While all Quentin Tarantino's work so far plays around with the same themes (in regular Hollywood style), his stuff fascinates precisely because of the way each piece distinguishes itself, signifies on previous work—his or that of others. Cinematically, Tarantino is a master deconstructivist. No wonder then that everything he produces has such postmodern flavor and seduces both those who read and those who don't. When it comes to flavor he is definitely an equal opportunity employer. Unlike most contemporary border-crossing, "eat the other" culture bandits, he is not afraid to publicly pimp his wares.

Tarantino has the real nihilism of our times down. He represents the ultimate in "white cool": a hard-core cynical vision that would have everyone see racism, sexism, homophobia but behave as though none of that shit really matters, or if it does it means nothing 'cause none of it's gonna change, 'cause the real deal is that domination is here to stay—
going nowhere, and everybody is in on the act. Mind you, domination is always and only patriarchal—a dick thing.

In Tarantino's flicks women's liberation is just another scam, white women wanting to be let in on the deal even as they act just like that Enjoli commercial told us they would: they help "bring home the bacon, fry it up in the pan, and never let you forget" they're a w-o-m-a-n. Check out the white girls in True Romance (written by Tarantino) and Pulp Fiction. Even when they are absent à la Reservoir Dogs, that little opening dialogue about Madonna says it all—a piece of the action, their share of the cut. And black folks, personified simply and solely by black men, are just into a dick thing, wanting to be right there in the mix, doing the right thing in the dance hall of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. Only the black woman who has no face—Jimmy's wife in Pulp Fiction, we see her only from the back—would raise any protest. The fun thing about Tarantino's films is that he makes that shit look so ridiculous you think everybody's gonna get it and see how absurd it all is. Well, that's when we enter the danger zone. Folks be laughing at the absurdity and clinging to it nevertheless. This happens first with Reservoir Dogs, which takes the hard-core white patriarchal dick thing and shows it for the vampire culture it really is. And when the black men have eaten each other up ('cause Tarantino would have us all know that when there are no white girls and niggers of all colors around, white boys are busy fucking each other over), it would be hard work for any viewer to see this film as a gleeful celebration of madness. Reservoir Dogs has a critical edge that is totally absent from Pulp Fiction, where everything is farce. Yeah, like it's really funny when Butch the hypermasculine phallic white boy—who has no name that means anything, who has no culture to be proud of, who comes straight out of childhood clinging to the anal-retentive time-piece of patriarchal imperialism—is exposed. Yet exposure does nothing to intervene on this evil, it merely graphically highlights it. As the work progresses, little Butch is still doing it or daddy—a real American hero.

Tarantino's films are the ultimate in sexy cover-ups of very unsexy mind-fuck. They titillate with subversive possibility (scenes that are so fine you are just blown away—like that wonderful moment when Vincent and Mia do the twist in Pulp Fiction), but then everything kinda comes right back to normal. And normal is finally a multicultural world with white supremacy intact. Note that even when the black male arrives at the top, as does Marcellus in Pulp Fiction—complete with a lying, cheating lapdog white child-woman wife—he is unmasked as only an imitation cowboy, not the real thing. And in case viewers haven't figured out that Marcellus ain't got what it takes, the film turns him into a welfare case—another needy victim who must ultimately rely on the kindness of strangers (i.e., Butch, the neoprimitive white colonizer, another modern-day Tarzan) to rescue him from the rape-in-progress that is his symbolic castration, his return to the jungle, to a lower rung on the food chain. No doubt had John Singleton, or any homeboy filmmaker, shot a scene as overtly gay-bashing as this one, progressive forces would have rallied en masse to condemn—to protest—to remind moviegoers that homophobia means genocide, that silence equals death. But it's fine to remain silent when the cool straight white boy from the wrong side of the tracks offers a movie that depicts the brutal slaughter and/or bashing of butt-fuckers and their playmates. If this isn't symbolic genocide of gay men, what is? Yet everyone has to pretend there's some hidden subversive message in the scenes. Hello! But that's the Tarantino message: everybody is in the corrupt jungle doing their own sweet version of the domination dance. This is multiculturalism with a chic neofascist twist.

Let's have a new world order in cinema: i.e., flashy flicks like Tarantino's, which kinda seem like the American version of Hanif Kureishi's stylish nihilism, so well done in Sammy and Rosie Get Laid and less well done in the rather tedious London Kills Me. Here most anybody can get a piece of the action, every ethnicity can be represented, can be fucked and fucked-over, 'cause in the end it's all shit. The real democracy, as True Romance tells us loud and clear, consists of a world where everyone has equal access to eating shit. Mind you, some folks come out of the shit smelling like roses, like our death-dealing white gender-equity couple in True Romance, who take their nuclear-family values to a warm place in the Third World and relax 'cause that's their way of getting away from it all. But when Jules (Samuel Jackson), our resident black male preacher-philosopher death-dealing mammified intellectual (he does pull out the tit and feed knowledge to everyone in Pulp Fiction)—magnificently, I might add—a stunning performance—particularly that closing monologue), decides he wants out of the rat race, he doesn't get to leave the plantation with riches in hand. John Travolta's Massa Junior makes it clear he must go his way destitute. 'Cause in the real plantation economy, no matter how many borders are crossed, no matter how many cultures are mixed and how much shit is appropriated (the everybody-is-a-nigger version of "We are the World"), when it comes right down to it Jules as our resident enlightened dharma bum has nowhere to go—no Third World playground he can retire to.
No doubt that retro hairdo he sports throughout the film keeps him from charting a new journey. It's his own signifying monkey. No matter how serious Jules's rap, that hair always intervenes to let the audience know not to take him too seriously. That hair is kinda like another character in the film. Talking back to Jules as he talks to us, it undermines his words every step of the way. 'Cause that hair is like a minstrel thing—telling the world that the black preacher-philosopher is ultimately just an intellectual arty white boy in drag, aping, imitating, and mouthing intellectual rhetoric that he can't quite use to help him make sense of his own life. Well, in steps the interpreter of dreams, Vincent “Lone Ranger” Vega, who has no trouble spelling out in plain speech to his beloved Tonto, alas Jules, that there will be no redemptive future for him—that if he leaves the white-boy setup and abandons his criminal destiny he will just be another homeless black man on the street, a bum. In the new world order Tarantino creates in Pulp Fiction, dead white-boy star-culture bandits live again and, like their ethnographic counterparts, know black folks better than we could ever know ourselves.

Well, as Tarantino's work lets us know, it's a sick, motherfucking world and we may as well get used to that fact, laugh at it, and go on our way, 'cause ain't nothing changing—and that's Hollywood, the place where white supremacist capitalist patriarchy can keep reinventing itself, no matter how many times the West is centered. Hollywood is the new plantation, getting more-chic with the times. That Tarantino can call it out, tell it like it is, give the ultimate “read,” the on-the-down-low diss, is part of the magic. It's deconstruction at its finest—all dressed up with no place to go. That is, unless you, the viewer, got somewhere you wanna take it, 'cause this is the new crossover model—the new multicultural survival kit. It can be all things to all people. Like you can choose to come away from Reservoir Dogs thinking. Later for white supremacy, racism, and fascism, 'cause when that shit is on display anybody can see how funky it is. Or maybe you could even catch that moment in Pulp Fiction when Butch and Marcellus are boy-bonding, with the tie that binds being their shared fear of homosexual rape, and think, Doesn't Tarantino just name the homophobia of our times—calling out the way patriarchal homosocial bonding mediates racism? (I mean Burch and Marcellus, they end up like brothers.) But if you choose to look at it all from the right, that's okay too. 'Cause the shit smells the same whether you are liberal or conservative, on the right or the left. There is no way out.

If you don't get the picture, check out the fate of our cross-race boy-bonding team, Vincent and Jules. Throughout the movie we admire their cross-racial, funky solidarity, their shared cool, but this difference don't last; they don't end up as “brothers” 'cause they are both ultimately disloyal to the structure they should uphold (Vincent by taking a break and reading, i.e. sleeping on the job, Jules by wanting to retire into nothingness). The film takes no note of Vincent's death by showing Jules either grieving or seeking revenge. Like all the meaningful emotional ties in the film (Vincent and Mia) this one doesn't count for shit. In the end loyalty sucks. Betrayal delivers the goods.

Well, as the preacher man told us at the end of Pulp Fiction, the tyranny of evil does not disappear just because we change the channel. Tarantino shows us in his films that a good cynical read on life can be compelling, entertaining, and downright satisfying—so much so that everyone will come back for more. But as the poet Amiri Baraka reminds us, “Cynicism is not revolutionary.”