Beyond Crime and Space

How Quentin Tarantino conveys temporality and spatiality in relation to the characters in
Reservoir Dogs

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Comparative literature, Master, LV2321

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Abstract

Master Thesis in Comparative literature

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Year: Autumn 2016

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Keywords: Screenplay, adaptation, Quentin Tarantino, Reservoir Dogs, temporality, spatiality, literature, film, music, dialogue, actor

In my thesis I examine how the screenplay author and director Quentin Tarantino uses the literary format of the screenplay to convey the spatiality and temporality of the characters in the narrative. I also investigate how the reader's perception of these factors is crystallized, by contrasting the screenplay with its film. I apply theories from screenplay and adaptation studies, and by combining, opposing or altering them I demonstrate how the screenplay can achieve unique effects that are lost when the text is turned into a movie. I show, among other things, that in the screenplay, the reader can be endowed spatial properties. Furthermore, not all spatial properties of the characters have to be specified in the screenplay. The spatiality of the people in the movie depends on whether they are recognized by the spectator or not, as this alters the spectator's perception of the actors' extension in space. I also analyze how the distance between reader and narrative is diminished in the screenplay as she partly participates in the creation of it. On the other hand, there seems to be an indelible temporal discrepancy between the music and the events described in the screenplay. Moreover, in a screenplay, silence and inaction can be endowed with temporal extension in a way that movies cannot. I also examine how the screenplay author, thanks to the screenplay's unique feature of scene headings, can create a temporal rupture that lacks equivalence in the finished film.

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1. Introduction

Novels are and have been analyzed *ad nauseam* on all levels of education, from primary school up to university, where aspects such as themes, characters, symbols and literary style are discussed in everything from short papers to doctoral dissertations. Adapting a book into a movie seems to work even more as an incitement for discussion, more specifically about what inevitably gets lost in the transition to the big screen. A screenplay, on the other hand, seldom receives this kind of attention and is at best seen as an instruction booklet, a "blueprint" for the finished product to come, a flawed description of how the film should look and how one should go about making it. Where writers of novels are greeted with reverence and admiration, screenwriters receive very little attention, if any at all. The screenplay is seen as something incomplete, intermediary, liminal and technical. A poet who adapts to the format of the sonnet is admired for what he can do within its limitations, but using the strict format of the screenplay to convey story and characters is not considered to be as admirable. Though limited, the screenplay format need not necessarily restrict its author more than any other kind of literature, and this unique kind of text may – in some cases – just prove to be just as artistic as any other, provided that it is handled by a competent writer.

Quentin Tarantino, a prominent American director who writes the screenplays for his own movies, may be one of the film-makers who benefit from using the screenplay format. Until now, however, there has been little research on the literary aspects of screenplays, for instance those by Tarantino. In the screenplay to his first feature film, *Reservoir Dogs* (Quentin Tarantino, 1992), the story is fairly simple: a team of gangsters, with no earlier relation to one another, is put together by a mob boss, in order to rob a jeweler's store. One of these men is in fact a policeman working undercover, gathering information on the project. The heist is interrupted by the police, and the gangsters who escape gather at the rendezvous-point, trying to find out who is the secret infiltrator. In the end the gangsters turn on one another, and most of them are shot to death either by each other or by the police. One of them (presumably) escapes. However, as simple as the story may seem, the sequences are not presented in chronological order, if they are presented at all. The heist itself is never shown, and the spectator is just as confused as the characters as to what really happened, and whom to trust. The plot is an enigma where the reader of the screenplay and the spectator of the movie try to find out who the characters really are and who did what (with the help of flashbacks and the discussions of the characters), and the inherently minimalistic and conventionalized format of the screenplay may very well be an advantage to its author. Two aspects in particular, spatiality and temporality, are salient features of the representation of the characters in the finished film, but may seem elusive in a written text; after all, there is no visible space, and the only time experienced is that of reading the text. However, I would argue that Tarantino

successfully conveys both of these factors, but how he goes about doing this is a bit more complex than one may think at first sight.

1.1 Purpose and research question

The purpose of this study is to explore how the spatiality and temporality of the characters is conveyed in the screenplay *Reservoir Dogs* by Quentin Tarantino, and how the reader's relation to the characters' spatiality and temporality is altered when the screenplay is turned into a film.[1] In the analysis, the screenplay will be considered as a literary text with its own unique aesthetic and literary qualities, and I will examine how these qualities can be approached when reading it. The literary aspects of a screenplay are often neglected, as screenplays tend to be considered as no more than instructions to be used when staging the story, even though this conception of screenplays need not necessarily exclude analyses of their literary qualities. As in all kinds of literature, the way the author writes inevitably changes the reader's perception of the story, which means that the format can be used to convey the narrative in more or less successful ways. In this study, theories on both screenplays and adaptation will be used. The adaptation of the screenplay will be studied in the same way as were it a "conventional" adaptation (that is, a movie based on a novel), where the literary version – the screenplay in this case – is seen as an anterior version of the same story, and not a mere prototype, which is otherwise often the case. The questions that will be treated in this study are thus:

- How is the spatiality and temporality, in relation to the characters in the screenplay of *Reservoir Dogs,* conveyed to the reader by Tarantino's literary style?
- How is the reader's perception of these factors crystallized and/or altered when the narrative is transferred from screenplay to movie?
- What does this reveal about how temporality and spatiality in relation to the characters are influenced when a screenplay is made into a film?

1.2 Method and aims

I will analyse the screenplay of *Reservoir Dogs* as an "original" literary text, in the same way that one would read a novel that later on is turned into a film. This does not mean that I will ignore by and for whom the screenplay was originally written, with what intentions and during what circumstances, only that I do not see these aspects as essential to the comprehension of all the aspects of the narrative. With the Barthesian "death of the author" in mind I wish to examine the

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1 Throughout the thesis I will interchangeably use different expressions referring to the screenplay, such as screenplay, manuscript, script etc. The variation is not motivated by different meanings or connotations of the words; different words are used for the ease of reading, to avoid repetition.

autonomous nature of the screenplay, to see what kind of possible reading that arises when the text "speaks for itself", instead of being interpreted primarily through the intentions of the author – which in this case encompasses his intention to make a film out of it. These intentions will not be completely ignored, but they will be used as a point of reference, not as an infallible means of understanding the text. Instead, the qualities of the screenplay – those unique to the format as well as those shared with other kinds of literature – will be studied primarily, in order to see how they establish and develop the characters, and how these are to be imagined, in aspects of spatiality and temporality.

I will do a close reading of Tarantino's screenplay and compare it to the film to see what qualitative and quantitative differences and similarities one can assess from the discrepancy between the screenplay and the finished film. I will analyze a selection of scenes where spatial and temporal aspects are more prevalent and where it is thus more interesting to see how they are connected to the screenplay's literary style. With the help of the analyses of these scenes I will apply different lines of reasoning from screenplay research by Ann Igelström, Marja-Riitta Koivumäki and Steven Price to see what they can add to the analysis, how the comprehension of the screenplay can be augmented. I will explore how the screenplay can convey information on the narrative, action and characters when its literary qualities are stressed, as opposed to the purely technical; I will consider it as an autonomous text, not as an instruction booklet on how the film should be produced. Parts that are purely technical in their nature (such as scene headings, containing information on the time and location of the scene) will also be seen from a more "literary" perspective, with the approach that they, together with the rest of the text, compose the narrative, as opposed to mere instructions on what to shoot and where.

I will also apply different theories from adaptation studies by Seymore Chatman, Robert Stam and Thomas M. Leitch to examine what the discrepancy between the screenplay and the film reveals about the former in terms of literary properties and its spatiotemporality; what is conveyed by the text becomes more apparent when the text is juxtaposed with a version in another medium that may or may not retain these qualities. I will first and foremost analyze scenes that illustrate different issues and/or phenomena in adaptation studies that are related to aspect of spatiality and temporality. I will subject common arguments from adaptation theory, used "against" or "for" adaptations, in relation to discussions about screenplays in order to see how these arguments can clarify the spectator's understanding of the characters' spatiotemporality in *Reservoir Dogs*. I will thus approach the screenplay as one would a novel, to see what different theories add and how they may have to be altered to remain valid. I believe that this may allow for a more humble approach to the film, as the screenplay traditionally does not enjoy the same status as a novel, allowing for a

new perspective on the process of transposing a narrative.

The reason why this is a pertinent topic is that it is practically unexplored. Although screenplays are no longer seen exclusively as instructions to the film crew, disposable once they have filled their purpose, there is comparatively little research where the literary qualities of screenplays are analyzed, and even then they are still usually seen as a predecessor to what has yet to come. The style is often seen as a means of conveying how the film-crew should stage the film, screenplays are not seen as works of literature in their own right, and the process of converting them to moving images is rarely, if ever, seen as a kind of adaptation.[2] Tarantino's screenplays, though sometimes referred to in screenplay studies, have received no in-depth study of the kind I intend to undertake, even though they have an interesting literary style that arguably is more than mere instructions on what to film and how to do it. Also, there is practically no research that considers the film as an adaptation of a screenplay that focuses on the transition from this kind of literary format and what influence this has on the narrative and its recipients. Luckily, progress is made in both screenplay and adaptation studies, and as of late some of these questions are occasionally raised, but very much remains to be done, and there is a huge difference between proposing the possibility of studying screenplays in this way, and going "all the way" by actually *doing* it. By using *Reservoir Dogs* as an example, I hope to develop and/or modify existing theories relating to this topic.

One recurrent problem when reading screenplays is assessing which version to which the scholar has access. Scripts are often rewritten and modified during the production of the film, and the version I will use is the published "final" version, released after Tarantino's film. This version includes photographs from the film as well as scenes that were cut during the shooting, but neither the images nor the deleted scenes will be discussed at all, and pose no problem to the essay. Although this raises interesting questions concerning the ontological status of each version of the text, and their respective relations to the finished film, any such discussion is beyond the purview of this study.

Though I will occasionally refer to screenplays as "literary texts", I do not mean to use this expression as an attempt to make screenplays appear as a more cultural kind of text on a par with novels. I simply use it as a means of alluding to the purely verbal nature of the texts, in order to emphasize the structural and essential properties that they share with "conventional" literary texts.

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2   I have only found one example of how a screenplay's literary properties are studied in detail in a somewhat similar way – although that particular screenplay is a bit unconventional – and only one author suggesting that screenplay and adaptation studies should be combined, which are, respectively:
Mota, Miguel, "Derek Jarman's Caravaggio: The Screenplay as Book", *Criticism,*, vol 47, nr 2, pp 215-231, 2005 and
Sherry, Jamie, "Adaptation studies through screenplay studies: transitionality and the adapted screenplay", *Journal of Screenwriting,* vol. 7 nr 1, 2016

Whether they should share the same cultural status as novels is an interesting but different discussion, beyond the purview of this thesis.

Although the discussion will sometimes touch upon other types of texts – such as theatre plays or novels – these will not be discussed in-depth, as there is neither a novel, nor a play on which *Reservoir Dogs* is based.[3] These references are primarily motivated by their appearance in the theoretical framework used in the essay; several of the theoreticians occasionally refer to novels and/or theatre plays, and it is important to address these questions, if only in passing.

To avoid confusion as to whether I refer to the film or the script, without having to incessantly repeat to which I am referring, I will use a certain terminology to make this distinction more clear in my analysis.

Actant: A person in the screenplay (not to be confused with Greimas' use of the notion).

Performer: A person in the film.

Actor: The real person that was present during the shooting of the film, portraying one of the actants in the screenplay.

Character: A person in the story, or the *fabula*. Here I adopt a somewhat essentialist view on narratives, assuming that the story is conveyed but not constituted by the text/film. An actant and a performer can portray the same character.

Reader: A real person who reads the script.

Spectator: A real person who watches the film.

Recipient: A real person who receives a story, regardless of which medium that conveys it.

Thus, Sean Connery is an actor, James Bond in the movie is a performer (seen by a spectator), James Bond in the book is an actant (read by the reader), but, beyond both the book and the film, James Bond is a character.

I will begin the essay with a short presentation of the background of the particular screenplay and film that will be studied. After that I will present the theoretical framework that will be used. As no study of this kind has been undertaken there is no previous research, but the theory will still provide an essential point of reference. Following that is the analysis, where three kinds of spatiality will be analysed in the first section: that of the reader, the actants and the performers. The

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3   On the other hand, the screenplay was staged once in 2012 with an afroamerican cast. This staging would be inappropriate to study as a theatre play for several reasons: there is no recorded version of it available and it has only been performed once (http://insidemovies.ew.com/2012/02/17/laurence-fishburne-as-mr-white-inside-the-all-black-almost-reservoir-dogs-reading/, accessed 18/11-2016); the use of an almost exclusively afroamerican cast introduces questions of race and post-colonialism that, as interesting as they may be, are beyond the purview of this essay; there is arguably a subversive dimension to the staging that arises out of the contrast between it and the original movie, and it seems as though it was aimed at an audience already acquainted with the movie, giving rise to important but less pertinent questions of intertextuality and its impact on interpretative processes; last but not least, whether a staged screenplay can be thought of as a theatre play at all is a problematic question itself, far beyond the purview of this thesis.

second section will be dedicated to temporality, first of all the temporal discrepancy between the reader and the text, then temporal aspects of sound – dialogue and music – followed by a discussion about scene headings (or sluglines, as they are also called)[4] and their impact on temporality, and lastly I will look at temporal aspects of different kinds of inaction, such as silence. The conclusions I reach will be presented and summarized in the final chapter.

1.3 Tarantino and his screenplay

The screenplay and movie that will be the main object of examination is *Reservoir Dogs*. The screenplay is interesting for this study, as it was written when Tarantino was still a comparatively unknown person in Hollywood, at least compared to the success and fame he would gain later in his career. Paul A. Woods explains that Tarantino did not get to direct his two first scripts (*True Romance* [Tony Scott, 1993] and *Natural Born Killers* [Oliver Stone, 1994]), and refused to let anyone else direct *Reservoir Dogs*, even if it meant that he had to shoot it with friends and nothing but the money he earned for writing *True Romance,* the comparatively microscopic sum of $ 30 000.[5] The confined space that is the warehouse was originally chosen for these financial reasons.[6] Later on, Tarantino's name alone can be seen as a contributing factor in a petition for support, monetary or other, from potential producers, which makes it safe to assume that later screenplays were not as severely scrutinized as this one. When trying to find backing for *Reservoir Dogs*, he had already been denied the right to direct his first two screenplays, and probably knew of the importance of rendering a screenplay as appealing as possible in order to please potential investors. Although his intention was to direct it himself (which may be the motivation for the occasionally colloquial diction in the script), he would still have to provide a screenplay written well enough to convince someone to support him. Thus, one can assume that the screenplay for *Reservoir Dogs* may have been written with some marketability in mind, not only as a document for Tarantino himself to be used when shooting the film.

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4   A scene headings/slugline is the text above each new scene, indicating where the scene is to take place, if it is in- or outdoors and what time of day it is.
5   Woods, Paul A., *King pulp: the wild world of Quentin Tarantino*, Rev. and updated ed., Plexus, London, 1998, 23
6   Woods, 26

2. Theory

2.1 Screenplays

One dare conjecture that one reason as to why analyses of the literary aspects of screenplays are scarce is the common conception that they have neither independence nor aesthetic value, due to their function as "blueprint"; this is also probably the reason why no such study has been dedicated to the screenplay of *Reservoir Dogs*. This is not to say that their aesthetic properties have been entirely neglected, but even when they are observed they are mostly seen in the light of their context; when qualities are mentioned, one recurrent question is how they are to be translated into image and sound, screenplays are almost never studied in their own right.

Marja-Riitta Koivumäki for one discusses and defends the aesthetic independence of the screenplay. She contests the argument that a theatre play has an aesthetic value that screenplays lack only because screenplays are produced once, whereas theatre plays can be staged several times by different producers. She shows that this argument is fallacious because, first of all, one has to ask oneself the question whether theatre plays would lose their aesthetic value if they too were produced only once; second of all, there are in fact examples of different movies that are based on the very same screenplay, even though this is more of an exception. The only reason this does not happen on a more regular basis, Koivumäki argues, may be because the film version is available to a bigger audience, which is why making several versions would be superfluous.[7] This argument is essential to the essay, as it shows that screenplays are worthy of literary analysis, thanks to their aesthetic independence.

However, she concedes that the screenplay is written in order to be performed later on by the film crew; it is subservient to the filmmaking, but it has its own aesthetic value and continues to exist through the performance, the content and style of which it influences, and the audience will thus only receive the screenplay indirectly through the performance.[8] I strongly disagree with this opinion and its exaggerated emphasis on the intention of the creator and the context of the text. In one respect Koivumäki does not differ that much from the people she opposes, as she does not seem to wish to liberate the screenplay from its relation to the film, as if these two works were inextricably tied to each other; she seems to primarily defend the screenplay's aesthetics and not its independence. However, I ascribe a high value to both.

Koivumäki stresses the importance of clarity in a screenplay, which diminishes the value of a poetic language; action should be described in such a precise and clear way that it can be

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7   Koivumäki, Marja-Riitta, "The Aesthetic Independence of the Screenplay", *Journal of Screenwriting*, Vol. 2, Number 1, 26-7
8   Koivumäki, 37

converted into dramatic images. This, together with the fact that screenplays offer no aesthetic or immediate sensory experience for the reader in the way that literature does, is why screenplays are not likely to make for good reading.[9] Koivumäki does, however, show with this argument that one may access the screenplay indirectly through the film as its content and style are influenced. The precise language and lack of aesthetic and sensory experience will be important to keep in mind while reading the screenplay, as they may have an impact on the reader's understanding and interpretation of the text. Unfortunately, Koivumäki does not look at what these effects entail when one experiences the screenplay *directly,* which I intend to do; this is a flagrant flaw with her study, a missed opportunity to look more closely at the unique properties of screenplays and what they do to the reader's comprehension.

On the other hand, Koivumäki admits that dialogue can use poetic elements more freely. Erwin Panofsky claims that in film, dialogue only adds to the moving picture, whereas in theatre it is independent of the action in the visible space.[10] Koivumäki counters this with the example of *Stalker* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1979) with its long monologues on morals, and recitals of poetry, showing that it can indeed utilize the same kind of artistic expression commonly found in literature. Koivumäki does not shun abstract elements and the poetic use thereof in screenplays, but maintains that it should be evident how the orchestration of these is to be conveyed visually; they do not have to carry literary qualities.[11] This is a comparatively common example of a recurrent phenomenon in more recent screenplay research: Koivumäki mentions how an element of the screenplay can be used (e.g. that the dialogue can be somewhat poetic) but chooses not to look at concrete examples of this; she claims that it *can* be done, but does not look at what happens when it *is. Reservoir Dogs* is comparatively heavy in dialogue, all the more reason to study its poetic qualities to see what these can mean, in general, to the reader's interpretation.

Koivumäki examines dramaturgy, which she defines as "the use of any material selected during the creation process for the purposes of building a performance for the audience to experience."[12] The screenplay is, according to her, not the final step in this process, a multitude of choices are made in the staging of the screenplay, by, among others, the actors and the director.

However, she distinguishes between three different experiences: sensory, emotional and intellectual. The auditive and visual elements of a film clearly pertain to the first category, but Koivumäki claims that the spectator's experience of the last two are shaped by the *author's* decisions and dramaturgical choices. He chooses what information about characters and events to

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9   Koivumäki, 27-9
10 Panofsky, Erwin, Lavin, Irving & Heckscher, William S., *Three essays on style*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1995, 100-101
11 Koivumäki, 29-30
12 Ibid., 31

provide or delay in order to elicit the desired emotional response. He also conveys thoughts and conceptions, what themes and interpretative elements to include for the viewer's intellectual pleasure. These are experienced *indirectly* through the performance, and thus Koivumäki refutes the idea that the recipient needs direct contact with the artwork to experience it. The screenplay is interpreted first by the director, during the production, and later on again by the spectator as she watches the film; it shapes both interpretations.[13] Even if many dramaturgical choices are not detailed in the screenplay, or even defined by the author, Koivumäki stresses the screenplay's importance to the staging, as it may use small hints that become pertinent later on. The staging of the screenplay is always an interpretation by the director, regardless of whether he did or did not write the screenplay himself.[14] What this means to the reader, who experiences the text directly and not through the film, remains to be seen. If themes and concepts are conveyed already by the text which the movie is based upon, there is all the more reason to look at the screenplay text directly, to see how the text does this, which is what I intend to do with *Reservoir Dogs*.

Koivumäki also relates the narrative to the epistemologic model of Karl Popper (his theory on the three worlds of knowledge), as applied by Kari Kurkela. Popper distinguishes between three forms of being, that Kurkela labels F-reality, E-reality and A-reality, which are, respectively: fact (physical objects), experience (e.g. sensations) and abstractions ("from the thought or conception of what exists before the physical artwork").[15] In the case of cinema, Koivumäki says that the director bases his vision/abstraction on the experience of reading the screenplay provided by the screenwriter's dramaturgical choices, meaning that the abstraction and the physical object that is the film can exist *simultaneously.* These do not have to compete with one another, as the director's choices mostly comprise style, locations, casting and other elements that are not visible in the screenplay.[16] She does not mention how these elements are nonetheless conveyed, even if they are not stated explicitly. Yet again she emphasizes how the content of the screenplay uses the film as a medium, but I find that it is important to try to distinguish between these two kinds of texts, in order to see what the screenplay manages to convey on its own, not *through* the film but in *contrast* to it.

Even though Koivumäki acknowledges the aesthetics of screenplays, she still does not seem to deny its teleology: it is written to be performed, and this aspect must not be forgotten. However, she seems to overestimate the importance of this aspect. Steven Price initially seems to agree with

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13 Koivumäki, 32-4, 37
14 Ibid., 34
15 Kurkela, Kari, 'Yksityisen ja yhteisen rajalla. Musiikin esittämisen emotionaalisista ja kognitiivisista ulottuvuuksista'/'Between Private and Common', in Raija Ojala (ed.), *Esiintyjä – taiteen tulkki ja tekijä/Performer - Interpreter and Practitioner of Art*, Porvoo-Helsinki-Juva: WSOYIbid, 1995, cited in Koivumäki, 34-5
    Popper, Karl. "The Three Worlds, The Tanner Lecture of Human Values, Delivered", at the University of Michigan, 1978. http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/p/popper80.pdf Accessed 02/12-2016
16 Koivumäki, 35

Koivumäki when he addresses the formalistic and technical jargon of screenplays and says that it results in an incessant reference to its own construction, making it highly self-reflexive. This acts as a reminder of its fictional construct, but also the industrial process for which it was written, reminding casual readers that they are not the reader implied by the author. However, Price indirectly opposes Koivumäki when he adds that once this fact has been established, the reading of a screenplay should not differ from that of any other kind of text.[17] I find this conclusion to be important, as it shows that a screenplay can be enjoyed as something more than just technical instructions, it opens up for the possibility of immersion similar to that experienced when reading a novel.

Price also explains the three modes of prose narrative, originally identified by Sternberg, which are: mode of description, report mode and comment.[18] Mode of description comprises, for instance, product design and slug-lines. In novels, the only feature available of this kind is the pausing of the narrative, in order to describe an object while the plot remains inactive. In addition to this, screenplays can also add indications of camera movement. Report mode centers on events and their temporal sequence, usually human activity, which, in combination with the camera-instructions in the mode of description "gives the screenplay its characteristic quality of dynamic movement in time."[19] Comment adds something to the visible and audible elements, for instance an explanation or interpretation of them. This dynamic movement in time is, for obvious reasons, an interesting aspect to study in an essay on temporality.

However, Price adds, it is not easy to distinguish between the three modes in practice. For instance, he notes, there is no such thing as an absence of description, as the very lack thereof constitutes a style that can also be regarded as a comment on the events described. Literary descriptions without any visual equivalence can still be useful, making the director try to find a corresponding mood or image.[20]

Comment mode, Price explains, is somewhat problematic in a screenplay, as it cannot be translated into visual terms. The use of it can vary, depending on the author, especially if he will go on to direct the film. In the screenplay of *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1942) Orson Welles uses quite literary comments appropriate for him in his twofold capacity as writer and director, while David Mamet's scene texts are more minimalistic for the same reason (or because he relies on the

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17 Price, Steven, *The screenplay: authorship, theory and criticism*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2010, 113
18 Sternberg, Claudia, *Written for the Screen: The American Motion-Picture Screenplay as Text*, Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 47-50, cited in Price, 114

19 Price, 114
20 Ibid., 117

contribution of others in the team during the realization of the screenplay). What most screenplays have in common, on the other hand, is the lack of details on lighting, sound, colour and other such elements for which other members of the crew are responsible. Long descriptions are also omitted, Price claims, because of the convention that one script page should represent one minute of the finished film. This is why the experience of reading a screenplay is very different from watching a movie, even one that one has already seen.[21] This is also an important aspect of Tarantino's screenplay to study: he wanted to direct it himself, but still had to write it in such a way so as to make it clear and comprehensible to other readers. The fact that screenwriters have different styles is an interesting piece of information, but unlike Price I want to look in more detail on what the screenplay author's style entails in practice, its impact on the reader, not just state that practice differs from one writer to another.

Screenplays are also characterized, Price explains, by their use of parataxis, the lack of conjunctions that connects events, both within and between sequences. In a scene description, the parataxis renders the narration metonymic, in its conscious selection of objects and/or events from the implied story world (that often have a particular significance not necessarily revealed initially). Likewise, there is nothing that connects these scenes, no conjunctions are used between them to explain their organization; instead, these will be arranged into a sequence by the reader. Price argues that parataxis has opposite effects in screenplays and prose respectively: in the former, the reader detects a directorial presence thanks to her knowledge of conventions of montage (she knows that the shots will later on be arranged into a sequence), whereas in prose, parataxis acts as a *suppression* of narration.[22] This is a view that I will question later on in my analysis. Like Koivumäki, Price pays too much attention to the intention of the author, but I believe that by studying the text in its own right the parataxis may be perceived differently, especially by readers from other contexts than film production.

Price explains that visual representation is essential to the film, when establishing and developing characters, to a higher degree than in a play, where dialogue may convey much more about a character's inner life and/or relations to other characters. However, he says that some gangster movies (particularly those by Tarantino) can use dialogue to generate a sense of threat. He mentions the dialogue about hamburgers in *Pulp Fiction* (Quentin Tarantino, 1994), where the discussion is disproportionate for several reasons. The most obvious one is its sheer length, considering that visual elements are presumed to be emphasized, but a more subtle element is the imbalance between the dramatic situation (imbued with imminent threat) and the frivolous nature of

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21 Price, 114-5, 118
22 Ibid., 123-4

the discussion, which consists of a prolonged examination of a seemingly trivial topic.[23] If visual representation is so essential, an obvious question would be how the reader perceives a narrative conveyed in a non-visual medium such as a text, especially one that usually lacks visual information. Price does not address this question, but I will bring this up in my analysis.

The screenplay's temporal aspect is yet another interesting element that Price discusses. It differs from the retrospection of conventional prose, where the focus is on narration due to its use of past tense. Screenplays, on the other hand, are written in present tense, which, together with the structure consisting of a series of brief episodes, conceals the gap between discourse and story. As opposed to a novel, the screenplay does not retell what once occurred, but rather inspires an anticipation of what *is about to come* in the form of a realization in a different medium.[24] The temporality of the reader in relation to the text is a highly interesting topic, and I will elaborate on that more than Price does. Yet again Price's argument is tinged with the constant focus on intention, which may give a radically different conclusion than if the text were to be studied as it is.

Thus, Price has a slightly different approach to the more literary aspects of screenplays than Koivumäki, and sees the importance of these in relation to the reader's experience of the text. Ann Igelström does something similar but takes it even further when she explores the different ways in which the screenplay can guide the reader's visualisation. She begins by identifying two different strands in research on screenplays: the first one stresses the collaborative nature of film, and claims that the collaboration in relation to – and constant rewritings of – the screenplay have a greater impact than the text itself. The other strand claims that the screenplay, with its allusion to potential cinematographic work, has to be able to adequately convey how the film is to be visualized so that the potential film can be constructed in the mind of the reader. What is important then, Igelström claims, is not only *what* is being told, but *how;* not only content, but how it is to be visualized.[25]

Igelström notes that, although a screenplay is originally intended for the person with the power to bring it to the production stage, there are in fact *three* different kinds of screenplay readers, originally distinguished by Claudia Sternberg: the property reader (a potential buyer or investor), the blueprint reader (who will transfer the text into a film) and the reading stage reader, who reads the screenplay after the film's release, for instance scholars.[26] Within the text, there are also different kinds of fictional voices.

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23 Price, 147-8
24 Ibid., 118
25 Igelström, Ann, "Narrating Voices in the Screenplay Text: How the Writer Can Direct the Reader's Visualisations of the Potential Film" in Batty, Craig. (red.), *Screenwriters and screenwriting: putting practice into context*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2014, 31-2
26 Sternberg, Claudia, *Written for the Screen: The American Motion-Picture Screenplay as Text*, Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 47-50, cited in Igelström, 32

The first one, the extrafictional voice, is capable of providing technical information relating to the production of the film, but even though it is external to the fiction and can address the reader in the real world directly, it is not external to the screenplay text's narration. The reader's perception of the potential film is guided by it, things such as camera positions aid in the visualization of the story.[27] The extrafictional voice in books, in contrast, is "responsible" for forewords and acknowledgements, whereas in a screenplay it remains in the text throughout the telling of the story. Concrete examples of an extrafictional voice do not only comprise camera directions, but also slug-lines (scene headings), the text above each scene indicating the place and time of the scene. Note that Igelström's extrafictional voice is not to be confused with an *actual* voice, such as a voice-over. Due to the technical abbreviations and the direct communication of the extrafictional voice, unique qualities of the screenplay text, Igelström believes – not too differently from Koivumäki but contrary to Price – that the reader can never forget the artificial nature of the screenplay, as the extrafictional voice increases the distance between the reader and the story, as references to the real world reminds the reader of the fictional and constructed nature of the story; mentioning the word "camera" acts as an object between the reader and the story, making her visualize the story as if it were shown through a camera, instead of seeing it "directly".[28] Tarantino, for example, naturally could not escape the use of the extrafictional voice, as it is more or less compulsory in conventional scripts, but Igelström fails to elaborate enough on its impact on the reader to give a more nuanced image of its impact.

The fictional voice, on the other hand, does not use technical information to convey the film, but manages to direct the reader's visualisation by describing the scene in specific ways. Igelström mentions two examples, one scene with a large hand grabbing a clutch of crabs, and another with a crowd of 80 people. It is indicated that a close up should be used in the first scene and a wide shot in the second, even though this is not explicitly stated; how else would the hand appear as large, and how else would 80 people fit in the image?[29] This is, according to Igelström, the method that creates the smallest distance between the reader and the story, making the reader experience it "directly" in his mind. However, the reader still cannot be fully immersed in the story, as most screenplays still use an extrafictional voice to some extent (scene headings and the mere format of the screenplay, if nothing else), reminding the reader of the text's purpose to become a film.[30]

Another way to avoid camera instructions is to use so called "we-formulations", that direct visualisation as well as indicate the reader's emotional response. "We" is an impersonal *fictional*

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27 Igelström, 36-7
28 Ibid., 37-8, 43
29 Ibid., 38-9
30 Ibid., 43

voice, and can simply be used as a replacement for the word "camera" (which would only have been mentioned by an *extrafictional* voice), but with the advantage of conveying what emotional response that is expected by the writer, from the reader, aligning or separating the reader from the characters, story and/or action.[31] "We", like "camera", places the reader in a viewing position outside of the story, and thus creates a distance between them; this distance can be increased, should the reader not agree with the emotional response expected from her.[32]

It is important to note that these voices are not in opposition with one another, but can be used interchangeably within one and the same text depending on which effects one wishes to achieve, e.g. which distance one wants to establish between the reader and the story/characters/action.[33] This is the case in *Reservoir Dogs;* Tarantino uses all of these voices, but what this use means in practice remains to be seen.

Igelström's reasoning is not that far away from what I intend to do, as she often ignores the context surrounding the screenplay text. I want to study the screenplay text and the literary techniques at its disposition like Igelström does; I believe that her article is a huge step in the right direction in screenplay studies, and I want to take it even further and look in more detail on how concrete and abstract content of the text is conveyed.

2.2 Adaptations

Traditionally, adaptations are seen as a kind of ignominy in relation to the novel, and have been subject to much vituperation. Film and literature are placed in a dichotomous relation where the latter is seen as superior thanks to its seniority and historical anteriority. Furthermore, this animosity is aggravated by iconophobia and anti-corporeality, the dislike for the images what with the "embodiedness" of characters and places, a natural consequence of logophila, the exaltation of the verbal.[34] One of the most frequently used criteria in the evaluation of an adaptation is fidelity, the notion that a film does or does not capture that which is seen as essential in terms of narrative, or thematic and aesthetic features of the novel.[35] Although discussions are traditionally about the film-version of novels, I believe that many of the same arguments could easily be applied to screenplays, as long as they pertain to the nature and properties of literature as a medium, and not specific qualities of novels as a form. The focus on fidelity has been (mildly put) detrimental to adaptation studies, but I believe that a higher estimation of the text could be appropriate when studying a

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31 Igelström, 41-2
32 Ibid., 43
33 Ibid., 44
34 Stam, Robert, "Introduction: The Theory and Practice of Adaptation" in Stam, Robert & Raengo, Alessandra (red.), *Literature and film: a guide to the theory and practice of film adaptation*, Blackwell, Malden, MA, 2005, 3-6
35 Leitch, Thomas M., "Twelve Fallacies in Contemporary Adaptation Theory", *Criticism,* Volume 45, Number 2, Spring 2003, pp. 149-171, Wayne State University Press 161

screenplay, as it could be elucidating regarding its medium specific "advantages", and since the situation has been "inversed" in screenplay studies, as mentioned above – naturally without the assumption that literature is an essentially superior medium. Furthermore, in my analysis I will focus, among other things, on corporeality – as it has strong connections to spatiality – and will thus have to explore how this aspect is included in the text. It would be preposterous to imply that literary texts would be completely void of corporeality, as this particular text serves as a medium for it, not as a refuge from it, but the question of how it is conveyed seems to have been neglected.

Seymour Chatman approaches the question of medium specificity by, first of all, outlining theories of narratology, according to which a narrative is a text organization independent of its medium; it simply has to be transmitted, using words and/or actors.[36] Chatman observes that peculiarities of different media are crystallized when a story is transferred from one medium to another, and chooses to focus on two salient features: description and point of view, both of which are essential to my analysis of *Reservoir Dogs*, as they both indirectly pertain to spatiality and temporality (what someone/something looks like and from which perspective it is portrayed being related to their extension in space and time).This is also a good reason why a comparative analysis is advantageous in this case. A comparison between the screenplay and its film should be even more elucidating regarding how the former conveys what is illustrated in the latter.

In literature, Chatman says, descriptions can have the effect of "freezing" the narrative, halting the progress of the story-time. This can be done either by pausing the narration to describe the current state of affairs, or to provide background information, but both stop the progress of time. This kind of communication does not convey information about events, but rather on state of affairs, or the quality of an object. Even sentences that are ostensibly incorporating these qualities in the narrative can remain descriptive from a textual point of view. As an example, Chatman uses a passage from Maupassant's "Une Partie de campagne" where a cart is said to have a curtain that fluttered in the breeze. Chatman argues that this is not tied to the chain of events, one could just as easily have used a copulative verb, saying that there *was* a fluttering curtain instead of saying that the curtain *fluttered*.[37] In the film version of the book, Chatman notices something interesting about how the cart appears. In the short story, three details of the cart are mentioned, whereas the movie has an indeterminate number of details. This trait makes film similar to other visual arts, with the important difference that the viewer does not register most of these details, at least not during a first screening, as she is too occupied with the meaning of the cart, the narrative development etc.

Moreover, Chatman maintains that there are fundamental differences between literary and

36 Chatman, Seymour, "What Novels Can Do That Films Can't (And Vice Versa)", *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 121-140 University of Chicago Press, 1980, 121
37 Chatman, 123-4

filmic modes of presentation. Literature has the option of choosing between asserting and naming; that is, between stating a certain quality, bringing attention to this particular state of affairs (often done in an independent clause), as opposed to "slipping in" this quality in a clause where the action/event is of interest. As an example, he contrasts two sentences, "The cart was tiny; it came unto the bridge" and "The green cart came unto the bridge."[38] The size of the cart is asserted in a different way than the colour. Chatman argues that the dominant cinematic mode is presentational, showing rather than explicitly saying, and that assertive modes, such as an oral description by a voice-over or a character, is rather *literary assertion* than *cinematic description*; movies depict rather than describe. Also, related to this, is how the literary narrator can choose to unravel the story, permitting the reader to access one trait at a time in any order desired.[39] This kind of analysis of literary style could be essential to my study. Though Chatman's conclusions may seem a bit dated, applying his line of reasoning about literature on manuscripts could reveal a lot about their essential properties.

According to Chatman, even close-ups are used for hermeneutic purposes: they neither describe, nor invite aesthetic contemplation. Furthermore, even in instances where they are used in a descriptive way, the same passage in a novel and a movie will appear differently. As mentioned above, the novel can freeze story time, leaving the plot suspended while elaborating on details, delivering a long explanation, while the movie cannot. It cannot temporarily remain within the critical moment, making the spectator wonder when the plot will advance; any pause will inevitably constitute a delay incorporated into the story, and the plot will advance anyhow. Chatman sees description as an abeyance of story-time, as the story-time cannot be paused in movies; consequently they cannot describe.[40] The reason for this, he guesses, is connected to the medium itself. In novels there is no movement, only abstract symbols that lead the reader to imagine it. In movies movement, once established, seems so real that it cannot be dissociated from passage of time, not even in moments without it.[41] Apart from the temporality, movement is also of importance to the essay, as movement is related to spatiality (it has to take place in some kind of space), but unfortunately Chatman does not elaborate on whether his conclusions valid for all kinds of texts or only prose, so if they are applicable to screenplays remains to be seen.

Chatman anticipates yet another counter-argument when he discusses establishing shots. Their ontological nature differs, depending on whether they are placed in the beginning or in the middle of a narrative, but in neither case do they suspend action. In the beginning of a film they

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38 Chatman, 128
39 Ibid., 139
40 Ibid., 128-9
41 Ibid., 130

may be used to inform the spectator about the location of the story, but then they are applied before the introduction of any characters, thus before the narrative commences, because a narrative is a chain of events, and no such thing has started yet. If used in the middle of a film, they still do not constitute an arrest of story-time, as events are assumed to continue off-screen. When Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman fly to Rio de Janeiro in *Notorious* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1946), shots of the city do not freeze time, they simply illustrate the new milieu while the couple are busy making their way to it (off-screen). Not even a freeze-frame dispels the force of plot, says Chatman, who interprets the last still frame of Doinel in *Les 400 cents coups* (François Truffaut, 1959) as an indication of how he is trapped in a fugitive way of life.[42] One obvious flaw in this comparison is that the examples Chatman uses to illustrate literature's descriptive qualities do not necessarily correspond to establishing shots, and he does not elaborate on the difference between the literary equivalent to establishing shots and the effect of transferring these from one medium to another, something I intend to do, as screenplays actually *do* include scenes that will later on become establishing shots in the finished film.

Another difference between the media is cinema's dependency on the audience's acquiescence concerning evaluative descriptions. A book can claim that a person is pretty, invoking the reader's image of a pretty girl that suits the context, where a movie has to choose a specific actor and hope that the audience agrees that she is indeed pretty. A novel can also convey the narrative from a specific character's point of view or in a more spatially detached manner, from a *generalized* point of view, but in a movie the point of view is always *determinate*, as it is positioned within the scene.[43] *Reservoir Dogs*, in its capacity as a screenplay, does not dedicate many lines to descriptions of the appearance of the characters (or, for that matter, of *anything*), which gives it an interesting relation to its film, where this is not altered as much as it is "filled in", added during the filming but not, strictly speaking, changed, as opposed to a conventional novel, where traits in the text may be altered when shooting the film. As we also shall see in the analysis, the screenplay has different opportunities regarding which perspective to adopt.

Robert Stam tries to identify some reasons as to why novels are seen as "better" than movies, at least in the case of adaptations. As mentioned above, one recurrent question related to the relation between literary narrative and film is the importance and/or problem of fidelity between the movie and the novel that it adapts, but even when the old theories are discarded, Stam still thinks one has to address the question of fidelity. He thinks that a film is criticized for not capturing that which is seen as essential in terms of narrative, or thematic and aesthetic features of the novel partly

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42 Chatman, 129-30
43 Ibid., 132-3

because readers and spectators approach some of the content from different "directions": a reader *constructs his own image* with the help of the verbal descriptions, whereas the spectator *structures and names objects* pictured in the film. According to Stam, the notion of fidelity is related to the conception that there is an essence to speak of, which can be extracted from one version and injected into another. However, Stam objects to this image, and claims that there is no "core" to speak of, only an interpretative consensus – within a certain context – of a text, that can give rise to an abundance of different readings, depending on the grids of interpretation and incessantly permutating intertext.[44] I believe that this kind of deconstructionism may be elucidating, in the respect that it emphasizes the recipient's participation in the creation of the narrative. However, this borderline relativism may underestimate the impact of medium specific properties and their importance for the reader's comprehension.

Stam's emphasis on interpretative consensus does not mean that his theories necessarily oppose those of Chatman, even though Stam examines some important areas not sufficiently explored by Chatman. Stam concedes that some aspects of the media will inevitably lead to differences between the stories, even in terms of content; for one thing, the mode of production in relation to monetary resources can significantly influence the outcome of the production of a film, where the cost of writing a novel remains the same, regardless of the verbal content.[45] Moreover, the shift from one semiotic system to another automatically brings about inevitable differences, as movies are endowed with an auditive and visual dimension completely absent in the book – similar to Chatman's observation of the properties of the cart absent in the text but added in the film. Every single object in the picture entails choices in filmmaking, concerning what size, shape and colour to use, as well as how to show it (angle, duration, framing, light). Unlike Chatman, Stam addresses the phenomenological aspect of medium specificity when he argues that even a text where all these details are described and accompanying music is mentioned, there will still be a difference between reading this description and actually *seeing* and *hearing* it for oneself, especially at the same time. This leads Stam to believe that there can never be a real equivalent to the written text in the audiovisual format of the film, the texts are in their nature incommensurable.[46] This is one case where studying a screenplay is essential, in my opinion. One could object to Stam by saying the reason to this is that novels do not even *attempt* to recreate the same feeling of hearing a song accompanying the descriptions pertaining to visuality, but this is perhaps what screenplays do. In *Reservoir Dogs* there are a couple of cases where songs are said to be played in the background, either in- or outside of the story, and I will study if the difference really must be as big as Stam

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44 Stam, 14-5
45 Ibid., 16
46 Ibid., 17-8

makes it out to be.

Although films are often accused of reducing the story of the novel, Stam says that its means of expression are more polysemic, thanks to its multiplication of registers, and the extraverbal aspects it can present in addition to the verbal dimension. Accent and intonation are combined with facial and corporeal expression. All of these are used *simultaneously*, and the interaction between different tracks (auditive, visual, verbal) can be used to shape the spectator's assessment of them.[47]

According to Stam, each person in a film, as opposed to a novel, is a dualistic entity, an embodiment of character and performer, once more opening up for interplay or contradiction; the person is not open to the same kind of projection as a literary actant, especially since the actor may already be known to the spectator thanks to earlier performances and/or gossip about his/her life outside the screen.[48] This is relevant to my study, as the very point of the story is that so much about the characters remains unknown to the recipient, and I will look at what this does to the reader's comprehension in contrast to the spectator's.

Thomas M. Leitch also discusses media specificity, and criticizes the, until then, common practice of basing theories on adaptation on specific cases, and proposes a more theoretical approach that would engender general theories on what happens (or *should* happen) during the process of moving a narrative from one medium to another.[49] He then proceeds to identify twelve common fallacies in contemporary adaptation theory, of which only the ones pertinent to the dissertation will be presented and developed in detail. Also, they will not be presented in the same order as in his article, but will be interwoven with one another, structured thematically.

He criticizes the essentialist idea of media specificity, that different media would be best suited for different purposes. Leitch scrutinizes Chatman's theories in particular, among other things his argument that cinematic images are descriptive, and therefore do not invite aesthetic contemplation. Leitch counters by saying that it is the very descriptive quality that *constitutes* this invitation. As an example, he mentions how the seemingly neutral camera in *Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941) makes Sam Spade appear as all the more mechanical and cold, and that the very suppression of psychological investigation ever so prevalent in literature will, in film, appear as more disturbing, troubling the spectator.[50] Leitch reaches a conclusion not too different from that of Stam, that the evaluation of literary traits does not pertain to essential qualities of different media, but rather to reading habits, not technical properties. I disagree, as there are most likely things that simply cannot be done in both movies and literature, and even if the same result is attained, one

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47 Stam, 18-22
48 Ibid., 23
49 Leitch, 149
50 Ibid., 151-3

cannot assume that the process leading up to it must therefore be the same as well, but more on this later.

Similar to Stam, Leitch emphasizes the importance of movies' auditive dimension, pointing out another common misconception: that films would be only visual and not verbal. Leitch notes that this theory ignores that movies have depended on their soundtrack for decades, using music as well as dialogue, and that the combination of images and sounds is much more complex than mere iconicity.[51] Here it is worth noting the similarity between this argument and that of Stam, regarding synchronization of sound and image. Instead, Leitch would like to emphasize how movies depend on unalterable visual and verbal performances in a way that a purely literary text does not; a film has a definitive version where lines are delivered in one way only, as opposed to theatre, where mild alterations are possible. Moreover, reading literature encompasses one interpretation only – that by the reader when approaching the text – whereas cinema adds one link in the interpretatory chain, as the script is first interpreted and conveyed by a performance, which in turn is interpreted by the audience. This argument is tied to the one above, as it elaborates on the importance of interpretative practices and the "definitive" state of the film's staging, both of which could have consequences for the comprehension of the minimalism of Tarantino's screenplay.

Another common misconception is that novels deal in concepts and films in percepts. The idea would then be that language needs to be filtered through a conceptual screen, which, despite its origins in percepts, results in a different experience. Leitch's reservation is that, while this is partially true, one would be mistaken if one assumed that filmic texts offered nothing but the percepts, as if the sole pleasure derived from movie spectatorship is, not conceptual implication, but the kinaesthetic movement of images. Such an assumption, Leitch argues, ignores that movies consist, not only of a visual code, but of a *multitude* of codes (e.g. narratological, fictional, auditory) which all demand a conceptual initiative if they are to be structured into a single signifying system.[52] He suggests that the conceptual dimension might elude a first-time-viewer of a film, but that it appears more clearly when watched again. I agree with Leitch, and will consider the conceptual aspects of the movie when comparing it to the text.

Similar to Chatman and Stam, Leitch also addresses the visuality of movies. Yet another common theory is that novels, thanks to their direct access to the minds of fictional characters, as well as their length, are able to create more complex characters than movies. However, Leitch notes, the latter argument is only ever applied in the case of *movies;* in discussions limited to literary texts, no one ever suggests that there is any correlation between character complexity and the length of

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51 Leitch, 153-4
52 Ibid., 156, 8

the text. As for the direct access, no one uses this argument in relation to theatre, even in examples such as the plays by Shakespeare, where internal thought is conveyed through soliloquies, rendering an internal thought external. Leitch argues that the thoughts inferred through speech and behaviour can be just as profound as those presented explicitly. In fact, he goes as far as to argue that an appeal lies in the very possibility of inference, regardless of which medium that is used, and that this is a prime example of concepts derived from percepts.[53] This emphasis on the participation of the recipient in the assessment of story content is very much in line with Stam's stressing of interpretative consensus. It is therefore, Leitch adds, that screenplays are seldom read by the audience; screenplays, he argues, contain gaps that do not serve as invitations to a reader, but rather are supposed to be filled in once and for all by cast and crew, as opposed to a play by for instance Shakespeare, whose verbal texture supports a richer sense of reality than any screenplay does. His view on screenplays, as disparaging as it may be, provides a good point of reference when analyzing the gaps of Tarantino's screenplay, since they, thanks to his minimalism, are quite many. However, Leitch's evaluation of the gaps is flawed, his argument tinged with the traditional estimation of culture with an older heritage. In my analysis I will consider the gaps in the screenplay as he does those of a theatre play, as an invitation to the reader, not as a mere lack of information. As mentioned above, Price claims that there is no such thing as an absence of description, as the very lack thereof constitutes a style that can also be regarded as a comment on the events described.

As a contrast to Leitch's argument, people defending literature claim that the visual specificity of cinema is detrimental to the imagination of the audience.[54] Yet again the argument is actually more about criticism of cinema's inability to translate a novel's unique properties without altering them; one dare even say that this is a fidelity-argument in disguise. Leitch notes that visual descriptions in, for instance, novels by Dickens, do not provide material that is to be visually realized by a reader; rather, they are supposed to be enjoyed as concepts, containing little information on concrete features. Leitch goes as far as to argue that visual specificity in novels is not necessarily an advantage to a film-maker, as the gaps in the text provides him with an opportunity to supply and invent details. However, Leitch does not mention what consequences this has for the reader in general when she reads the script, how she perceives visual traits in a text that does not include these, which may influence how she perceives spatiality and temporality, as all visual objects have an extension in space as well as in time. These are things I will take a closer look at in my analysis.

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53 Leitch, 158-9
54 Ibid., 160-1

3. Analysis

3.1 Spatiality

3.1.1 The spatiality of the reader

Tarantino's screenplay has an ambiguous and fluid relation to the spatiality in the story, one that changes in different passages. As noted by Chatman, the literary narration does not have to be endowed with any spatiality, it can present the story from either a character's point of view or from what he calls a "generalized perspective."[55] However, here Tarantino employs one of the unique features of a screenplay: a screenplay, as opposed to conventional prose, is not forced to this generalized position when it comes to spatiality. One early example of this is Mr Pink's escape from a group of policemen, briefly shown when he and Mr White are talking in the warehouse bathroom. It is interesting, apropos of Chatman's claim about the generalized position, what position the reader occupies in this scene. Throughout the script, the framing is mentioned at some specific instances, such as closeups, whereas some passages are completely void of this kind of information, and yet again at other times this is conveyed indirectly, without giving details on framing but nonetheless describing what position the reader occupies. Here, Tarantino unites the reader and the camera as he writes: "We dolly at the same speed, right alongside of [Mr Pink]."[56] He chooses a personal pronoun ("we") instead of referring to the camera, while at the same time describing camera movement with a technical jargon not necessarily known by people outside of the business.

Igelström claims that by mentioning the word "we", the spectator is endowed with a viewing position outside of the narrative.[57] I beg to differ: although she is correct in her claim that the spectator is indeed given a position, she jumps to conclusions when she extends this argument so that said position will invariably be *outside* of the narrative. While a novel can choose which subjectivity to adopt, conveying information only accessible to one specific actant, so as to aline the reader with that actant's point of view, Tarantino can – thanks to the conventions of screenplays – take the opportunity to position the reader *within* the narrative, ascribing her a spatial relation to the actants. Tarantino says that *we* dolly at the same speed, *alongside* of Mr Pink; we cannot possibly be alongside Mr Pink unless we are inside of the narrative. Tarantino places the audience outside of Mr Pink's subjectivity, it does not seem that they, by extension, are necessarily distanced even further, ending up outside of Mr Pink's entire world. Nor must one be tempted to think that the technical parts of the sentence will only be pertinent to the film-crew: they will not only influence decisions by the director and cameramen during the production phase, *any* reader of the script will inevitably

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55 Chatman, 133
56 Tarantino, Quentin, *Reservoir Dogs*, Faber & Faber, London, 1994, 22
57 Igelström, 43

end up seeing the scene play out in his head in the way described by the script; it cannot be considered a purely technical piece of information, as it inevitably does something to the reader's relation to the space in which the events take place.

This can be achieved with both the extrafictional and the intrafictional voices described by Koivumäki, either with explicit references to a camera, or by replacing it with "we". In Tarantino's case, there is a combination of both, which renders the description less technical, allowing for a higher level of immersion, while it nonetheless gives details on *how* the reader should see it. By saying that we *dolly* at the same speed as Mr Pink, the reader immediately understands Mr Pink's position within the imagined frame, and her spatial extension becomes even more palpable as she is endowed with *movement* throughout the space. If Tarantino would only have written from which perspective we see Mr Pink, one could still have maintained that the description of his escape remains just that: a description, a recounting of what happened. Now, we are incorporated into the same space as Mr Pink to a much higher degree, as we not only know how we see it, but are, to a limited extent, allowed to explore it; we are not immobile spectators, we are participants, moving down the same street as one of the characters.

This also means that the figurative distance to Mr Pink, established through our ignorance (we do not know much about him and thus cannot identify with him), is increased, due to the physical one: we are placed within the narrative, and the palpable physical distance to Mr Pink reminds us of the polarization between him and us. In the movie, there is an equivalent distance to the actors by default (there are almost no POV-shots), and Tarantino establishes this kind of distance in the script in a way that is quite rare (if not non-existent) in conventional literature. The fact that Tarantino exchanges the word "camera" for the personal pronoun "we" means that the reader is almost endowed with her own subjectivity in the narrative. She cannot claim a generalized *perspective*, nor a general, non-corporeal *existence*; if Tarantino would have referred to the camera, the reader could have occupied its position and thus found an entity with which to identify, the camera being a representative in the text, but now she occupies some space *herself* more directly than if another entity would have done it *for* her, vicariously.

At the end of the sequence, a car hits Mr Pink as he crosses the street. He gets up and tries to steal it, but the woman inside refuses to open the door, so he smashes the window. The scene description tells us "He SMASHES it into our face."[58] What is interesting about this passage is the choice and *use* of words. First of all, this passage is supposed to be filmed from the inside, so Tarantino reinforces the impact of the blow coming towards the screen by, once more, speaking of

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58 Tarantino, 24

the reader instead of the camera: Mr Pink smashes it into *our face*. The spatiality with which the reader is endowed is retained in this segment, thanks to the personal pronoun ("our") in combination with the adverb conveying into which direction he smashes it ("into"). Through this use of the spatiality Mr Pink appears as much more threatening and desperate than if Tarantino would have written, in a more factual manner, that he crushes the window. This would have made the reader occupy Chatman's general position, while at the same time toned down the violent nature of Mr Pink's actions. He smashes the window into *our* face, which constitutes a violent intrusion into our personal space within the narrative, as opposed to if the car would have been the object of this violation. The capital letters reinforce the kinetic and almost tactile sensation of this event. One can thus establish that the reader is endowed with corporeality and is therefore incorporated into the spatiality of the narrative, which in turns distances her from the characters.

Also, Tarantino sometimes explores an aspect of the reader's spatiality seemingly without equivalent in conventional prose. When Mr White and Mr Pink stand in the bathroom, the instructions are surprisingly clear and precise on what is visible on-screen and what is not, compared to other scenes. We are told that Mr Pink is obscured by the bathroom door, and we are reminded of this when he speaks, by the parenthesis under his name, where it is written "off". The narration thus endows the reader with a mixture of the general spatiality and the specific one seen above at some instances in the script. In this case, not only do we have little information on exactly where the actants stand in relation to each other (which will be discussed in the next section), we know just as little about where we stand in relation to *them;* we are only told that we are positioned in such a way that Mr White is visible but not Mr Pink. Similar to Chatman's claim that literature can single out specific *visual* properties, the script here seems to do the same regarding *spatial* ones, revealing only what is important for the moment being. Any such aspect will inevitably be lost in an adaptation, as it is impossible to visually illustrate some parts of spatiality but not others, and this specificity is used by Tarantino to convey just about enough of what the reader should know, in order to give the reader a certain perspective (thanks to the characters' and the reader's own extension in space), while letting her remain ignorant about everything else. Even more striking is the parenthesis under Mr Pink's name, saying that his voice is off-screen. This frequent reminder of how Mr Pink is not visible to us also acts as a reminder of his corporeality: in the film, all we have is the sound of his voice, but in the script we are constantly reminded that he is present in the room, though not currently visible.

3.1.2 The spatiality of the actants

As for the characters themselves, they do not exist as non-corporeal entities in a vacuum, they have

an extension in time and space in both verbal and audiovisual media, but their spatiality is more conspicuous in the movie. Their spatiality is sometimes specified in the script, but it is one far from as often as in the movie, a natural consequence of the visuality of the performers, and sometimes the descriptions are phrased in such a way that may seem hard to transfer to a non-verbal depiction. However, these are some of the unique properties (or strengths, one dare suggest) of Tarantino's script, a different spatial portrayal, unavailable in film. The verbal mode and lack of specificity seems to be, in one way, to his screenplay's advantage, concerning the identities of the actants.

To find an illustrative example of the nature of the screenplay's verbality, one can once more turn to the scene where Mr Pink escapes from the police, as the description of this scene is one of the first where Tarantino uses a more colloquial diction. He does not write that Mr Pink is running fast down a street, but rather that he is "hauling ass down a busy city sidewalk."[59] His escape down the street is also referred to in a less technical manner, called a "mad dash."[60] The use of slang indirectly influences Mr Pink's extension in the space, his corporeality, as there is a difference between "running down a crowded sidewalk in the city" and "hauling ass down a busy city sidewalk." "Hauling ass" implies that Mr Pink does not sprint in the controlled and disciplined manner of an athlete, or even a casual jogger; Mr Pink is running frantically, and this description paints an engaging picture of how he progresses through the space which he occupies in order to distance himself as much as possible from his pursuers.

As for the lack of specificity, one prominent example is the scene where Mr Blonde enters the warehouse for the first time. We do not get much information on his position in relation to his two partners in crime, except that they approach one another, but nothing about the distance between them, nor how Mr White and Mr Pink are positioned in relation to each other. Here it seems like one can once more apply the general position of Chatman, not only concerning the reader's relation to the actants, but to the actants' relations to *each other*. In conventional prose, the author may be tempted to give at least some details on how people are positioned in relation to one another, but the literary quality of a screenplay allows for little to no information on this. Price seems to take this one step "further", arguing that the general screenplay reader is not "constantly […] framing the dialogue within a precisely imagined diegetic world".[61] He has a point, which must nonetheless not be taken too far: the reader probably does not create a detailed picture of how things look, but this is not to say that the actants *lack* spatiality, just that the reader is not incessantly attempting to assess its elusive nature. Leitch reasons in a similar fashion, but goes even further

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59 Tarantino, 22
60 Ibid., 22
61 Price, 46

than Price, stating that the gaps in a movie screenplay do not work as invitations to a reader, seeing that they are to be filled by cast and crew, as opposed to theatre plays. The flagrant flaw in Leitch's reasoning echoes the traditional disdain for movies in relation to older, more "cultivated" artforms, and his defense of Shakespeare's plays seems to stem from personal preference rather than sound and valid arguments.[62] First of all, why would the gaps in a play be any more inviting than those in a screenplay? In neither case are they *intended* to be filled by a casual reader. Second of all, of what relevance is the intention? Leitch seems to imply that the reader will not fill in these gaps, refraining to do so primarily motivated by the author's intentions, as if the reader would never act until given permission to do so. One could ask oneself if it is even *possible* to avoid creating an image of events and people described, albeit a somewhat vague and sketchy one. Even if the author does not intend the reader to imagine anything not clearly described – and it seems doubtful that this should always be the case – there is no reason to assume that all readers will invariably submit to this volition. In *Reservoir Dogs,* the vague information on the characters' spatiality even seems to fill a function. Seeing how we do not know "where they stand" in a metaphorical sense, it is all the more fitting that we do not know, literally, where the actants stand in the room, and it could even be detrimental to the story that the actants are later on replaced by performers, who are forced to adopt specific spatial properties.

The same phenomenon can be observed in the beginning of the script. On the very first page, we are told that the men, currently in a diner, sit around a table, which invokes themes of cameraderie, that they are modern knights around a round breakfast table, while at the same time Tarantino does not reveal where they position themselves in relation to one another. The men are introduced by name, it is specified how many they are and what kind of clothes they don (black suits). We are informed that they have just finished eating breakfast, but that they are still talking and drinking coffee.[63] Their spatiality thus seems to elude the reader somewhat, as so little about it is specified; naturally they must have *some* extension in space, otherwise they could not really be inside of the diner, but the only thing that can be asserted is that this extension exists, we know very little about its nature.

In the film, however, we are not granted the same information about the men that quickly, and details are not as evident. The first thing to greet us is a title screen, over which a voice belonging to a so far unknown man is heard, talking about the song "Like a Virgin". Contrary to the actants, the names of the performers are unknown to the spectator. In the script, the reader is always

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62 Naturally, an *ad hominem* of this kind does not in itself disprove Leitch's theory, but it does show that, should his conclusions be true, the arguments are nonetheless invalid.
63 Tarantino, 3

informed about who is saying what, but in the film the spectator barely sees who is talking, let alone knows the names of the people, at least not until they are mentioned by the characters themselves. Initially the camera is filming from quite a low angle behind the backs of the gentlemen at the table, the view is often obscured by their dark jackets, and the people doing the talking are either seen from behind (Mr Brown and Mr Orange) or not at all (Joe Cabot). The performers, as tangible as they may be with their corporeality, have an almost ephemeral extension in the visible space, as they constantly enter and exit, giving the spectator few points of reference when trying to organize the information she is given regarding their spatiality. Still, in the screenplay no information is given on which actant is seen in frame or not, nor when an actant enters or exits the frame, reducing their corporeality to a minimum due to the lack of point of references that help us position them in the space, whereas every single image of a performer conveys a lot of information about him; we immediately perceive their corporeality, even if the framing and camera movements obstruct attempts to organize this information. However, as different as the screenplay and movie may be in this regard, it seems as though they do not differ significantly in what spatiality the reader is endowed with: the lack of camera instructions should automatically give her a generalized perspective à la Chatman, placing her outside of the group, in a way very similar to how she is excluded from the breakfast table of the performers, as the camera (at least initially) cannot penetrate the "wall" of backs turned to it.

This is the first time in the script Tarantino chooses to reveal very little about the actants spatiality, but far from the last one: the conversation between Mr White and Mr Pink; their ensuing conversation with Mr Blonde; Mr Pink being chased by policemen. There are several examples where the spatiality is omitted in the script, which emphasizes the ignorance of the reader; Tarantino lets us know just about enough to understand what is going on, but omits any piece of information on specific details, which renders the actants all the more distant and nebulous. In all of the warehouse-scenes there is an interesting omittance of information concerning Mr Orange. It is fitting that he, in his capacity as the secret infiltrator, has a spatial position completely unknown to the reader. The fact that he does not really belong in the group is further emphasized by how he is rarely put in a spatial relation to them, as if he is a corporeal entity that paradoxically enough lacks an extension in space, because he cannot enter the same figurative space as the others.

In the film Tarantino is forced to decide on these aspects, and thus deprives the performers of the nebulosity entailed by the spatial incertitude when he is forced to replace the actants with physical performers who have a palpable extension in a visible space. Thus, it is possible for the Tarantino to *write* but not *show* that Mr Blonde approaches Mr White and Mr Pink without telling

us about where the actants stand in relation to one another, which fits well with how they earlier tried to trust each other but eventually reminded one another that, for all they know, the other person may very well be the "rat".

3.1.3 The spatiality of the performers

There is also the dual aspect of the performers, as noted by Stam, as the people we see on-screen are represented by actors present in other movies as well as in real life, outside the silver screen.[64] Stam mentions how the knowledge about an actor, such as experience of his previous performances or an insight into his private life, shapes the spectator's assessment of the performer. One could argue that this is less of a concern in the case of *Reservoir Dogs*, as some actors arguably reached their pinnacle of success and fame later on in their career, but the fundamental problem remains.[65] All of the actors in the lead roles had appeared in other movies before, so it was possible that spectators were already acquainted with them, leading them to infer information on the performers. Another point, completely ignored by Stam, is that this phenomenon probably occurs "in reverse" quite often. Naturally one should be able to assume that people not present during the film's initial theatrical run, who saw it much later on VHS or even DVD, experienced this "backwards", getting to know the actors from later appearances and using *this* information to deduce as much as possible about their performers in earlier performances. Stam does not sufficiently go into detail on what effect this brings about in practice, but one can suppose that it is irrelevant whether this information does anything to the accuracy of the image created by the spectator, and that the perception of the performer will always be influenced regardless of this. In *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorcese, 1976) and *Mean Streets (*Martin Scorcese, 1972) Harvey Keitel plays a pimp and a small-time crook respectively, but these characters have little in common with Mr White, apart from their involvement in illegal business.

On the other hand, Stam might just overestimate the impact of this. First of all, not every spectator is interested in the private lives of actors, so it is possible that some of them do not know the actor from any other context but filmic ones, possibly only this one. Then the actor would arguably not attain the dualistic nature which Stam speaks of, but would rather be restricted to the cinematic sphere, and he could be seen as just as fictitious as the character he portrays, to such a degree that the actor and performer become indistinguishable from one another, as the ontological rift between them is imperceptible to the spectator; at least this is the case if the spectator has paid little attention to the rest of the actor's movies, either because she simply lacks any interest in

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64 Stam, 23
65 Exactly how one would go about measuring fame and success is neither within the purview of this discussion, nor pertinent to it.

movies' intertextual relations, or because it happens to be the first movie she sees with that particular actor. Stam touches upon the impact of knowledge on aspects of the film industry, ranging from gossip to earlier films, but this brief commentary is as unmitigated as it is undeveloped; he merely mentions what happens if one is acquainted with earlier performances and the private life of an actor, but fails to explore to what extent this influences different spectators. One has to keep in mind that for every fan who zealously keeps track of the career of her favourite actors, there is most likely at least one spectator who more or less stumbled upon the very same movie almost by coincidence, considering a visit to the cinema as a social activity where the company of friends is more of the main attraction than the particular movie, or stopping on the right channel when zapping. Not everyone knows or cares that much about actors' lives and earlier performances, and then these effects should become less relevant.

The effect of this is that the corporeality of the actors becomes subservient to that of the performers, so that they in turn become indistinguishable from the characters of the narrative. The corporeality of the performer is in this case restricted to the filmic sphere, as opposed to when the actor is known to the spectator and it stretches beyond the diegetic universe into the same spatiality occupied by her, as she and the actor share the same ontological status despite the film's attempt to conceal this. This can, for natural reasons, never apply to an actant, who is by necessity restricted to the world of the narrative as he is excluded from Popper's two first epistemological categories: the actant cannot be perceived as a physical entity, and therefore offers no direct sensory experience, but is perceived exclusively as an abstraction.

Second of all, Stam does not elaborate enough on this phenomenon and its importance. His interesting but mostly rhetorical questions provide no satisfying explanation to the impact of earlier acquaintance with an actor, even when this could very well act as a contributing factor. Naturally one can assume that this will initially lead the viewer to *attempt* to infer something about a particular performer, but Stam does not explain whether this is a tentative process abandoned if discovered to be futile, or if it leaves indelible traces on the viewer's perception. Anyone who has seen *Taxi Driver* or *Mean Streets* may see the parallels between Harvey Keitel's characters there and in *Reservoir Dogs*, but the spectator should understand early on that there is only a vague connection between them, and therefore abandon earlier conceptions of the actor in order to "make way" for this new one, rather than retaining an old image that proves to be of little use in this new context; earlier acquaintance would thus be used as a point of reference, just as Stam claims, but more specifically as a *contrast,* not a source of elucidation, as implied by Stam. Stam is then right in his claim that earlier performances will influence the interpretation, but this is too vague and trivial

a statement, and has to be developed to fully illustrate its function in practice.

What impact this has on the *spatiality* of the performers is a complex question without any clear answer, at least none is offered by Stam. Supposing that the spectator does recognize the performer thanks to her experience of previous appearances, it would be natural to draw the conclusion that the performer's corporeality stretches beyond the confinements of that particular film, resulting in an "expansion" of his ontological status; that is, he does not exist solely in this film. But what happens if the spectator concludes that the performer, in spite of his striking visual resemblance to a performer in another film – the degree of which will naturally vary depending on makeup, clothes, age of the actor in the respective movies etc – has nothing in common with this other performer in another film, save his looks? If she notes that Mr White looks very much like the pimp in *Taxi Driver*, but discovers that her attempts to deduce something about Mr White, by comparing him to the pimp, are of no avail, one could presume that she, by severing the narratological connection between the two characters – by conceding that they share few similarities related to personality, arguably no more than they do with any other character in any other story – also disrupts any *ontological* links between the performers; neither the characters, nor the performers should be mistaken for one another. However, this would require a large dose of suspension of disbelief from the spectator's side, if she is to completely ignore the movie's connection to the real world. Naturally she knows that the people on-screen are actors, even if she does not perceive this to be the case as she is successfully immersed in the story, but once she is able to see parallels with the same performer appearing in two different movies, she is reminded of the fictitious nature of the film, and the coalescence of the performer and the character is ruptured. However, one must probably not jump to conclusions in this case. Even though the performer is thus perceived as an actor, and even if this conception of the performer is retained by the spectator throughout the rest of the movie – as she now is aware of the fact that the performer appears in another film and must therefore be an actor, not only a personification of a character – this is not to say that the corporeality of the performer and the character suffer the same fate. The corporeality of the performer could from that moment on stretch outside of the diegetic space (as he is perceived also as an actor), but the spectator is still competent enough to realize, perhaps even more so because of this spatial displacement, that the character nonetheless remains *inside* of said space; the discrepancy between the performer/actor (now fused with one another) renders the ontology of the character even more clear, which in turn makes it clear that at least the *character* has no extension beyond the visible space.

This is an aspect that Stam does not seem to emphasize enough: the very acquaintance *per*

se, and its consequences for the cinematic immersion. Not only does knowledge about the actor open up for the possibility of inference, as already discussed, but it also endows the performer with a different ontological status than a "purely" fictitious character, as opposed to all actants in a screenplay, where there is no conceivable link between any character and real people, and they all thus remain fictitious. This should dispel the cinematic illusion, if only momentarily. When one first lays eyes upon a person that one knows exist outside of the cinematic text, be it as a real person or only as a performer in other movies, one is reminded of the intertextuality of the film, in the sense that there are connections between the movie and entities that exist outside and/or beyond it, and any such reminder should counteract suspension of disbelief. It does not seem as likely that the person will be absorbed by the cinematic illusion if she is aware of extratextual properties, because the performer is then indirectly granted corporeality that stretches beyond this specific representation; the person on-screen is no longer confined to the spatiality of this specific movie, but transcends it, breaking his narratological confinement. His entrance into another ontological sphere, perhaps even that of the spectator – if she recognizes him as an actor – should also displace her own perceived spatial properties, as her awareness of the film's fictitious nature displaces her, removes her from the cinematic space – as she is no longer immersed in the film – and positions her in the real world; she is reminded of the fact that the film takes place in another space, one in which she cannot enter.

This is made even more complex by yet another aspect mentioned but not sufficiently examined by Stam: the iconicity and "embodiedness" of the film. Here, one must be careful not to inadvertently adopt the misconception addressed by Leitch, but at the same time one should be critical of his hasty dismissal of this idea altogether. It is true, as Leitch claims, that movies cannot be seen as a purely perceptual artform – except in more artistic experimental movies one should add, but these are hardly representative of films in general. He is right to stress the conceptual dimension inferred through the percepts offered by the movie, but he seems to focus too much on the "product" of the spectator's engagement with the cinematic text, the final result of her decoding of the filmic "cipher", and therefore neglects the interpretative process preceding it. One possible assumption would be that the conceptual result attained through interaction with either medium will have negligible differences regarding the assessment of narratological aspects, but Stam, for one, does not make this assumption, so not even this can be taken for granted. However, this naturally does not mean that the *processes* leading up to said result must share the same similarity. The corporeality of the performers is palpable – as opposed to that of the actants, which is merely alluded to verbally – to such a degree that one can question the very possibility *not* to perceive them

as real. Exaggerated and somewhat dubious examples from cinema's infancy of people rushing from the screen to avoid being crushed by a train arriving at a station still offer a good illustration of how one cannot "unsee" the images on the screen in a way seemingly without equivalence in literature, as the characters on-screen will be perceived as entities with an extension in space, even though the spectator knows that this is merely an illusion.

One could object that, once a person is literate, it is likewise impossible for her to "unread" a word, but this objection does not hold up. The automatic access to the meaning of a written word is not equivalent to the automatic perception of an iconic semiotic unit (that is, an image, a picture), because reading written text is the *next* step in the interaction with it, the first being simply perceiving it, just as one perceives the performers on-screen; to *look* at a written text is to *perceive* it, to *read* it is to decode it. Following from this is that the corporeality of the actants seems to be more conceptual, as it has to be understood by a competent reader, whereas that of the performers is indeed more perceptual, easily seen by the spectator. The only reason why the spectator would *not* perceive the spatiality on-screen would be if she would completely fail to identify what the images are supposed to portray, but in *Reservoir Dogs* performers are so easily identified – as human beings, if nothing else – that a spectator unable to recognize what they are supposed to be would have to lack so much competence that she would not be a representative example. She would hardly be a realistic example, as only the most extraordinary circumstances would prevent a person from learning how to recognize another human being. This means that the corporeality of the actants is not as easily accessed as that of the performers, as the latter almost seems to be an innate skill, and the former requires the competency to decode lexical, scriptory semiotic units, a skill that, conversely, is not acquired automatically, but requires education and practice. Should English not be the maternal tongue of the reader, she requires even more education, as her attainments in the English language have to be sufficient to access the *meaning* of the words, as there is, to the best of my knowledge, no official translation of the manuscript in its entirety. The corporeality of the performers is accessed automatically as the result of unconscious processes, but that of the actants demands a comparatively high linguistic competency.

This can in turn be connected to the epistemological model of Popper, as described by Koivumäki. As she explains, the first and the third level (facts/physical objects and abstract) can exist simultaneously in cinema, which is very much in line with what I described above; the spectator sees the performers (perception), and uses the information she receives to assess something about the characers (conception). This supports Leitch's claim that cinema has a conceptual dimension, not only a perceptual one, while it nonetheless emphasizes the difference

between these in the case of manuscripts, as the latter lacks this aspect almost entirely; the reader does not perceive anything in the manuscript, but has to "create" everything herself with its help. Thus, Popper would probably not consider the corporeality of the actants to be an epistemological "fact", as the bodies have no extension in space, which in turn means that they offer no sensory experience – it is the text the reader experiences, not the bodies – and exist solely in the third category, abstraction, as their properties have to be inferred by a competent reader decoding the text.

3.2 "It wasn't that soon" – Temporality

The story of *Reservoir Dogs* is hard to access initially, as the scenes are not in chonological order. Below is the story, outlined chronologically:

1. Larry (alias Mr White) and Joe Cabot meet to discuss an upcoming heist.

2. Vic Vega (alias Mr Blonde) and Joe Cabot meet. Vega is offered to participate in the upcoming heist discussed with Mr White.

3. Freddie Newendike (alias Mr Orange) tells his supervisor that he has received an offer from the criminal Joe Cabot to take part in a heist against a jeweler's store. He memorizes an anecdote given to him by his supervisor, which he later on recounts as were it his own experience, during a meeting with Joe Cabot, Joe's son Nice Guy Eddie and Mr White.

4. Joe Cabot has a meeting with all of the people involved in the heist to explain everything to them, and distributes the colour-coded codenames.

5. Mr Orange receives detailed instructions from Mr White, outside the jeweler's store, on who will do what during the heist.

6. All of the people involved in the heist have breakfast together in a diner.

7. Mr White, Mr Orange and Mr Brown crash with the getaway car. Mr White and Mr Orange steal a new car (Mr Orange is shot in the stomach by its owner) and drive away.

8. Mr Pink flees on foot from the cops, and steals a car.

9. Mr White and Mr Orange drive their new, stolen getaway-car and arrive at their destination; they enter a warehouse, the rendezvous-point. Shortly thereafter, Mr Pink enters too. He and Mr White try to figure out who could be working undercover.

10. The discussion between Mr White and Pink gets more intense, they end up fighting. Mr

Blonde enters the warehouse. The three men have a vivid discussion. Mr Blonde shows the men that he has a policeman tied up in is trunk.

11. Mr White, Mr Pink and Mr Blonde beat up a policeman that Mr Blonde has caught. Nice Guy Eddie arrives, and leaves with Mr White and Mr Pink to hide some of the getaway cars outside of the warehouse. Mr Blonde proceeds to torture the policeman, but is shot by Mr Orange.

12. Nice Guy Eddie, Mr White and Mr Pink return. Mr Orange tries to lie about what happened. Joe Cabot arrives and exposes Mr Orange. Joe Cabot, Nice Guy Eddie and Mr White have a short shootout that only Mr White survives. Mr Orange confesses that he is an undercover cop. The police enter the warehouse. Mr White shoots Mr Orange, and is shot himself by the police.

In the screenplay/movie, the events are presented in the following order:

6, 9, 8, 9 (continued), 1, 10, 2, 11, 3, 4, 5, 7, 12

3.2.1 Temporal discrepancy between reader and text

Reservoir Dogs is unconventional in the way it structures the events temporally, but the temporality of the film is not restricted to the structure of the narrative, it also encompasses the characters themselves; naturally, they do not only have an extension in space, but also in time. The very first thing to happen in the movie and the script is that we enter in the beginning of a soliloquy on Madonna's song "Like a Virgin". However, the movie and the script differ somewhat in how they introduce the spectator to the scene. As noted by Chatman, literature has the opportunity to freeze story time in a way without parallel film.[66] This is the very first thing that happens in the script: time is frozen, and we are introduced to all of the characters. As brief as this pause may be, it nonetheless creates a tangible discrepancy between film and script in terms of how they deal with temporality, which in turn influences the access to the characters in each medium. The script does not elaborate on who these people are, but merely provides their names, but this is still a huge decrease in the distance between the reader and the actants. It means that we as readers are, if only temporarily and for this occasion only, placed outside of the narrative's spatiotemporality, as we occupy neither space nor time within the story, merely observing the actants from afar, until the initial description reaches its end and the story can commence.

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66 Chatman, 128

But then again, is time really frozen? As Price notes, screenplays depart from the prosaic convention of narration in past tense, and *Reservoir Dogs* is no exception to this rule. He says that the narration of conventional prose draws attention to itself due to its use of past tense, acting as a comment on past events.[67] If written in past tense, a narrative may seem more detached from the reader, frozen in time, or maybe even atemporal. The "classic" narratological idea, mentioned by Chatman, is that a narrative is a text organisation, one that does not necessarily have to be endowed with temporal extension, but can be seen as an atemporal structure. However, the present tense of a screenplay does not seem to turn the narration into an aperture into a narrative in the same way as conventional prose. Price writes that the tense together with the structure of brief episodes following one another conceals the gap between discourse and story. This, I would argue, is the very strength of screenplays, and a source of their aesthetic value, once disregarding that they may be used as "instruction booklets" in the shooting of the film. The present tense seems to subvert the descriptive and frozen nature, or at least the reader's perception of it. The reader no longer gathers information about the background to the story that she is about to be told, she *enters* it right from the start. There does not seem to be any background, she is flung into the enrolling events immediately, in a kind of *in medias res*. Price – referring to David Bordwell – claims that Sergei Eisenstein's films have the quality of a performance of a "prior" story that is staged before the audience by an unknown creator, and – referring to Sternberg – that the screenplay has access to an impersonal narrative "voice".[68] The similarity between Sternberg's impersonal voice and the fictional and extrafictional voices of Igelström is striking in this aspect. This is in line with Koivumäki's statement – citing Panofsky – that the spectator experiences the screenplay indirectly, through the director's interpretation, as it means that the reader conversely *has* a more direct experience of the elements that Koivumäki argues have their origin in the screenplay text, such as thoughts, conceptions and themes. The film gives the impression of staging a story that exists prior to it, but the screenplay, which *is* that very story, should lack this quality. This means that the temporal discrepancy between the story and the narration thereof becomes less tangible; the spectator gets the impression that there is a story that exists prior to the film, but the reader gets the impression that the screenplay *is* the story.

However, Price himself brings up a problematic aspect of the screenplay's temporality on which he does not elaborate enough. Price emphasizes the anticipation with which the screenplay is imbued, the knowledge that the script speaks of things *to come*, as they are to be realized in a film. A reader, who is aware of the alleged function of the screenplay, will be likely to think of the

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67 Price, 117-8
68 Bordwell, David, *Narration in the fiction film*, Methuen, London, 1985 cited in Price, 124

screenplay in opposite terms of conventional prose, not as narrating what has come to pass, but what is about to come, which displaces the temporality of the actants and introduces the same discrepancy as one finds in the movie (between the characters and the actors/performers), as the narration takes place in another time than the events of which it speaks. Regardless of how Tarantino chooses to describe events, either by referring to camera-movement or using the "we-formulations" defended by Igelström, the technical dimension of the screenplay will not be forgotten, as it remains an instruction on what is about to come, a "premonatory" document.

Price states that parataxis in a screenplay renders the narration more palpable than in conventional literature. He claims that the lack of conjunctions, connecting the events, usually suppresses the narration, making the reader neglect the existence of the directorial presence that structures the sequences, as opposed to screenplays where this structure alone acts as a reminder of this very presence.[69] This is probably one of the reasons why Price comes to the conclusion that a screenplay creates an anticipation of what has yet to come, as opposed to novels, where the events are presumed to already have taken place.[70] With this in mind, one could see the script as a *description* of the narrative instead of a representation of it; its description of music, visual events and the connection between the two, makes the reader painfully aware of how it does not claim to be neither an original version that *constitutes* the narrative – similar to what is implied by Stam's theory – nor a manifestation of a narrative that ontologically transcends it – as implied by narratological theories outlined by Chatman – but simply a *retelling* of a narrative of which it cannot give an adequate representation. This all makes it hard to defend the manuscript as an independent representation of the story, as it so clearly dissociates between the representation and itself.

I would however like to argue that this is yet another instant of the fallacious application of intention, an exaggerated focus on *context* instead of pure *text*: once the dimension of intentionality is ignored, and the screenplay is read as an independent work, the present tense becomes even more tangible in the reading, especially in combination with parataxis; we are frequently told that we *see* events playing out, not that we *will* see them, so the textual content does not itself explicitly allude to a future performance, even though some of the technical descriptions do arguably act as *implicit* reminders. Price himself mentions (as noted earlier) that the technical nature of the screenplay is soon ignored by the reader, why should this aspect be any different? If the reader is capable of forgetting about the technical aspect of camera-movement and similar instructions on how to stage the film, why should the *intention* be any different, especially seeing how it is a dimension not even

69 Price, 122-3
70 Ibid., 118

present in the text itself but merely implied as an extratextual property, which must be acquired outside of the text? The parataxis is a textual property, but its *raison d'être* (the intention behind it) is an extratextual property which is not necessarily within the text, but in the context in which the screenplay is usually read by, for instance, producers and inverstors; once this intention is ignored, the parataxis in a screenplay should have very same effect as in conventional literature. If one agrees with Price that parataxis suppresses the narrator in novels, the literary style of Tarantino should likewise suppress the perceivable gap between story time and reading time, not as much fusing them as rendering the discrepancy between them irrelevant, imperceptible to the reader. There is naturally no ontological implication of this, but a pertinent phenomenological one: the reader forgets about the temporal displacement of the events described in the script, depending on whether one sees it as documentation of what has already come to pass, or as an instruction of what has yet to come, and gets the impression that they play out as she reads them.

3.2.2 "Say the fucking words" – The dialogue

Another temporal aspect of *Reservoir Dogs,* shared by the script and the film, is the dialogue, which endows the characters with an extension in time in a way that their corporeality does not. Tarantino's dialogues are always memorable, and *Reservoir Dogs* is no exception: long passages are dedicated to topics that seem incidental to the narrative, while others more or less constitute it; the initial explanation of the true meaning of *Like a Virgin* has no impact on what happens later, whereas the discussions in the warehouse reveal the most of what happened during the robbery we never get to witness.

Minimalism plays a crucial part in Tarantino's script, and this minimalism is also tangible in the dialogue. Leitch argues that one difference between theater and film is that in the former, one can always alter the way the line is delivered in each performance of the play, whereas in a movie, there is only one, final delivery of each line.[71] I would like to take this argument even further, as the plasticity of the manner in which the line is delivered is not restricted to the theatre play, but rather resides in the literary medium itself, regardless of what purpose it is supposed to have. In a novel, theatre play or screenplay, the lines uttered by the characters can be imagined to be delivered in many different ways by just as many different readers. This means that the dialogue is not "frozen" in time in literature, it is forever stuck in an undecided form that, similar to some subatomic particles, is not forced into a specific state until it is "observed" (that is, read) by the reader. The content of the dialogue is fixed, but the way it is delivered is "decided" by the reader. The process of interpretation entails that a part of its creation takes place during the reading, yet another factor

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71 Leitch, 153-4

that, if only ostensibly, increases the temporal proximity of the reader and the script, as opposed to the spectator, who instead has to observe a dialogue that took place before the screening, especially if one takes into account Bordwell's claim that it may be seen as the performance of a "prior" story.[72]

Here one could object by considering Leitch's estimation, not of the decision to specify or withhold the thoughts of a character, but of the fullness and subtlety of actions and thoughts specified or inferred, as well as his assertion that the abundance of visual information is, contrary to popular belief, *not* detrimental to the imagination of the spectator.[73] This should apply to dialogue as well: it may be more "specific" when delivered by the performers in the sense that the specified gestures, posture, intonation etc. all give indications on how the line is to be interpreted, but this does not automatically make them any less polysemic in relation to the screenplay, and require no less participation from the spectator than the screenplay does from the reader. One can certainly object to Leitch's assertion of the static nature of the lines in the movie, this quality should not be exaggerated. It is true that after the post-production stage, the lines are "frozen", but different aspects of the performance can work together to make the meaning *less* obvious, increasing the demand for audience participation in the decoding of the true meaning of the dialogue. As Stam notes, movies possess a larger quantity of extraverbal elements, which cooperate to convey information to the spectator.[74] One probably should not see mere quantity as a cause of either increase or decrease in clarity; neither the film nor the script can, as a principle, be deemed more accurate in their portrayal of different characters (accurate in the sense that the portrayal is detailed and precise). Neither of them seems to be restricted in the potential complexity of its characters, even if the portrayals *per se* may differ in this aspect. The screenplay of *Reservoir Dogs* does not include a lot of explicit information on how each actant moves and talks, whereas the actors inevitably add this information, but that only seems to alter the quantity of variables connected to the recipient's interpretation of the characters, not the amount of possible *assessments* of them. These variables are not analyzed individually, apart from each other, but are seen with a holistic perspective, as the viewer tries to combine them into a coherent image, and the dialectics of these factors may not be ignored in favor of a reductionism that neglects this complexity; the specificity of the movie does not in and of itself equal a more narrow collection of interpretations. This means that the spectator is just as participating as the reader when it comes to interpretation of the dialogue, which could lead one to believe that, if the recipients of both media are active participants

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72 Bordwell, 15
73 Leitch, 159-161
74 Stam, 19-21

in the creation of meaning, the temporal distance should be similar in both cases.

At the same time one must not overestimate the liberty of literature. It, too, is based on a text with certain indications of how each line should be delivered – even if none of them are explicitly outlined by the writer – and while the reader can take some liberties, not all deviations from the norm would be seen as plausible; she will most likely not imagine that an actant is laughing with joy while saying something that clearly expresses indifference, for instance. In the screenplay of *Reservoir Dogs,* most of the lines lack indications of how they are later on supposed to be delivered by the actor, which leaves the reader ignorant of what exactly the actant means by what he says. When Mr Pink takes back what he said about killing Mr Blonde, does he do so because Mr Blonde is really the only man he can trust not to be the infiltrator, or is he only trying to convince Mr Blonde, an obvious psychopath, that he changed his mind, now that Mr Blonde is present and poses an even bigger potential threat than the still unknown mole? The script does not reveal this, as there is no indication of how Mr Pink says this. Is he nervous that he will be exposed as a coward who sides with anyone currently posing as a threat, or is he calm, assured that at least Mr Blonde is not an ally to the police? Tarantino includes good reasons to believe both of these in the script. Likewise, when Mr White tries to console Mr Orange in the getaway car, there is a limited amount of ways that this line can be delivered, even in theory. When reading it, one might easily imagine him to sound stressed, frustrated, absent-minded and, too concentrated on driving, lacking conviction etc., but the parental "singing" of Harvey Keitel in the movie is not an implausible interpretation. Though singing may be an index of mirth, in this context it comes off as more desperate and faked, conveying the desperation of Mr White in this situation. Keitel's acting cannot radically change the scene, as the context and character severely limit his possibilities, as well as the way the lines are phrased.

One can also argue that the literary style of the screenplay dialogue already says a lot about how the actant is to be imagined by the reader and thus also how she should be portrayed by an actor. Igelström explains that the fictional voice of a screenplay guides the reader's visualization of a scene, without describing explicitly how things are supposed to look.[75] The same theory could most likely be applied on dialogue, and the way one is "supposed" to imagine the enunciation of it. One only has to compare the lines of different characters to see that this is likely to be the case. When Mr White and Pink talk to each other in the warehouse, the contrasts in their dialogue paint a comparatively detailed image of their respective personality. Mr White's lines are often brief and terse, whereas Mr Pink is garrulous: he has long lines where some words are repeated in several

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75 Igelström, 38-9

phrases, with some sentences resembling one another in terms of structure, and he makes short digressions on topics not entirely relevant to his point, while at the same time systematically exploring different possible explanations to his problem. This could easily be interpreted as a sign of him being an overall nervous, slightly neurotic and energetic person, probably talking quite fast, if one adheres to the principle that each page represents about a minute in the finished film and his lines thus have to be "compressed" in the movie to allow for them to fit in the allotted time frame. In Mr Pink's case, this is hinted already in the diner, where Mr Pink says that he wants six refills of his cup of coffee, and Nice Guy Eddie says that another cup of coffee is the last thing he needs. In contrast, Mr White's lines are short and more to the point, where the few subordinate clauses that can be found – even his sentences tend to be short – are used to elaborate on the point he is trying to make, as opposed to Mr Pink's deviations from the topic at hand. The difference between his and Mr Pink's lines probably also say something about the temporal aspect of Mr White's dialogue. As he is presented as a contrast to Mr Pink, and since all the dialogue on one page should occupy about a minute in the finished film, it is easy to imagine (while reading) that he is speaking in a slower pace than Mr Pink. Thus, the dialogue turns out to be a complex element that reveals a lot about the actants' and performers' temporality.

There is an obvious flaw with this argument: all kinds of participation of the recipient do not in themselves alter the temporal distance, as deciphering content is not the same as creating it, which one realizes by reading Stam. He explains that readers and spectators approach some of the content from different "directions": a reader *constructs his own image* with the help of the verbal descriptions, whereas the spectator *structures and names objects* pictured in the film. As guiding as the text may be, it is nonetheless "undecided" in its natural state, before the reader's engagement. All of the factors that have to be decoded in the film (intonation, posture, gestures etc.) are ontologically different from those in the screenplay, seeing how they belong to Popper's first world of knowledge (i.e. fact). These may all be *indicated* in the screenplay, but this is not to say that they are actually *there* prior to the reading of it. The movie, on the other hand, includes all these factors, and the decoding of them is yet another step in the intepretative process of the spectator; she does not have to conjure them up, only ascertain their meaning. As Stam states, the reader constructs her own image, the spectator structures and names the objects already present in the image. Even though not any kind of content will fit in the gaps of the screenplay, they remain gaps that have to be filled in, and this is ultimately done by the reader; in the movie they have already been filled in by the film crew. The temporal proximity between the reader and the screenplay's story – and therefore, indirectly its actants – remains smaller than that between the spectator and the film's story

– and indirectly its performers – as the former is created in cooperation with the reader and the latter is merely interpreted.

3.2.3 "Can you believe the songs they been playin'?" – The music

Another temporal aspect related to the auditive aspects of the narrative is the music: it, just like the dialogue, endows the characters with temporality, as their actions are accompanied by it. The music, as Stam says, plays a significant part in movies, but he does not stress enough the impact of actually *hearing* it during the screening, synchronized with the images; he is focusing more on the co-existence of image and sound, not enough on what effects they create when only described, in literature.[76] If Stam is right in this assumption, people who have heard "Stuck in the middle with you", who may even know it by heart, will most likely not experience the infamous torture scene in the same way when they read about it and have nothing but their own memories to aid them in their visualisation. Furthermore, it seems unlikely that they manage to recall the melody and lyrics of the song – and construct an image of how this is to be synchronized with the events – while trying to be immersed in the script. Naturally, every reader sufficiently acquainted with the song could match images and sound in the way that pleases them the most, thanks once more to the minimalism of the script, but the effect is still different, as explained by Stam. Even if all details are specified by the film, there is still a difference between *reading* about them and actually *seeing* and *hearing* them for oneself, and this very much applies in *Reservoir Dogs* even more than one may think when reading Stam. First of all, as Stam mentions himself, the synchronicity of the film has no parallel in the text. The effect of this is gargantuan, but Stam does not seem to realize this himself, though it becomes evident when one contrasts him with Chatman, and his explanation of how literature can single out properties and convey them one at a time. Here, Chatman realizes the same thing about literature as Stam does about film, and they implicitly and explicitly point out medium specific restrictions on temporal representation of specific properties. Stam says that movies are polysemic thanks to their multiplication of registers, but this stresses the weakness of the screenplay, which can never do this. Chatman speaks of the singular register of literature as were it only an advantage, and as shown above it is to *Reservoir Dogs'* advantage that Tarantino highlights certain spatial aspects as he pleases, but when it comes to temporal ones, the literary medium is less advantageous.

One of the most salient problems with Tarantino's use of music is his poor attempt at synchronization. One could have imagined other solutions to this problem, for instance that he writes the lyrics of the song next to the events they are supposed to accompany, but this will, as already stated above, not create the same impact as when one actually *hears* the music for oneself

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76 Stam, 18-22

while simultaneously *seeing* the events described. The same problem of retaining the effect of a continuous sound is not restricted to the domain of music, it is just as prevalent in the first warehouse-section, where Mr Orange is said to be moaning in the background throughout the discussion of Messrs White and Pink: it is mentioned once in the script, after which the reader is expected to keep this in mind herself, whereas the movie can easily combine these two auditive elements. Tarantino's clumsy attempts at synchronization of visual and auditive elements in the screenplay could very well be thought of as the kind of reminder of artificiality criticized by Igelström, and here Price's objection is less relevant – that is, his claim that one soon disregards technical aspects after reading some pages of the script – as the artificiality seems to be too palpable to be ignored. The audiovisuality is invoked to a degree that lacks any equivalence in a purely verbal medium. Here one may object with Stam's claim that there is no transferable "core" that passes between media but only an interpretative consensus, which should make it possible for two interpretative communities to reach the exact same interpretation of the movie and screenplay respectively, regardless of their differences. In this case, the temporal discrepancy between music and events should not be a problem, as the temporal anteriority of the song in the reading will not be retained in the reader's own conception (or her abstraction, if one wishes) of the narrative; the song is perceived first, because it appears first in the text, but the reader will nonetheless imagine it and the events to play out concurrently, not unlike how sound and light are always experienced as simultaneous, even though they do not reach the eye and the ear at the same time. Such a theory would do away with the tangible juxtaposition of song and action in the screenplay, but it has obvious problems. First of all, as mentioned above, Stam concedes that the experience of watching a movie will inevitably differ from reading about the very same event depicted, which in turn should probably lead to different interpretations. As argued above, the content and inherent structure of the text will inevitably shape the reader's interpretation, at least to a certain degree; anything else would be sheer relativism, neglecting the text's function in the context, ascribing the creation of the story to the reader herself, which would in turn render the text itself superfluous.

Another problem with the songs on the soundtrack is that they share the same phenomenological properties of those discussed early on in the diner: their defining auditive qualities are eliminated and replaced with a brief verbal allusion to them, differing only in textual content; the song is in this context a rather superficial element, not adding that much to the reader's experience, but all the more to that of the spectator. The songs in the script will inevitably fail to co-exist with the events they are supposed to accompany. Tarantino is forced to *tell* the reader about what song is supposed to play in the background before the events commence, so it will always be

temporally anterior to the events themselves, at least from the perspective of the reader, who first reads about the song, later about the events, whereas both of these "come into existence" at the same time in the movie. The temporal ontology of songs and events respectively will thus inevitably differ in the manuscript, but not in the movie. Nor is there any phenomenological difference between diegetic and non-diegetic music, as illustrated when the three men beat up the policeman, while Nice Guy Eddie is driving to the warehouse.[77] Tarantino writes explicitly that the song "Love Grows Where My Rosemary Goes" plays on Eddie's radio, but is still heard on the soundtrack during the beating, meaning that the song changes from diegetic to non-diegetic, back and forth, as we cut from one place to another.[78] In the movie, one clearly hears and sees the difference, as the sound quality indicates that it is played on a radio in one shot but is non-diegetic in another (the quality is better and there is no visible source from which the song can be emitted); the discrepancy between diegetic and non-diegetic music will in turn influence how the spectator perceives the performers, but not necessarily how the reader perceives the actants. Although the music is not an intrinsic property of the actants themselves, it nonetheless conveys something about them, if only indirectly, even when the songs are mentioned instead of being performed (as they are in the movie), as the diegetic music is made out to be chosen by the character listening to it (Eddie chooses to listen to up-beat pop-music even during such a stressful moment) whereas the non-diegetic is chosen by the director (the joyful tone of the music creates a stark contrast with the assault taking place before our eyes). The result of all this is not only a temporal displacement of the songs (in the script they only "take place" before the events they are supposed to accompany, as that is the only time they are mentioned), but also a spatial one: the non-diegetic music cannot be said to have extension in space, because there is no source to emit it in the visible space, as neither the space nor the source are visible, and is therefore a temporal but a-spatial phenomenon. In the screenplay, the non-diegetic music shares the same ontological sphere as the diegetic one. Both of them probably pertain to Popper's third epistemological world, abstraction (as explained by Koivumäki), as they are beyond the first two spheres, fact and experience. Why they do not belong to the first sphere should be obvious: the songs do not, from a strict point of view, actually appear in the screenplay (as there is no sound emitted) but are merely alluded to. Why they cannot be placed in the second sphere is slightly more complicated. One could argue that reading about the songs still

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77 Diegetic music: Music that belongs to the world of the performers, that is emitted from a a visible or implied source, such as a radio, a stereo or any other source that has a physical extension in the cinematic world. This music can (potentially) be heard by the performers.
    Non-diegetic music: Music that is audible to the spectator but inaudible to the performers, for instance a leitmotif, or music playing over the credits. This music has no source within the world of the performers.
78 The song played in the movie is another one, but which particular song that is played is irrelevant, what is important is that it appears in a different manner to the reader and the spectator respectively.

pertains to E-reality – after all, reading about the songs constitutes a kind of experience – but there is still no experience of the songs *per se*, only of a text referring to them, and this is quite different from actually *hearing* them, as claimed by Stam. The distinction between these two kinds of music is lost, meaning that the screenplay fails to adequately illustrate the temporal correlation between the diegetic music and the events. The song played on the radio is a part of the diegetic world, and the passage of time in the narrative is equivalent to the time of the performers as well as the songs; two minutes in their lives always pass in the same pace as two minutes of a diegetic song. A non-diegetic song lacks this correlation, as illustrated in the scene following the breakfast in the diner, where the song "Little Green Bag" is played from beginning almost until the end, even though the events portrayed take much less time than the approximately two minutes we hear of the song; the performers are walking in slow-motion, which takes about two minutes for the spectator to observe, but it obviously occupies less of the diegetic time. Thus the reader will fail to ascertain this temporal correlation.

3.2.4 Beyond crime and space – the sluglines

In his screenplay, Tarantino utilizes a verbal dimension of the temporality (as well as spatiality, one might argue) that influences the perception of temporality, even though it is beyond the capacity of audiovisual portrayal, namely the sluglines. Igelström thinks that the sluglines, in their capacity of what she calls an "extrafictional voice", acts as reminders of the artificial nature of the screenplay, which hampers immersion and increases the distance between the reader and the story.[79] Though Price disagrees somewhat on what effects they have on the reader's immersion, he concedes that the structure and format is motivated by *industrial* reasons.[80] This seems to imply that aesthetic reasons are precluded, even though Price does not explicitly state this to be the case. I would on the other hand say that although a slugline might act as a kind of rupture in the textual flow, momentarily bringing the reader to a halt before the story may continue, this can still be used to establish a desired mood, an aspect that seems to be neglected by both Igelström and Price. When Mr Blonde first enters the warehouse, there is a slugline in the middle of the scene that repeats the same information given earlier – we are still on the inside of the warehouse, and no time has passed – with the addition of camera instructions (closeup on Mr Blonde). This may seem redundant. The time and place being the same, Tarantino could have omitted this superfluous information and restricted it to a specification of framing (i.e. a closeup), but it arguably achieves an effect beyond the one in the movie. There, the camera zooms out until Mr Blonde enters the frame, after which it

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79 Igelström, 37-8, 43
80 Price, 113

cuts to an image of him only, but the visual effect of a cut does not create the same conceptual effect as the slugline does. The difference lies not in the degree of the effect created, it is more fundamental than that; the film is full of cuts in the middle of scenes and this one should not elicit any other reaction than the others. Temporally, the shot before and after the cut are interwined, they are two parts of the same temporal sequence. The insertion of a slugline, on the contrary, does indeed create some kind of rupture when it appears in the middle of a scene, marking the end of one sequence and the beginning of another, regardless of their temporal and spatial proximity; Mr Blonde's entrance is placed in juxtaposition with the previous sequence even though it could just as well have been incorporated into it (and indeed is, in the movie). One cannot avoid but getting the impression that the following passage and the preceding one are divided temporally by Tarantino (and, arguably, thematically), but he does not accomplish the same division in the movie. On the contrary, Mr Blonde's entrance is surprisingly smooth, brought about by a slow zoom-out until the frame is large enough to include him as well. Even the cut soon afterwards does little to turn this into a new thematic unit; it seems like a natural continuation, it cannot mimic the rupture in the text.

There is another example in this scene of how Tarantino creates an ostensible rupture in the middle of a scene in a fundamentally different way than he does in the movie. When Mr Blonde is just about to set fire to the cop he is shot by Mr Orange. The sudden loud noise and the cut (not a pan, as mentioned in the script) to Mr Orange interrupts the slow, smooth pace of the torture scene and stops it with no previous warning. In the script, the same effect cannot be attained with the sudden sound marking the commencement of a new sequence, but Tarantino manages to create this effect all the same, without using a slugline as seen above. As noted by Price, the screenplay has the quality of dynamic movement in time thanks to its focus on events and their temporal sequence (mostly human activity) in combination with instructions on camera movement. Here, Tarantino does just that, focuses on human activity and combines it with camera movement. Just as Mr Blonde is about to set the cop on fire, the scene description is cut mid-sentence, and continues on the next line.

> *He moves the match up to the cop . . .*
>
> *. . . When a bullet explodes in Mr Blonde's chest.*
>
> *The handheld camera whips to the right and we see the bloody Mr Orange firing his gun.*[81]

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81 Tarantino, 63

Tarantino uses an ellipsis and a line break in the middle of the scene description, and thus interrupts the action in the same way as he does the sentence, and alters the temporal perception of the reader; this is something that happens *suddenly,* it is unexpected and shocking; it is temporally dissociated from the events preceding it. Although Igelström might claim that the word "camera" acts as an obstruction between reader and story, I would argue that this very well conveys the sudden movement in time that is the murder of Mr Blonde. Had Tarantino only written that we see Mr Orange fire, the events would have been connected temporally, but not spatially. As Price explains, it is the *combination* of report mode (events and their temporal sequence) and mode of descriptions (camera movement, among other things) that gives the screenplay its characteristic quality of movement through time, and this is a good example of that. Thanks to the description that the camera *whips* to the right, there is a sense of sudden movement of our field of vision as we observe the scene play out, as the velocity of the camera extends to include not only the spatiality but also temporality, in a relation where they almost seem to reinforce each other reciprocally: things move fast through space, and therefore also through time, they happen all of a sudden and at a fast pace.

In the first case discussed above, the slugline served to create a certain rupture within a sequence, which does not contradict what Igelström says, even if it supplements it. There may be some truth to her claim, but Igelström seems too certain about the inevitable effect of sluglines, and as Price notes, one should be able to ignore the technical nature of this after a while. Although both have valid points, the truth probably lies somewhere in between. Tarantino displays a competent use of sluglines later on, during the torture scene, that illustrates how he can easily use them to create a rupture if he so wishes (as seen above), but that he can easily evade this when necessary. The torture scene is one long continuous sequence, but the sluglines wedged into the pages could at first give the impression that the text should be experienced as quite disrupted and temporally divided by the reader. In what is one continuous moving shot in the film, Mr Blonde leaves the building to fetch some gasoline in his car, but in the scipt, the sluglines interrupt the flow. Tarantino manages to compensate for this with a scene description that starts above one slugline and finishes beneath it, "paused" with the use of periods of ellipsis:

He walks back inside the warehouse . . .

INT. WAREHOUSE – DAY

. . . carrying the can of gas.[82]

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82 Tarantino, 63

The broken sentence flows naturally from one line to the other without a rough interruption, the sequence still plays out as continuous, even in the written text. Besides, even though Tarantino is forced to adapt to the format of the manuscript, he successfully manages to abridge sluglines, and should thus decrease the distance entailed by them according to Igelström. After the flashback to Mr White's meeting with Joe, the scene-heading simply states "BACK TO THE GARAGE",[83] without the specific details usually included (exterior/interior, day/night). Tarantino does something similar this later on, when he intersperses the beating of the policeman with Nice Guy Eddie's car ride to the warehouse. In the very first slugline, there is extensive information on Eddie's location, that we are inside his car, that the car is moving, and that it is daytime. When we cut back to him the first time this is reduced to "BACK TO NICE GUY EDDIE", and the last time it is abridged even more to "EDDIE".[84] Not only does this aid immersion, as the technical jargon of the slugline is removed and the slugline itself becomes shorter, it also impacts the reader's perception of the pace of the scene. In the movie, every transition between the warehouse and Eddie's car is a simple cut, no different from any other in the movie. In the screenplay, on the other hand, the sluglines are reduced at each transition, which changes their nature somewhat, as they require less time to read. We know that Eddie is furious, trying to figure out what happened, and that his arrival is a dramatic change in the story (it is his first appearance after the failed heist). Each time we cut to him he is a little closer to his destination, and the dramatic mood seems to increase in inverse proportion to the length of the scene-headings: the shorter they get, the closer he is, and the closer he is, the more dramatic the scene becomes, as the scene-headings occupy less and less time, which makes the transitions seem to increase in speed in the script in a way they do not in the movie.

3.2.5 "You better start talkin' to us, asshole" – The sound of silence

The script also seems more apt at using sound during the first encounter with Mr Blonde, in the sense that the literary medium seems to offer a wider variety of ways of expressing one kind of void, or lack, and what this does to the mood, in a way similar to that of the cuts to Nice Guy Eddie driving his car. Mr Blonde remains taciturn during Mr White's and Mr Pink's inquiry, but Tarantino describes this in different ways in the text: first he writes "*Mr Blonde doesn't answer*", but this is later changed to "*Silence from Mr Blonde*", which is finally substituted for "*Silence*".[85] Price discusses literary techniques of Tarantino in *Pulp Fiction*, and the example he mentions is similar to this one in principal, even though the method may seem reverse in practice: in *Pulp Fiction,* there is

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83 Tarantino, 33
84 Ibid., 54
85 Ibid., 41

a suprisingly long and disproportionate dialogue between gangsters about an, in comparison, frivolous topic (hamburgers), the frivolous nature of which generates a sense of threat.[86] Here, everything seems to be reversed: the topic is on the contrary most relevant (the two men ask how Mr Blonde got away from the cops and what happened to Mr Blue), and so the text is not overly long, but quite proportionate to the threat that slowly escalates, as illustrated by the increased brevity of the scene-descriptions on Mr Blonde's silence. In this passage, Tarantino illustrates temporal aspects of a threatening silence, just as his dialogue encompassed the temporal aspect of sound: silence, in its capacity of *lack* of sound, nevertheless requires temporal extension in order to exist. While an equivalent to the length can easily be created in film by adjusting the length of each moment of silence, it is still debatable whether this would actually engender equivalent effects.

The differences between "Mr Blonde doesn't answer" and "Silence from Mr Blonde" are many and important: the switch from grammatical activity to passivity on Mr Blonde's part, despite his role as the logical subject in both sentences; the introduction of silence as grammatical subject in the second sentence, depriving Mr Blonde of this position; the introduction of an adverb in the second sentence; the verb present in the first sentence but absent in the second; the inclusion of a contraction ("doesn't" instead of "does not"); the complete removal of any formal subject and the reduction into a single noun in the last sentence. All of these differences should alter the comprehension of the reader of the script in a way that is beyond the audiovisual means of expression of the film. Both the script and the film retain the mystery of Mr Blonde and his erratic nature, but the way leading to that result seems quite different in both versions, and the screenplay's description includes a dimension of Mr Blonde's temporal extension somewhat lost in the film: he occupies the temporal space, but fills it with a void, an inagency, that is stretched along the timeline of the scene as he is replaced by the silence as the subject of the sentence.

A similar illustration of lack or negation can be found in the opening scene, though without the same linguistic aspect, when Mr Pink does not tip. After the in-depth analysis of two pop-songs, the men contribute with a dollar each, but Mr Pink refuses to tip. In the scene text it is clearly stated that "Everybody whips out a buck, and throws it on the table. Everybody, that is, except Mr Pink."[87] In the movie, the same character refuses to contribute, but this is conveyed somewhat differently. First of all, we do not know his name yet, so the sole means of identification is his appearance. Second of all, in order to emphasize his inaction in this scene, there is a close-up on him for a couple of seconds, showing how he is simply waiting for the others to finish the gathering of money, looking slightly to the side, avoiding to look in the direction of the camera, as if trying to

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86 Price, 147-8
87 Tarantino, 8

avoid its gaze. In the literary format of the script, Tarantino has the possibility to say that Mr Pink does *not* tip, a kind of inaction that nonetheless occupies temporal "space", but it is impossible for him to convey this kind of negation in the film. Mr Pink's inactivity, similar to Mr Blonde's silence, requires an extension in time so as not to be deprived entirely of its ontology; if not, it would cease to be the kind of positive, tangible lack that it is, and turn into a lack *tout court*. The way Tarantino conveys Mr Pink's inactivity in the script attributes it (the inactivity) with a positive extension which in turn endows Mr Pink with a certain property or quality, in this case: that of being egoistic, or at least having a set of unconventional principles. (The seemingly frivolous discussion about tips actually reveals a lot about Mr Pink later on, when he turns out to be the most rational person, trying to be analytical instead of acting out of instinct and/or emotions.) Instead of showing that Mr Pink does *not* do something, the movie is forced to show that he chooses to do *something else*. Instead of tipping, he scratches his chin and looks away. He does X instead of Y, temporality is ascribed to one action instead of another on order to convey inaction on Mr Pink's part, whereas in literature, the temporality is ascribed to inaction *per se:* the negativity of his act can be conveyed as a positive negativity, something he actively does.

4. Conclusion

In this thesis, I have looked at Quentin Tarantino's screenplay *Reservoir Dogs* and how his literary style conveys temporality and spatiality in relation to the characters. I have compared the screenplay with the movie based upon it, in order to see how the reader's perception is crystallized and sometimes altered when the story is transferred from one medium to another, in order to see what general conclusions one can draw from this.

Throughout my analysis I have shown that Tarantino, thanks to screenplay conventions, can ascribe spatial extension in the narrative to the reader, meaning that she has a spatial relation to the actants, as opposed to conventional literature, where the reader usually possesses a "generalized" perspective, or shares the perspective of one of the characters in the book. In movies, the spectator will inevitably be placed "within" the narrative space, as the camera has to take a position in it, in a way that usually lacks any equivalence in the literary text on which it is based. Tarantino's screenplay reveals that the screenplay author has the possibility of ascribing spatiality to the reader in the same way that the film does to the spectator, which entails smaller divergences when the story is transferred from a text to a film. Contrary to what is implied by some theoreticians, the technical jargon used to convey this will influence the visualization of *all* readers of the screenplay, not only the film crew. This means that allusions to the camera or phrases like "we see" open up for more possibilities for an author when guiding the reader's visualization, which allows him to minimize the distance between the reader and the characters portrayed, especially since phrases like "we see" allow for less vicarious a position than references to the camera. The author is still able to maintain the figurative distance to the actants in the text, by establishing a spatial distance when including the reader in the narrative space. This also creates shocking effects when the reader's space is violated by one of the actants.

Tarantino also shows that the minimalistic nature of screenplays allows the screenplay author to convey specific details pertaining to spatial properties belonging to the reader as well as the actants in a way with no equivalence in the finished film. This shows that the screenplay author can be selective in his communication of certain aspects; for instance, in one scene Tarantino writes that one actant approaches two others, without revealing how these two stand in relation to one another, while yet another remains in the background, something which would be impossible in a film where all people on-screen must adopt a specified spatiality. A screenplay author can thus select properties essential to the reader's visualization of the scene, but leave out details that are not as pertinent. In a text that is constantly trying to guide the reader's visualization, this kind of gap is tangible in a different way than in conventional literature, where, for obvious reasons, not all details

are specified. Tarantino also sometimes uses a colloquial diction to better specify how the characters move about in the space, for instance rendering one character's movement more frantic and less controlled and disciplined by avoiding a "stiff" technical description, instead making use of a less formal phrasing.

As already noted in adaptation studies, recognition of an actor will influence the spectator's perception of him, and I develop this conclusion by applying it on the perception of spatiality. If the spectator recognizes the actor in a movie, the cinematic illusion should be disrupted as the performer is endowed with a spatiality that stretches across several films, provided that the spectator identifies him as a performer from other cinematic instances, or even into the real world, if she knows something about the actor's private life and identifies him as a real person who is not restricted to the world of movies. Tarantino shows that, conversely, the screenplay author is able to confine the actant's spatiality to the screenplay. The corporeality of an actant cannot stretch outside of the screenplay in this way, as no such connection can be established between him and people appearing in other movies and/or in the real world. This also means that the reader does not perceive the actant's spatiality in the same way as she does that of a performer/actor, as the actant's spatiality is a concept that is assessed through decoding the literary text, not a percept automatically perceived as when one watches a movie.

As for temporality, there seems to be a smaller perceived temporal distance between the reader and the narrative, as it has been noted that the present tense used in a screenplay conceals the gap between discourse and story. The screenplay is a comparatively technical document with information on what is about to come in the form of a performance, but contrary to popular belief, this quality is most likely not noticed by the reader, as the intention by the writer is a property not to be found in the text itself. As for the technical instructions, they are only salient initially, but ignored later on by the reader. The screenplay is indeed used in a context where it is seen as an indication of what has yet to come, but the anticipation of a future staging is just that, an *anticipation*, a sentiment originating in the film-maker, not in the text. When reading the screenplay as an independent text, the present tense heightens the sense of temporal immediacy.

The screenplay dialogue is a complex factor, as it arguably lacks a definitive extension in time before the reading; it is, to a certain extent, created by the reader as she reads. One could argue that the movie dialogue is subject to the same act of creation, but there is a fundamental difference between it and screenplay dialogue, as it is forced into a definitive state during the performance, and is thus temporally anterior to the screening of the film. This is not to say that the dialogue is void of qualities before being read, its structure and style indicates in some ways how it is supposed to be

imagined, whether spoken fast and nervously or slowly and calmly, so even though the dialogue could arguably be imagined in any way conceivable, the reader will most likely be guided by the text, which limits the amount of plausible ways the lines can be delivered. This brings the reader closer, temporally, to the screenplay dialogue, as it is partially constructed by her in her encounter with the text.

The music, on the other hand, does not have the same temporal immediacy as the dialogue. It has already been observed in adaptation studies that reading about sound will not be the same as hearing it, and *Reservoir Dogs* is a good illustration of why. Tarantino's inclusion of different songs – and his attempts to utilize them for narratological purposes – shows that songs in a screenplay, and the events they are supposed to accompany, cannot be synchronized; continuous auditive elements are temporally anterior to the events, as they are mentioned before the events and then have to be retained by the reader. Thus, a song is not likely to match the images constructed by the reader in the same way as one played in a movie. This also results in a phenomenological coalescence of the songs, as the difference between diegetic and non-diegetic music cannot be properly illustrated in a literary medium. This seems like a necessity, as the literary medium entirely lacks all possibilities to convey auditive elements as percepts, and is restricted to *referring* to them, rendering their status exclusively conceptual.

On the other hand, Tarantino shows that the screenplay does however offer some possibilities without any equivalent in the film. By using a scene heading (or "slugline"), or a line break and points of ellipsis, it is possible to create an ostensible temporal rupture in the middle of a scene in order to establish a desired mood. The literary format can also be used to override this kind of rupture, through the use of points of ellipsis to minimize the impact of the slugline. By decreasing the length of sluglines in another scene Tarantino illustrates how it is possible to convey the rising tension and the fast pace. With Tarantino's screenplay I have also verified that technical information in combination with a focus on human activity gives the screenplay a quality of dynamic movement in time, for instance how one can use descriptions of fast camera-movement through the cinematic space in order to convey the fast pace of the scene.

With examples from *Reservoir Dogs* I have also shown that the screenplay author can express the temporal qualities of silence by letting this kind of negativity become a positive void in the temporal progression. In a movie this is not possible, and the screenplay author has to substitute *lack* of agency for a certain *kind* of agency that expresses passivity. In a screenplay, the inaction *per se* can be conveyed, it occupies temporal "space" in a way it cannot do in a movie.

In my analysis I have shown how Quentin Tarantino manages to use the screenplay format

to convey spatiality and temporality in relation to the characters – with the help of, among other things, the structure and technical jargon typichal of a screenplay – through a close reading of his screenplay and by contrasting it with its film. Although this study was restricted to but a single screenplay, it gives some insight not only to the characteristic style of this particular screenplay author, but also to what possibilities that are offered by the unique literary format of screenplays, and what effects that are entailed when it is made into a film. Hopefully both of these categories will be further examined in future studies, as both adaptation studies and screenplay studies are still evolving.

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