从后现代角度分析昆廷·塔伦蒂诺的电影艺术

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后现代主义是20世纪60年代兴起于西方发达资本主义国家的泛文化思潮并迅速引起哲学、文学、艺术、社会学、教育学等不同领域的广泛讨论。作为后现代文化一个重要分支的后现代电影，以其独特的艺术魅力和观赏价值，近年来引起了世人的广泛关注，因此国外也涌现了相当数量的关于后现代电影的专著。由于我国特殊的历史原因和社会环境，直到20世纪80年代末才在我国掀起后现代的热潮。我国对具体的后现代艺术形式的研究，多集中于小说领域。对其他形式的后现代艺术，如电影、戏剧、舞蹈等的论述则数量甚少，且缺乏深度和系统性。因此，对美国年轻的电影人昆廷·塔伦蒂诺以及其电影作品的个案研究便显得尤为重要。

本论文把昆廷·塔伦蒂诺在不同时期拍摄的四部代表性影片：《水库狗》(1992)、《低俗小说》(1994)、《杀死比尔Ⅰ》(2003)和《杀死比尔Ⅱ》(2004)作为研究载体，通过对这四部电影的叙事结构、剧情设计、人物塑造和人物对话等电影元素的分析，论述其如何体现了以下后现代理论：不连续性，嬉戏，通俗化倾向以及互文性。全文共分为引言，主体和结论三部分。

引言大致介绍了国内外对后现代电影以及对昆廷·塔伦蒂诺电影研究的基本情况，并提出了本文的理论基础。

主体分为三章进行论述。第一章分为两节，主要从不确定性的两个衍

生方面即不连续性和嬉戏展开。不连续性常用于后现代的叙事结构之中。传统电影的开端、发展、高潮和结局的叙事在昆廷·塔伦蒂诺的电影中被颠覆，取而代之的是后现代的非线性叙事手法。嬉戏最主要体现在其对演员台词和暴力的嬉戏，以及他时而扮演一些小角色，穿插于自己所导演的影片中，来实现自己儿时的演员梦。

第二章论述昆廷·塔伦蒂诺的影片所呈现的通俗化倾向。通俗化是一种双向运动，即把艺术融入商业当中，把大众的、流行的、日常的事物艺术化。昆廷·塔伦蒂诺的电影旅程也是他从艺术到商业的转变过程。同时，他把历来被视为边缘性的电影类别如黑色电影提升到了艺术的殿堂。不仅如此，昆廷·塔伦蒂诺的电影作为后现代消费社会的文化产品，具有典型的商业性、娱乐性以及世俗性。

第三章探讨昆廷·塔伦蒂诺的影片中体现的互文性特征。首先大致介绍了本论文的中心人物，美国年轻的电影导演昆廷·塔伦蒂诺的成长背景。昆廷·塔伦蒂诺的成长背景对影片中的互文片段产生了一些直接影响。后现代时期的戏仿不同于现代时期的讽仿。昆廷·塔伦蒂诺对自己以往作品的戏仿，打破传统电影的固定模式，达到了相当的艺术震撼力和审美价值，并且在世界范围内掀起了戏仿电影的潮流。但他在创新的同时，又陷入了一种无法避免的电影类型的模式。

结论部分总结了昆廷·塔伦蒂诺的影片中所体现的后现代的特征，指出导演本人确实为美国新一代后现代电影的代表人物。同时，作者希望本论文对他作品的研究在一定程度上可帮助电影观众更好的理解昆廷·塔伦蒂诺的电影作品，并且有利于丰富国内后现代电影的相关研究。

关键词： 后现代主义 不连续性 嬉戏 通俗化 互文性

Quentin Tarantino and His Movies

----Analysis on Tarantino's Movies From Postmodern Thoughts

Postmodernism is in certain degree a trend of cultural thoughts, growing in the western developed countries in 1960s and generated an immediate response in the fields of philosophy, literature, architecture, art, sociology and so forth. As an important and colorful branch of postmodern cultures/arts, postmodern cinema is attracting attentions from more and more people with its unique cinematic values and aesthetics. Accordingly, this gives rise to a great deal of academic monographs on the postmodern cinema abroad. Due to the historical and social circumstances, it was not until the end of 1980s that an enthusiastic wave toward postmodernism was raised in China. However, there are few systematic researches in China in regard to studies on specific postmodern arts, such as films, dramas, dances and so on, with the exception of novel. Therefore, a case study of Quentin Tarantino and his films is of important significance.

With carriers of four films Tarantino made at different periods, *Reservoir Dogs(1992)*, *Pulp Fiction(1994)*, *Kill Bill Ⅰ (2003)*and *Kill Bill Ⅱ(2004)*, this thesis provides an analysis and critique of Tarantino's films in terms of narrative structure, dialogue, plot design, and characterization, trying to answer how his films represent the postmodern theories of discontinuity, playfulness, intertextuality and popularization, what influence his works will bring about and what deficiency are embodied behind all his successes. The thesis consists of introduction, three chapters and conclusion.

Introduction provides general information about the researches on postmodern cinema and Tarantino's films, the theoretical basis and the significance of this thesis.

Chapter I conducts the analysis from two aspects. The first looks into the narrative structures of his films in comparison with the previous landmark films which are important in terms of narrative structure. The second involves the investigation on the dialogue and violence represented in a playful way in his films with some failure hidden behind his playful manipulation of violence.

Chapter II develops a detailed survey on the box-office receipts and the film awards of each of his films to display his trend of being commercialized. In addition, it also discusses the entertainment, nostalgia and vulgarity represented in his films contributing to his films' tendency of popularization and popularity around the world as well.

Chapter III introduces general information of Tarantino's growing background, which plays an important role in shaping his intertextual way of filmmaking. Accordingly, his films display a strong sense of intertextuality. On the one hand, this unique way of filmmaking guarantees Tarantino's international reputation as a film genius and help start a fad of intertextual movie around the world; on the other hand, no matter how postmodern his films are, he could not avoid falling into the "trap" of being formalized resulting from this intertextual way of filmmaking.

To conclude the thesis, the author reaffirms the postmodern characteristics embodied in Tarantino's films. At the end of the thesis, the author also points out that this thesis would more or less help Chinese

audience better understand the postmodern movies by Tarantino and provide
some suggestions for researchers here to broaden the view on postmodern
cinema.

Key Words   postmodernism   discontinuity   playfulness
                  popularization   intertextuality

Introduction

This thesis is to explore how postmodern characteristics are represented in art works, especially in movies. With carriers of four films made at different periods, *Reservoir Dogs (1992)*, *Pulp Fiction (1994)*, *Kill Bill I (2003)* and *Kill Bill II*(2004), the thesis provides an analysis and critique of films of Quentin Tarantino, a young and talented American filmmaker, in terms of narrative structure, dialogue, plot design, and characterization, trying to answer how his films represent the postmodern ideas of discontinuity, playfulness, intertextuality and popularization, what influence his works will bring about and what deficiency is embodied behind all his successes.

Postmodernismo (postmodernism) was used by Federíco de Onís in 1934 to mean a minor reaction against the difficulty and experimentalism of modernist poetry.[1] The term "postmodern" is first made by J. Hudnunt in his book *Architecture and the Spirit of Man* in 1949.[2] Accordingly, postmodern theories were initially used in artistic fields, especially in architecture and later aroused a great deal of interests amongst academics and intellectuals in 1970s.

In 1979, a French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard, also the forerunner of postmodern theory, discussed the legitimation of matanarratives and advocated to wage a war on totality in his most successful and influential work, *The Postmodern Condition*, and for the first time, generated a global enthusiasm towards the postmodern issues. By the end of 1970s, postmodern theory had been a dominating discourse and gained wider usage in various fields, such as architecture, literature, philosophy, sociology, art, etc. In 1984, Fredric Jameson, an American Marxist, elaborated in an article titled

Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism his postmodern thought from the aspect of the relation between arts and historical circumstances of their creation and reception. He holds that cultural artifacts are oblique representations of their historical circumstances, such as the postmodern art paralleling with late or monopoly capitalism in a consumer society which formed its own aesthetics different from the modernist ones. The popularity of postmodernism in United States is mainly due to Derrida's introduction of his deconstruction theory and the young American artists, such as John Cage, and critics, such as Ihab Hassan, Susan Sontag, using the term to refer to "a movement beyond 'exhausted' high modernism which was regarded as having become institutionalized in the museum and in the academy."[3] Ihab Hassan, as a writer, scholar and lecturer, published his famous work *The Postmodern Turn* in 1987 in which he pointed out indeterminacy was one of the essential constructive features of postmodernism, and that many variants derive from it, such as discontinuity, fragmentation, playfulness, hybridization and so on.

From the time when postmodernism came to be recognized, it was accompanied by an extensive dispute about its relationship with modernism. Some scholars favor to think that postmodernism is a continuation of modernism; others, a break instead. Based on the analysis of the construction of the word "postmodernism", What Steven Best has pointed out on this question sounds reasonable,

> "On the one hand, 'post' describes a 'not' modern that can be read as an active term of negation which attempts to move beyond the modern era and its theoretical and cultural practices..., On the other hand, the 'post' in postmodern also signifies a

dependence on, a continuity, that which it follows, leading some critics to conceptualize the postmodern as merely an intensification of the modern, as a hypermodernity, a 'new' face of modernity , or a 'postmodern' development with modernity."[4]

As an important and colorful branch of postmodern cultures/arts, postmodern cinema possibly first appeared in 1962 when Alain Resnais directed a film titled *Last Year in Marienbad*, which was regarded as the representative cinema of early postmodernism, although many other film critics disagree with it.[5] The rudimentary example of American postmodern cinema may possibly come into being in 1980s with two representative films, respectively named *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Blue Velvet* (1986), which are often the most quoted examples when postmodern cinema is considered. After almost ten years' continuous development and perfection, these kind of American films reached another peak in 1990s, especially in 1994 when *Forrest Gump* and *Pulp Fiction* were presented in United States and gave rise to a postmodern movie fad internationally.

As for studies on Quentin Tarantino and his films, there are books such as *Quentin Tarantino: The Film Geek Files*[6] and *Quentin Tarantino: The Man and His Movies*,[7] in which Jami Bernard Uses exclusive material from her interviews with Tarantino and those close to him, traces his fascinating rise from high school dropout and B-movie junkie to the darling Hollywood, exploring the philosophy and mythology of the writer and director and reveals the man and his message. In addition to this, few articles discuss his movies, including his latest works, from clear postmodern perspectives.

Due to historical and social circumstances, it was not until the end of 1980s that an enthusiastic wave toward postmodernism was raised in China. However, there are few systematic researches in China in regard to studies on specific postmodern arts, such as films, dramas, dances and so on, with the exception of novel. Therefore, a case study of Quentin Tarantino and his movies is of important significance. This thesis consists of three parts of introduction, three chapters and conclusion.

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Chapter II develops a detailed survey on the box-office receipts and the film awards of each of his films to display his trend of being commercialized. In addition, it also discusses the entertainment, nostalgia and vulgarity represented in his films contributing to his films' tendency of popularization and popularity around the world as well.

Chapter III introduces general information of Tarantino's growing background, which plays an important role in shaping his intertextual way of filmmaking. Accordingly, his films display a strong sense of intertextuality. On the one hand, this unique way of filmmaking guarantees Tarantino's

international reputation as a film genius and help start a fad of intertextual movie around the world; on the other hand, no matter how postmodern his films are, he could not avoid falling into the "trap" of being formalized resulting from this intertextual way of filmmaking.

To conclude the thesis, the author reaffirms the postmodern characteristics embodied in Tarantino's films. At the end of the thesis, the author also points out that this thesis would more or less help Chinese audience better understand the postmodern movies by Tarantino and provide some suggestions for researchers here to broaden the view on postmodern cinema.

Chapter I Indeterminacy in Quentin Tarantino's movies

In 1984, Ihab Hassan, the famous American postmodern critic, pointed out that indeterminacy was one of the most essential features of postmodernism in an essay entitled *Toward a Concept of Postmodernism*, and it subsumed dozens of variant terms, such as discontinuity, fragmentation, uncertainty, randomness, deconstruction, and so on. Indeterminacy takes innumerable artistic forms, such as absurdist, ludic, collage, self-reflectivity, playfulness and so on.[8] Among those variants, discontinuity is often involved when talking about the narrative structure of a piece of postmodern art work, especially movies.

1.1 Discontinuous Narrative Structure

Narrative form is very common in film works, such as fictional films, documentaries, animated films and so on. "A narrative begins with one situation; a series of changes occurs according to a pattern of cause and effect; finally, a new situation arises that brings about the end of the narrative."[9] Obviously, this definition of narrative makes sure that causality and time order are very important elements with regard to traditional narratives. Seymour Chatman made clear that "all narratives, in whatever medium, combine the time sequence of plot events, the time of the histoire ('story-time') with the time of the presentation of those events in the text, which we call 'discourse-time.'"[10] In postmodern cinema, these two types of time-lines are intermingled with each other, which help to establish the sense of

discontinuity.

There were a few critical steps worth mentioning when the cinematic narrative form is considered. When the first motion picture of the world, *Workers Leaving the Lumiere Factory*, projected by Lumiere brothers, was shown on December 28, 1895 at the Grand Café in Paris, it was only constituted by shots of workers leaving their factory gate, and what it photographed was more a real event than a story, let alone the storyline. However, a basic narrative pattern of beginning, middle and ending still could be sensed. As for the early films, David Bordwell, an American professor of film studies, made clear that: "The first films were extremely simple in form and style. They usually consisted of a single shot framing an action, usually at long-shot distance."[11] With the rapid development of cinematic technology, eight years later, Edwin S. Porter, a creative American director, made a landmark film entitled *The Great Train Robbery*, which was regarded as the first film to develop with a linearity of temporal logic. This ten-minute-long film did tell a continuous story, though very simple, that a gang of bandits robbed a train, escaped into woods, were tracked down and shot to death by the posse at last, which displays a very clear storyline. Compared to the first ones, *The Great Train Robbery* is meaningful in American film history for it in some ways sets up a prototype for the classical Hollywood cinema and a solid basis on which the later Hollywood film industry could depend to develop a wildly accepted form of narrative structure. By the 1920s, there had been established within the Hollywood film industry a systematic theory about film narration, including exposition, complication, climax and denouement four parts, or as Peter Wollen concludes, "The beginning of the film starts as with

establishment, which sets up the basic dramatic situation—usually an equilibrium, which is then disturbed. A kind of chain reaction then follows, until at the end a new equilibrium is restored."[12] Even today, this way of narration is still extensively used to tell a story in a film by American directors, as well as directors from other countries.

In 1941, another great film entitled *Citizen Kane* was released. It involves a story in which Charles Foster Kane, a successful businessman, holds a glass ball in his hand and dies with his last word "Rosebud". In order to make the newsreel on Kane more absorbing, the reporter, Jerry Thompson is assigned to discover the identity of Rosebud by interviewing Kane's associates. What's revolutionary about this film is that Kane dies in the opening scene, and comes back to life through the six inserted flashbacks, concerning his life from childhood to old age, which builds a secondary storyline of this film. In addition, the main line of the story is constituted by Jerry's investigation, which is executed according to his boss' requirement of getting touch with people who know Kane well. The flashbacks are frequently inserted into the film and interrupt the narrative flow of the story; hence, it subverts the traditionally linear narrative structure, which could count for the creativity of this film. In this sense, Kane strode a big step towards non-linearity. Meanwhile, it should be mentioned that the display of those six segments is in a strictly chronological order, from Kane's boyhood, youth, and middle age to old age. What's more, Ralston's suggestion serves as a hint which preoccupies the audience with some expectation, so when those flashbacks are interposed into the main storyline, it does not appear too abrupt and erratic. In this respect, Citizen Kane could be categorized as the representative of traditional

modernist film for "the modernist work still aspire to unity, but this unity, if that is what is, has been (is still being?) constructed, assembled from fragments, or shocks or juxtapositions of difference. It shifts abruptly among a multiplicity of voices, perspectives, materials."[13] Nevertheless, the narrative structure of *Citizen Kane* is in part subversive, but could not escape completely from the rules of narrative traditions.

Tarantino moves far beyond that and his subversion of coherent narrative form is accomplished in two steps. Unlike most of the traditional films, which strictly stick to the narrative rules of time, space and logic, Quentin Tarantino's virgin directing work, *Reservoir Dogs* shows a difference. Set in LA, *Reservoir Dogs* tells a story in which a boss recruits and codes six stereotypical professional gangsters in six colors to carry out a diamond heist, which goes tragically wrong. The survivors return to their hideout, an abandoned warehouse in which they gradually realize that they have been betrayed and then start to find out the agent provocateur in their midst. Like Citizen Kane, in this film, there are two storylines embedded, one of which is the identification of the hidden traitor, the other, the introduction of those six mobsters through comparatively independent segments. On the one hand, the main storyline progresses in a conventional and linear way: in the beginning, the gangsters plan to rob the diamond store; then when they carry out the plan, they are ambushed and start to find out the traitor; at last, the gangsters are shot to death by themselves because of mutual distrust and the undercover police is survived. Apparently, RD tells its story in a tight accordance with the establishment-unbalance-equilibrium format. On the other hand, there are not definite and overt chronological connections among those segments. For

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instance, after Mr. White quarrels with Mr. Pink about rats, he is left alone in the bathroom and without any transitive elements. The film then cuts directly to the story which provides some information about him. Another digressive segment takes place when the film is drawing to a close, where the background knowledge about Mr. Orange is offered. Here, it is hard to determine which one comes first, the story of Mr. Orange, or that of Mr. White. It is the same situation when trying to discover the temporal sequence among those other segments. What is more, the series of those intermittent fragments are frequently inserted into the film and interrupt the narrative transitivity, which increases the discontinuity of the film as a whole. In this sense, it does launch a war on totality and unity of traditional narrative and replaces it with its fragmented narrative. Therefore, *Reservoir Dogs* goes much further in terms of overthrowing the film constructing traditions of the Hollywood classicals with its nonlinear secondary storyline compared to the linear one of Citizen Kane, but is still trapped within the conventions with its typically chronological main line.

The second step is achieved in 1994 through Tarantino's most famous film *Pulp Fiction*, which has been crowned as one of the most representative postmodern films by many film critics. In its beginning, there is a quotation explaining the word "pulp",

1. *A soft, moist, shapeless mass of matter.*
2. *A magazine or book containing lurid subject matter and being characteristically printed on rough, unfinished paper.*

> *From the American Heritage Dictionary New Collage Edition*[14]

Just as the title suggests, *Pulp Fiction* is going to be a "magazine" or a "book", but an electronic one, in which pieces of stories function as different chapters and could be randomly read (watched) without destroying the entertainment. *Pulp Fiction* could be roughly divided into six pieces according to the narrative sequence of the film as the followings:

I   Two psychopaths decide to rob the restaurant where they eat and hold everyone at bay with guns and threats of murder.

II Vincent (John Travolta) and Jules (Samuel L. Jackson) are going to an apartment to retrieve Marcellus'(Ving Rhames) attache case and the property within, and to kill the occupants.

III Vincent and Jules go to Marcellus' bar to deliver their cache when their boss Marcellus is talking to a washed-up palooka boxer named Butch (Bruce Willis) about being paid off to throw a fight the next night.

IV Vincent goes to his drug dealer's house and buys heroin and then leaves for his baby-suiting evening with his boss' inamorata Mia (Uma Thurman).

V   Instead of throwing the fight, Butch kills his opponent, and enrages Marcellus, but makes peace by saving him out of two sodomites.

VI Vincent accidentally blows off Marvin's head, causing a very large bloody mess in the car. Under the instruction of Mr. Wolf (Harvey Keitel), Jules and Vincent dispose Marvin's dead body.

VII In the restaurant where two psychopaths are robbing, Jules moralizes and gives them his money because of his recent miraculous experience.

But the possible and widely accepted temporal order is

II → VI → I → VII → III → IV → V. The difference between two of time orders lies obviously in the fact that the former one progresses chronologically, while the latter one does not. At the same time, every story is split into pieces of segments, interlocked with one or another and overlapped at odd yet vital moments. For instance, in the opening sequence of PF, when the female robber stands on the table and yields to all the customers to be cool, darkness suddenly covers the screen. If the traditional cause-and-effect format is considered here, the following part should continue to tell how that story goes on. However, when the screen lights again, an old gas guzzling, dirty, white car appears on and is driven down a homeless-ridden street by two gangster-like people, which starts the second-told story logically unrelated to the previous one. Another typical and persuasive example could be found in the middle of the film where the previous sequence ends with Vincent's starting up his car and driving away and the story of "the gold watch" is about to begin with a fade-up of cartoon TV show. Then, Little Boy Butch, his mother and Captain Koons (Kristopher Walken) are introduced to the audience. What happens next is Captain Koons' lengthy monologue on the history of that gold watch, which is totally irrelevant to the previous scene. There is not any transitive hint or any causal relationship between those parts. It is this collage of fragments that demolishes the traditional cause-and-effect chain and deconstructs the narrative fluency of classical films. Besides that, in PF, the arbitrary convention of beginnings and endings is freely abandoned and "may have no ending at all, but circle back to its own beginning."[15] when PF begins and ends with the different fragments of the same story and the same restaurant setting.

The narrative of PF is obviously different from that of modern time. The classical or modern narrative is linear and chronological, emphasizing the logical connection and the dialectics of cause and effect, and "everything in a classical film is motivated and serves a purpose, while the rules of continuity editing ensure smooth, invisible transitions from shot to shot and from segment to segment".[16] In contrast, Tarantino's postmodern narrative aims to undermine all those established concepts about narration, replacing them with fragmented and disruptive narrative in order to reflect the changing perception of postmodern reality as discontinuous and fragmentary. "In the postmodernist sensibility, the search for unity has apparently been abandoned altogether."[17] Postmodern films are suspicious of any kind of wholeness and completion and negate modernist "closed" writing, which is full of meaningful coherence and meaningful plots, and randomly reverses the time order, by which postmodern films overthrow and deconstruct the entirety of narrative structure of the traditional narratives. In addition, the fragmentary narrative also loses the function to convey ideas and knowledge because of the chaotic essence embodied in it. In this sense, Tarantino is an affirmative practitioner of postmodernism in that he does not "create meaning in the meaninglessness…, and make sense of the senselessness of the world in which we live and die"[18]

1.2 Playful Lines and Violence

Playfulness is ubiquitous in Tarantino's movies in many aspects. The most powerful proof would be his playful manipulation of characters' lines. In traditional films, the lines mainly serve to progress the development of the story, or to foreshadow some hints to build up suspense or pre-causes, in short,

"words are regarded as communicative instruments, as sounds that convey meanings",[19] but lines of Tarantino's films lose such functions and are transformed into a cinematic language to be manipulated playfully by Tarantino.

In his debut film RD, language takes precedence over action. The much-discussed jewel heist, for example, is never shown, but is only made known through the conversation. What is more ironic is the scene in which Mr. Orange carefully rehearses his anecdote about a drug deal. He starts out reading the story unconvincingly and then eventually transforms himself right before the audience's eyes into a believable low life. The truth becomes merely verbal constructs. "More than what they do, what the characters say, and they never stop talking, guarantees their existence."[20] They talk, therefore they are. On the one hand, Mr. Orange's story tells how he becomes a gangster, in which the lines serve in a very traditional way. On the other hand, it also appears certain subversive. This piece of segment deconstructs "one of the most violent hierarchies derived from Platonic and Aristotelian thought"[21], namely the speech/writing with speech being privileged. Mr. Orange constructs a fake identity with a possibly real story, in which the line/language does not convey the truth, but easily recognizable artificiality.

In Tarantino's another film PF, the lines' traditional function of progressing story is ignored and lines are sometimes even unrelated to the story. When Vincent and Jules are on their way to carry out the killing mission, Jules has a lengthy conversation with Vincent, in which he tries to explain to Vincent what a pilot show is like:

Vincent: What's a pilot?

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> Jules: *Well, you know the shows on TV?*
> Vincent: *I don't watch TV.*
> Jules: *Yes, but you're aware that there's an invention called*
>   *television, and on that invention they show shows?*
> Vincent: *Yeah.*
> Jules: *Well, the way they pick the shows on TV is they make one show,*
>   *and that show's called a pilot. And they show that one show to*
>   *the people who pick the shows, and on the strength of that one*
>   *show, they decide if they want to make more shows.*[22]

When audiences are watching this scene, their ears are filled with the word of "show" which is coming out of Jules' mouth in quick succession. What Jules talks to Vincent is more like a playing of the word "show" than telling the truth of pilot. "A lot of movies these days use flat functional speech: the character say only enough to advance the plot. But the people in PF are in love with words for their own sake."[23] However, the lines of those two examples do have a connection with the story itself in that the first one introduces how Mr. Orange infiltrates the gangster group, which is playing a very important role in developing the whole story. The second one also functions in a similar way that the pilot show section is to give some background information about Wallace's inamorata, Mia, whom Vincent is going to date later in the movie.

In most traditional films, the dialogue is designed to cue the next dramatic plot twist, while in Tarantino's films there are some lines completely irrelevant to the story, but they are still inserted into the films possibly because Tarantino wants them to be and he is interested in those subjects. In the opening scene of RD, eight men, dressed in black suits, sit around a table at a café, talking about Madonna's popular song "like a virgin", quarrelling about a notebook and tips, which is unconnected to the later robbing story for none of

hints could be discerned from their conversations. Tarantino is trying to tell a fact that language in his movies does not function the traditional way by which meaning is expressed or conveyed through language because "the postmodernist looks for non-sense, rejecting sense."[24] In addition, the characters in PF also talk about completely random subjects that are unbelievably unrelated and trivial. For instance, prizefighter Butch returns to the motel room after killing a man in the ring, he has a conversation with his baby-doll girlfriend:

> *Fabian: I was looking at myself in the mirror.*
> *Butch: Uh-huh?*
> *Fabian: I wish I had a pot.*
> *Butch: You were lookin' in the mirror and you wish you had some pot?*
> *Fabian: A pot. A pot belly. Pot bellies are sexy.*
> *Butch: Well you should be happy, 'cause you do.*
> *Fabian: Shut up, Fatso! I don't have a pot! I have a bit of a tummy,*
> *   like Madonna when she did "Lucky Star," it's not the same*
> *   thing.*
> *Butch: I didn't realize there was a difference between a tummy and a*
> *   pot belly.*
> *Fabian: The difference is huge.[25]*

This is a dialogue wonderfully irrelevant to the plot process in that it comes at a moment of Butch's desperation resulting from his double-crossing during the fight. He will make a lot of money on condition that he can escape from his boss' vengeance. In most movies, the dialogue in this scene would have been entirely plot-driven in the way Butch explains to his girlfriend what has happened. Instead, Tarantino inserted an apparently irrelevant conversation into the film and abandoned the traditional rules of organizing lines to develop the story. Maybe the best part of the conversation is when Jules and Vincent

are talking about foot massage in the hallway while on their way to kill people, which effectively build up a sense of absurdity. Hence, it is easy to conclude that words in Tarantino's films are played instead of conveying some truth.

Tarantino is not only interested in playing word games, but also in the violence, which goes far beyond his manipulation of words. When Oliver Stone seriously discussed the increasing violent events resulting from the irresponsibility of family, society and mass media in *Natural Born Killers* written by Tarantino, Tarantino was very angry about that and he said: "h(H)e(Oliver Stone) not only stole my *Natural Born Killers* script, but also ruined everything. That is not the original story I wrote and the movie was also made to a f**king piece of crap. I have never seen *Natural Born Killers*."[26] What cause such a huge disagreement between two of them? Reasons are definitely a lot and one of them could possibly be the different understanding toward the displaying of violence. Tarantino's way of handling the violence intends to establish the absurdity and meant to make the audience laugh, instead of the nervous hysteria often heard at horror films with bloody scenes. In RD, Mr. Orange gets shot in the beginning of the film, and then keeps bleeding till the end of it, which creates an absurd aura and also challenges the audience's capability to bear the long-time bloody scene. "When most directors would cut away from the violence, Tarantino stays with the aftermath, he has made violence humorous."[27] Hit man Vincent could come back to life in one sequence after dying in another one. What gives Tarantino such absurd right to tell such a story is the fact that the modern concept of the world built on reason, truth and justice has fallen apart and "i(I)ts basis, the legitimation of knowledge and of social justice by certain grand narratives, lost

credibility..."[28] and replaced by the postmodern world in which anything goes. When Mr. Brown tortures the pitiful police while dancing to the nostalgia 1970s radio program, Tarantino rightly chooses to pan away the camera at the crucial moment and let the audience's imagination do the rest. AT the same time, the contrast between the sweetness of the nostalgic melody and the cruelty of the ear-slicing culminates the absurdity of the film. In PF, Marvin is shot in the head and the car is messed up with his blood and brain. In order to get out of this mess, Mr. Wolf is sent to help clean the bloody car. Dressed like a gentleman, Mr. Wolf leisurely instructs Vincent and Jules how to clean the mess, at the same time, talking with Jimmie about the coffee taste. Although the film does not show how bloody it is in the car, it could be imagined through Mr. Wolf's description when he checks the car. Here a sense of humor is achieved when gentleman-like Mr. Wolf is drinking his coffee while arranging the cleaning. "Scenes of gore are deflected into scenes of the Wolf's professionalism, which is funny because it is so matter-of-a-fact." [29] Compared with his first two violent films, Tarantino did some essential changes about violence in KB. Even he himself once admitted in an interview: "I've done violence before, but I've never done it in such an outrageous way. Not that I have any problem when it's not outrageous, but this is definitely not taking place on Planet Earth."[30] This is the case for two-volume KB, which is not only outrageous, but also superficial. "Postmodernism would say in any case that depth is just a surface effect, and that superficiality can be deep."[31] In this film, when Cottonmouth (Lucy Liu) is offended by one of her sub-bosses Tanaka and cut off his head, a geyser of blood shoots up in the air and lasts for a few seconds, which creates a very controversial feeling whether

it should be horrible or funny. In Tarantino's film world, the traditional format of thinking, by which the depth model of essence/appearance is subverted because the apparent violent description in Tarantino's films are apparently a kind of cinematic language without any deeper meaning. "What replaces these various depth models is for the most part a conception of practice, discourse and textual play"[32] And possibly, the most absurdist scene about violence is in Kill Bill I which a cartoon inserted in the middle of the picture in order to provide background information on one of the Bride's would-be-assassins, plus the bloody fight coming later in the movie. Compared with the cartoon section, the long and intricate scene is the climax during which the Bride takes on 88 yakuza fighters and litters a Tokyo nightclub with their severed limbs and writhing trunks. In essence, it is staged with the assistance of the martial-arts maestro Yuen Wo-Ping. Maybe Tarantino himself feels uncomfortable with those gory sequences, so the movie here becomes black-and-white.

Tarantino has received hostile response from movie and academic critics for his excessive display of blood and violence, but he does not seem to give up his likes because he thinks he was" trying to think up every inventive, most entertaining way and trying to create one of the greatest, most exciting sequences in the history of cinema."[33] It has to be admitted that Tarantino is a genius when dealing with the violent scenes, no wonder Neil Smith, a film critic, commented this issue very positively, "The more films by Tarantino you watch, the more comfortable you begin to feel in his world even though violence and disorientation beset the world."[34] However, at the same time, one thing has to be admitted that Tarantino's detailed description of bloody

violence will inevitably generate some negative impact on the society no matter how playful his depiction of violence is.

According to his growing chronology, Tarantino once wanted to be an actor, but failed. In order to satisfy his early dreams, Tarantino sometimes plays mini characters in his films such as Mr. Brown in RD, who only has two shots and dies, or Jimmie in PF, who is afraid of his wife and always talks about some trivial things. such as the neat bed sheet, the clean towel, and the coffee brand. Once in an interview, Tarantino admitted that he likes watching kung Fu films of Hong Kong and samurai films of Japan and is fascinated by their beauty. In actual life, Tarantino may not have the opportunity to learn Kung Fu, but he can obtain it in his highly fancied film worlds. Sometimes characters in his films talk the topics that Tarantino is really interested in, or they just do the same things as Tarantino really wants to. Clarence (Christian Slater) in *True Romance* could be thought as the semi-biographical figure of Tarantino because in the movie, he works in a video shop and says: "He (Sonny Chiba) is, far none, the greatest actor working in martial arts movies ever."[35] And in the middle of the film, he and his girlfriend are watching TV program in which Sonny Chiba is practicing his martial arts. However, that seems to be a predicative sign showing Tarantino's zeal in Kung Fu compared with his later two-volume film *Kill Bill*, which is full of his interested subjects and his dreams are accomplished through his characters. In *Kill Bill II*, in order to revenge her enemies, the Bride begins to learn two kinds of martial arts that Tarantino wants, Japanese kendo and the Chinese kung fu. The Bride purchases a sword from a reluctant craftsman played by icon of Japanese martial films Sonny Chiba. When the film is narrating how the Bride learns the

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martial arts, Sonny Chiba, who was talked about and shown on TV in his first screenplay TR, now comes into Tarantino's film and is acting a Sushi chef, who was a master of Japanese martial arts, and once, trained the members of the Deadly Viper Assassination Squad and later casts a sharp sword for the Bride by breaking his vow of never making swords again. In the next scene, the chef takes the Bride to a room with many handcrafted samurai swords in hand-carved wooden sheaths resting on wooden racks running the length of the second half of the attic. Then, the Bride walks down the row of the steel, reaches out her hands to touch them. The swords and her hands appear more shining under the sunlight down through the dormer. Here, it is understandable to imagine Tarantino is in the Bride's body to appreciate those beautiful steel. In *Kill Bill II*, Pai Mei (Gordon Liu), a master of one of Chinese Kung Fu branches, the White Lotus, becomes the master of the Bride and teaches her the Five-Point-Palm-Exploding-Heart Technique. Here, Tarantino jumps into the Bride's body to practice the Chinese martial arts by throwing her fist into the wall and carrying two barrels of water and climbing one hundred rock steps. Actually, Tarantino once trained himself for three months to do the fights and Chinese Kung Fu to prepare to play Pai Mei, but he found it difficult for him to act while directing. At last, Tarantino reluctantly gave up. Bill (David Carradin) was also in the film because David Carradin represents America's martial arts. On this issue, Tarantino once proudly commented in an interview:

> I'm a huge fan of Master Killer and of Gordon Liu in particular. He's fantastic. He doesn't look any goddamn different today then he did back then. And it's just so cool to see both him and Sonny Chiba in the same film together. They are every bit the superstars. Living legends. As I am framing shots, I'm thinking "I can't believe

Gordon Liu is in my movie! I can't believe it." And to have been so influenced by seventies kung fu films and to have, as far as I'm concerned, my three favorite stars of kung fu from three different countries .., Gordon Liu representing Hong Kong. Sonny Chiba representing Japan. And David Carradin representing America. That's a triple header. A triple crown. If Bruce Lee was still alive, he'd be in it. If Fu Sheng was still alive, he could be in it too.[36]

The four films are overwhelmed by a sense of playfulness and absurdity, which establishes Tarantino as an auteur with his consistent cinematic style. Although Tarantino seems to be a playful boy of movie, he did play something out of his playing of cinematic discourses. It will not be appropriate to conclude that he is a playful boy because of the playful fact for what Tarantino has done just sticks to his life goals as a loyal cinephile.

Chapter II Popularization and Commercialization

There was a strong confrontation and obvious distinction between high culture and popular culture almost two hundreds years ago. If the cultural distinction is considered, the long-held division prefers to the elite-and-popular one. Popular culture usually includes the mass mediated forms, such as television, comics, and films and so on, while the elite generally refers to classics of literature, operas, paintings and installations. In the nineteenth century, this distinction began to blur because of political democracy, mass education and technical progression. With the advent of postmodernism, this process of effacement appears more intensive by way of a dual movement, namely, migrating art into cultural industries, such as advertisement, resulting in a closer connection between art and commerce, and aestheticizing the everyday, popular and mundane objects and exalting them into art status. However, "it doesn't mean throwing out the old elite works of art but it does mean being more inclusive, being more receptive to new forms of art and to popular culture."[37] This movement was accelerated in 1960s when the whole western society underwent a deep transformation and entered into what Fredric Jameson calls, the "post-industrial or consumer society, the society of the media or the spectacle, or multinational capitalism".[38] In this new social context, the cultural products bear a closer connection with commercial activity and focus more on the profit making and finally surrender to the values of consumer society, simply offering "the desire and pleasure, the emotional and aesthetic satisfactions derived from consumer experience, not merely in terms of some logic of psychological manipulation."[39] Film, as one

center field of the culture industry, is inevitably imparted those characteristics.

2.1 Box-office Receipts and Film Awards

Film was closely connected to commercial activity at the time when it was born in 1895 when two brothers in France began to show films for an admission price in a basement of a Paris café. Because of the fast development of society and technology, the commercial feature of films increasingly progresses, especially due to the influence of systematization and globalization of Hollywood's film industry. "t(T)he tremendous expense involved in producing motion picture reminds us that film is both an industry and an art form. Each film is the child of a turbulent marriage between businesspeople and artists."[40] As a native-born filmmaker of Hollywood, Tarantino put into practice the principle of dual movements of popularization with his filmmaking although it can not be confirmed definitely that he has done this purposely. His success shows an overt trend to be commercialized, which could be proved by surveying the box-office receipts of his four films and their film awards. The growing trace displays his struggle between being commercial and artistic, whether this struggle is conscious or not. His first movie, RD was instantly established as a genius piece of art. Two years later, PF received an Oscar nomination for best film and won the best screenplay. Until now, PF still remains one of the most talked about and watched movies.

In 1992, a film titled *Reservoir Dogs* was shown as the opening film and hit the Sundance Film Festival. It is necessary to have some basic information about this festival before discussing this work. "The Sundance Institute is a multi-disciplinary arts organization dedicated to the development of artists of

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independent vision and to the exhibition of their new work …to encourage the exhibition of outstanding new independent films, …is now widely regarded as the preeminent showcase for new independent cinema."[41] The artistic value of RD could be proved because of the high appraisal by SFF with its obvious acclamation for art. Besides that, compared to those Hollywood blockbusters, RD could only be counted as a tiny film with a paltry budget of only around one million dollars. Because of the super-low investment, writer-director Tarantino had to focus more on the film itself than sparing some extra money to do some special effects that most Hollywood films would do. He injected many new elements into the film, created a freshly new style, and displayed a totally experimental avant-gardity. At the same time, it also generated and turned a new leaf for the American independent cinema. As I have analyzed in previous part, this film takes a closer stance with the leitmotive of postmodernism, which could explain its poor box-office receipt of 2.8 million dollars from its opening show to the close. "i(I)ndeed, commercial failure comes to be seen as a hallmark of the serious work of art."[42] However, it could easily be sensed the way that Tarantino made films is still immature and coarse and waits to be developed. Nevertheless, he benefited a lot from his first-time filmmaking experience, which enables him to raise enough money for his next film, which was doomed to be an excellent one.

Two years later, Tarantino wrote and directed his second film named *Pulp Fiction*, which did turn out to be a very successfully one, both as a commercial product and a work of art. In this film, Tarantino perfected his cinematic techniques and skillfully expressed his ideas through the filmic languages. PF premiered at the Cannes film festival, which "is the world's most prestigious

film festival"[43] and won the coveted Palme d' Or, "the most prestigious award given out at Cannes",[44] which is virtually equal of the best picture of Academy Awards. At the same time, in 1994s Academy Awards, PF was nominated for seven Awards, among which it won the Best Screenplay of the Year. In addition, PF was listed as the 95th film on the AFI's (American Film Institute) top 100 Greatest Movies in 1995 when 100 American films were chosen to celebrate film's 100th anniversary. The fact that PF was thought of highly by the two world-top film festivals not only proves its artistic value, but also helped it a lot in its profit making. With an investment of around 10 million dollars around, PF created a box-office legend with its domestic receipt of 108 million dollars and over 200 million dollars globally. If the budget is taken into consideration, the total box-office receipt is quite ideal and satisfactory. Besides that, the products related to PF also made another profit for the book behind the movie became a top ten bestseller in England where more than 165,000 copies were sold. The most important thing is that Tarantino established his international reputation as a cult legend by his work PF. Hence, PF could be regarded as a representative example which achieved huge success both artistic and commercial, and by which Tarantino accomplished his transformation from pure art to emphasis on both artistic value and commercial profit.

Two volumes of *Kill Bill* in 2003 show a purely commercial trend. Lucy Liu, playing O-hen Ishii, was awarded the Best Villain by the MTV Movie Awards, which was initiated by MTV channel and was determined by MTV viewers to give a cup of popcorn as the prize. That is the only award that KB gained, which apparently has nothing to do with the film art and seems very entertaining. Even its way of distribution reveals a strong trend of

commercialization. Like the blockbusters of *The Lord of the Rings* of same year, distributed in three sequels, KB also abided by that way of marketing and was divided into two parts, which could effectively increase the curiosity and the suspense, and accordingly enlarge the commercial profit as much as possible. The result turned out to be effective because two volumes made a box-office receipt of 330 million dollars globally. Like his previous films, these two are also narrated in a non-linear way, which could be thought as Tarantino's writing signature, but with some salient differences in them, among which the most obvious is the commercial elements filled through the formal postmodern structure. In addition, Tarantino's all-time unorthodoxy helps a lot in his box-office receipts. In fact, many audiences go to see the film only because it's Quentinian.

The customary distinction between high and popular culture does not have much thing to do with the mass reading experience in that Tarantino's films could achieve recognition from different sections of audience, the so-called elite class, such as the Academy, as well as the mass public. Through analysis above, it is easy to sketch out the apparent commercializing trace when Tarantino made films and migrated himself from art into commerce. At the same time, he also did a job of elevation possibly in an unconscious way.

All of Tarantino's films studied in this thesis have many things in common, among which the most overt one is the interweavement of different film genres. For instance, RD mainly takes a genre of gangster film, combined with horror and suspense. KB appears to be a much more complex one, mingled with western, gangster, Japanese Samurai, and Chinese Kung Fu film. However, Tarantino's favorite genre is definitely the film noir, which was overwhelmed by

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the blackness of cinematic techniques and the dark themes of contents. This genre grew out of popular detective novels of 1930s and mainly describes the stories connected with drug-dealers, robbers, prostitutes and gangsters who all live in a lower and corrupted world. It is the same in Tarantino's highly stylish film worlds in which gangsters carry out a jewel heist in RD, the drug deal is over-detailed and the homosexual rape takes place in PF, or the furious Bride revenges by killing her enemies one by one in KB, to name but a few, all of which consist of the main subjects of the film noir genre. In modernist understanding, these types of stories are vulgar and excluded by the dominant taste. Although these stories should definitely be categorized as "dark", they are not only welcomed by the mass public, as they used to, but also win the recognitions from the official institutes like Cannes and Oscar film awards. Thus, Tarantino endowed these traditionally black stories with an artistic value and elevated their status up to the art, and aestheticizes the popular objects. The two contrary cultural elements were harmoniously lived together in Tarantino's films, although some arguments were generated because of this combination. In doing so, Tarantino effaced the distinction and bridged the gap between high culture and low culture.

Through analyzing the box-office receipts and the awards that four films had won, it could be easily conclude that Tarantino has successfully transformed himself from an unconscious art pursuer to a profit hunter, and it is more possible to say that Tarantino has yielded to the Hollywood film industry. However, this transformation could not be simply thought as negative or positive.

2.2 Entertainment Consumption

The whole growing process of Tarantino not only reveals his clear commercial trend, but also every one of his films displays an outstanding feature as a commercial product determined to be consumed by the mass. The concept of consumption in western society roughly went through changes in three stages. In pre-modern time, the concept of consumption was dominated by frugalness and austerity, and the correspondingly means of consumption. In modern time, this traditional concept was changed to the pursuit of the possession of the material wealthy as much as possible. "Postmodernism, on the other hand, is fatally attracted to commerce, mass culture and the assembly-line mentality. From this point of view, modern day mass culture is corrupt because it is an instrument of capitalism, and art's job is to oppose it. But with postmodernism, art has been pulled down from its position of spiritual purity and sucked into the orbit of media, advertising and the fetishization of commodities."[45] In the postmodern era, the focus of consumption was encouraged to pursuit the amusement during the consuming experience, and to achieve the recognition of identity and satisfaction through consuming some certain images and signs. The mass enjoys the consumption process in order to satisfy their leisure demand resulted from the quick development of technology which could free them from the laborious job. Meanwhile, the postmodern cultural activity is dominated by mass media industries which are capable of appealing directly to the public's taste demands and put the cultural elite aside. "A good deal of production is targeted at consumption, leisure and services."[46] Tarantino's films could be thought of as the representative cultural products in the

postmodern consumer society for they particularly fulfil their task as a commercial product, voluntarily catering to the public in terms of nostalgia, entertainment and vulgarity.

All of Tarantino's films exude a massive nostalgic aura, which bears a close relation with Tarantino's growing environment. According to Jameson's account, the nostalgia film in the narrow sense refers to "films about the past and about specific generational moments of that past"[47] It "set(s) out to recapture all the atmosphere and stylistic peculiarities"[48] of that past. Unlike the historical films narrating stories about the past, nostalgia films touch the past in a very different way by which the narratives choose the cultural stereotypes about the past instead of representing the past with historical events. In Tarantino's films, the theme club called Jack Rabbit Slim in PF contributes to the most nostalgic mood. In this fancied place, posters of 50's movies are hanging on the wall, the archetypal waitress-to-superstar legend is inverted by using look-alikes to bring the dead '50s celebrity back to life with their nostalgic costumes, such Marilyn Monroe, James Dean, etc, even the menu breaks film history into pure consumption by offering Douglas Sirk steaks and Martin & Lewis shakes. Jules' explosive hairstyle of 1960's and Mia's wig of 1930's style also help a lot in increasing this nostalgic feeling. Besides that, the soundtracks in his films could be a very effective element to build up their archaic sense. For instance, in RD, when Mr. Blond is slicing the captured police officer's ear, he is listening to the broadcast program hosted by K-Billy DJ, who usually introduced music of 70's pop hits in the weekends. What's more, the soundtrack of PF is a mixture of gangster bravado mixed with pop nostalgia underscored by 70s and 80s classic from

the likes of Edison Lighthouse and the Difranco Family. Tarantino "package(s) the past as a commodity and offer(s) it to the viewer as an object of purely aesthetic consumption."[49] When audience of different generations watch it, they will definitely have different experience and the resultant feelings: the younger generation may simply take this interesting journey and be attracted by those past miraculous icons, while people growing up with those images and sounds are able to arise a deeper and more emotional feelings to return to that older period and experience it once again. This is where the specialty of nostalgic films lies because they do not reinvent a picture specifically as same as the past, but rather by establishing a feel and shape of those characteristic objects of an older time and then accomplishes the goal of reawakening a sense of the past associated with those objects. Even the car driven by Jules and Vincent is the 1974 Chevy Nova. Hence, "t(T)he postmodern nostalgic film is then very precisely such a consumable set of images, marked very often by music, fashion, hairstyles and vehicles or motorcars."[50] All of those nostalgic elements not only betray Tarantino's being born in 1960's, but also serve to increase its popularity among the different audiences because its nostalgic mood could meet their consumption demands and become a best-seller movie.

Generally, contemporary films are hybrids, no matter which sorts they feed in, commercial or artistic. The films directed by Tarantino are not an exception, even more hybrid. RD, within the framework of gangster and noir, incorporates strands of visual horror, action and suspense, and the plot involves dramatic chase sequence, and roof-top confrontation. KB mainly structured in a revenge format, combines with black-and-white, Japanese

Cartoon, Chinese Kung Fu genre and so on, which does represent the trend of multi-incorporation of late capitalism because it is well known that Japan is famous for its cartoon industry. Besides that, there are huge amount references to American popular culture, ranging from the sexy idle Marilyn Monroe of 1960's, sexy legend Madonna of 1980s to superman and spiderman. These referent pieces could provide the joyment because "T(t)he pleasure of the texts consciously spills over into an audience's knowledge of other films, other performance, other music."[51] Those quotations in Tarantino's films are popular not only in America, but also all over the world, so the audience outside of the U.S.A. can instantly recognize them and obtain the amusement, as well as Americans. In addition, they are not new because they existed before, when they are recycled into Tarantino's films, they are given another role of simply entertaining the mass when "we pay our money and are entertained by consuming second-hand experiences which once formed the basis of social life."[52] In doing so, the mass audience could "derive(s) pleasure from the recognition of internal parody and literary and cultural allusions."[53] when watching Tarantino's films. And in this way, Tarantino accomplished the goal to offer joyment to the masses.

Some people say Tarantino achieves such a huge success because he is very lucky. That is not a jealous attitude toward his success because in fact he really is. Tarantino is lucky to have a chance to cater to the mass appetite and to attract moviegoers as many as possible, which was most presented in his latest two-volume film KB. It is well known that in American film history, Bruce Lee, a Hong Kong master of Chinese martial arts, sparked a martial trend by his martial cinema in 1970s and the year from 1972 to 1975 was often

cited as the Bruce Lee era. Tarantino was growing up in the same period and inevitably influenced by that trend, and accordingly this trend laid some important influence upon his later filmmaking. What's more, this trend cultivated a huge amount of audience who were passionate for the Chinese martial arts and established its popularity among American moviegoers. This trend was intensified in 2000 when a Chinese martial arts film named *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* was awarded the Oscar for the best foreign language film. Almost at the same period Tarantino made his martial films, in which the famous Chinese Kung Fu master Pai Mei trains the Bride to practice arts in very traditional ways. For example, the bride is required to hit the wall with her naked fist until she can break through the wall; the bride is ordered to dig in the sang contained in a round deep pit with her fingers; she is asked to climb up the 100-step stone stairs with two barrels of water on her shoulders. All of those descriptions are typical clichés of Chinese Kung Fu films, which constructs more visual wonders for the American audience and also satisfies their dreaming of becoming a master of martial arts. "This means less of theme, structure, style, ideology and significance----the prime concerns of modernist criticism----and more of myth, fable, archetype, fantasy, magic, in short more wonder."[54] All those ancient Chinese martial elements not only increase the film' s creativity, but also function as a very attractive additive to cater to the mass' need to experience the exotic atmosphere and entertainment through watching the films. However, it is still hard to say that Tarantino is determined to satisfy the mass audience's curiosity from the very beginning. He is more fortunate than successful because he only puts what he likes as a cinephile into his filmmaking, and no matter what others think, Tarantino

succeeds.

As the cultural product in the consumer society, the factors analyzed above of course contribute to Tarantino's commercial success, while another one should not be ignored. Being vulgar is such a sufficient means for Tarantino to attract moviegoers as many as possible, both in film content and characters' lines. According to the independent research firm Media Index, RD has over 200 f-words, and PF has 411 swear words, which far exceeds any other production. Some conversations between his characters are even more vulgar. For instance, at the beginning of RD, the gangsters are sitting around a coffee table and talking about Madonna's popular song "like a virgin":

> Mr. Pink: "Like a Virgin" is all about a girl who digs a guy with a big dick. The whole song is a metaphor for big dicks.
> Mr. Blue: No it's not. It's about a girl who is very vulnerable and she's been fucked over a few times. Then she meets some guy who's really sensitive--......
> Mr. Pink: Let me tell ya what "Like a Virgin"'s about. It's about some cooze who's a regular fuck machine. I mean all the time, morning, day, night, afternoon, dick, dick, dick, dick, dick, dick, dick, dick, dick, dick, dick.
> Mr. Blue: How many dicks was that?
> Mr. White: A lot.[55]

Compared with the vulgar conversations, the stories involved in Tarantino's films are not shadowed. The genres that Tarantino selects to tell the stories primarily encompass the gangster, crime and action and the stories are mainly related to violence, sex and drugs. In RD, Mr. Orange is graphically depicted bleeding from the beginning to the end of the film, which generates some severe criticism from some film critics. In PF, two sexual sadists rape the head

gangster Wallace. Also in this film, there is a sequence in which the camera first shoots the needle going into Vincent's vein, then blood spurting back into the syringe, mixing with the heroin, and last Vincent's thumb is shot pushing down on the plunger. This sequence describes how Vincent purchases drug and shoots him up with the special utensils in a very detailed way. Although his films are full of vulgarity, which helps a great deal in his box-office receipts, it does not prevent them from being appreciated by academic institutes for "that horror, violent death and explicit sex have migrated from B-movie (and pornography) margin to the mainstream center."[56] Meanwhile, although this vulgarity remains the same as it was in the modernist works, there lies an important difference.

It is well known that secularity does not exist only in postmodern time; it existed even before modern period. However, the dominant upper class of modern time thought this feature did not go well with their taste and the established order within the middle-class concern, although it was welcomed by the mass public. Accordingly, these mundane elements were doomed to be dead for "it emerged... as scandalous and offensive to the middle-class public--ugly, dissonant, bohemian, sexually shocking."[57] On the contrary, in the postmodern era or the consumer society, the vulgar essence does not change at all. What have changed are the attitudes of different people towards it. This vulgarity is welcomed by the mass, as well as the academic. Under the aesthetic of consumer society, "there is very little in either the form or the content of the contemporary art that contemporary society finds intolerable and scandalous."[58] A difference has been long held between the elite interpretation of film as art and the mass-audience perception as entertainment.

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But in Tarantino's films, what has been liked by the mass public also is appreciated by the elite class. It is no longer a subordinate or marginal feature, and even "no longer scandalize anyone and are not only received with the greatest complacency but have themselves become institutionalized and are at one with the official or public culture of western society."[59] The most offensive forms of postmodern art is not only welcomed by the mass in great zeal and accordingly explains their huge commercial success, as well as artistic, as what Tarantino's films' situation, but also it is labeled as the avant-gardism and is consumed by the mass for the purpose of being avant-gard.

Chapter III Intertextual Filmmaking

Derived from Latin *intertexto*, meaning to intermingle while weaving, intertextuality[60] is a term coined by French semiotician Julia Kristeva[61] in the late sixties. In her elaboration, intertextuality designated the transposition of one or more systems of signs on to another, which was accompanied by a new enunciative and denotative position. Kristeva referred to this relation between texts in terms of two axes: a horizontal axis connecting the author and readers of a text, and a vertical axis, which connected the text to other texts. Intertextuality is not a time-bound word; however it is obvious that some periods has a closer connection with it, especially in postmodernism which represents an increase of this trend, recently in postmodern cinema in particular. Tarantino's films reveal an intense intertextuality in forms of allusion, quotation, pastiche and collage, with resources ranging from his own previous films and others.

Quentin Tarantino, a young American director, is regarded as the master of American postmodern cinema. He achieved his international fame with his masterpiece *Pulp Fiction* in 1994, and from that time onward, he is entitled with the most representative filmmaker of postmodern popular culture. It is very useful and necessary to take into consideration Tarantino's growing background before looking into his intertextual way of filmmaking.

Quentin Tarantino was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1963. His mother named him after the figure Quint, from the television series *Gunsmoke*(1955), which might in some degree predicates that Quentin was going to be a

"plagiarizer". Tarantino grew up in South Bay at the southern end of the city of Los Angeles which was rich in films. Quentin was not a good child because of coming from a family which was broken and rebroken. Instead of going to school and learning, he liked watching television, going to the cinema and reading comics, which became resources on which he dependent to start his later movie career. After quitting from the tenth grade, Quentin worked in a porn cinema, the *Pussycat Theatre* in Torrance, where he checked tickets at the entrance. At the same time, he began to take acting classes, but it turned out that he was not a good actor. Unlike many other famous directors who went into college and studied movies, Tarantino spent five years as a video clerk in a shop called Video Archives in the Californian Manhattan Beach from the age of eighteen, where he watched a lot of movies made in different countries and of different genres, including French New Wave movies, especially Godard's, Melville's film noir, 1960-70s Kung-fu movies of Hong Kong, Japanese Samurai film, and John Woo's action, which generated a huge impact on his movie creation and became another resource for him to explore later. It is during that period that Quentin deepened his understanding about films, broaden his perspectives of making films and formed his own and unique theory of movie making. Besides that, it is also important to take into account the period when Tarantino grew up in order to better understand his films. During that period, American culture showed a tendency of fragmentation and the popular culture was in its critically transforming period. American pop culture had the most comprehensive affect on Tarantino's filmmaking. In the following analysis, it will be shown that the pop figure of 70s and 80s will keep in appearance one or another in his films.

3.1 Cinematic Discourses in Intertextuality

The concept of intertextuality reminds us that each text exists in relation to others. In fact, texts owe more to other texts than to their own makers. Tarantino's films are good examples. First of all, titles of Tarantino's films allude filially to other films. *Reservoir Dogs* is a pastiche of *Straw Dogs* (1971), and *Pulp Fiction* copies directly the old pulp novels which mainly told crime and detective stories that appeared in cheep magazine printed on newsprint, or pulp paper in 1960s and 1970s in America. Each of his films is divided into many chapters which are tied together by headings to introduce the main ideas of every chapter, such as "Mr. Blonde", "Mr. Orange" in RD, "The Gold Watch" in PF, or "The blood-splattered BRIDE" in KB. This way of handling the non-linear narratives produces a reference to early silent films, creating an archaic sense, different from the old subtitles which were to offer some necessary information to the audience and help them understand the films when sounds were not available.

Besides that, Tarantino's films consists of a lot of references to American popular culture, as well as other countries', ranging from the costumes which characters wear to conversation subjects that characters talk, such as Madonna's popular song "like a virgin" talked by robbers in the opening sequence of RD, the lengthy conversation between Jules and Vincent about the size of hamburgers in the second sequence of PF, or Bill's digressive monologue on superman, spiderman in the end of KB. Especially in KB, Tarantino samples the lurid hues of westerns, the deep-fried funk of 70's blaxploitation and above all the graceful and kinetic mayhem of Asian action movies, from Hong Kong-style martial arts, Japanese samurai swordplay to

hard-boiled gangster animation. There is a typical setting in KB when the Bride is fighting against her enemy O-hen Ishii in a garden. Why must the garden be in the movie? Because gardens with snow are iconic Japanese images and Tarantino is acting as the instrument of his received influence. Also in KB, a flashback shows the Bride's first meeting with her master Pai Mei, who is old, wise and trains her to transform from a naïve girl to a self-possessed warrior. This sequence is fun to watch, because it is shot on grainy film stock with lots of zooms to emulate the old kung fu movies. However, these small intertextualities seem to be pieces of cakes, compared with the complete sequences lifted from other movies.

At the first glance, it seemed that RD was homage to the gritty crime drama of the late sixties and early seventies, but in fact, it was even more directly influenced by Hong Kong cinema because its entire premise was a remake of the last fifteen minutes of *Ringo Lam*'s 1987's HK action film *City on Fire*. The main idea of KB comes from a Japanese film *Lady Snowblood*(1973), centering around a female child whose mother dies in jail, who then goes on to receive martial arts training to avenge her mother's death. In KB, the Bride follows the same revenging road as that little girl did and the story carries out. The scene of House of Blue Leaves produces a reference to a Hong Kong film named *Chinese Boxer* (1969) in which Wang Yu fights against one hundred enemies without any sword; but in KB, the Bride is fighting with her bare hands against the Crazy 88 ruled by O-hen Ishii, a former member of Bill's assassination group.

All the intertextual parts show Tarantino's strong passion for films, but not a snobbish one. He keeps the same enthusiasm for both respected movies

and trash ones. He is smart enough though to escape from doing homage or simple remakes. He takes the scrapes from these old movies and weaves an extraordinary new cloak out of them. Those referent objects make Tarantino's films more like a popular museum instead of films, displaying different figures from different periods, and credits its audience with the necessary experience to make sense of such allusions and offers them the pleasure of recognition. Because of this passion, it is more appropriate to name Tarantino's "plagiarizing process" pastiche than parody, although many people incline to think each of them is correct.

According to Fredric Jameson's account, these two both involve imitation, but with different purposes. Parody is popular in modern time and mainly servers to "cast ridicule on the private nature of these stylistic mannerisms"[62] in order to reassure "the norm in contrast to which the styles of the great modernists can be mocked."[63] No matter what forms they take, there is always some impulse in the parody, especially the ironic tone. On the contrary, pastiche in postmodern works is a "blank parody", "without parody's ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter, without that latent feeling that there exists something normal compared with which is being imitated."[64] Tarantino's feelings for those old films are more blank than ironic. Some film critics think that there are so many intertextual segments of martial arts in Tarantino's films, it is because Tarantino himself has always been fascinated by them and that he wanted to show some respects to them. Tarantino was strongly in opposition to that arguments and once said very clearly that he was not homage to anybody although he admitted he was inspired by the works of John Woo, Martin Scorsese, and so forth. No matter

how Tarantino excuses himself, his films disclose his real attitudes towards those films. Tarantino once said he was a huge fan of Asian martial arts, mainly Chinese and Japanese, and this is particularly apparent by looking into his latest two-volume film Kill Bill, in which the pastiches of stories of Asian martial arts films are ubiquitous. Besides that, the intertextual costume and prop show his homage to certain films as well. For instance, the black suitcase in PF is a reference to the same prop in a film noir *Kiss Me Deadly*(1955); the brides of KB wears a tracksuit, which is similar to that one Bruce Lee worn in his last unfinished film *Game of Death*(1978). Even in his latest film KB, Tarantino adds in the beginning a subtitle "This film is dedicated to master director Kinji Fukasaku (1930—2003)", by which Tarantino publicly claims his attitudes of being respectful to his favorite directors instead of satiric attitude.

At the same time, this is not to say Tarantino handles this issue very well because it could be easily found out his shortages when dealing with the segments of different cultural indications, especially in KB. When the film is drawing to the end, the Bride brings up her right arm, sticks out two fingers, and hits Bill on ten different pressure points on his body, then hits him straight on in the heart with her palm. Bill's body jolts, as if he's just had a heart attack. Bill coughs up a little blood, turns his back to her and walks five steps in the opposite direction with each step his heart swells. On the fifth he bursts and falls down on the floor and died. In this sequence, Tarantino tries to imitate the legendary martial arts of ten-point-palm-exploding-heart technique, which was often used by master of Chinese martial arts in 1960, 70's Hong Kong martial movies. When Chinese audiences watch this part, they can't help laughing at

the childishness and the blunt imitation resulting from the cultural misunderstanding. He did watch a great deal this kind of films, but without living in the specific cultural context, he still remains in the merely imitating level. However, this could be forgettable if taking into consideration that Tarantino is a huge cinephile of Chinese martial arts.

Tarantino not only refers to other directors' films, but also to his own. One of the evident features in his films is the continual recognitions of recycled characters, sets, props. In RD, Keitel's Mr. White refers to his ex-partner Alabama, a reference to Patricia Arquette' character in TR; according to Tarantino, Michael Madsen's Mr. Blonde whose real name is Vic Vega, is the brother of John Travolta's Vincent Vega in PF. Here, Tarantino has an "acute self-consciousness about the formal, constructed nature of the work"[65] This kind of self-consciousness is especially displayed in PF at one point where Mia describes Vincent as a square by making the shape in the air. Tarantino gives an outlined square on the screen as she does it. This is not authorial or directorial twitches. Tarantino's purpose is to tell audience to keep distanced from the movie world and not to take everything too seriously and to enjoy the show. Tarantino's films "are experienced rather than watched, that they offer a fantasy space to inhabit rather than opening a window onto reality."[66] There are many such details that are consistent throughout many of his films, it adds to the familiarity of his films and helps us identify with the characters. The movie plays on Mr. Carradine's persona as Cain, the totemic star of the TV series "kung fu", referenced by Mr. Jackson in PF. With all those cinematic signs, quotes and clichés, his films show anything no more than a celluloid film world. "i(I)t is purely about its own intensity, its own

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effect as a piece of fictional film."[67] Tarantino highlights the artificiality and consciousness with the constant monochrome sequences in his films, sometimes to increase the archaic sense of the backdrop when Vincent drives to Mia' s home in PF, or to avoid too gory scene of the House of Blue Leaves in KB.

It is not too difficult for audience to acknowledge the intertextual pieces related to American films and popular culture. Here, those references are put randomly into his films and function as different codes, or signs. In conventional thought, signs consist of signifiers, referring to "the material objects, the sounds that words make, the letters on a page"[68] and signifieds, "the concept of mental image to which the signifier give rise"[69] with signifieds being privileged. On the contrary, the postmodern thought gives primacy to the signifiers over the signifieds, and therefore the floating signifiers are all left. Because of the former attention is focused on the signidieds, the modern aesthetics determined in a piece of art to find out the deep-rooted meanings through the references of the signifiers, holding "the essence of art is its ability to reveal aspects of beauty..., its ability to reveal on a profounder metaphysical level aspects of universal beauty and truth."[70] While audience of postmodern works recognize the segments that they are familiar with, they attain a kind of enjoyment. The meanings of these postmodern works emerge in the interconnection between the old and the new texts as they play off one another in the minds of audience. "In extreme cases, it exchanges its internal coherence completely for an external one...; it loses its identity and disintegrates into numerous texts particles which only bear an extrinsic reference."[71] The most important thing to appreciate intertextual

films depends on audience's familiarity with the intertextual pieces. The audience could find "a kind of revolutionary quality in consumption and in the refusal of meaning and thought in favor of delight."[72] The postmodern favors acquiring the pleasure through the acknowledgements of intertextual segments and relations, without any fetters put on the readers' minds.

However, the most interesting reference may possibly lies in the theme restaurant in PF that Tarantino dreamed up for "signifiers have become more important than their signifieds; we live in a society that consumes images and doesn't think too much about what the images represent or mean"[73] In this place, some of the 1950s celebrities come back to life, such as Hollywood sexy queens Marilyn Monroe, Mamie Van Doren and superstar Buddy Holly serving customaries with food like Douglas Sirk steaks and Durwood Kirby burger. Beside that, Tarantino collages different stylistic icons from every possible resource, regardless of time and space, blurring the boundaries between past and present, which could be effectively supported by the juxtaposition of 1920s jazz music, Jules' 1960s explosive hair style and Mia's wig, a reference to actress Louise Brooks of silent films in 1930s, the Chevy Nova of 1970s. "This reflects a general tendency in our culture to be simultaneously obsessed with images of the past and forgetful of real history."[74] When people lose the capability to discern the past from the present, they live in a perpetual present situation. When watching Tarantino's films, it is very easy for audience to lose in a time labyrinth, which is collaged by much unconnected images to produce a sense of nostalgia as well as chaos. The worlds of PF and RD are pure nonsense, chaotic and absurd by the intentional design of the director. Maybe for Tarantino himself, the world does

not make sense, so neither should art.

3.2 Pros and cons of Tarantino's Intertextual Filmmaking

The application of intertexts interrogates the traditional understanding and functioning of the originality and authorship. Traditionally, "the artist is the origin of the work"[75] For films, the directors play an important role in creating the originality of the film. But Tarantino's films display a copying feature instead of being original because of the application of huge amount of intertextual segments, which confuses the audiences and demolished its originality because of the similarity between the reference segments. Besides that, there is another reason for him to "plagiarize".

From the first movie shown in 1895 in Paris, film has been undergoing a long long evolution today. "whereas formerly imitated another style with the firm intention of mocking, satirizing or at least making a judgment on it; today pastiche reproduces formal features for the pleasure of citing them, in a practice of blank parody"[76] Maybe it really has had enough creations. "In a world in which stylish innovation is no longer possible, all that is left is to imitate dead styles, to speak through the masks and with the voices of the styles in the imaginary museum."[77] Tarantino possibly confronted with the same problems as to do something really creative, so he "plagiarizes" all kinds of possibility and unexpectedly, establishes another film fad of intertextuality. "y(Y)et these references are exuberantly playful, never pretentious, despite its fascination with the familiar, this film itself is absolutely new."[78] Although those are second-handed materials, Tarantino creates a brand new style with them, and proves him a genius moviemaker different from most of his

counterparts.

The notion of intertextuality also problematizes the idea of a text having boundaries in terms of form and content. Tarantino breaks the limitations on film contents in interesting ways. All of Tarantino's films transcend the distinctions between genres, including film noir, gangster and animation and so on, and the spatial limitations on locations from China, Japan to Mexico. PF typified postmodern genre-mixing, moving between the classic gangster film to film noir with a playful and comic tone; KB is a hybrid of martial arts together with western and Japanese samurai film. This genre collage breaks the traditional expectation the audience have and creates some unexpected wonder within conventions, which suffices to gain popularity among the public. At the same time, Tarantino has made his contribution to the film industry. He gave new look to the long-neglected film genres, as in KB, "Not groundbreaking storytelling, not complete characters in an action-drama about revenge and lust that brings new life to the long forgotten 70's kung-fu-sploitation genre."[79] In addition, he also created a fad of pastiche film internationally. The special way Tarantino makes films did influenced a great deal the movie industry so as to take a look at the introduction part of 76th Academic Awards which was made of many pastiche segments of different famous films of that year, from *the Lord of the Kings to Harry Potter*; or the box-office hit *Scary Movie 3*, which includes a lot of references from other films as well and produces a great enjoying experience when watching it. So, small wonder that David said: "The director is everything that Hollywood cinema needs right now, able to find art in seemingly antiquated genres and toss out fresh images."[80] Even this influence also affects Chinese filmmakers

such as Feng Xiaogang, who plagiarizes from the opening sequence of an American film *Triple-X* in which the camera is quickly tracking down and shot on a telephone in his last film *Mobile Phone* (2002) On the other hand, the collaged segments are all cinematic clichés, by which Tarantino created a non-cliché representative of postmodern culture, where lies one of postmodern paradox. No matter how postmodern his films are, he could not escape from it.

As a self-taught writer and director, Tarantino's success encourages a lot of youth who love to make their own works, hence more and more independent and non-academic filmmakers come forth with their unique stylish films. Accordingly, in some sense, Tarantino's success can be accounted for against the fact that movie can only achieve huge commercial profit by high budget, high technology and movie celebrities. What's more, his success also proved that a film could be appreciated by common audience with its deep thoughts, unique style, leading ideas and fresh language. At the same time, many film producers are influenced and attracted by Tarantino's phenomenon and become invested in independent films of low budget and low venture, thereby making high profits. Therefore, many independent films like Tarantino's, ranging from *The Usual Suspects* (1995) to *Memento* (2000), were made and achieved huge commercial success, as well as artistic acclaim. However, it also needs to point out that on the one hand, Tarantino's intertextual way of filmmaking does contribute to the world film industry in terms of creating new style, on the other hand, it has almost transformed into a kind of fetter which hinder Tarantino's self-progress. Whether Tarantino has reached his peak of movie carrier and run out of his talent or not, let's wait and see.

Conclusion

Postmodern cinema, as one of the most dynamic field of postmodern cultures/arts, has been attractive since its first appearance in 1960s. Accordingly, this gave rise to a great deal of academic monographs on the postmodern cinema abroad. Due to the historical and social circumstances, it was not until the end of 1980s that an enthusiastic wave toward postmodernism was raised in China. However, there are few systematic researches in China in regard to studies on specific postmodern arts, such as films, dramas, dances and so on, with the exception of novel. Therefore, a case study of Quentin Tarantino and his movies is of important significance.

Ihab Hassan points out that indeterminacy is the most essential characteristic feature of postmodernism with many variants, such as discontinuity, playfulness, uncertainty, fragmentation and so forth. Postmodern theories favor discontinuity and fragmentation rather than unity and totality of modern period when the narrative structure of a piece of postmodern art work is considered. This feature is particularly evident in Tarantino's films. Narrative structure is very common in films. By the 1920s, there had been established within the Hollywood film industry a systematic theory about film narration, including four parts of exposition, complication, climax and denouement However, in 1941, another great modernist film entitled *Citizen Kane* was released, which progressed in double story lines. Although two lines were linear, the intermingling of them interrupted the linear flow of the narrative, and partially subverted the traditional narrative linearity.

Similar to CK, Tarantino's debut film RD also adopted the way of double

story lines to tell the story. The main line remains in accordance with a strictly temporal order, while its narrative flow is hindered when the flash segments are inserted frequently into the story. What's more, there is not any clear temporal order among the segments, which contributes to RD's overthrowing the traditional narrative structure. Compared to RD, Tarantino's next film PF shows a complete break from the linear narrative. This film is divided into seven segments at odd and critical moments, every one of which tells a comparatively independent story and is only connected by characters jumping from this piece to another. In this film, the collage of different fragments takes the place of story line which is widely used in traditional films. Moreover, it also abandons modern "close" writing when PF begins and ends with the different fragments of the same story and the same restaurant setting. In short, PF totally deconstructs the traditional chronological narrative with its chaotic structure.

Playfulness is another postmodern feature represented in Tarantino's films. In traditional films, characters' lines mainly provide the information to progress the story or build up some suspense or intensity. On the contrary, the lines in Tarantino's films appear digressive or totally unrelated to the story itself. Some of them even do not offer the basic knowledge in order to better understand the film. What the characters say is totally isolated from what they do. Tarantino's another favorite subject is violence, but he also deals with it in a playful way. In his films, violence loses its signified and only left with the signifier. Besides that, Tarantino sometimes plays mini-characters in his own films, which could possibly be understood that he is acting out his dream of being an actor.

Postmodernism announces what it wants is the popularization and what it can provide is the pleasure. Unlike modernist hostile attitude to popular culture, postmodern theories celebrate and welcome it. In postmodern thought, popularization is achieved through a dual movement, migrating art into commercial activity and exalting the everyday or popular objects up to the status of art. This movement could be found through surveying Tarantino's four films' box-office receipts and film awards, which reveals Tarantino's clear tendency to be commercial whether he is conscious of it or not. At the same time, Tarantino also elevates the status of some film genres, such as gangster, film noir, and action. In tradition, these genres are pulp or vulgar, but are accepted by the academy into the art auditoria when they are recognized by the U.S. and European film festivals.

Besides that, according to Fredric Jameson's account, the western society has entered into what he calls the late capitalism or consumer society, in which "the aesthetic of consumer society"[81] has been formed. This directly conduces to an orientation that the mass-produced cultural products are determined to be consumed by the public as many as possible in order to make profit as much as possible and an emphasis on simply offering joyment and visual excitements. Tarantino's films display such an inclination in terms of nostalgia, entertainment and vulgarity. However, the postmodern vulgarity goes very well with the established order and is even recognized by the academia, which was almost impossible in modernist aesthetics. All in all, Tarantino's films are effectively popularized and consumed without being scandalous and offensive to the mass audience.

Intertextuality is one of the defining features of postmodernism including

such forms as reference, allusion, quotation, pastiche and so on. This Tarantino's postmodern feature has a close connection with his growing background. Unlike many of his successful colleagues who were trained professionally in the film universities or institutes, Tarantino taught himself about films in a video store where he watched a lot of films of different genres, made from different countries. Tarantino established his own film theories and techniques based on watching experiences. Tarantino's films show a high density of intertextuality, ranging from stories, costumes, hairstyles, soundtrack to props. However, Tarantino's feeling to intertextuality does not limit to be blank; he even appears respectful to the films from which his intertextual segments come. This was made clearer in his latest film KB II, in the beginning of which he adds a subtitle to show his respect to a Japanese director.Tarantino not only quotes others, but also from his own previous works. Postmodernism advocates the effacement of distinctions among genres. Because of the applications of intertextuality, Tarantino's films are generally hybrids, within the framework of gangster and film noir, collaged with horror, suspense, action and kung fu, and in so doing, he breaks and transcends the limitation of genre distinction. However, when Tarantino breaks these limitations and creates some new style, he also establishes another film genre and falls into the postmodern paradox which he could not avoid no matter how postmodern his films are.

In spite of this, there is a distinct batch of aesthetic devices that bear recognizable hallmark of a Quentinian production: the non-linear narrative, the playful violence, the vulgar wards, the pastiche and collage of different film genres. Although Quentin Tarantino has been both celebrated and denounced

as the representative figure of postmodern cinema, his films represent the postmodern theories in terms of discontinuity, playfulness, intertextuality and popularization. He is the representative figure of American postmodern filmmakers. The analysis of his films in this thesis has been hoped, more or less, to help readers better understand postmodern movies and provide some references to promote further research on postmodern cinema in this country.

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Appendix I [1]

Terminology

Aesthetics

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of beauty. The word *aesthetics* was first used by German philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, who helped to establish the study of aesthetics as a separate philosophical field of study. The word aesthetic can be used as a noun meaning "that which appeals to the senses." Literary theorists of past two decades in particular were more interested in seeing what works of art and literature have in common with that which is non-artistic than in isolating that which is unique about them. For this reason, the term aesthetic has tended to crop up in theoretical discussion mainly as a prelude to detailed discussion of the specificity of art or literature.

Collage

A term adopted from the vocabulary of painters to denote a work contains a mixture of allusions, references, quotations and foreign expressions.

Consumption

Consumption is the using up of a resource. Discussions of human consumption of resources play an important role in both economics and environmentalism. In Keynesian economics, "consumption" is short-hand for personal consumption expenditure and is determined by the consumption function, especially by the marginal propensity to consume. It is part of aggregate demand or effective demand. Consumption can also be defined as "the selection, adoption, use, disposal and recycling of goods and services", as opposed to their design, production and marketing.

Deconstruction

The term originates in the writings of French philosopher Jacques Derrida and implies that the hierarchical oppositions of western metaphysics are themselves constructions or ideological impositions. Deconstruction thus aims to undermine western metaphysics by undoing these hierarchical oppositions, showing their reliance upon a center or presense.

Entertainment

Entertainment is an amusement or diversion intended to hold the attention of an audience or its participants.

Fetishism

In the Marxist sense of the term, it is closely linked to Karl Marx's distinction between use value and exchange value. Marx distinguishes between the value a commodity has measured in terms of what it can be exchanged for (exchange value), and measured in terms of its use to whoever possesses it (use value). The term has frequently been brought into discussions of literary value by Marxist critics, especially in the context of discussions of the way in which literature itself becomes a commodity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Genre

A French term for a kind, a literary type or class. The major classical genres were: epic, tragedy, lyric, comedy and satire, to which would now be added novel and story. From the Renaissance to the 18th, the genres were carefully distinguished, and writers were expected to follow the rules prescribed for the form.

Parody

The imitative use of the words, style, attitude, tone and ideas of an author in such a way as to make them ridiculous. This is usually achieved by exaggerating certain traits, using more or less the same technique as the cartoon caricaturist. In fact, a kind of satirical mimicry. As a branch of satire, its purpose may be corrective as well as derisive.

Pastiche

A patchwork of words, sentences or complete passages from various authors or one author. It is, therefore, a kind of imitation and, when intentional, may be a form of parody. An elaborate form of pastiche is a sustained work written mostly or entirely in the style and manner of another writer.

Playfulness/Ludism

From a Latin root meaning to play, ludism and ludic are used interchangeably in English with play and playful. More recently play and playful have perhaps have been more favored, probably because their use allows reference to a wider range of meanings. Recent discussions of postmodernism have suggested that one important way in which it can be distinguished from a modernism is by reference to this more playful and unserious tone. Instead of a view of the loss of center in the contemporary world as tragic, the postmodernist views this as a justification of playfulness—exploring the potentialities of significations without an irritable searching for final truths or unified meanings.

Popular culture

The term popular culture refers to the culture of a subordinate group or class which is distinct from the dominant culture of a particular society, dominant in the sense either of

more widely disseminated or valued, or in the sense of belong to and reflecting the interests of a dominant group or class. Popular culture is constantly changing and is specific to place and time. It forms currents and eddies, in the sense that a small group of people will have a strong interest in an area of which the mainstream popular culture is only partially aware. A widely held opinion about popular culture is that it tends to be superficial. Cultural items that require extensive experience, training, or reflection to be appreciated seldom become items of popular culture.

Reference

To refer is to point or allude to, and thus to assert the existence or nature. In literary criticism from a very early time the term has been associated with controversies about whether literary works make reference to extra-literary or extra-reality. Many influential recent theories have argued that literature is non-referential, literary works can refer only to themselves, and that they represent closed spheres within which referential statements are locked and unable to escape. A referent is that which has been referred to.

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[1] See Wolfreys, Julian. ED. *The Edinburch Encyclopaedia of Modern Criticism and Theory.* Edinburch: Edinburch University Press, 2002.

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Appendix II

Abbreviation

CK	*Citizen Kane*
KB I	*Kill Bill I*
KB II	*Kill Bill II*
PF	*Pulp Fiction*
RD	*Reservoir Dogs*
TR	*True Romance*

Acknowledgements

The writing of this thesis involves certain risks because of few relevant materials available. However, I finally finished the thesis with the encouragement, guidance and support of many people. Firstly, I would like to thank my tutor, Professor Jiang Yuan, who read my draft and offered me many valuable suggestions.

I am also grateful to the many other professors who have helped me directly or indirectly in the course of writing this thesis, whether by conversations, by listening, by their comments, or by their support. I would like to mention them in particular: they are Professor Zhao Yi, Professor Lin Biguo, Professor Zhui Hui, Professor Shi Jian, Professor Cheng Xiling, and Professor Feng Zehui.

My thanks also go to my friend, Erick Peterson, who checked carefully my thesis draft for accuracy. I am deeply indebted to him for sharing his knowledge and his opinions.

Finally, but most especially, I wish to thank my husband Wang Xiaobai, the most important person in my life, who is always there somewhere ready to help me patiently, untiringly, without hesitation no matter what happened or is going to happen. Without him, the completion of this thesis would have been impossible.

本人在读期间科研成果

本人在四川大学外国语学院攻读硕士研究生学位期间公开发表的论文：

卿梅，《后现代主义与昆廷·塔伦蒂诺电影》，西南民族大学学报，2004 年 10 月。

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