

## PASTICHE IN QUENTIN TARANTINO'S FILM, "INGLOURIOUS BASTERDS": A POSTMODERN PERSPECTIVE

### Quratulan

M.Phil Scholar, Foundation University Islamabad

### Arsalan Anjum

M.Phil Scholar, University of Management and Technology, Lahore

### Abstract

*The present research explores the use of pastiche in Quentin Tarantino's "Inglourious Basterds" to refute Fredric Jameson's definition of pastiche. The researcher found various satirical elements and historical parallels in the film, revealing that its plot is based on documented events such as those described in Anne Frank's diary. As the critic bloggers purport, Tarantino's creation is a satirical pastiche to mock the postwar generations' obsession with spectacles and dramas. Thus, the scenes of vengeance, which include killing and scalping people, help create a satirical nature of the film as it condemns the violence. The film itself demonstrates Tarantino's pastiche, producing a highly original work with a complex message on history and human nature.*

**Keywords:** Pastiche, Inglourious Basterds, Postmodernism,

### Background to the Study

This research article discusses the concept of Pastiche in the selected film of an American filmmaker, author, and actor, Quentin Tarantino. He is one of the most renowned producers and a genius with postmodern sensibilities because of his figuring out how to make films by taking elements from previous works of visual art. His films are frequently regarded as a sample of pastiche, drawing from different genres, film directors, cinematic movements and even explicit movies. He creates something new by implying past elements in his films. This use of the past element in the recent works of the postmodern artists is called 'Pastiche' by Fredric Jameson. Frederic Jameson, a postmodern critic has defined Pastiche as one of the main characteristics of cultural production in the age of postmodernism. He says that it is not clear what postmodern artists and authors are doing beside copying the past. The postmodern artists just imitate the dead styles which can be called "empty parodies" having no deep or hidden meanings. Pastiche, like parody, is the imitation of some unique styles of the past, but it is an empty neutral practice which lacks the intention of satirical impulse. Jameson further says that when the past is being presented through pastiche the result is a "loss of historicalness". The past is being presented as a glimmering mirage. Jameson calls this type of postmodern history, "pop history" – a history found on the 'pop images' produced by commercial culture. The 'pop images are those images which are based on the stereotypic perception of man about History. These images can't be verified or accessible because there is no reality in them. One of the manifestations of this pastiche which is based on "pop history" are retro films and books of the postmodern era. While talking about Pastiche, Jameson claims that the postmodern artist is no longer creative because he depends upon the past work. If he had been creative, he would have not been imitating the past work to get support in his recent work.

This analysis of Tarantino's film, "Inglourious Basterds" will help the readers to analyze the satirical elements present along with the imitation of the past styles which were

representatives of the earlier centuries and had been famous for their ideal presentation. This research will also highlight the instances which reveal some gruesome aspects of the History and the creative techniques used by the postmodern artists to create something new. The Literature Review is divided into three parts. The first part deals with the critics' remarks about the purposefulness and the presence of satirical elements in Tarantino's films. The second part deals with the authentic references of some gruesome aspects of the history which are portrayed in Tarantino's film, *Inglourious Basterds*. The third part deals with the critics' remarks about Tarantino's creativity, film reviews by the audience and Tarantino's own perspective about the portrayal of things in his films. All the three parts commend that Tarantino's use of the past work in his present work is not an empty pastiche rather it has satirical bite in it, his present work doesn't give us pop-images of history only rather it reveals the past in a truer sense and Tarantino has been creative in making films because the film *Inglourious Basterds* is a proof of his creativity which makes us to see the History in a newer way. After analyzing the critics remarks about Tarantino's use of irony and satirical bite, portrayal of gruesome aspects of History (WW-II and Third Reich) by using his creativity and skillfulness in presentation of his ideas in his film, *Inglourious Basterds*. It can be said that his work is not a 'blank parody' or any 'pop image' of History rather it criticizes human beings and their mischievous sadistic nature which is made possible only through the artist's creativity. Tarantino's film, *Inglourious Basterds* has used pastiche (images of WW-II & Third Reich) neither it is mere imitation of the past nor stereotypical presentation of the past without creativity as Frederic Jamesons said.

### **Theoretical framework and Method**

Postmodern theorist, Fredric Jameson's concept of pastiche has been utilized as a theoretical framework of this study. Postmodernism is an umbrella term, so its simple straight forward definition is not possible. It is considered at once as the continuity of modernism and a break away from modernism. Like modernism it is characterized by fragmentation, plurality and disconnectedness, but it celebrates that fragmentation while modernism mourns it, for instance: T.S Eliot's *wasteland*. Postmodernism is characterized by the erasure of boundaries between low and high culture, death of individuality due to the consumer culture and intertextuality and the death of grand narrative. Linda Hutcheon claims in *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, that postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and subverts, the very concepts it challenges –be it in architecture, literature, painting, sculpture, film, video, dance, TV, music, philosophy, aesthetic theory, linguistics or historiography.

So, postmodernism is a broad intellectual trend with limitless explanations. Its prominent theorists are Michel Foucault, Lyotard, Baudrillard and Fredric Jameson. They all have their own perspectives regarding postmodernism. Fredric Jameson (1934) is the most renowned critic and postmodern Marxist and Theorist. In his essay "postmodernism and consumer society" Fredric Jameson points out the major concepts and characteristics of the postmodernism. According to him, postmodernism is a reaction and revolt against the modernism. Jameson illustrates the deathlessness of the postmodernism by giving the example of two paintings: Van Gogh's "A pair of shoes" and Andy Warhol's "Diamond dust shoes. Van Gogh's painting is modern and has an interpretation of the dire life of peasants while Andy Warhol's painting obviously postmodern, is speechless and it has 'nothing to say'. Jameson further elaborates his point outlining certain features of postmodernism that are pastiche, the death of subject, nostalgia and schizophrenia. In "postmodernism on consumer culture and late capitalism" Jameson claims that postmodern

subject has just reduced to consumer of images having no uniqueness and depth. Jameson's subject is schizophrenic, bound in the present moment. The death of subject and lack of individuality resulted in, that the new work of art can be placed only on past work, the imitation of dead style which Jameson calls pastiche. Pastiche is one of the principal traits in postmodernism. Pastiche is the imitation of a peculiar or unique idiosyncratic style, cannibalization of the styles of the past with the fracture of subjectivity and subjectivity one might say reaching a miserable end, it is never again clear what postmodern critics and authors should do above and beyond engaging the past, to the impersonation of dead styles, a "blank parody" with no profound or concealed implications. He offers a fascinating model for envisioning the recombinant styles of postmodern art with the idea of pastiche.

### **Discussion and Analysis:**

In terms of elucidating postmodern style, one can't set free the significance of free structure and in general a no standards approach. Truth be told, postmodernism looks for its own definition. Numerous academics, philosophers and intellectuals felt uneasy while talking about this term. There are various meanings of the term postmodernism and the greater part of them concur upon one central consideration and they equally share some general qualities. Postmodernism is a broad intellectual trend or movement in culture, arts, architecture and way of thinking. It is characterized by emphasis on the ideas of the de-centeredness of meaning, the value and autonomy of the local and the particular, the infinite possibilities of the human existence, in sort of pastiche, of different cultures, perspectives, time periods and ways of thinking.

Postmodern films utilize the element of pastiche over the original work of cinematic images. Conventional narrative still exists in postmodern cinematic style yet drew closer from an alternate edge, often playing with its mode of representation. There is no standard of how the story will push ahead or who will drive the narrative forward. The narrative can likewise surprise the viewer with peculiar results. As indicated by Frederic Jameson, postmodernism is a culture of pastiche, a culture, that is set apart by the careless role of historical illusion. Pastiche is ordinarily mystified with parody, since the two of them include imitation and mimicry. Besides Jameson contends, while parody has a deliberate intention to ridicule a deviation from the convention or a standard, pastiche is a blank parody, which has no sense of the probability of there being a standard from which to deviate. At the end of the day pastiche never again contains stylistic novelty, all that is left is to mirror dead styles. As opposed to going further with inventiveness, post-modern culture is a culture of quotations, images and surfaces.

Tarantino proved that Pastiche is the imitation of a peculiar or unique idiosyncratic style, cannibalization of the styles of the past to create new images by using the past images, experiencing history in a new way. Pastiche works contrary to mere parody, with social or political bite. Pastiche is not merely a "blank parody," a combination of varying points of view and sources into one chronicle structure:

"Tarantino's intertextuality is often seen as pastiche, blank parody to use Jameson's judgmental terms, but we might equally regard Tarantino's recycling of genre elements as a positive exploration of possibilities within the commercial form' (Tasker 396).

Quentin Tarantino as a post-modern satirist, whose significant type of expression is pastiche, has battled against this constraint blank parody for a considerable period of time. There

is nothing amiss with Tarantino's subjects, which are The French New Wave or criminal films (*Kill Bill*, *Pulp fiction*). Moreover, elements from some MTV recordings from the 80s just as from Spaghetti westerns are not missing. In spite of the fact that there is much criticism on Tarantino's style, he absolutely made another genre, that is generally perceived just by pronouncing his name.

The film deals with the revenge taken by Jews on Germans. Usually, the atrocities committed by German have been presented in films but here Jews are criticized for their brutality and revenge. It is Pastiche in the sense that the film deals with a historical event of massacre done by Germans but it is not mere parody or blind imitation but it deals with criticism on human beings (Jews and Germans). Numerous Holocaust films have prefigured Tarantino's subjects of Jewish exertion and obstruction, his examination of revenge and even his bring into play the elements of pastiche. What makes *Inglourious Basterds* especially noticeable is that in spite of the fact that it gives off an impression of being reworking Holocaust history, it is truly modifying Holocaust filmography. By presenting and utilizing complex cinematic references, Tarantino unfastens the Holocaust on film from the Holocaust in history.

*Inglourious Basterds* has a pastiche of the Holocaust. It also has immense references to pastiche to other Holocaust movies such as *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* has reference of Holocaust. It depicts the true graphic representation of the event of history. The Holocaust was the precise oppression and murder of six million Jews by the Nazi army and his band. The Nazis, who came to rule over Germany in January 1933, alleged that Germans were racially dominant and the Jews were racially mediocre. This point of view is justified in this movie when Bruno's father SS asserts his superiority by saying that Jews are not even human beings: "Ah, those people [...]. Those people... well, they're not people at all, Bruno"(Herman 17:01). Amid the Holocaust, more than 66% of all the Jewish individuals living in Europe were killed. In the final scene of the movie, Shmuel and Bruno along with a vast majority of people are taken to the gas chamber:

Bruno never heard it because at the moment there were loud gasps on all the marchers who had filled the room, as the door at the front was suddenly closed and a loud metallic sound rang through from the outsides"(Herman 1:24:23).

In another movie *Life Is Beautiful* (1997) directed by Roberto Benigni, there are also instances of the Holocaust. Jewish people were assaulted by Fascists and taken to the death camp by rails. Joshua a boy of seven years old and Guido were also taken to the camp where they both witnessed the cruel treatment given to the Jews and were finally burned in the Gas Chambers. Both of the films highlight the incidents which narrate the atrocities committed by Germans on Jews. (Benigni 1:17:56). *Inglourious Basterds* also has Holocaust themes even while seeming to emulate other cinematic genres, giving adequate prospects to delineate visual experimentation onto contemporary perceptions of the Holocaust. Reverberating through *Inglourious Basterds*, the overt perception of Jewish action is a component of various ongoing movies that help reinforce the case for Tarantino's film to be considered inside a more extensive continuum of Holocaust representation.

In this movie Tarantino out of the blue chose a socio-political setting to strain against World War II, solidly the time of Nazi occupied France. However, the objective is not the depiction of Nazis or the Holocaust. Holocaust turns into a movie connection; a reality gets from different movies and accordingly loses its authentic esteem (one could contend). In any case, it is

the films propose to depict the genuine occasions occurring in France under the Nazi regime. *Inglourious Basterds* does not only deal with the major event of Holocaust rather it criticizes the brutal killing or massacre of human beings by human beings. German soldier Zoller is titled as a war hero after killing at least two hundred and fifty Jews. Zoller was revealing to Shosanna about his so-called act of bravery. Following is the dialogue in which he revealed to Shosanna that how he made Jews to flee from Germany: "The first day. A hundred and fifty the second day. Thirty-Two the Third day. On the fourth day, they existed the city." (Tarantino 45:31-45:48). There are some other instances from the film that presents criticism on the human beings for their atrocities. In the movie Werner was a sergeant who fought in the WW11 in France. His company in French woods is ambushed the Bastards. Aldo asked him to reveal the location of another German patrol. After refusing continuously Aldo ordered Donny who was a Bear Jew to kill him with a club.

Moreover, in the opening scene the farmer conceals the Jews from an involving armed force that desires to eradicate them. Landa with the end goal of Pierrre's permission utilizes the basic Nazi promulgation machine that is extorting them with their families:

'Give me a chance to reason an inquiry? In this time of war, what is your main obligation? Is it to secure the forlorn unfortunate casualties? Or on the other hand is your main obligation in this time of carnage to secure those delightful ladies who establish your family?'" (Tarantino 20:00)

Pierrre so as to ensure his family concedes he shields Jews and calls attention to the area where they are. The wooden floor is therefore destroyed with assault rifle shoot. Jews were haunted by the Germans to wipe out their race as they have no right to live on this earth. They are considered as vermin, polluting the whole environment. Tarantino begins the movie *Inglourious Basterds* with an exceptional passionate scene, yet the movies never beat that all-encompassing opening arrangement. It negates Jameson's concept that Pastiche is mere a "blank parody". Pastiche has element of satire and criticism. Tarantino sorts out a pastiche of stunning and moving moments into a post-modern day film that demonstrates to us that history can be reworked. Cinematic fabrication affirms that there is something more to state about major historical occasions like World War II. The purpose of the movie is not merely to mention event of Holocaust rather it.

The film *Inglourious Basterds* creates new meanings by describing an event of history (WWII). Through the film it is conveyed that Jews are not less brutal than Germans. If Germans have done the wrong, Jews are also not far apart. Overall humanity is criticized and abused. It doesn't make the difference who is abusing (Jews/Germans) and who is abused (Germans/Jews). This change of perspective shows Tarantino's Creativity. *Inglourious Basterds* is to be noticed among Tarantino's best movies. It is a story about a group of American Jews looking for retribution on German Nazis through the assistance of German on-screen character and twofold operator Bridget von Hammersmark. History gives us the perspective that Germans threw Jews in Gas chambers to wipe out their race. In the same way Germs are killed in the movie *Inglourious Basterds* by putting them in the fire. The Americans make a tactic alluded to as Operation Kino that includes detonating the theatre where Adolf Hitler and high positioning officers are going to an elite film debut. Fortuitously, a comparative arrangement is organized by Shosanna, the Jewish proprietor of the film. (Tarantino 2:18:07-2:20:26). Tarantino applied the pastiche of the holocaust to create something new. As in the final scene of the movie Germans were locked up in the cinema hall and burnt down the same way as Jews were thrown and burnt

in the gas chambers in the movies *Boy in the Striped Pajamas* and *Life is Beautiful*. Following Jameson, the nostalgic film inspires a feeling of the narrative certainties of the past. But Tarantino uses Pastiche with a different perspective.

### Conclusion:

Tarantino has used the element of pastiche in his film, *Inglourious Basterds* but proved it otherwise. The term, 'Pastiche' was coined by Fredric Jameson, the postmodern critic about the use of past in the postmodern films. According to Jameson pastiche includes 'empty parody', 'pop historical images' and 'no creativity'. Tarantino's movies are regarded as sample of 'Pastiche', drawing images from different genres, film directors and past movies. The present study analyzed the film, *The Inglourious Basterds*. It is a reworking of the holocaust history. The film presents the revenge taken by Jews on Germans. It is pastiche in the sense that the film deals with a historical event of massacre done by Germans. But it is not just 'blank parody' or blind imitation of past but deals with criticism on human beings. The film does not give the 'pop images of the history' of holocaust but rather it deals with certain incidents and actions committed by Germans like their haunting of Jews and their brutal killing of Jews in their hideouts.

Tarantino has used past images with a new perspective and created history in a new way as he describes an event in history (World War II). The holocaust event is recreated and as the Germans had burnt the Jews in bunkers, here Jews burnt them in a cinema with closed doors. So, the History is presented in a new way and also shows Tarantino's creativity in using 'Pastiche'. It can be said that Tarantino has used the element of pastiche in his film, *Inglourious Basterds*. Fredric Jameson's pastiche characterizes 'blank parody', 'pop historical' images and 'no creativity' but Tarantino's work *Inglourious Basterds* proved otherwise. It reflects parody with a satirical bite, historical images with a clear description of past events and experiencing history in a new way which shows the author's creativity.

### Works Cited

- Bauer, Erik. "Method Writing: Interview with Quentin Tarantino." *Creative Screenwriting*. May 20, 2019. <https://creativescreenwriting.com/>.
- Herman, Mark. "The Boy in the Striped Pajamas." *Gloria. tv*, 28 August 2008. <https://gloria.tv/video/zvZQseEPoYWQ1pBW7sYHe1QW8>.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Post Modernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Routledge, 1988.
- Iqbal, H. M. Z. "Revisiting Colonial Encounters in Maitreyi Devi's *It Does Not Die: A Romance: A Postcolonial Perspective*". *Sage Open*, vol. 14, issue no. 2, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241252405>
- Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991
- Jameson, Fredric. *Modernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Duke University Press, 1991
- Tasker, Yvonne. *Fifty Contemporary Film Directors*. Routledge; 2nd edition, 2010.
- Tarantino, Quentin. "Inglorious Basterds." *Vimeo.com*, 20 May 2009, <https://vimeo.com/249204896>.
- Tarantino, Quentin. "Kill Bill vol. 2" *123 movies*, 8 April 2004, <https://123movies00.org/movie/kill-bill-vol-2>.
- Walters, Ben. "Debating *Inglourious Basterds*". *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 63, No. 2 2009, pp. 19-22.