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Carme Tronch Valls

"An Analysis of Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time in…Hollywood* as a Novelization"

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Abstract: This article analyses Quentin Tarantino's 2021 written work *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* as a novelization of the 2019 film *Once Upon a Time in... Hollywood*, directed and also written by him. The main research questions driving this study inquire about whether the novel captures that late 1960s Hollywood zeitgeist in the same way or whether it ultimately has the same purpose as the film. This essay also examines if the novel tells the same story, or perhaps narrates more or fewer events, whether characters are constructed differently, or if the novel makes the same references to popular culture. Furthermore, this study also considers how aspects of the film's narration (namely the use of a narrator) are verbally transposed to the novel. This paper offers a comparative analysis of the film and the novel in order to prove that Tarantino had different purposes for the film and for the novel as an answer to my research questions. On the one hand, the film focuses on three main characters (Rick, Cliff, and Sharon Tate) and a fourth character, the late 1960s Hollywood. But most notably, it is aimed at providing an alternative ending to Sharon Tate's real tragic story. On the other hand, the novel puts the characters in the background and only uses them as a thread in a Hollywood retrospective, thus Hollywood becomes the main character. This conclusion is drawn from the differences between the film and the novel on the basis of plot and structure, characterization, intertextuality and narratological aspects.

Keywords: Quentin Tarantino, *Once Upon a Time in… Hollywood*, adaptation, novelization, postmodernism.

Carme TRONCH VALLS

An Analysis of Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time in… Hollywood* as a Novelization

0. Introduction

It is a truth universally acknowledged that many films are based on novels, as is the case of Jane Austen's 1813 novel *Pride and Prejudice* having been adapted into moving images both for cinema and for television on several occasions. But the reverse process of adapting a film to the medium and form of the novel, one of the various types of novelization, is as interesting as a cultural phenomenon. Despite the fact that novelizations are not quantitatively as important they also deserve a place in the discipline of Adaptation Studies. A case in point is the object of this article: the 2021 novel *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* written by Quentin Tarantino, which is "based on" (as the back cover advertises) the 2019 film *Once Upon a Time in... Hollywood*, directed and also written by Tarantino. My aim in the following pages is to analyse the former as a novelization or film-to-book adaptation of the latter.

Quentin Tarantino is known for being the quintessential filmmaker of witty dialogues, aestheticized violence, and passion for cinema and pop culture. His 2019 film, *Once Upon a Time in... Hollywood*, encapsulates these traits by capturing the zeitgeist of the Hollywood of 1969. His novel (with the same title except for the ellipsis) is his first adventure into prose fictional narrative. My study is driven by a set of main research questions that aim to investigate whether the novel shares the same ultimate purpose as the film. Does it capture captures that zeitgeist in the same way? These questions include analysing whether the novel tells the same story or does it narrate more events, if characters are portrayed differently and how the novel adapt certain narrative elements from the film, namely the use of a narrator.

In order to pursue my aim, I have structured this essay into three main sections. In "Adaptation: the Question of Creation, Anxiety and Novelization" I expound the theoretical premises that support my analysis, namely key concepts in Adaptation Studies, including originality, fidelity, intertextuality, and novelization. Since the postmodernist movement plays a key role in Adaptation Studies, I go on to place the filmmaker's work in the field of postmodernism and identify postmodern traits in all his film in the "Postmodern Tarantino" section. Finally, in order to answer my research questions, in the largest section, "A Comparative Analysis", I examine adaptation shifts in the novel in comparison with the film organized around the following aspects: plot and structure, characterization, intertextuality and pastiche, and finally narrators.

1. Adaptation: the question of creation, anxiety and novelization

As Linda Hutcheon states in *A Theory of Adaptation*, adaptation has always played a significant role in the story-telling imagination (4) and merits to be investigated in its full scope and depth as both a process (of creation and reception) and a unique output. Hutcheon reassesses how adaptation works across all media and genres that could put an end to the age-old debate over whether the book was better than the movie. This paper also encompasses the definition of adaptation as cultural recycling – in Julia Kristeva's terms– a "mosaic of quotations" (37) or as "palimpsestuous works"

(Hutcheon 33). Therefore, the take on adaptation is to consider it as a manifestation of intertextuality, an embodiment of textual relationships, and we experience them "through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation" (Hutcheon 8). However, as Peter Brooke points out (113), the viewer is under no duty to be familiar with the source text when seeing an adaptation and thus being able to enjoy and appreciate the adaptation on its own right.
Regardless of the label and definition of adaptation, the field has its detractors outside academia. Adaptations are widely received as minor, dissatisfactory and never with the same value as their original source. According to Robert Stam, the rhetoric of criticism has been flooded with words such as "infidelity," "betrayal," "deformation," "violation," "vulgarization," and "desecration" (54). Brian McFarlane adds to this list that is blatantly moralistic language such as "tampering," "interference," or "molestation" (12). The prejudices towards adaptations lie in the misconception of "fidelity." The "fidelity criticism" has been deeply discussed by Hutcheon, who argues that the discourse of fidelity is based on the premise that adapters work towards the repetition of the source text (7). But she defines adaptation as "repetition without replication," as changes in the product are inevitable (Hutcheon 7). As Mazurek-Przybylska highlights (127), it is not until the acceptance that adaptations are a completely different medium that they are valued as independent works of art.

Hence, fidelity or proximity to the source text do not set out the premises on which the adapted text should be valued. Moreover, if fidelity is taken as a criterion, there would be nothing more faithful to the original work than for the adaptation to be made by the author himself, as it happens in this case study. However, as it will be explained below, the novel is not a faithful reproduction of the film, even if it was made by the same author. Therefore, this self-adaptation proves that faithfulness should not be the purpose of an adaptation.

This study, however, goes beyond the conventional, mainstream book-to-film adaptations and deals with a less studied and less known type of adaptation: novelization. It is the book adaptation of a film, or more accurately, the book adaptation of the screenplay of a film. This kind of adaptation not only contributes to the development of cinema and literature, as it also offers insights to the relationship between these two arts (Mazurek-Przybylska 125). From its birth, novelizations have been regarded as a socio-economic phenomenon. As Jan Baetens explains ("Novelization" 47), novelization is strictly linked to Hollywood's commercial services. In other words, it is a merchandising literature, available to readers at the time of release of the film. The process of this kind of novelization involves the writing of a novel on the basis of the film's screenplay, dismissed of all technical indications, and publicized with the release of the film, making it a marketing product. It is worth noting that most novelized books are not written by an author who has seen the film, but by a novelizer commissioned by the producers to convert the screenplay into a novel in order to coincide with the film's release and serve the marketing policy. Furthermore, the majority of novelizers must work with an earlier draft of the film in order to get it ready for publication at the time of the film's release and must obey the desires of the producer and of the target audience, thus lacking literary creativity. Novelizations are still frequently dismissed as literary by-products and cheap novels produced for Hollywood's promotion and marketing apparatus (Verevis 6).

On the account of novelizations being dismissed of having little literary value, it was only recently, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, that works devoted to the history and phenomenon of

novelization emerged, despite its long history and involvement of scholars. For this reason, Baetens argues ("Novelization" 44) that the rise of film-to-book adaptations is a way for the foregoing dominating art form – writing – to recuperate its status, or as he phrases it, "the text writes back". There are novelizations, nevertheless, that approach a more elite and highbrow literary proposal, disconnected from its liminal commercial purposes only because the film's release is not set to coincide with the novel's publication. This leads to a distinction between those novels written for an "intellectual and aesthetic betterment" and those created for marketing purposes. And so, changes in how we access and consume literature and what literature means to us result in reconfigurations of literary culture that erode highbrow/lowbrow distinctions (Newell 57).

As explained before, adaptation is always assessed in relation to the source text, conceiving it as a derivative product and not a valuable work on its own. Returning to the question of fidelity, it is believed that they are creations of an "original" screenplay, but in Baeten's assessment "novelization does not so much aspire to become the movie's other as it wants to be its double . . . The imaginary regime novelization fosters for itself is that of a copy (calque), that is, an immediate transfer" ("Novelization" 50). As well as its peer novel-to-film adaptation, novelizations are blamed as unoriginal, devaluing their artistic merit. There are prejudices against them because they have been accused of cheating, as they are about stories and characters the author did not create. Novelizations are often referred to "reverse adaptations" or "anti-adaptations" (Baetens "Novelization" 45; Newell 30) since they avoid the major challenges that most filmic adaptations undergo, that is, the translation from one semiotic system to another. But once more, both the cinematographic adaptation and novelization are regarded of lower status since they are constantly compared to their source text and are assessed on the criterion of fidelity. As Thomas M. Leitch claims in "Twelve Fallacies of Adaptation," fidelity is a fallacious measure because it is "unattainable, undesirable, and theoretically possible only in a trivial sense," since adaptations will always "reveal their sources" superiority because the source texts will always be better at being themselves" (161). He also explains that the assumption of fidelity comes from the appeal to anteriority, "the primacy of classic over modern text" (162). This paper endorses this view: in the comparative analysis infidelities or deviations from the source text will not be appraised negatively *per se*, but rather as opportunities for creativity.

2. Postmodern Tarantino

Postmodernism defines the era in which Quentin Tarantino produces his films. Therefore, in this section, I will explain how postmodernism serves as a critical tool of cinema and how Tarantino fits into these characteristics which help understand his novelization. The postmodernist trace in Tarantino is noticeable in the fragmented narrative structure, filled with chapters belonging to characters, as in *Kill Bill vol.1* and *Kill Bill vol.2* (2003 and 2004, respectively) or belonging to events, as in *The Hateful Eight* (2015). Tarantino's long, deliberate sequences with lengthy, amusing dialogues are frequently mixed with instances of 'contemplative' stoppage of the action, which are abruptly followed by violent outbursts. In addition to this, close-ups, the "trunk shot" and split screens – or side by side frames – are some of his peculiarities, as well as the constant flashbacks, flashforwards, and jump-cuts that interrupt the linear narration of the film.

Postmodernism holds pastiche at its heart, which is a concept deeply explored by Frederic Jameson in his celebrated essay "Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism" (1984). In this case, pastiche begins to imply several meanings: the imitation of a style, the appropriation of an element that is present in another's work in the form of a textual quotation, or even, though not necessarily, the exact copy of another's creation. Jameson clarifies the difference between pastiche and parody, terms which people have frequently confused. Both techniques involve imitation or/and styles. The difference lies in that parody "capitalizes on the uniqueness of these styles and seizes on their idiosyncrasies and eccentricities to produce an imitation which mocks the original" ("Consumer Society" 113), whereas pastiche is a "neutral practice" of the imitation without the satirical intention or ulterior motive; it is a "blank parody, parody that has lost its sense of humor". Pastiche in cinema itself is the "mixing and matching past styles and genres in order to modernize, reinvent or deconstruct their source text" (Onley 167). This not only includes styles or genres, but also camera angles, lighting, and *mise-en-scène*. Additionally, most filmmakers claim that pastiche uses homage, as a way to pay respect. For this matter, Quentin Tarantino is the quintessential example of a filmmaker using pastiche, and in this case, not only in his films but also in his novel, as will be explained later. Pastiche raises again many questions about the relationship of the copy to the original. Is it what has been called "appropriationism," that is, taking the work of another artist and copying it without formally deviating from its content. Does it constitute a certain kind of imitation or plagiarism? Is it a harmless kind of homage or a nostalgic or ironic expression?

The personal brand created by the filmmaker from Tennessee is more than consolidated, and many filmmakers copy Tarantino's style, although without touching his rhythmic-musical capacity or his enormous cinematographic knowledge. It is the filmmaker's ability to appropriate what is not his own in order to make it his own that is most admirable in his entire filmography. This explains why he resorts to a well-known story, loaded with history; not a historical narrative, reliable and true, if any can be considered as such; but a different story, his own, that of himself and of his filmography, full of intertextual resources, self-references, and postmodern pastiches. "Tarantino is described as the perfect embodiment of the artist completely uninterested in dealing with 'reality,' totally absorbed in the history of cinema and exclusively occupied with re-mixing pre-existing pieces of popular culture" (Pagello 78). The intertextuality that surrounds his entire work is evident from beginning to end.

In a 1994 interview with *Empire* magazine Tarantino stated: "I steal from every single movie ever made," and as result, visual allusions to motion pictures have come to define Tarantino's work. He also uses homage to attempt and create something new, or in other words, to personalize the film. When a director is capable of handling the narrative and expressive possibilities of the cinematographic apparatus so effectively, when cinephilia envelops everything and intertextuality is not an excuse but a means in itself, something freash and autonomous is born. There is no point in accusations of copying to try to belittle a careful intertextual work, or superfluous historical attempts to criticise a temporal rewriting, because if there is one thing this director knows about, it is "cinematic palimpsests".

His use of pastiche extends from allusions to film genres and styles – heist movies, kung fu/martial arts, war films, revenge dramas, gangster movies, blaxploitations[1] or spaghetti westerns – to technical allusions of shots, long sequences, music, fashion, literature, and characters. Tarantino's witty use of pastiche does not stop at the mimicry of others' works; it reaches a personal level. Another of his trademarks is casting, where he is completely aware of the actor's previous roles and adapts them to the set film[2]. Not only are his films in a constant dialogue with works by other filmmakers, but also with Tarantino's filmography itself. He has been playing with films during his life (constantly alluding and imitating other films), and now that his work has reached a canonical status, he has begun to play with his own films. For instance, it is known that Tarantino has a foot fetish since in his films there are long and detailed shots of women's feet. Over the years, however, his foot obsession has become more of a self-parody than a fetish in his films, as he is aware of the mockery.

His latest film and the case study of this paper, *Once Upon a Time in… Hollywood* (2019) presents itself at the podium for intertextual references. The title itself is a pastiche of Sergio Leone's *Once Upon a Time in the West* (1968), and the film is packed with references to Hollywood's 1969 popular culture elements, from costumes, cars, music, celebrities, TV shows, and films. It is not a film about the past, it is a film of *his* past, of the environment in which Tarantino was brought up. The film even inserts montages of movies such as *The Great Escape* (John Sturges, 1963) or *The Wrecking Crew* (Phil Karlson, 1968). Nevertheless, the most notable aspect is how Tarantino is at his most meta. The film not only references some of Tarantino's favourites films, but also references himself. For instance, the aforementioned pastiche of the foot fetish. Another example can be found when Rick is rehearsing his lines, as Tim Roth does in *Reservoir Dogs*, or the scene from Rick's film *The Fourteen Fists of McCluskey* greatly resembles *Inglorious Basterds* (2009) – setting fire to Nazi soldiers – or when Rick and Cliff are at the airport, they walk by a wall the same way Jackie Brown does in the eponymous film, which is in turn a reference to *The Graduate* (1967). Additionally, it also includes the made-up cigarette brand of Red Apples – which appears in every film of the director – as well as the brand "Big Kahuna Burgers". As recently explained, another form of pastiche involves casting, and in this film Kurt Russell and Zoë Bell are the stunt coordinators, praising their previous roles as stunt doubles and their roles in *Death Proof* (2007). Yet the most powerful example of the juxtaposition between Tarantino's fiction and reality is when Margot Robbie as Sharon Tate goes to the cinema and sees herself in *The Wrecking Crew* (1968), although it is not Margot Robbie in the screen but the actual footage of Sharon Tate in that film, thus making us aware that what we are watching is fiction.

When a film examines itself, it develops an understanding of the creative process and serves as a lens through which the reality of the film is filtered. With the release of *Once Upon a Time in… Hollywood*, Tarantino finally applies that filter to his own work while taking stock of his

[1] Blaxploitation cinema emerged in the early 1970s as a new genre that focused on African Americans living in urban areas. These films featured Black protagonists and emphasized their blackness, and were characterized by violence and simplistic themes (Wright 66).

[2] For instance, he casted John Travolta as Vicent Vega in *Pulp Fiction* (1994) for the dance scene knowing Travolta's famous work in *Saturday Night Fever* (1977) and *Grease* (1978), or David Carradine as Bill in *Kill Bill vol.1 & 2* (2003, 2004) due to his role in the TV series *Kung Fu* (1972-1975). This reliance gives their performances an extra metatextual layer.

own filmography. It is Tarantino on Tarantino. This leads to the conclusion that Tarantino's pastiche is without a doubt a source of homage, far from intentions of mockery, parody, or irony.

3. Comparative Analysis

The aim of this comparative analysis is to argue that the purpose of the novel is different from the ulterior motive of the film, a change that motivated Tarantino to novelize his film. *Once upon a Time in... Hollywood* is subject to cinematic norms, be it the duration of the film, the narrative structure, or the plot, all in order to meet the expectations of the film industry and spectators. The film takes a snapshot of Hollywood in 1969 through three main characters, two fictional (Rick Dalton and Cliff Booth) and one real (Sharon Tate). The film focuses on these characters, and the film's main attraction was to know how such a recent traumatic event for society as it is Sharon Tate's death is treated by a filmmaker that concurring with Coulthard (1) is defined as raw, violent, and satirical. Moreover, the fourth main character of the film is Hollywood itself, seen in the long sequences of driving around in vintage cars to the sound of music on the streets of that decade, showing the prevailing hippie movement and how films were made at the time. On the other hand, in *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood* (the novel) Tarantino has more freedom: no time restrictions (his only concern could have been the length of the novel and still it consists of 400 pages) and probably no audience expectations (those who read the novel most likely have already seen the film and are devotees of Tarantino's work, even though it is his first novel, but are familiar with his writing style). Therefore, the novel has late 1960s Hollywood as its sole main character. To that aim Tarantino uses the rest of the characters as conduits through which he shows a panoramic view of Hollywood, not only as a place but also as a wide range of actors, movies, music, TV series, and as a historical moment in the cinema timeline. This can be seen in the way Tarantino changes aspects of plot and the structure, characterization, intertextuality and pastiche, and narration in his adaptation from film to novel.

Once Upon a Time in... Hollywood is an attempt to recreate the world that produced the postmodern imagination of young Tarantino. Both the film and the book are not simply aimed at showing the film industry but are about how films and TV series were made at a specific moment in time. They are a 48-hour story told through three actors at a turning point in the Hollywood history of cinema, such as the influential *Singin' in the Rain* (Stanley Donen, 1952, which depicts the transition from silent films to films with sound): the era of shifting between the Old Hollywood and the New Hollywood (Pagello 190). On the one hand, the characters of Rick and Cliff represent the Old Hollywood: two middle-aged white, sexists and racists men who do not bear the hippies. They personify the dying patriarchal stigmas. Rick's storyline is a struggle to remain relevant against his vanishing career, as well as his identity of classical white male fights against the changing world. On the other hand, the new wave of modern actors and directors, namely Roman Polanski, Bruce Lee, Sharon Tate, and the hippies are those who shape the New Hollywood, groups that break with tradition and impose their new fashions. Polanski's character is not given much screen time, but it is evident that he represents the new, androgynous kind that will rule popular culture in the 1970s. The ethereal portrayal of Sharon Tate's figure, which seems to be the embodiment of innocence, beauty, and joy, signalled the beginning of a new kind of cinema. This allowed for a different

aesthetic that gave more room to new pictures of female heroes as well as black and Asian heroes, which obviously challenges the predominance of white masculinity embodied by Rick and Cliff.

Before diving into the comparative analysis, it is worth noting that the application of the term "novelization" to this film-to-book adaptation may be questionable. The first reason that comes to mind is that more than an adaptation, it is an expansion of the film, with stories from the characters' past, historical context, and with chapters dedicated to delving into films and their actors, and some minor changes in the plot. Secondly, if we consider Baeten's definition of novelization given in the previous pages, this adaptation does not fit these premises, as the book is not written on the basis of a screenplay. The director explained in an interview with Joe Rogan in June 2021 (01:28:30) that he had been working on the novel for eight years without the intention of making it into a film and that this writing process was only with the purpose of getting to know the characters and how they would develop. It is not until years later that he decides that this was going to turn into a movie. This problematizes defining the novel as a novelization since chronologically the idea of writing a novel is prior to the conception of the film. Furthermore, in the same interview he states that if he would make a director's cut of the film it would be more than three hours, as a cinematographic adaptation of the novel with all its extensive facts and stories about Hollywood. Lastly, it can be argued as well that this adaptation fits into the category of elite and literary novelization (Baetens "Novelization" 55), that is, the novelization that is not made for marketing purposes as the novel was not issued at the time of the film's release.

To begin with, this analysis focuses on the plot and structure of the novel. The film unfolds in a linear structure, filled with flashbacks and insertion of clips from Rick's films, TV series, TV programmes and even film clips that only exists in the film's reality such as *The Great Escape*, since clips of Rick playing the leading role in the film are shown but in reality it is Steve McQueen who plays it. In addition, there is not only the storyline of Rick's and Cliff's lives, but also the narrative line of *Lancer*, as the filming of the series and how it develops is presented on several occasions (a real American Western TV series broadcasted from 1968 to 1970 that Tarantino incorporates in the film and in the novel as Rick plays the villain for the pilot episode). The film takes place within forty-eight hours followed by a jump of six months in time, where the ending takes place and where the audience receives what they came for: the happy ending to Sharon Tate's fatal ending in real life.

Once Upon a Time in... Hollywood starts in February 1969 with the meeting between Marvin Schwarz and Rick Dalton in a bar where they discuss Rick's filmography and his future. Here, Rick realizes he is a "has-been". Through this character, we learn about how movies were made in 1969 Hollywood. Meanwhile, Cliff Booth drives us around the city of Los Angeles to the music of that time and serves as a connection between the hippies and Rick, and ultimately, between the hippies and Sharon Tate. He encounters a young hippie hitchhiker that leads him to the Manson family and eventually turns the film into a horror movie of sorts. Simultaneously, the film provides snapshots of the celebrity culture through Roman Polanski and Sharon Tate, Rick Dalton's neighbours, as when they attend parties with famous people, such as Cass from The Mammas and the Papas or Steve McQueen. Moreover, the fashion of the era is shown, and the soundtrack of the film is the music of the period shown within the diegesis through car radios. These three plots intermingle only by the end of the film two hours after the beginning. The six-month jump brings the story to August 1969. During these six months Rick and Cliff have been in Italy shooting Spaghetti Westerns and now they

are going back to Los Angeles to celebrate the last night of the dynamic duo for a "final rodeo". That same night Tate is with her friends, and she is eight months pregnant. Up until this point, everything has been of service to a build-up, since we know that in August 1969 an eight- month pregnant Sharon Tate and her friends were murdered at the hands of Manson's family members. Tate is saved thanks to Cliff Booth, his dog, and Rick Dalton's flamethrower. Not only is she saved, but Rick is also given a happy ending, as he manages to be invited to the Polanski residence and meets Sharon and her friends. Ultimately, he manages to make his way into the New Hollywood that displaced him as a "has-been".

The novel starts with the same meeting between Mr. Schwarz and Rick and presents the same issue for him. As for the plot of the story, it is not very different from the film: the same story is told about Rick, Cliff, Tate, and the hippies. The crucial difference is that the novel expands much more on the characters and reflections on the cinema culture, but most importantly the ending. Cliff is given much more depth, as there are chapters dedicated to his cinephilia, his past and the story focuses much more on him. Manson also receives more attention, as well as the hippie girl, and Sharon Tate also receives more dialogue and focus on her past. All the knowledge about cinema and television poured into the novel serve as an essay on those topics. The book is filled with flashbacks and flash-forwards that interrupt the linear narrative, not only in chapters but also flashbacks slip into the narrative of the present by simply changing paragraphs.

While the film ends with a happy ending, in the book the fight between the hippies and the duo happens in chapter seven (110) in a two-paragraph flash- forward recount. The end of the novel consists of a telephone conversation between Rick and his co-star Trudi Frazer, a ten-year-old actress that plays Mirabella Lancer, in which they rehearse their lines for the next day of filming where they share a scene. As such, the novel has no time jump in its narrative line, other than the recurring flashbacks and flash-forwards, and hence there is no recollection of the night of Tate's death six months after. As a consequence, the novel does not give a clear conclusion to what happens to her. The narrator plays blind in this matter when narrating the night of the fight with the hippies: "What the armed intruders' intentions were was never made clear. But their intention sounded both deadly and evil," (111) although it can be assumed that as well as the film, the intrusion to Dalton's house means that they did not go the Polanskis' house and did not commit the murder.

The reality of the story is that Charles Manson sent three members of his cult to kill Sharon Tate in her house that summer night; in the film, a conversation between the members is shown in which, after talking to Rick Dalton, they discuss how they have grown up watching killers in TV series and decide to murder those who have taught them to kill. Therefore, instead of going to the Polanskis' house, they decide to go in and kill Rick Dalton. The twist comes here. Tarantino in the interview with Joe Rogan explains that he believes the hippies, members of the cult, had another task that night – another creepy crawl[3] or some other macabre family game – arguing that an inexperienced family (cult) member was with the group and therefore it makes no sense whatsoever that they would take someone new with them on such an important killing spree. He concludes that it was not Manson's idea but that of Tex (Austin Butler), one of the members. Thus, Tarantino inserts

[3] A Manson Family's technique of breaking into people's homes secretly, without causing any harm, and leaving behind a trail of evidence, some indication that the home had been violated.

his theory into the novel. In it, one can sense the hint of Tarantino's theory in the narrator's satire when he says, "those fucking hippies sure picked the wrong house" (111).

In essence, the novel does not specify what happens to Sharon Tate six months after. Although the audience finds the fact that she is "saved" in the movie to be gratifying and cathartic, Tarantino seems less interested in this in the novel. Without much of a plot climax, he appears willing to let the characters exist on their own. This leads to the conclusion that Tarantino's intention with the novel was not that of telling the story of Tate's alternative ending, as there is no recollection of what happens to her, but that of giving a panoramic snapshot of the Hollywood he grew up in.

The following aspect in this analysis is characterization. Rick Dalton does not undergo much elaboration compared to the film, to highlight one example of his expansion, in the novel it is explained that he suffers from bipolar disease, making sense of his sudden mood swings. His character serves mostly as a thread through the films and programmes of the time – Ron Ely's *Tarzan*, *The Great Escape*, and many more films are frequently mentioned. On the other hand, Cliff Booth receives much more expansion and focus, to the point that it is suggested that he is the main character. We learn that Cliff loves cinema – many of his opinions on films are similar to Tarantino's –, that he fought in the Vietnam War and has two medals of honour, that he is much more dislikeable and that he is a killer. In the film, it is implied that he killed his wife, since the scene where she dies does not show if Cliff shot the harpoon but before his fight with Bruce Lee, the stunt gaffer (played by Kurt Russell) claims that he did kill his wife and got away with it. But in the novel, it is narrated how he killed her, and moreover, how he killed two more people. However, we also learn that he has a vulnerable side, for instance, chapter four recounts how he adopted his dog Brandy and the story presents him as a sensitive man. Thus, I believe these characters are used as means to explain cinema and Hollywood. Additionally, it emphasizes the dialectical relationship between Hollywood and television, on the one hand, and traditional American and (post)modern European cinemas, on the other, thus Tarantino slipping his passion for films (Pagello 189).

Instead of being a part of the twist ending, Sharon Tate is explored in the book as a character. As analysed above, Tate is given more prominence in the book – a short chapter is dedicated to her journey hitchhiking to Los Angeles, and more interactions with Polanski are shown than in the film. Nevertheless, she is still objectified as a woman, for she is depicted as a "golden blonde" (170) and she is not referred by her name. The same applies to Charles Manson and the hippies, especially Pussycat (Margot Qualley). For instance, we learn about Manson's music career, a frustration in his life that some believe is the reason of his anger and ultimate violence. We also learn how Pussycat met Manson and some of the "activities" the family does – chapter five, titled "Pussycat's Kreepy Krawl," tells how Pussycat breaks and enters a house in California. All these events are displayed in the novel in order to give a glimpse of the era. Tarantino poured his vast knowledge to put the spotlight on Hollywood rather than the characters, since the characters are devices through which the narrator guides the reader across Hollywood.

Regarding the pastiche and intertextuality aspects, and as already stated, Tarantino's filmography in general and this film in specific are the quintessential examples of these concepts of postmodern cinema. Moreover, the novel has more references to other films, directors, and actors, serving to prove that the novel has the intention of spilling all of Tarantino's passion and knowledge

of cinema into its pages. Yet these references are not forms of pastiche, since they do not mimic other texts, but rather they are allusions to those films and other kinds of cinema culture.

The novel dives into the film culture of the late 60s, giving detailed accounts of films and TV series, the actors and director' stories and Charles Manson's family. There is even a whole chapter written as if it was a novelization of one of the episodes for *Lancer*, the TV series that Rick Dalton is filming, where the novel expands on the story of the events and its characters (whereas in the film it is only shown the rehearsing scenes that are going to appear in the pilot episode). Tarantino has claimed that he himself was a fan of novelizations when he was growing up (Rogan 01:28:59), so it might be that this is another form of homage or pastiche. Hence, it is more accurate to talk about allusions when it comes to the novel. For instance, the moment in the film where Polanski and Sharon Tate are at the airport, the film is mimicking *Jackie Brown* (1977) and *The Graduate* (1967) (scenes at the airport as well), and the novel does not narrate it in such a way that the reader visualises the scene by remembering it as a pastiche of the films.

The novel reaches its full metafiction when Tarantino incorporates himself and his stepfather in the story. In chapter twenty-three, Rick, Cliff, and James Stacey – Rick's co-star in Lancer – go to a bar after working, and the piano man playing at the bar is Tarantino' stepfather, who worked as a piano man in real life at a bar where actors would go. While chatting with him, Curt Zastoupil asks Rick for an autograph for his stepson, Quentin. Tarantino also appears in the novel a few pages prior, when the narrator is foreshadowing Trudi Frazer's acting career and states that the only time she would be nominated for a best-lead- actress Academy Award would be in "Quentin Tarantino's 1999 remake of the John Sayles script for the gangster epic *The Lady in Red,"* (354) a remake that does not exist. Furthermore, the brand Red Apple is also mentioned in the novel. With both the film and the novel, Tarantino is almost displaying a fanfiction of Hollywood. The large number of allusions to the cinema, therefore, suggest that his aim is to give his vision of Hollywood.

Lastly, this paper focuses on the narratological aspect on the film and the novel. First of all, it is key to call attention to the fact that novelization is a kind of adaptation involving different mediums, and each one has a unique nature and traits that are difficult to transmit from one system to another. Novels use a verbal narrator, and in the case *Once upon a Time in Hollywood*, Tarantino deploys an extradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator[4]. Contrastingly, the medium of film entails a non-verbal narrator, consisting of the combination of decisions in the camera work. Tarantino's film, for instance, incorporates the novel's lengthy descriptions with languid shots and camera movements, which can be seen as the "narrator".

In addition, the film resorts to a verbal narrator in three occasions, present in a voice-over. It is noteworthy to explain that this voice-over narrator is Kurt Russell and that this actor plays the stunt coordinator, but the film does not show any relationship between the voice, Russell's voice, and the stunt coordinator, who first intervenes at 00:39:20. It may be the case that not many spectators are aware of any connection between voiceover and character, so that the perception of this voice-over narrator is similar to that of the book's omniscient narrator: both come out of

[4] I am using the types of narrator distinguished by Rimmon-Kennan (1983). Extradiegetic narrator implies that the voice narrates the events from an external level, and heterodiegetic narrator means that the narrator does not participate in the story.

nowhere and have no explanation, yet they are present throughout. Therefore, it could be argued that this voice-narrator can be characterized as extradiegetic and heterodiegetic.

The first appearance of the voice-over is at 00:05:48, where he explains why Rick no longer drives. He acts as an extrospective voice of the story to add information, but most importantly, his appearance serves to introduce himself, to let the audience know there is a narrator since he does not appear again after two hours later. The second time is where the six-month jump takes place (01:53:45), and he narrates what had happened during those months, combining his narration with visual flashbacks. Here, he is omniscient, as he knows what the characters are concerned about and their thoughts. After a brief pause, he speaks again and narrates the night of the duo's final rodeo and an eight-month pregnant Sharon Tate with her friends. His narration alternates one storyline with the other, building up the tension of the ending, as if giving the audience puzzle pieces in order to discover the alternative ending. He gives details of specific routine actions as the film visualizes them and provides information about the exact hour and minute each action takes places, all with a view to creating tension and expectancy. The audience is trying to connect how the storylines are going to cross. Yet what gives more tension is the lack of narration of the Manson family members, the main characters in this event. The spectators are left wondering where they are in all the narrative, and it is only when the voice-over disappears that they step into the picture.

One of the main questions when reading the novel is: who is the voice behind the words? It can be easily argued that it is Tarantino himself, as the personal strokes given to the novel give away his presence as a subject. It could be someone with an inside knowledge of the late 1960s Hollywood, and actor, or a filmmaker. Nonetheless, I would suggest that the narrator of the book is Kurt Russell. Firstly, he is already the voice-over narrator in the film; and secondly, in the first pages of the book, before the narration starts, Tarantino dedicates the novel to all the actors who are "old timers" and who told him stories about Hollywood in this period, but especially to Kurt Russell. It is indeed thanks to Russell's recounts to the filmmaker about Hollywood what shapes the novel. Therefore, it would not be wrong to believe that the narrator is Russell himself. To go even further, it seems as if Tarantino had copied a whole speech by Russell given to him about his vast knowledge on Hollywood, as the narrator uses the first person, manifests his opinions, and uses words very similar to those of speech: abundance of "Now" or "Well now" (244) as introductory phrases for explanations, rhetorical questions, or "I mean" (307). Furthermore, he shows himself in several occasions, as when he says (30): "While in America – and when *I* say "America" I mean "Hollywood"" (my emphasis). He also directly addresses the reader, or allegorically Tarantino, "Don't try looking it up" (203), "Say you're wrong" (226) or "you must remember" (309).

The book presents a garrulous extra-heterodiegetic narrator that includes in the narration the character's thoughts – even Brandy's thoughts (Cliff's dog) – in the form of italics. The whole novel feels like the narrator is unfolding the reader a story about the triangle formed by the main characters, interrupted by extensive analepsis and foreshadows, and even gives large pieces of information between the character's conversations. The narrator is so invested in the narrative that sometimes it even seems like the characters are talking through him:

> Now, Cliff never spoke to anybody about it, but if he did, his first case in point would be when the kid prays to Balzac. Is that something French kids do? Is the point that that's

> normal or is the point he's a little weirdo? Yes, he knows it could be meant to be the same as an American kid putting a picture of Willie Mays on his wall. But he doesn't think it's supposed to be that simple. Also, it seems absurd. A ten-year-old little boy loves Balzac that much? No, he doesn't. (Tarantino 38)

An interesting element of metafiction appears when the narrator also functions as the meta-narrator for the chapter dedicated to Lancer, where he tells the plot of the series as a narrative. Moreover, he is a remarkably cinematographic narrator, that is, he narrates as a moving camera showing different spaces at the same time. What the film achieves through a juxtaposition of shots showing different events, the narrator attains through a juxtaposition of groups of paragraphs united by a heading indicating the time and place of the event or by interrupting the linear narration with "now," "meanwhile," "On the TV screen," "On television." This is evident in the following quotation:

> **Saturday, February 8, 1969 6:30 A.M.**
>
> Cliff's Karmann Ghia drives down the practically deserted street known throughout the world as the Sunset Strip (...). (105)
>
> **6:45 A.M.**
>
> When Rick's clock radio wakes him up to the voice of 93 KHJ's morning disc jockey, Robert W. Morgan, he immediately feels that his pillow is soaked cold with alcohol sweat (...). (108)
>
> **7:10 A.M.**
>
> Squeaky's filthy petite bare feet pad their way across the dirty cracked linoleum floor of George's kitchen, (...). (117)
>
> **7:30 A.M.**
>
> Jay Sebring, the man responsible for creating a revolution in men's hair design, and whose pre-eminence in Hollywood hairstyling is undisputed. (123)
>
> **7:45 A.M.**
>
> Roman Polanski steps out into his Hollywood Hills home backyard and the vivid view of Downtown L.A. it offers its successful residents. (126)

There is even an instance where the text literally prints "cut to" (248), two words used in film language that are used to verbally express when a frame is finished and a new one is shown:

> The suits at CBS knew they had a hot property in Stacy when they cast him in the coveted Gunsmoke guest-star slot. Now that they've seen the results, they are positive.
>
> CUT TO Jim Stacy, dressed in Johnny Lancer's sangria-red ruffled shirt with a brown leather short coat. (248)

In this way, Tarantino manages, through the format of the novel and its narrator, to offer a Tolstoian overview, as he is able to give a complete picture of many different characters, situations, and stories. This expands the reader's experience, which in comparison to the film, cannot be achieved as the film has limitations of length and audience expectations.

4. Conclusion

Answering the research questions that I posited at the beginning of my study, I can conclude that Tarantino had different purposes for the film and for the novel: on the one hand, the film focuses on three main characters – Rick, Cliff, and Sharon Tate – and a fourth character, the late 1960s Hollywood, which embodies music, fashion, cars, and the hippie movement of that time, but most notably is aimed at providing an alternate ending to Sharon Tate's real tragic story. On the other hand, the novel puts the characters in the background and only uses them as a thread in a Hollywood retrospective, thus Hollywood becomes the main character. This conclusion is drawn from the differences between the film and the novel on the basis of plot and structure: by not even mentioning the outcome of Sharon Tate's story and by providing the novel with a different denouement, Tarantino places more emphasis on Hollywood itself than on the events. The differences in characterization also lead to this conclusion since characters are the means through which the narrator guides the reader across Hollywood. Furthermore, the postmodernist mechanisms of pastiche and intertextuality that play a notable role in the film are expanded in the novel as it alludes to other works of cinema and television to complete the picture, and these allusions are more frequent and significant. Therefore, Hollywood is once again the protagonist of the novel. Lastly, I propose that the novel's extradiegetic and heterodiegetic narrator can be identified with actor Kurt Russell or with someone with an inside knowledge of the late 1960s Hollywood, and this interpretation leads readers to perceive that the information about Hollywood is more important than the personal story of the characters.

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Bioprofile of the author

Carme Tronch Valls holds a degree in English Studies from Universitat de València, having studied one year at University of Wollongong, Australia (2020-2021) and her final year at University of Nottingham, UK (2021-2022). Her research and literary interests revolve around nature, feminism, cultures and languages.

Contact < car5@alumni.uv.es >