dances on tiptoes mimicking the moves in Wolfgang Reitherman's film. Tarantino in a BBC interview with Norton danced the dance and explained that Vince and Mia do two versions of the dance where Vince's is with energy, but Mia's is aristocratic as if she feels she does not need to dance well to get the trophy.

Nostalgia is evident in Butch's reverence for the watch that has been passed down in his family from his great-grandfather. The watch has also been passed through the rectum of two men and is, therefore, a disgusting object, but Captain Koons is able to build through his story of the watch, an image of the watch as a relic of the past and all its glory of fighting for the motherland, maintaining the bonds of brotherhood and responsibility that Butch has a nostalgic love for the watch. The watch stands for his past and the past of his family. This reveals the postmodern notion of nostalgia, i.e., what people know of the past is the images of the past and they long for these created images rather than the actual past. Butch's reaction is the reaction of the ordinary people who are taken in by the stories. He develops a value for the watch. Indeed, he looks at it as a sacred object, whereas it is a pretty disgusting object since it has been in the bowels of two men. The close association of the watch with excrement also makes possible the reading that even the shit of the past is gold for the later generations because the past has been built into nostalgia.

Pastiche is at work in the selection of the actors for particular roles. Brad Pitt plays Aldo Raine in *Inglourious Basterds*. The element of pastiche comes from Brad Pitt's earlier role in *Legends of the Fall* where his character Tristan was brought up by Indians and grows up to marry an Indian girl. Brad Pitt's character Tristan scalps his enemies in the allegedly Indian way and this association is responsible for pastiche.

There is a strong element of pastiche evoking the Blaxploitation films of the 1970s. A parallel with a key film of the genre will help make the point. In *The Mack* "women are acquisitions" in true Blaxploitation fashion (Lawrence 72). The Blaxploitation hero displays his women and liquor but is not interested in either. He does not have any physical interest in women and is also not interested in enjoying alcohol. He is weary of both because both can harm him. In *The Mack,* Goldie acquires his women before he can be considered by his peers to have achieved prosperity. In *Pulp Fiction,* Marsellus's acquisition of Mia is part of his claim to the elite status he has. This is not to say that he pimps Mia. But Mia only serves the purpose of letting Marsellus show his power. Just as the pimp is not interested in the women he owns but he has them in possession for the obvious purpose of his social prestige, the fact that Marsellus is not intimate with his new wife shows that Mia is his acquisition, not his love The parallel with a pimp taking his time to establish himself is unmistakable here. The pastiche with *The Mack* serves to bring out Marsellus's attempt to be considered powerful through the signs he exhibits.

Marsellus's relative misogyny—he's not concerned about Mia's feelings when she is handed over to Vince for an evening out—is accompanied by masculine characteristics as is characteristic of the Blaxploitation films. Black Power seemed to call for virulent race pride, physical resistance to white supremacy and colonialism" (Bausch 260)—all of which are there in Marsellus. Tarantino refers back to the characteristics of the heroes of Blaxploitation films in his character. Lawrence observes the "iconography" to comprise "machine guns, black limousines, tuxedos, and the acquisition of women" (63). Marsellus flaunts weapons, a luxurious mansion, an opulent lifestyle, one of the most beautiful white women and elegant dominating appearance and thus evokes the hero of the Blaxploitation films.

Tarantino crafts his British spy in *Inglourious Basterds,* Lt. Hilcox, as a parody of film critics. He was a film critic before the war and tells his officer that he worked for "*Films and Filmmakers"* and "*Flickers Bi-Monthly"* and has published two books: "*Art of the Eyes, the Heart, and the Mind: A Study of German Cinema in*

the Twenties" and "*Twenty-Four Frame Da Vinci*" (*Inglourious Basterds*). He can talk about films academically and compare directors and measure their success through statistics, but he fails when it comes to pulling off his assignment for which his profession of a film critic should have prepared him. While he speaks German fluently and correctly he cannot speak it in the right accent and immediately draws the attention of Hellstrom. Even the drunk Private Wilhem is able to note that his accent is not German. Tarantino is attempting to show through Hilcox that film critics are too academic and fail to realize the real-world dynamics of films and direction. The biggest attack on film critics comes when Lt. Hilcox blows his cover by figuring the number three without using his thumb the way the Germans do. This mistake makes Hellstrom sure of his suspicion and the ensuing bloodbath sees all the people in the tavern killed except Bridget who is shot in the leg. The incompetence is not of the spy, the incompetence is of the film critic—this is underscored by the fact that he is selected because of being a film critic—who is academic but not street smart. Thus Tarantino is satirizing film critics who get too caught up in academic debates and comparisons between directors and lose sight of the cultural grounding and meaning of the work that emanates from the director. Shosanna's remark, "We respect directors in our country" is proof that Tarantino is satirizing the film critics for being cut off from reality (*Inglourious Basterds*).

Tarantino's group of soldiers fighting the Nazis constitutes pastiche with the purpose of satirizing the cultural and social reception of genocide. Tarantino crafts the Nazis as per the screen image that has become ingrained in the public memory but for his soldiers, he creates a blend that has a strong element of the Indigenous People (Native Americans). Scalping the enemies is a tradition of the Indigenous People and by incorporating it in the story Tarantino is actually drawing attention to the fact that while the Holocaust has been Americanized and has witnessed massive attention the genocide of the Indigenous People has not been paid attention. It has been argued that Tarantino's Aldo Raine is meant to juxtapose the two genocides that herein lies the use of pastiche as a parody to drive home a political point. But Aldo's proclamation of being of Native American origin is not substantiated. In fact, the proof he offers—of being descendent of Jim Bridger—exposes the claim as a lie. So it is hard to see scalping as Tarantino’s way of lacing his pastiche with parody.

Tarantino's characters in *Inglourious Basterds* are crafted in a non-Hollywood way in terms of their categorization. Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* was satiric

and made fun of Hitler. Spielberg's *Schindler's List* presented the Jews as victims. *Saving Private Ryan* presented American soldiers as ordinary citizens risking their lives for their country and a mother. The categories are set: Hitler is a cruel fanatic, the Jews are toothless victims, and the American soldiers save the day out of their duty towards humanity. Tarantino crafts his characters in a way that they do not fit these traditionally neat categories. His Hitler is a helpless man whose power only extends to banning the name of The Bear Jew. He is the audience of the violence, not the perpetrator—he only watches the film that shows a German sniper killing one American soldier after another. There is little evidence of his cruelty to the Jews. The only Jews that are killed in the film are the Dreyfuses and here too the visual is never shown. They are hiding under the floor and all the audience get to see is bullets tearing the floorboards apart.

The great German hero Private Zoller is not a hero for killing Jews; he is a hero for killing American soldiers. He seems averse to violence since he leaves the screening when the killing he committed is being shown. He tells Shosanna the reason, "… this film is based on my military exploits. And in this case, my exploits consisted of me killing many men. Consequently, the part of the film that's playing now,... .I don't like watching this part" (*Inglourious Basterds*). He also serves to make the point that World War II and the Holocaust have been Americanized and thus as per Hollywood code the German hero is a hero for killing Americans not Jews.

American soldiers are no longer average Joes headed by the frail Captain Miller of *Saving Private Ryan*. They are cruel and kill more men than the German army does in the film. They are also motivated by revenge. Their being Jews means that the Jews have not been given their typical classification of the victim but have been turned into aggressors who fight very well. Women also rise in *Inglourious Basterds* to occupy power. Operation Kino—the plan to get rid of the top Nazis—is Bridget's plan. It is Shosanna who plans Hitler's murder and firebombs the cinema. Hitler's killing in *Inglourious Basterds*, thus, is the outcome of multiple factors. No single person can be exclusively credited with it: Bridget sneaks the Basterds in, Shosanna gets the doors blocked and the cinema burnt down, the Basterds gun Hitler down and Landa enables the Basterds to gun Hitler down by striking the deal. No single character is responsible and this is Tarantino's jibe at history which always classifies facts into neat compartments and fails to tell people that historical events are the outcome of a number of events and involve multiple personalities. Also by

creating characters who defy the content of history books and act in newer ways, Tarantino is pitching the view that there are many genocides in the world but the Hollywood-taught world has focused on only one.

There is palpable pastiche in the way Hitler's death is depicted in the film. The American president famous for his stance against slavery, Abraham Lincoln, was killed as he watched a theatre performance from a box. Tarantino's Hitler meets his end in a cinema box. The parallel shows pastiche in the sense that Tarantino is pitching the death of a hero against the death of a dastardly villain and thereby satirizing the neat and convenient categories of good guys and bad guys that Hollywood and history have imposed on audiences. Tarantino's satire is unmistakable, here, as he is making his audience look at history more critically.

That none of Tarantino's characters can be credited with assassinating Hitler constitutes satire also in the sense that Hitler's death has been presented as the victory of good over evil. But this and other victories like this are all false images. Such images hide the fact that evil still exists; it is only a symbol of evil that has been exterminated. Such images also prevent people from questioning the definitions of good and evil. As Landa points out, the plan to assassinate Hitler may be called a terrorist plot or a mission, depending on which side is commenting on it. By drumming up the death of Hitler as evil, the media curb any attempt to define evil and this is partly why so many look at the Holocaust as the only genocide and do not realize that genocides litter the history of the world. Tarantino satirizes the simple feel-good images Hollywood has fed people all over the world and through his characters opens up the possibility of questioning definitions that history makes and events that history marks as important.

6.3 Hyperspace

The notion of hyperspace is crucial in Jameson's notion of postmodernism. The Westin Bonaventure in Los Angeles contains illustrations of hyperspace, which confounds the inhabitants and disorients them, forcing them to come up with newer ways to locate themselves in the surroundings and to come up with newer strategies of establishing associations. Placing Tarantino's characters in a space peculiar to a particular era or decade is problematic. While the other features of postmodernism such as depthlessness are clear it is difficult to determine what sort of space they inhabit. Mia's house in *Pulp Fiction* is a technological space with gadgets galore, the warehouse in *Reservoir Dogs* is a world in itself and then there is also Jack Rabbit Slim's that recreates the world of the

1950s. For his characters in *Inglourious Basterds,* he recreates the theater of World War II. This part of the study discusses the "Tarantinoverse" (Laist) Tarantino's characters occupy in the light of pastiche and hyperspace.

Using the insight the study gained from discussing that the restaurant Mia takes Vince to in *Pulp Fiction* illustrates pastiche, it will now be discussed that the reason the characters prefer or frequent this restaurant is nostalgia.

The restaurant makes it seem that the 1950s that pervade the restaurant are outside too. It manages this by showing street scenes of 1950 on video screens that mimic windows so a person who raises his head to look out actually sees the monitors and is lulled into believing that it is indeed the 1950s. The hyperreality blurs "the distinction between the Real World and Possible Worlds" (Eco 14). Mia and to some extent Vince—he is impressed with the shake—are drawn to the restaurant for "the cartoonish" reality it represents and which lets them avoid reality. The restaurant is modelled after an image of the 1950s and in this exhibits nostalgia, but it also exhibits a link with hyperspace in that it cuts the characters off of the real world. The windows here are not real windows. They are technological gadgets that blind the patrons to the real city and lets them live in this isolated world in a sort of similar way to the interior of the Westin Bonaventure that cuts the visitor off of the reality outside.

In the war era *Inglourious Basterds* the world is decidedly postmodern for its architecture and landscaping. It may be said that it exhibits, the past, but it actually only exhibits what can readily be taken as the landscape of the war era Germany and France. The Tarantinoverse here is built on nostalgia. The towns and the houses they contain, as also Hitler's war headquarter, the Parisian cinema, restaurant, and the bar are built in such a way that the viewers' prior knowledge gained through other period films will make them readily identifiable as part of the World War II scene.

The warehouse that the Ramblers in *Reservoir Dogs* use as their meeting point after the heist does not strike me as being anything close to glamorous. It borders on the decrepit and is without any ornamentation, but it shares a key element with Westin Bonaventure that Jameson uses as an example to extrapolate his views on postmodernism. Like the hotel, it is a world in its own. The Bonaventure does not resist the city or try to oppose the city it becomes a part of the city by reflecting the city itself in its outer surfaces. The onlooker sees only the city in the glass exterior of the iconic hotel. While on the outside the hotel is in a way indistinguishable from the city—because it reflects the city—on the inside, the hotel is a world in itself cut off

from the outside world. The immediate loss of orientation a visitor faces because of the deceptive entrance into the hotel, is barely over when the inside structure of the hotel forces the visitor to try to make sense of the labyrinths of the hotel that do not have signs to direct the visitors to their desired locations. The warehouse does not have glass surfaces to reflect the city but it is a non-distinct warehouse and because it does not stand out and forms a natural part of the cityscape it can be said that it is like the Bonaventure a part of the city and does not resist the city by trying to stand out. Like the Bonaventure, it is a world in itself on the inside because it shuts the city out, as there are only a few small windows with panes that are too dusty to afford an outside view. On the inside, it defeats any attempt to make sense of it by refusing to be identified. There are no signboards in the hotel and the warehouse has no signs that can help determine what sort of warehouse it is. I was on the lookout for signs that may give me a clue regarding the identity of the house but there was not a single clue. A solitary tall crate got me interested in conjecturing its content, but any speculation regarding its tallness was forestalled by the car parked a few feet away. Wrapped up in cellophane it defies description. It may be a classic car meant to be stored or it may be a murder weapon and the crate a coffin. The row of sinks, water pipes, white tiles that are contrasted with peeling cement and a ramp add to the confusion regarding the identity of the warehouse. Thus the space that the warehouse is, is hyperspace. There are no answers to be had in the warehouse because the warehouse achieves the “suppression of depth” (J. Berger) that postmodern literature and art achieve. It is a part of the city due to its ordinariness but once inside it becomes a complete world by shutting the city out. The fact that the characters have chosen this warehouse shows their postmodernism. They feel at ease in this space without orientation because they are postmodern in their thinking.

Jameson's fascination with escalators and elevators is evident in his influential work. He looks at them as machines that help traverse the terrain of the postmodern Bonaventure. For Tarantino’s characters cars serve the same purpose as escalators. They represent motion as well as inertia. Also, they are no less aesthetic than the "gigantic kinetic sculptures" of Portman's building.

In *Reservoir Dogs* the characters' cars are not mere modes of transportation from A to B but they are aesthetically created works of art which are part of the larger hyperspace of the cities and states. They are the "allegorical signifier of that older promenade we are no longer allowed to conduct on our own" (Jameson 42). Cars have

replaced walking. The advancement in and access to technology, the spread of wealth and technology-based lifestyles have led to a reliance on cars as modes of transport. Where one goes is dictated to a great extent by cars. The area being accessible by a car and the type of car one has access to determine to a large extent where people travel. Cars have come to not just replace walking and similar forms of movement, they have also come to "designate themselves as new reflexive signs and emblems of movement proper" (Jameson 42). Their centrality to the culture and way of life is an embodiment of Jameson's idea that modern culture is cable of designating its own products as its culture.

Cars are also like escalators and elevators in the sense that just as escalators blend motion and stillness, cars also blend movement and stillness and like elevators deny the characters agency. The driver and the passengers are still with respect to the car but moving with respect to the surroundings. There is a related notion at work here too. Cars are becoming more like elevators as the human input and the effort of driving are decreasing by the day. Driver-less cars are not shown in *Reservoir Dogs* but even without gadgets like GPS, cameras, and sensors Mr. White is driving without effort—he finds time to talk to Mr. Orange in the back seat as he speeds through the traffic. He is able to talk to his passenger and also to look back at him. This is man and machine as one and, therefore, gives credence to the association between cars and elevators which do not require any major input. Of course, the present day cars are just a few steps away from becoming exactly like elevators where one would need to just punch in the destination and the car would carry them to the place without them having to drive. Tarantino's characters are like the hypercrowd Jameson talks about. They feel that cars are conveniences making their lives easy and also that cars give them agency. But the cars take them from one task to another and in fact control the characters like elevators in the Westin Bonaventure do.

Cars are also hyperspace in that they are a world in themselves. People ensconced in cars tend to feel that they are cut off from the rest of the world and also feel safe from outside interference. There is a tendency among drivers to make angry gestures or mouth obscenities at pedestrians and motorists at perceived infractions or poor driving of other motorists. Such a driver has an increased likelihood of exhibiting their anger because the person is in their own world—their car—and feels that because they are in their own world the outside world cannot harm them.

Marsellus Wallace's house in *Pulp Fiction* is also hyperspace because of its reliance on technology that turns abstractions into the mainstream. Mia communicates with Vince through an intercom as she sees him on CCTV monitors. The materiality of human interaction has been turned into the abstraction of a digital sound and images. The numerous sculptures and paintings that adorn the place show that the house is hyperspace because it erases the boundary between art and the functional.

Jack Rabbit Slim's is also hyperspace because it relies on technology and presents itself as a world in entirety. The interior of the restaurant has cut cars that serve as booths and the dance floor is the shape of a speedometer. It is adorned with pictures and posters from the 1950s films and personalities and is staffed with people impersonating icons of the 1950s film world. The video monitors that are installed in place of windows create an outside world of the 1950s and thus complete the world of the restaurant.

The postmodern hyperspace is a world of capitalism where the subjects have been reduced to consumers. Tarantino's characters are consumers. They have no will to stand up against the products that are forced onto them and are thereby reduced to mere consumers of products as also information and entertainment. What follows is a discussion of Tarantino's characters as subjects of consumer culture induced by hyperspace.

Just as capitalism and also late-capitalism are evident in the Westin Bonaventure Hotel capitalism and they are evident in the hyperspace of the warehouse in *Reservoir Dogs*. The Ramblers are operating under the principles of capitalism. They are working for a higher authority who stands to gain much more than they do, but they have to work for Joe Cabot because only Joe can put things together through which they can earn some money. The diamonds they steal do not have any inherent value, value due to utility or due to scarcity; they only have exchange value. Diamonds, precious as they may be perceived to be, have value for the Ramblers only because Joe knows a black market dealer who can sell them. If the black market dealer had not been there the diamonds would have been worthless. Thus objects and even people have value according to the principles of capitalism. The warehouse, in being a hyperspace, brings abstraction into the mainstream and disorients its inhabitants just as the Westin Bonaventure does. Capitalism rests on abstractions but late capitalism brings those abstractions into the mainstream. The hyperspace of the Westin Bonaventure brings abstractions into the foreground and the warehouse in

Reservoir Dogs also does the same. It illustrates the deterritorialization brought in by late capitalism. Here there are gang members who are working together but under new identities and in a situation where no one knows who the others are. They are in a space that does not have a clear meaning or form. This disorientation is further cemented by the situation where they do not know whether they should stay here or move out to some other place. All these reflect the disorientation and displacement of the work force by late capitalism. Jameson observes that the deterritorialization induced by the hyperspace is detrimental to capitalism—the shops stand to lose revenue because the customers cannot visit the same shops again—and late capitalism responds to it by bringing in signs to direct the visitors to the shops. In *Reservoir Dogs* the deterritorialization is countered by the introduction of Joe Cabot into the warehouse. His arrival signifies that the capitalist principles and order have been restored.

Tarantino's characters in *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction* move around spaces that do not show any iconic architecture that can readily identify the real world city they are inhabiting. This gels in with Jameson's notion of the deterritorializing effect of hyperspace. It is meant to show that the characters are part of the late capitalist world of multinational corporations where geographical spaces boundaries do not matter and where capital is limited to particular territories.

The first characters to appear on the screen in *Pulp Fiction* are Pumpkin and Honey Bunny. The characters show themselves to be postmodern beings whose postmodernity is marked by consumer culture. They seem to be living together and the viewers are lead to believe that they are involved in a romantic relationship. They depict the triumph of consumer culture over the nuclear family. The modernist nuclear family expectations would have them ensconced in their love nest with their two children and the homely wife taking care of her husband and the children. In this nuclear family, any meal time would be family time with the father, the man of the house, lording over the dinner table. An image search with the terms 1950s nuclear family yields pictures that show the wife/mother busy taking care of the family. A recurrent theme is that she is cooking for the family. When it is not the mother cooking the picture shows the father preparing Barbeque out in the lawn. The common element is that the family is self-sufficient in that it can meet its own needs regarding the preparation of the food it consumes. Tarantino's characters are different. They show a rejection of the notion of the nuclear family. Their postmodern world

has reduced them to mere consumers of products. They could have made their breakfast at home but to followers of consumer culture, it is only natural that they should go to a diner. This is the same as people queuing up outside Starbucks for their morning coffee. The consumer culture attitude of buying one's coffee was proliferated through the media especially through the iconic 1990s sitcom *Friends* where the friends hang out in a coffee shop called Central Perk. The program takes inspiration from *Cheers* from the 1980s where the situations are played out in a Boston bar. Friends, attributed to the influence of the coffee industry in the US, became a roaring success and established grabbing one's coffee from such shops as a routine. Images of detectives walking to the office with a cup of coffee, doctors sending their young subordinates on coffee-runs, policemen showing up at the crime scene with coffee cups, pervade the media and show that man has been turned into a consumer of products even those of such basic variety. The rage of coffee hangouts particularly multinational giants such as Starbucks, Dunkin Donuts etc. can be seen in that news of the most expensive coffee order at Starbucks is worthy of news coverage with coffeeeinformer.com posting a top ten most expensive order on their website. Fern in news story of July 15, 2014 chronicles Sameera of Florida placing an order of $60.58 to earn the honor of placing the costliest order at the coffee shop. The fact that people are taking the trouble of coining costly orders even at the risk of consuming dangerous amounts of caffeine accompanied by the fact that there are people chronicling these so called feats, point to the fact that there is an audience for such overwhelming domination of the consumer culture. A person can claim excellence just because they can consume more than others. This may seem trivial, but it is a telling glimpse of the spread of consumer culture. Pumpkin and Honey Bunny are also part of this consumer culture whose adherents relish on spending and consuming. The ease with which they discuss their plan in the café and the way they do not care for the littered table showcases them as regulars and thus establishes consumerism as part of their makeup. Also, they are engaged in a profound discussion over the course of their lives where Pumpkin resolves to quit robbing only to get back to his old ways within a day. This is exactly what shows like *Cheers*, *Friends,* and *Frazier* portray. A nineties' hit and one of the most highly-ranked comedies ever, *Frazier* regularly shows the two Crane brothers visiting Café Nervosa to devise their plans, calm their nerves or to keep their social engagements. Whatever they do the café is a crucial part of their postmodern existence. The same can be said for Honey Bunny and Pumpkin

that the diner experience is a regular part of their lives. Similarly, Jules and Vince also eat at a restaurant. In fact, no character is shown eating a meal at home. When the mob boss, Wallace, is shown by his pool he is sipping a drink with a little umbrella embellishment that is dictated by the restaurant and bar culture.

That family does not play a major role in the lives of Tarantino's characters is in stark contrast to the model of modernist cinema which "always romanticized the conventional nuclear family" or at least upheld this basic social unit of American society as the standard repository of established values, loving personal relationships, and effective childhood socialization" (Boggs and Pollard, 445). Where the characters have families, the family life revolves around "a jaundiced, sometimes confused, often violence-laden understanding of gender relations, intimacy, and sexuality" (Boggs and Pollard, 445). Mia and Marsellus Wallace certainly have a strange relationship where the husband asks another man to show his wife a good time. Jimmie's subservience to Bonnie and the fact that he is living off of her is a contortion of the gender roles and family structure espoused by modernist cinema.

Even in *Reservoir Dogs*, the restaurant is an important place. The gang meets up at the restaurant and lazes about discussing songs and tips. Freddy Newendyke meets his mentor in a diner. They are police officers involved in an undercover operation and secrecy is of utmost importance to them. This means that meeting in a restaurant or a diner is appropriate because frequenting restaurants is a common habit of the postmodern people.

Inglourious Basterds too has a number of major scenes in restaurants. Zoller pitches his proposal to hold the screening at Shosanna's cinema to Goebbels in a restaurant and Landa carries out his initial investigation of Shosanna in the same restaurant. The way he devours the apple strudel shows his mad love for produced food. It is also possible to read into Landa sticking his cigarette butt in the dessert that he feels he has conquered the world of consumer culture. The Basterds are revealed in a bar where the characters indulge in drinking and lengthy games of cards showing that they feel at home in the restaurant/bar setting.

Jules, the verbose life changer with his love for religion and keenness to achieve enlightenment, is as much a consumer of products as any other character. Walking into Brett's apartment on a mission to retrieve Wallace's briefcase he is stricken by the burger Brett is eating. He wants to know what sort of hamburger—"the cornerstone of any nutritious breakfast" (*Pulp Fiction*)—it is and when Brett offers

information that it is a cheeseburger Jules cuts him short because he does not require this information. He is interested in the brand of the hamburger.

JULES. What kind of hamburger?

BRETT. Juicy cheeseburger.

JULES. No no no no. where did you get it? Macdonald's? Wendy's? Jack-in-the-box?

BRETT. Big Kahuna Burger

JULES. Big Kahuna Burger? That's the Hawaiian joint …you mind if I try one of yours?

Jules shows himself to be a product of consumer culture, as he just cannot resist the temptation of trying a mass produced standardized product that he has not tried before. Also, he cannot resist trying this product and comparing it against the other products that make up the big names of the fast food industry.

JULES. What's in this?

BRETT. Sprite.

JULES. Sprite! Would you mind if I have some of your tasty beverage to wash this down with?

Once again Jules is intrigued by the packaged product and his curiosity forces him to ask for it. He does not ask for water because of the appeal of the consumer product. Also, the characters do not use any overarching term like "beverage" to hide having to dish out the details of the product they are consuming because the details of the products define them. This sort of thinking is reflected in the designer labels being on the outside of the dresses. The designer labels appear on the front bottom of T-shirts, adorn the chest of men's shirts, occupy the shoes and are tacked onto ladies' handbags. Consumer culture turns human beings into walking billboards and these walking billboards have no qualms about advertising some label because their identity as individuals rests on these labels and these labels project a healthy image of them.

At Jimmy's house, Jules appreciates Jimmy's coffee and mentions that he would have been happy with Taster's Choice but he is only too happy to see Jimmy serve him "some serious gourmet shit" (*Pulp Fiction*). He may not really be impressed by Jimmy's taste of coffee, but he is trying to appease Jimmy by appreciating his choice of a consumer product. The identity of a person is linked to the products they use. Also, people choose and use particular products to create

identities for themselves and Jimmy's boasting of his coffee is proof that he feels good in choosing a particular brand of coffee.

Jules, talking about Vince's trip to Europe, is interested in finding out what a Big Mac is called in France to which Vince replies that it is called *Le Big Mac*. The issue of my interest here is that the topic of discussion is a consumer product. They could have been talking about any of the fascinating things about French culture, cuisine, history or literature, but they choose to talk about a consumer product because consumer products are a big part of their life. Reading fast food menus is all the reading they do and the discussion shows the dominance of multinational consumerism. Macdonald's, like the other chains, is not confined to the US. It has spread its tentacles across the globe and the chain, its products, and the insignia, comprising the golden arches, are recognized the world over.

Macdonald's Quarter Pounder, a hamburger with a patty that weighs a quarter of a pound before being cooked, takes up quite some time of the character's time in *Pulp Fiction*. Vince, back from his journey to Europe enlightens Jules, about the subtle differences between the US and Europe by citing the example of a hamburger: what is a Quarter Pounder with Cheese in the US is Royale with Cheese in Europe as if this example was a glorious example of the differences between the two continents. The example shows how characters measure their lives and multinational corporations constitute their lives to a great extent. That Jules and Vince go on to discuss the French equivalents for Big Mac and Whopper only shows how central consumer products are to their lifestyle.

The passion for consuming fast food is paralleled in Butch when on a mission to retrieve his watch he stops to toast himself a packet of Sam's Toaster Pastries. He is in danger since he has invited Marsellus's wrath by betraying him, but he chooses to linger in the apartment because of the temptation of the product. It may be said that the fascination of the product is great enough to risk his life and this shows the power consumer goods have over the characters.

The characters' fascination with fast food is so strong that Mr. Blonde fleeing from the police dragnet and that too with a policeman as his hostage finds time to pick a burger and a drink. Even during the tense standoff, he is munching on his burger and sipping his drink. Whether it is his mechanism to release stress or his way of looking cool, the point is that it shows how important fast food, ready-made for consumption, is to him.

Barthes writing about the iconic automobile, Citroen DS notes, “I think cars today are almost the exact equivalent of the great Gothic cathedrals. I mean the supreme creation of an era, conceived with passion by unknown artists and consumed in image if not in usage by a whole population, which appropriates them as a purely magical object" (Barthes 88). It is no surprise, then, that Tarantino's postmodern characters hold cars in high esteem. Vince's pain is evident when he mentions that someone keyed his beloved Malibu. "I had it in storage for three years. It was out five days and some dick-less piece of shit fucking with it" (*Pulp Fiction*) The intensity of pain with which he mentions the keying and the disgust he feels for the worthless scum who did it are matched only by the intense punishment he proposes for the person: "He should be fucking killed man. No trial, no jury, straight to execution" (*Pulp Fiction*). Capital punishment for making a scratch on someone's car fits the crime for these postmodern men because the postmodern world is ruled by images of consumer culture. Commodities command respect. They are pampered and served and protected and any violation of one's commodity brings about the same emotions and threats as a violation of the most sacred of beings.

This point has a connection with the death of the subject discussed in the previous chapter. The subjects' attachment to material possessions is their timid attempt to give themselves an identity. Vince's investment in the car is to the end that driving around in a Malibu will enable him to present a particular image of himself. It is an attempt to matter in a world that is built on and around images. Vince knows he does not matter in this world and therefore tries to use the image to his advantage. Being asked, "Still got your Malibu?" allows Vince to enter a rant about how someone ruined his prize possession thus establishing himself as a connoisseur (*Pulp Fiction*). Of course, the critical viewer sees it as showcasing the importance of simulacra in the postmodern world, but Vince is happy in his delusion.

The Wolf is wearing an exquisite suit and a Gucci watch as he is called into action. He drives an Acura, a top-end sports car, which he is possessive about just as Vince is about his Chevy. Handing over the keys to his Acura to Vince the Wolf says, "Now get my car any different than I gave it, Monster Joe's gonna be disposing of two bodies" showing that he loves his car so much that he is willing to kill if it comes to harm (*Pulp Fiction*). Other than cars, gadgets in the house also signify consumer culture. Mobile phones dominate *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs*. Even when the characters call a landline phone they do so on the go from their mobile cellular

phones. Even inside the same house, the interaction between characters takes place via technology. Mia talks to Vince on the intercom set up in her home. She also monitors him on her CCTV before coming down. This is particularly interesting as security is sold to the people of the postmodern world as a commodity. Buying gadgets like cameras and monitors and alarms, like the one Mia turns off when she gets back from her date with Vince, are supposed to make people feel safe and even a man whom the world fears, needs this sense of safety.

Pulp Fiction shows the value accorded to human beings. The value varies for different characters but there, nevertheless, is a value. Antwan Roccamora has a little value as he is thrown out of a window but not killed while Marvin has no value. He is killed and nobody grieves his loss or even takes it as a loss. Vince does not consider Ringo worth anything and is ready to kill him to end the situation but for Jules Ringo's life has value and he buys it for $1500. Objects also have values. Vince's car is worth more than the life of whoever keyed it. But at the same time, the car is not worth enough to risk Mia's life and he crashes the car as he rushes Mia to Lance. The values are assigned by whoever has the power to do so. The car has value because Vince with a willingness to take life says so. Mia has value because Marsellus says so. The briefcase that Jules and Vince set out to retrieve holds value because Marsellus, the crime boss, says so. Jules and Vince kill three men to get the briefcase, Marvin becomes collateral damage, and Jules spends $1500 to make sure he gets the briefcase back to Marsellus without complication. The briefcase represents a commodity and it has value because someone higher up in the system has given it value and the cogs have to accept it.

Antwan's punishment at the hands of Marsellus and the discussion of the same as the waning of affect and in terms of language has been done in the previous chapter. The lengthy discussion that this has stirred in the characters also shows consumer culture. The world of the characters is one where everything has value and this value is in comparison and contrast with other things. Antwan's punishment has value in contrast with the alleged offence. Seen in this light Jules and Marsellus are not discussing the right or wrong of it but are discussing the value that was put on the alleged offence. Jules is of the opinion that touching Mia's feet does not have such a high value as for Antwan to be thrown out of a window while Vince feels that Antwan had to pay the price of what he had done and because the offence was high the price

was high. It is not an issue of morality or crime and punishment; it is a matter of the exchange rate.

In *Reservoir Dogs* Joe Cabot can be said to buy the criminals' lives when he hires them for the heist. He can give them names of his choice which is similar to Calvin Candie naming his slaves at his whim. He takes away their individuality and sends them on a risky mission, which can lead to them being killed. He can do all this because the criminals have a price. The spoils of the heist are the price each criminal has let Joe put on him and thus each has reduced himself to a commodity that can be bought for the right price. Joe bought Vic's loyalty in the prison through "packets" (*Reservoir Dogs*) delivered to him in the prison and now he is buying the other criminals against the loot from the diamond dealer.

Col. Landa holds a corporate view of his tasks and looks at thing not ideologically, but for the value they have. He is tracking Jews in France and he looks at it as an "enterprise" and labels himself part of the "management" heading a "department" *Inglourious Basterds*). To him hunting and killing Jews is but a corporate task that he must do efficiently. He sets up his temporary office with his files, ink pot, pen etc. and takes notes as if he is in a corporate meeting. He is The Jew Hunter but he does not hunt the Jewish family LaPadite is hiding. He transacts a deal with LaPadite in true corporate fashion giving LaPadite the security of his family in exchange for the information on Jews. Though the guns blaze, they blaze only after the transaction of handing over the Jews to The Jew Hunter has been made. It is not a matter of going in guns blazing, shouting orders and initiating a search. It is a corporate deal struck on a negotiating table and thereby shows the commodification that governs Tarantino's characters who treat everything as a commodity and every task as a transaction.

Landa's enemy, at least for the main part of the film, also adopts a similar mode of transaction in his fight against the Germans. He transacts a deal with the German captive where he lets him go in exchange for information on German posts and patrolling parties. It is very much like the TV show *Deal or No Deal* where deals are to be made and nobody wants to lose out by not making the right deal. The deal works for the soldier who divulges vital information as he can save his life by doing so and also works for Aldo as he gets to know the position and strategy of the enemy.

In the postmodern world of *Pulp Fiction* even redemption is a commodity. The image of Butch and Fabienne riding "Grace"—something that seems akin to

redemption—is incomplete till it is determined where they are riding to. With Marsellus's pardon in hand, it is definitely to a world free of Marsellus Wallace's orders that they are riding to. It is also a world of consumerism that they have ahead of them. They are riding Grace, a customized chopper, a sign of Americana, and plan to go to Knoxville to collect the money Butch has earned by betting on himself. So the initial journey is towards money. Then they will go to Bora Bora, or Tahiti, both posh resorts in French Polynesia. Butch teaches Fabienne a few phrases of Spanish and the first phrase he teaches her is about buying shoes. Money, posh retreats and shopping all convey that Butch's redemption lies in being able to participate in consumer culture more fully. He has the means to go on luxury vacations and Fabienne can shop to her heart's desire. Butch's redemption is not an opening into the spiritual world but an opening into the consumer world, the world of commodities where the exalted can buy till they drop. This shows the dominance of consumer culture where even a spiritual aspect like redemption is conceived in terms of money and consumer products be they choppers, hyped-up vacation packages or shoes.

Hans Landa in *Inglourious Basterds* conjures his own redemption from his past as a Colonel in the German army and his redemption is similar to Butch's. He wants not just a positive mention in the history books and the Congressional Medal of Honor, he also wants "full military pension and benefits" congruent with his actual rank and property in the resort for the high and mighty, Nantucket. This shows that like Butch, he feels redemption to be conjoined with money and possessions.

The most important example of commodification is the way World War II is brought to an end in *Inglourious Basterds*. Landa, by virtue of unearthing the Basterds and their plot, is in a strong position and he takes this strong position to the negotiation table. He says to Aldo, "Gentlemen let's discuss the prospects of ending the war" as he pours wine into glasses sitting across from the Basterds at a table with a line of communication with the big bosses right next to him. The war for the postmodern Landa is not to be won or lost on the battlefield; the outcome of the war is to be negotiated on the table. He tells the naïve Aldo who thought the war could be fought out in the open with guns and dynamite, "If you want to win the war, tonight, we have to make a deal" (*Inglourious Basterds*). Landa also knows that such a thing as Hitler's murder and the end of the World War II is of the "kind you [Aldo] wouldn't have the authority to make" (*Inglourious Basterds*). This just shows the corporate nature of things. Ending the war is a deal and it has to be made at the right level of the

hierarchy and thus he gets Aldo to get him a hearing with the top tier. While Aldo brandishes his knife and gun Landa's weapon of choice is "a very capable two way radio" one that can get him in touch with the people wielding the authority of making the deal (*Inglourious Basterds*).

Next Landa negotiates a deal that he will get a pardon, award, pension, and property in exchange for ending the war. The Allies strike the deal and thus the war comes to an end. This end of the war—in a civil way over a bottle of Chianti wine, and at the table—is no different from a corporate deal. Political ideologies, national pride or anything other than capital does not figure in the deal. The deal has all the trappings of a commodity being exchanged. Landa can give them Hitler and the end of the war if the price is right and for the Allies ending the war on the winning side in exchange for some monetary expense is a sweet deal. Tarantino's characters do not battle it out on the field, they negotiate on the table and treat war as any other commodity, one with a certain price and one that can be bought and sold.

6.4 Conclusion

Tarantino’s characters are based on pastiche. Tarantino uses frequent references to the past works mainly films to craft his characters and thus adds meaning to his characters. The use of pastiche helps the viewers with a film-education understands the characters better. Tarantino’s spaces are built on pastiche, technology and are hyperspaces that turn their inhabitants into consumers of commodities.

This brings to an end my discussion of Tarantino’s characters in the light of Jameson’s theory of postmodernism. It remains to conclude the thesis, which the next chapter will do.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This study was devised with the purpose of ascertaining the postmodernism of characters of ace director Quentin Tarantino's films. The prevalence of films as a means of entertainment and the fact that films constitute what Jameson terms the erasure of the boundary between pop and art led to films being selected as the texts of the study.

The thesis started its argument by taking up something very basic yet crucial to an understanding of the analysis: the genesis of postmodernism. For this, the study looked at the very term postmodernism and the various ways of writing it and made it clear that postmodernism is a contentious phenomenon which is interpreted and seen differently by different theorists. To add to an understanding of postmodernism the study also looked at the connection between modernism and postmodernism. Having established the origin of postmodernism the study looked at the views of key theorists like Charles Jencks, Ihab Hassan, Linda Hutcheon, and Brian McHale to establish the contours of postmodernism and then moved to Jameson's ideas regarding the origin of postmodernism and the reasons he thinks postmodernism should be demarcated as a separate epoch. Jameson sees postmodernism as a period and feels that though postmodernism can be said to share some features of modernism, it is nevertheless the cultural dominant of the time and has to be seen as an entity distinct and separate from modernism. The first chapter also shows the film as a postmodern art form because of the emphasis on the visual and performance and thus establishes the justification of working on films as text.

The study used the literature review to establish the significance of both Jameson and Tarantino. The literature review showed that Jameson is a key proponent of postmodernism and while he has detractors, his importance in debates on postmodernism is monumental. Similarly, Tarantino is a universally celebrated director whose cinematic works have earned both financial rewards and critical acclaim and who illustrates the postmodern notion of blending high and low or the

artistically niche and the mainstream. The literature review also looked at the critical reception and commentary on Tarantino's works to show the main features of his oeuvre and to that the existing critical literature regarding Tarantino's postmodernism is limited to one-off comments and generalizations and has not been based on a profound reading of his works in the light of a theory of postmodernism. Thus the chapter established the gap the study would try to contribute to filling. The chapter also reviewed textual analysis with a view to determining the appropriacy of the research method for the study. It also looked at the theorists' views on studying films as texts and thus prepared the study for undertaking interpretations of Tarantino's film texts.

The third chapter focused Frederic Jameson's theory of postmodernism to provide the study its underpinnings in terms of the theoretical framework. It discusses the death of the subject, erasure of boundaries, waning of affect and pastiche as key features of postmodernism. Jameson asserts that the subject in the postmodern world is dead because the individual lacks uniqueness, is fragmented, and depthless. The subject is limited to surfaces and these surfaces are all there is to the subject and there is no depth in the subject. Also, the subject is schizophrenic in the sense that s/he has lost consciousness of the past and future and is confined to the present moment and spends his time living the moment. Jameson also focuses the subject's language and asserts that the language is fragmented and lacks depth. The rest of the chapter was devoted to detailing textual analysis as the research method of choice for the study. The chapter also outlined the procedure for analyzing the film texts and for making interpretations.

Chapters four, five and six focused the analysis of selected works and discussed the works in terms of the death of the subject, pastiche, consumer culture, and hyperspace. The chapters looked at how Tarantino's characters exhibit these notions and determined that Tarantino's characters, by and large, subscribe to postmodernism as espoused by Jameson. The characters' postmodernism was revealed to be an outcome of both the way Tarantino created them and the way the characters shape themselves as independent entities. Tarantino models Jules on the prevalent images of a thug, but Jules too models his personality after the characters he has seen on TV and in films. Not only are the characters a result of simulacra they turn themselves into simulacra. The thugs need to get into character to be thugs and

this shows that the characters are shaping themselves as postmodern being in addition to Tarantino shaping them as postmodern beings.

The most important question the study posed was regarding the death of the subject. This issue yielded the most amount of analysis and lead to the conclusion that Tarantino's characters exhibit the death of the subject through their lack of uniqueness. Tarantino's characters lack uniqueness and because they know they are not unique they are perpetually engaged in an effort to stand out and assert their personal stamp on things. Vince Vega in *Pulp Fiction* provokes Butch and The Wolf in an attempt to come across as a person who must be respected. Jules sees himself as a thinking thug who can see enlightenment in the incidents that happen around him. He interprets a bullet missing him as a sign from God and decides to forsake the criminal world and its ways. Vince and Lance also attempt to stand out by being connoisseurs of drugs and cars. Marsellus the crime boss of *Pulp Fiction* is assertive, mysterious and strong, but he too lacks uniqueness because he can be betrayed and is even raped. The gangsters in *Reservoir Dogs* are turned into faceless individuals by being assigned colors for names, but this only propels them further into finding ways of stamping their uniqueness. Mr. Pink attempts to be unique by being a thorough professional while Mr. Blonde indulges in the torture of the most heinous sort, to stand out among the gangsters. Mr. White dons the suit of loyalty, but he too is not unique enough to be loyal and one can see through his façade of loyalty. Aldo Raine tries to stand out by being cruel and by claiming and emphasizing his alleged Native American roots.

Tarantino's characters also exhibit depthlessness and waning of affect—the waning of affect sees them turn into mere images, simulacra that are made up and without any depth or emotional quality. Both depthlessness and the waning of affect also contribute to the death of the subject. Vince and Jules get into character before entering Brett's apartment to kill Brett and his accomplices. They need to put on the tough-guy appearance and use frightening language to look the part because this is the sort of gangster they saw on the TV and this is what they think they too should be like if they are to pass themselves off as actual gangsters. Marsellus builds himself on the mystique and power of the Godfather. Butch is careful to get into the mold of an honorable man fighting for the brother man by choosing the samurai sword. In addition to Tarantino's characters putting on performances, his characters are taken in by the images and they feel that the images are real whereas they are not. Jules is

taken in by the image of the lines he loves to recite before executing his victims and he interprets it in different ways till he thinks he has hit the right interpretation, but he does not realize that the lines were only a simulacrum and therefore there cannot be any truth to them. Freddy Newendyke plays the part of an undercover police officer but loses sight of his real goal. He starts identifying himself as a gang member and his desire to be one of the gang and show his loyalty to Mr. White sees him get killed. The characters are also misled by the simulacra around them. Mia takes the world of Jack Rabbit Slim's—the world of 1950s American on film—to be real. Aldo Raine attaches too much meaning with the simulacrum of the Swastika as signifying Nazism and cuts a sorry figure as he punishes Landa by carving a Swastika on his forehead even when Landa has struck a deal that will see him live in luxury as a war hero. An important point is that his gangsters just exude the aura of a gangster but other than their appearance and manners there is no gangster-like quality of social rebellion or challenging hegemony in them. Thus Tarantino's characters exhibit Jameson's notion of the waning of affect.

Tarantino's characters are not schizophrenics exactly, but they do betray signs of fragmentation and have codes that are clearly a result of their inner conflicts and conflicts with the world and these codes are specially crafted for the postmodern world. They are confined to the present and can only see as far as present gratification. Aldo Raine knows that Landa is destined to a life of luxury, but he delights in causing Landa immediate, though temporary, pain.

Tarantino's characters exhibit schizophrenia because of being fragmented. Jules is a thug, but he sees himself as a born-again mystic who should roam the earth to find his true calling. Mr. Orange is fragmented as to what his real identity is. He sees himself as a policeman undertaking a dangerous assignment to arrest a top criminal, but he also has a strong urge to belong to the gang that he has become a member of. In the end, this ambivalence regarding his true identity leads to his death. Mr. White's case is no different. Caught up between the need to stay anonymous and the desire to strike a bond with his fellow men he ends up getting killed. Zoller, the apple of the eye of the Nazi war machine for killing American soldiers, is a war hero for the Germans and the subject of nationalistic films, but he despises killing and walks out of the screening because he cannot bear looking at the bloodshed on the screen. Landa is the exception among Tarantino's characters for he is not fragmented. He is clearly driven by the instinct for survival and harbors no delusions of

ideological alignment. He is not loyal to any cause and switches loyalties and sides as suits him.

However, the characters' schizophrenia does not mean that they do not have any values. Theirs are the values of a postmodern world. Their code is not divinity, but one that they have made for themselves. Jules recites verses from the Bible, but this is a misappropriation. Also, he assigns it meanings thereby stripping the text of any inherent value and assigning it a value that he chooses. Butch goes against moral principles and double crosses Marsellus because for him the code is not morality but getting ahead in the world through any means. Butch throws the fight and Landa ditches the Nazis to join the Allies. For them, helping a fellow man maintain appearances is a noble cause and this is why no one points out that Jules, Vince, and The Wolf are afraid of a woman and this is also why Butch keeps Marsellus's rape a secret and nobody tells Hitler that banning the name The Bear Jew is a silly thing to do. It is a code of this world where a man's wife must not be lusted after and a man's car must not be harmed. This code sees the war being won on the negotiating table, not the battlefield and is fine with it.

Tarantino's characters' schizophrenia does not spill into language. The language is no doubt depthless but it does not have the fragmentary nature of schizophrenic language. To say that Tarantino's characters love to talk would be an understatement. They talk, using bombastic language, but about trivial matters often pop culture. They talk at length but mean little. The lack of depth of meaning and the triviality and pointlessness of their talk shows that even though the language is not schizophrenic it does show the death of the subject through its depthlessness.

The study also sought to determine the role of pastiche and nostalgia in shaping the characters' identities. The analysis shows that pastiche plays a crucial role in shaping the characters. Tarantino creates his characters by referring to already existing characters. This is most obvious in his gangsters in both *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir*

Dogs where he exploits the visuals to make the audience identify his characters readily. He clothes them in the manner of the Mafiosi of the 1930s America which is also a stereotypical Hollywood image of gangsters. Their black suits, slims ties, and gelled hair enable the audience to perceive them as gangsters. This is not to say that pastiche is limited to visuals. Marsellus refers back to the strong Blaxploitation characters and draws his vitality, masculinity and anti-white stance from heroes of

films like *Shaft*. He also harkens back to Maynard Boyle in *Charley Varrick.* Mia dances like the cats in *Aristocats* to show her elevated status because of being Marsellus's wife. Butch's weapon of choice to save Marsellus is a Katana samurai sword and the pastiche involved here raises Butch to the level of an honorable man and turns Zed's killing into more than revenge. Freddy Newendyke's fascination with being a gang member and a policeman at the same time is revealed through the pastiche of The Thing. Tarantino brings in pastiche in a shrewd manner through the choice of the performer. Casting the likable star of *Grease* and *Saturday Night Fever*, John Travolta, as Vince Vega shows how low Vince is by contrasting his status as a junkie hit man with the star of these films. Brad Pitt's performance as Tristan, in *Legends of the Fall*, brings in the meaning of his Native American roots in the character of Aldo Raine in *Inglourious Basterds.*

Tarantino's use of pastiche sometimes moves into parody. When it does Tarantino's characters move away from the notion of pastiche espoused by Jameson who asserts that pastiche is blank parody, i.e., it does not have the satiric element of parody. Tarantino brings in parody and satirizes the stereotypes that have dominated Hollywood's representation of World War II. Tarantino changes these stereotypes. Tarantino's Jews are not the victims of a genocide ala Hollywood; they are a rag-tag team of mercenaries out to teach the Germans a lesson in humanity. His Hitler is an impotent who can only fume but does not cause much harm in the film. Tarantino even brings into question the categories of good and bad by not giving any one of his characters the honor of killing Hitler and also by setting Hitler at quite a remove from the genocide committed by the German forces whereby he prevents the convenient categorization of Hitler as evil and his death as the end of evil. Even when he follows the stereotypical Hollywood representation of World War II as Americans versus Nazis in *Inglourious Basterds*, he satirizes the Americanization of the World War II narrative and thus adds the flavor of parody to pastiche. Tarantino strays away from a historically accurate account of World War II, to jolt the viewers out of the text-book view of history as containing only one genocide, that of the Jews by the Nazis, thereby making the viewers think of what the European colonizers did to the Indigenous People of the Americas. He accomplishes this through pastiche blended with parody.

The spaces that Tarantino's characters occupy are varied but still reflect postmodernism. Their spaces in *Inglourious Basterds* are based on simulacra and

pastiche in that the spaces are constructed or chosen on the basis of the stereotypical locales of World War II films. *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs* uses spaces that are more contemporary and the characters inhabit postmodern hyperspaces like the restaurant which Pumpkin and Honey Bunny rob. The restaurant features postmodern architecture. Marsellus's house is a marvel of technology and employs gadgets like CCTV monitoring and intercom. The restaurant, Jack Rabbit Slim's, becomes a world in itself by creating the world of the 1950s through its interior design, staff and by using monitors that play scenes of 1950s streets to keep the outside world out and give an impression of the restaurant being a complete world in itself. TV sets are standard features of almost all the houses that make up the living spaces of the characters in *Pulp Fiction*. Butch and Fabienne are holed up in a motel, an idea in hoteling that pioneered at the time of the advent of postmodernism. Freddy's apartment is adorned with posters of comic book characters. The characters in *Reservoir Dogs* spend a lot of their time in the warehouse which is a postmodern hyperspace in the sense that it seems to be a world in itself. It does not have the reflective surface of the Westin Bonaventure but it is a city in itself because it is cut off from the rest of the city. Also, the interior space is disorienting and does not allow for easy placement of the warehouse in any category. It has a disorienting effect on the characters too till Joe comes to restore order. A key feature of the spaces in *Pulp Fiction* and *Reservoir Dogs* is that they do not offer a clue to the city they belong to or the era but because more spaces that are closely shown exude postmodern traits I can safely conclude that the characters occupy postmodern hyperspaces that are disorienting, infused with technology and entire worlds in themselves.

The hyperspace Tarantino's characters inhabit, and move around in, turns them into active participants of consumer culture to a great extent and are shaped if not defined by consumer culture. Vince and The Wolf flaunt their cars as prized possessions and are so possessive about these material objects that they are prepared to kill to avenge any harm to these. Lavish living spaces also point to the fact that the characters consume commodities. Marsellus's house is a marvel of technology and sculptures. Lance cannot afford these but his house is adorned with kitsch items that he can afford.

The pivotal place of consumerism in the lives of Tarantino's characters is also evident in that they consume readymade products in great quantities and frequently. Restaurants offer the convenience of produced food and serve as a welcome respite

from the tedium of producing their own meals. Tarantino's characters frequent restaurants and consume meals as already made products. Honey Bunny and Pumpkin are so involved in the restaurant culture that they plan their heist in a restaurant as do the Ramblers in *Reservoir Dogs*. Even the policemen, Freddy and Holland, rendezvous secretly in a restaurant. The characters in *Inglourious Basterds* are involved in a war of global proportions but still have enough time to go to bars to play their version of charades and consume liquor. The higher ups in the same setting visit elegant hotels and consume tasty dishes and wine e.g. Landa clearly relishes the apple strudel he orders and for Mia, a restaurant is a means of showing her status by buying exorbitantly priced food.

Tarantino's characters also reveal a penchant for fast food. Mia eats a burger in a restaurant and Jules cannot resist trying Brett's Big Kahuna burger even when he is on a mission to kill Brett. Mr. Blonde actually drives by a restaurant to grab a burger and drink even when he is escaping the police dragnet with a kidnapped policeman in the trunk of his car. Vince's sojourn in Europe is restricted to fast food places and he returns with the knowledge of what a Big Mac is called in France. Butch is stopped in his tracks as he comes across a ready-to-cook treat. A crucial point in the characters' consumerism is LaPadite, the French farmer in *Inglourious Basterds* who produces milk by keeping cows. He is irrelevant in the consumer culture-driven world because he is like the remnant of a bygone era. Landa lets him live despite the fact that he is hiding a Jew family because LaPadite does not matter and whether living or dead he is irrelevant. This evidence is strong enough to assert that Tarantino's characters are steeped in consumer culture.

The world in *Pulp Fiction* runs on truly capitalist values. Money is the byword and everything is geared towards earning money. Jules and Vince risk their lives to retrieve Marsellus's briefcase and the fact that the briefcase is worth four lives is because Marsellus has given it value. Jules and Vince are dispensable commodities in this world that are used, abused and replaced when needed. Jules is sent on a dangerous mission and when he bows out, Marsellus sends in Paul to take his place. Jimmie puts a value of $1500 on the wedding gift from his uncle and illustrates that for the characters everything has a dollar value. Human beings, human ability, and law are all conceived of in terms of money.

Things are not any different in the world of *Reservoir Dogs* where money rules the world. The Ramblers get together in an unknown setting and set about to

work with people they do not know for a boss who usurps their identities. All this points to the workings of capitalism and the consumer world where people displace themselves and set themselves to work in unfamiliar surroundings just for the sake of money. The deterritorialization evident in *Reservoir Dogs* shows that late capitalism dominates the world of the characters and also points to the multinational corporate culture that is linked with late capitalism.

The consumer culture is so ingrained in the characters that even when it comes to redemption Butch conceives redemption in purely monetary terms. To him, redemption is going away to luxury resorts and shopping. He and Fabienne ride on Grace, a chopper, where the name of the chopper – Grace - indicates their redemption, but the end of their journey shows that redemption to them is not a philosophical concept but a virginally money-based one. Landa's redemption, that sees him mutate from being The Jew Hunter to the winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor and the person responsible for ending World War II, is in fact just a successful transaction. He makes a deal with the American authorities whereby he will get reprieve and benefits for killing Hitler and the Americans will be able to win the war. It is a transaction made in corporate fashion on a table and through a telephonic exchange. Aldo's helpless look as he watches Landa strike the deal shows the power of consumer culture in the characters' world.

Tarantino's characters are not just occupied with earning money or making transactions of different sorts in a world run by money; they also consume trivial information dished to them through the media. The Ramblers in *Reservoir Dogs* spend considerable time discussing the semantics of a pop song *Like a Virgin*. Freddy Newendyke is a fan of comics and particularly the character The Thing. The characters also show their penchant for TV series as they recall Christie Love's catch phrase. Mia, Jules, Vince, Butch, Fabienne, and Lance are all fans of films and show that TV plays a big part in their lives. Thus Tarantino's characters consume not just products but also relish trivial information fed to them by the media.

It can thus be concluded that Tarantino's characters are products of a culture where people have been reduced to being mere consumers of products and services and where the worth of everything is determined by the value put on it by the powers that be. It is also a world where everything is reduced to being a commodity and where human beings can be bought and sold. It is also a money centric world where all interactions are essentially financial transactions. Tarantino's characters are

occupants of hyperspace and their thinking, actions, interpersonal relations, and value system are shaped by consumer culture.

7.1 Recommendations regarding Future Research

There are quite a few interesting and challenging researches that the present study may inspire by illustrating that research with film as text can be a fruitful undertaking. With their plot, language, sets and locales, topics, soundtracks and themes, films offer a lot for analysis. Future research may use films as texts and read them in the light of literary theory or as literary texts.

The present study employs Jameson's theorization of postmodernism. Future researches may choose other notions of postmodernism and thus contribute to building a substantive body of knowledge that deals with the postmodernism of film texts and works with the possibility of determining how far and in what ways film texts are postmodern.

Future researches may also look at the notion of the subjectivity of film characters in detail and attempt to relate it to real world people and establish if the subjectivity created in the film characters is, in fact, a reflection of the subjectivity various institutions and mechanisms create in the actual world. Subjectivity may also be studied in terms of literary texts or the real world. The notion of subjectivity may also be studied in terms of the theories of what comes after postmodernism such as digimodernism or metamodernism. It would be an interesting idea to see if metamodernism, for instance, has altered the idea of subjectivity offered by Jameson in some radical way or it is just a development of Jameson's view.

An interesting research based on the idea of subjectivity may be one that looks at how terrorist attacks are exploited by the powers that be to increasingly turn the citizens into controlled and conforming subjects. Such a research has great potential in both the Pakistani and the American context.

South Asian film industries and TV are heavily influenced by Hollywood norms and traditions. Researchers may take the notion of pastiche that the present study explores in the makeup of the characters and look at how Bollywood or Pakistani and Indian television works employ pastiche and incorporate meaning from Hollywood texts. It will be a challenging work but as a filmgoer, I see a lot of potential in this research. Future researches may also look at various conceptualizations of pastiche in the postmodern world, for instance, that by Linda Hutcheon, and compare and contrast them with that of Jameson and see how works

may be interpreted in the light of these views. Such studies may go to the level of theory, and instead of an application, try to collate a view of pastiche that may be termed the postmodern pastiche.

Though the study shies away from the auteur debate, it shows that works can be brought together under the umbrella of the director in much the same way as works are brought together under the arch of the writer or the poet. Future studies may debate the oeuvre of key directors such as Scorsese, de Palma, Tony Scott, Jameson Cameron, and Steven Spielberg. A variation may be looking at how the roles performed by a single actor can be brought together to create a single personality type.

Future research may also be carried out on Tarantino using theoretical frameworks other than Jameson and this will lead to a comprehensive analysis of Tarantino's characters as being postmodern. Postmodernism is a multifarious phenomenon and theorists take distinctly individual views of it, therefore, other theoretical frameworks to analyze Tarantino's characters as being postmodern are likely to yield good criticism regarding the issue and contribute to an interesting body of knowledge.

The present study shows that there are visual clues to the characters' personalities. Future researches may attempt to interpret texts only with the help of visuals. Postmodernism is a visual and therefore such a study will carry significance. The present study shows that gangster adopt a visual style to become and to be accepted as gangsters and this very interpretation may be food for thought for a future study which attempts to see how gangsters in a film culture or a number of film cultures have been visualized.

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