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**Hollywood Revelation: Hermeneutics and the Remix of the
Words of God in *Pulp Fiction* (1994)**

**Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirement of The Master Degree
in English Literature**

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Dedication I

To those beautiful Palestinian children,

I am sorry your tiny hands never had the chance to hold a pen.

This work is for you.

Younes

Dedication II

To my mother, whose unwavering love and strength have been my foundation.

To my father, I know you can see me from the heavens and you are proud of me your memory
lives on in my heart and your quiet strength continues to guide me.

And to my dear friend and collaborator Younes, whose support and dedication made this
journey possible.

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Abstract

This study aims at analyzing Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994), specifically his reinterpretation of the famous quote of Ezekiel 25:17 Bible verse. The hermeneutic process of religious text distortion and meaning-making through human intervention and employing Hans Gadamer's concept of the "fusion of horizons" is used to examine how different audiences engage with reinterpreted texts. The motive of this study is to discuss how sacred biblical texts can be easily manipulated and how human intervention can turn the word of God into a "remix." This research is also showing broader patterns of religious text distortion and meaning making. While illustrating how this example of human intervention and changing in biblical sacred texts represents a turning point in how the word of God is adapted and reimagined throughout history and in modern media. Additionally, this study includes the analysis of one of the most and well-known movies in Hollywood *Pulp fiction* directed by Quentin Tarantino. Finally, it connects *Pulp Fiction* the movie with Pulp Fiction magazines, analyzing how their narrative and non-linear style influences Tarantino's approach to storytelling and moral ambiguity and how that led him to reinterpret the Bible verse to be suitable and serving the script and characters development.

Keywords: Hermeneutics, religious distortion, Ezekiel 25:17, *Pulp Fiction*, Quentin Tarantino, Marcion of Sinope.

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General Introduction

The complicated relationship between religion, interpretation, and storytelling has been a major concern in both theological and literary domains. From ancient scripture to modern cinema, the narratives that define belief systems are not based only on their content but also on how they are formed, communicated, and received by the audience. Thus, cinema, which is the most influential narrative tool in the last and current century, emerged as a very convenient way to explore and reshape ideas that are traditionally connected to religion, morality, justice, fate, and the eternal struggle between good and bad. Among directors who have always challenged the conventional narratives and manipulated themes, Quentin Tarantino shines as a filmmaker whose work combines popular culture with philosophical reasoning and moral dilemmas. His film *Pulp Fiction* (1994) presents a special case for analysis; a postmodern work of art filled with satire, emulation, and re-imagination of the sacred structure of the religious storytelling. Through its nonlinear narrative, morally complex characters, stylized violence, and a recurring thematic focus on redemption, *Pulp Fiction* does not serve only as a tribute and a mirror to Pulp magazines and its themes and shape, but also when examined critically, as a parody to the makings of a religious narrative and how it is replaced or maintained.

This study relies on the fact that the historical and cultural procedures by which sacred texts, in early Christianity to be precise, were not simply passed on, but constructed through oral tradition, selective editing, event dramatization, and adaption to contemporary audiences (Rüpke). Early Christianity Gospels, for example, were put together several years after the events they talk about and often mirrored the political and cultural requirements of the communities that produced them. Likewise, *Pulp Fiction* is built on repetitive patterns, the power of performance, and the audience's engagement with

symbolic meaning.

One of the prominent examples is the repeated use of a fictionalized Bible verse, Ezekiel 25:17, delivered by one of the lead characters, Jules Winnfield, which at first was presented as a tool to justify violence, then later reinterpreted by Jules as a personal revelation and a moral turning point. The steps that shape the reinterpretation reflects hermeneutic principles, particularly Hans-George Gadamer's concept of Fusion of Horizons, which indicates that understanding comes from the interaction between the interpreter's context and the hidden meaning within the text.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This dissertation addresses the main issue of how and why secular narratives, especially those in popular films, can take from and reshape religious structures in manners that would form a new cultural mythology. *Pulp Fiction* does not contain an obvious moral structure, yet it is noticed that its characters are in constant struggle with matters of fate, justice, violence, and redemption; matters that typically would be found in religious scriptures. By making a movie that functions both as a parody and as a serious investigation of morality, Tarantino mixes profane and sacred, parody and tribute. The fictional verse of Ezekiel 25:17 presents a case study of how meaning is not fixed but formed by the context, behavior, and interpretation, challenging the nature of truth, belief, and reception in both religious and cinematic storytelling.

1.2 Research Questions

- How *Pulp Fiction* uses religious language and narrative shape to mimic the work of sacred texts?
- In what ways does the reinterpretation of Ezekiel 25:17 explains Gadamer's Fusion of Horizons in the process of meaning making of the audience?

- How do Pulp magazines and cinematic elements like; nonlinear form, morally complex and ambiguous transformative characters, and repetition serve as ways to make a myth narrative that mirrors Christian Gospels?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Thus, this dissertation aims to analyze *Pulp Fiction* as a postmodern cinematic cultural artifact through applying hermeneutic theory on the narrative and its reception, and to show how it can be considered as profane version of a religious Gospel, preaching about moral reflection and symbolic teachings through an unconventional way. This study works on filling the gap between movie analysis, philosophical hermeneutics, and religious studies by illustrating how narrative authority, be it sacred or secular, is often shaped by similar actions of repetition, dramatization, stylization, and common belief.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is that it is interdisciplinary and that it challenges the conventional limitations between theology, hermeneutics, and popular culture. In times when religion's cultural authority is gradually fading in many societies, movies like *Pulp fiction* serves as a modern moral compass, encompassing ethical reflection, existential questions, and life changing journeys that are similar to ancient Gospel teachings. By inspecting this, this dissertation adds to the debates about the nature of sacredness, how did storytelling evolve, and how narratives reach cultural stability and interpretive power. It also emphasizes how audiences contribute to the process of meaning making, not as mere consumers, but as interpreters whose cultural horizons decide how texts are understood and remembered.

1.5 Research Methodology

Qualitative hermeneutic method is the research method best suited for this study. It is a way to analyze how meaning is constructed, reshaped, and received, especially in

religious texts. This approach allows for an examination of how religious texts are reinterpreted in cinematic contexts, particularly through the lens of hermeneutics and textual distortion.

1.5.2 Data Gathering Tool

This study uses close textual analysis as its primary data gathering tool, which is used in literature, film, media, and cultural studies to examine the documentation in a focused and interpretive way, to discover hidden deep meanings and structures within the documentation itself. Interpretive, thematic analysis within a hermeneutic framework is the suitable approach to examine and analyze *Pulp Fiction* via interpreting meaning through philosophical hermeneutics concepts, precisely Hans-George Gadamer's 'fusion of horizons' concept.

1.6 Structure of the Study

This research is the analysis of how Tarantino's reinterpretation of Ezekiel 25:17 does illustrate the hermeneutic process of religious texts distortion and meaning making through human intervention. It includes a general introduction, two main chapters, and a general conclusion. The first chapter "Pulp Hermeneutics: When Movies Rewrite Scripture" presents the theoretical framework, covering the development of hermeneutics from its theological beginnings to Gadamer's contribution, with emphasis on the concept of the Fusion of Horizons, and also examines the parallels between religious narrative formation and modern media storytelling.

The second chapter, entitled "Hollywood Revelation: Ezekiel 25:17" focuses on the fictionalized verse of Ezekiel 25:17, analyzing how it was used in the movie as a tool for violence and how it transformed into a moment of self-revelation. The analysis also provides a connection to early Christianity editing practices and use of scripture as a moral device. Then the chapter sees into the interpretation of *Pulp Fiction* as a parody of Gospel

narrative, explaining how the movie builds myth not through literal truth but through cinematic form, repetition, and stylized performance. The chapter closes with a reflection on how belief in narratives is created and maintained by audience engagement and interpretation depending on Fusion of Horizons.

The General conclusion shows that the movie *Pulp fiction* is a lot more than a postmodern flick but a living text, just like the Gospels, one that shows how sacred texts can be distorted and how meaning is formed through interpretation, while inviting viewers to engage via reflection of the movie, and challenge their belief even if it is a parody.

Chapter One

Pulp Hermeneutics: When Movies Rewrite Scripture

1. Introduction

This Chapter has established the theoretical and historical foundations for understanding Quentin Tarantino's reinterpretation of Ezekiel 25:17 in *Pulp Fiction* as a hermeneutic act of textual distortion. By examining the principles of hermeneutics from Schleiermacher's focus on Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" this chapter demonstrated how interpretation is never neutral but always shaped by the interpreter's context, biases, and creative interventions. Just as early Christian theologians like Marcion of Sinope edited and reinterpreted scripture to fit their theological visions, Tarantino's fabrication of a biblical verse will be revealed and further analyzed in the next chapter.

2. Literature Review

The reinterpretation of religious texts has always been limited into the textual analysis of these sacred texts, but never rarely analyzing the cinematic narratives. Within the framework of this research, it is an attempt to present as exemplified by Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994), intersects with three critical scholarly discourses: hermeneutic theory, the history of scriptural distortion, and the role of Pulp aesthetics in postmodern filmmaking. This review synthesizes these areas to contextualize Tarantino's manipulation of Ezekiel 25:17 as both a continuation of historical textual interventions and a unique cinematic phenomenon.

Taking the absence of the previous studies that has explored this exact topic into consideration, this research offers a new perspective. It uses Gadamer's theory to analyze how Tarantino twists Bible verses in *Pulp Fiction*, something scholars have not examined before.

The bedrock that this study stood on is hermeneutics, particularly Hans-Georg Gadamer's concept of the *fusion of horizons* (Gadamer 2004). Gadamer posits that interpretation is a dynamic dialogue between the historical context of a text and the interpreter's subjective horizon. This framework aligns with Friedrich Schleiermacher's earlier emphasis on reconstructing authorial intent (Schleiermacher 1998), and Paul Ricoeur's assertion that texts invite self-involving engagement. These theories collectively challenge the notion of fixed textual meaning, a premise central to analyzing Tarantino's reinterpretation of Ezekiel 25:17. Recent applications of Gadamerian hermeneutics to film (e.g. Villarejo 2008) further validate its utility in decoding how audiences derive meaning from cinematic texts that repurpose religious language.

Tarantino's fabrication of Ezekiel 25:17 echoes historical instances of scriptural manipulation, most notably Marcion of Sinope's 2nd-century editorial revisions (Harnack 1990). Marcion's dualistic canon, which excised the Old Testament and altered New Testament texts to fit his theology (McDonald 2007), exemplifies how religious texts have long been shaped by human intervention—a process termed *tahrif* in Islamic thought. Scholars like Bart Ehrman have documented similar textual variations in early biblical manuscripts (e.g., Codex Sinaiticus), underscoring the Bible's status as a “dynamic anthology” rather than a static artifact. This body of work provides a critical lens to view Tarantino's actions as part of a broader tradition of textual adaptation for ideological or narrative ends.

The pulp fiction tradition, as explored by Goulart (1972) and Server (1993), informs Tarantino's stylistic and narrative choices. Pulp magazines with their sensationalized violence, moral ambiguity, and intertextual borrowing laid the groundwork for *Pulp Fiction*'s postmodern blending of high and low culture. The film's use of a fabricated Bible verse mirrors pulp's tendency to repurpose existing tropes for new

contexts, a practice scholar like Holmlund (2008) link to Tarantino's broader cinematic ethos. The *Bodyguard* (1973) connection further illustrates how Tarantino's hermeneutic process operates intertextually, transforming a Japanese film's pseudo-scripture into a tool for character development and audience reflection.

While there is few existing research addresses hermeneutics in film and historical textual distortion, these studies bridge many domains to analyze how *cinematic* reinterpretations of sacred texts function as modern hermeneutic acts. This research fills this gap by positioning Tarantino's Ezekiel 25:17 as a case study in how filmmakers, like ancient theologians, manipulate texts to serve new narratives a process illuminated by Gadamer's *fusion of horizons*. Additionally, it extends pulp studies by framing *Pulp Fiction* as a "cinematic Gospel," where stylistic repetition and audience interpretation replicate the myth-making mechanisms of early Christian texts.

While this research was conducted, no studies were found that examine how *Pulp Fiction*'s fabricated scripture is a mirror of historical processes of religious reinterpretation, nor the analysis of movies using the religious hermeneutics unless it was directly supposed to be a religious movie, so this dissertation bridges these disconnected discourse.

3. Hermeneutic on Spot

Hermeneutics, traditionally defined as the art and science of interpretation, has developed significantly over time. Schleiermacher redefined hermeneutics as a general theory of understanding; what is being applied not only to texts, but also to the speaker's psychology and intention, viewing interpretation as the reconstruction of the author's original meaning (Schleiermacher 89). Wilhelm Dilthey saw hermeneutics from a bright side and broaden it by applying it to the human sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*), highlighting the fact that understanding human history and culture requires an interpretive

approach, rather than just exploring the scientific side and methods (Dilthey 162). That means human experiences and expressions were under examination after hermeneutics emergence. However, looking into its beginnings, it lies in the interpretation of religious and legal texts; more specifically, hermeneutics was concerned with the recovery of meaning in sacred writings and legal writings (Encyclopaedia Britannica).

As scholarly inquiry expanded, the application of hermeneutic principles extended beyond its theological and juridical origins. Gadamer argues that all human understanding is mediated through historically shaped interpretation, making hermeneutics fundamental not just to philosophy but to the humanities more broadly (Gadamer 295). This confirms that now, hermeneutics has included many fields such as philosophy, history, cultural theory, and the social sciences. It provides a method to critically engage with texts, symbols, cultural narratives, and even personal and collective identities. According to Schleiermacher, he thinks that interpretation includes a “divinatory” element, where the interpreter imaginatively reconstructs the thought process behind a text. He said: “The divinatory method is the attempt to understand the individual directly, as well as one can, from the utterance. It is a reconstruction of the process of creation. One places oneself in the situation of the author, thinks his thoughts over again” (92).

At its core, interpretation is not just about reading fixed messages from a text. Paul Ricoeur also highlights this idea of interpretation he argues that it involves a dialogue between the self and the text, making understanding a dynamic and an evolving process. In his own words, “To understand a text is to follow its movement from sense to reference: from what it says to what it talks about. But this movement is not linear; it includes a return to the self. Interpretation, therefore, is not simply an objectifying act, but a self-involving one” (Ricoeur 43). That means that the context, and the object of interpretation makes it an indispensable approach for understanding how meaning is

constructed, negotiated, and communicated across various contexts and historical periods.

4. Hermeneutic History

Over centuries, hermeneutics has transformed from a method of scriptural exegesis into a broad and dynamic framework for meaning making in the humanities and social sciences. Hermeneutics has passed through many key historical milestones, thinkers, and philosophical shifts that have shaped the field. The historical development of hermeneutics as both a practice and a philosophical tradition is connected to the way interpretation is being understood and requires a foundational exploration of what it is. Firstly, the goal is to understand and to investigate where hermeneutics originates and how it has developed through time before engaging with contemporary theories or applying hermeneutic methods to texts. The term “interpretation” is not something new; it has deep historical roots that can be traced back to ancient civilizations, particularly in the religious, legal, and literary contexts of classical antiquity.

4.1. Early Hermeneutics

Its roots extend as far back as ancient Greece, where the Greek terms *hermeneuein* “to interpret” and *hermeneia* “interpretation” first appeared. These terms emphasize not just the act of translating or explaining, but also the deeper process of making something understandable through language a medium central to human communication and meaning (Palmer 13). The American philosopher Richard E. Palmer, in his influential work *Hermeneutics: Interpretation Theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*, demonstrates that these philosophers and thinkers outline three distinct ways that the Greek verb *hermeneuein* can be understood and through these different definitions it can give different approaches.

4.1.1. Palmer’s Hermeneuein

Firstly, Palmer identifies the first meaning of *hermeneuein* as an announcing

function, which involves “saying, expressing, affirming, and proclaiming.” He emphasizes that “even simply saying, asserting, or proclaiming is an important act of ‘interpretation’” (Palmer 15). The second aspect of *hermeneuein*, according to Palmer, refers to explanation. This focuses more on the clarifying function of interpretation rather than its expressive elements. As he notes, it “points to the explanatory rather than expressive dimensions of interpretation” (20). In this sense, using language to make meaning clearer should also be seen as a valid interpretive act.

The third meaning of *hermeneuein* that Palmer discusses is translation. He explains that interpretation typically means transforming what is new or hard to understand into something more understandable, generally into words. In his own language, it is the process of bringing “what is foreign, strange, or unintelligible into the medium of one's own language. Like the god Hermes, the translator mediates between one world and another” (27). Yet, Palmer also reminds us that translation is not a simple or literal conversion of words; rather, it reflects the deeper nature of hermeneutics as a complex and layered practice filled with uncertainty and interpretive challenges.

4.2. Pneumatological Hermeneutics (Marcion's Literalism)

“Marcion was the first to grasp clearly and to carry through consistently the opposition between the Gospel and the Law, between Christ and the Creator, between the God of the New Testament and the God of the Old Testament” (Harnack 17). Marcion of Sinope formulated a system of thinking (a dualistic understanding) that represented a difference between the Bible and other religious writings. Marcion of Sinope was a 2nd century Christian theologian and one of the earliest figures to propose a distinct separation between the God of the Old Testament and the God revealed in the New Testament. Marcion understood the idea of God found in the Old Testament at face value, he interpreted religious writings in a very literal way, intentionally refusing to interpret

anything symbolically or metaphorically, interpreting narratives of divine anger, punishment, and commands for war as direct and unambiguous truths.

This approach distinguished him from many of the early Christian theologians, who tended to employ allegory to reconcile difficult or violent passages with new theology about God's mercy and love, where he clearly chose to rather view these passages through a theological or moral lens that seeks deeper, hidden meanings, and he treated them as straightforward representations of God's character (Harnack 42). Also because of his views, he rejected the entire Old Testament and edited the New Testament keeping only parts of Luke and Paul's letters (which he also altered) to fit his theology. In McDonald's words: "Marcion rejected the entire Old Testament and produced what appears to be the first attempt at a Christian canon, consisting of an edited version of the Gospel of Luke and ten of Paul's letters, which were also edited to conform to his theology" (108).

Clarification:

Old Testament God: Harsh, judgmental, creator of the material world.

New Testament God: Loving, spiritual, revealed through Christ.

5. Literary Hermeneutics

"Literary hermeneutics is concerned not only with the interpretation of texts but also with how interpretive traditions and philosophical reflections on language and history affect our understanding" (Hoy 7). This is how David Couzens Hoy explains hermeneutics. Clearly it is not just about trying to understand what a text means. It is also about understanding how interpretations are connected by the traditions humans have inherited and the ways they think about language and history. Literary hermeneutics refers to the theoretical and philosophical study of how literary texts are interpreted and understood. Its main focus is on how meaning is created by history, language, and the reader's understanding. Literary hermeneutics extends the idea to include fiction, poetry, drama,

and other kinds of writing and it is based on classical hermeneutics, which first focused on interpreting religious and sacred texts. It emphasizes the dynamic interaction between text, author, and reader.

5.1. Fusion of Horizons (Hans-Georg Gadamer)

Gadamer was a 20th century German philosopher best known for his work in philosophical hermeneutics; he studied how we understand texts. According to Gadamer: “Understanding is not a reproductive process but a productive one. It is not simply a matter of recovering what the author meant but involves a fusion of horizons between the interpreter and the text” (305). This is how he commented in his major work, *Truth and Method*; he developed the idea that understanding is not simply reproducing an author’s intent or finding out what the author originally meant but involves a dialogue between the past and present. This simply clears out the idea of a “dialogue between the past and present” means that understanding a text involves more than uncovering its original meaning. Instead, the reader brings their own context shaped by time, culture, and experience into conversation with the historical context of the text.

This “dialogue” is not literal, but rather a process of negotiation, where meaning emerges between the interpreter and the text. This is what Gadamer calls the fusion of horizons, a creative interaction where new understanding is formed; which also explains his words: “The fusion of horizons that takes place in understanding is actually the achievement of language” (Gadamer 305). The term “horizon” in Gadamer’s thought refers to the set of cultural, historical, and personal assumptions that shape one’s view of the world. In interpretation, understanding occurs through the *fusion of horizons* where the interpreter’s horizon interacts with the text’s horizon to create new meaning (306).

5.2 Fusion of Horizons (David Couzens Hoy)

David Couzens Hoy builds on Gadamer’s concept of the *fusion of horizons* by

emphasizing that interpretation is a dynamic process shaped by both the historical context of the text and the interpreter's present perspective. Hoy explains: "Literary hermeneutics is concerned not only with the interpretation of texts but also with how interpretive traditions and philosophical reflections on language and history affect our understanding" (7). Here Hoy argues that literary understanding is not about finding one fixed meaning from the past. Instead, it's about having a conversation between past ideas and the reader's present point of view. This interaction creates a new, evolving understanding where meaning is not only discovered but continually formed.

Hoy sees this fusion as crucial for ethical and philosophical connections that have ties with literature. He examines how this concept, originally developed by Gadamer, applies specifically to literary and philosophical text (25). This proves his point of exploration of how readers' interpretations are shaped by their cultural and historical situations and how understanding changes over time through this ongoing dialogue. He also connects interpretation to ethical and critical theory. He explains that understanding a text is not only about analyzing it. It also means thinking about how our interpretations influence our beliefs (what is right or wrong) and the way we treat others. In other words, Hoy argues that understanding a text involves more than just the analysis, but it requires reflection on how our interpretations influence our relationships, values, and actions. He writes, "The interpretation of texts can raise questions about justice, responsibility, and the meaning of human existence" (Hoy 212). This means that interpretation is not neutral; it plays a role in shaping how we think about ethical issues. Therefore, reading literature becomes an ethical act one that contributes to both personal growth and social understanding.

6. Pulp Fiction

Pulp fiction magazines were a type of magazines that contained short stories and

novels that emerged in the late 19th century at the hands of Frank Munsey, whom the American author Ron Goulart, in his book *Cheap Thrills: An Informal History of Pulp Magazines*, calls the father of pulp; “But eras and movements, like people, can’t pick their father and so a history of pulp magazines has to begin with the ruthless and unlikable Munsey” (Goulart 10). This can be considered as a direct acknowledgement of Munsey’s role in creating pulp magazines which dominated the market during the Two World Wars and the Great Depression.

The reason behind naming the magazines “pulp” magazines is that they were printed out on the cheapest pulpwood paper, due to the desire of publishers in making as much money as possible, the writers were paid a dollar per word which made them eager to write more to make more, “Pulp writers got paid by the word, and the faster they wrote, the more they made” (Hulse 12). But the cheap paper and the overflow of the magazines and the novels did not stop the content from being thrilling and captivating to the audience which made them on high demand for consumption.

6.1. The Heyday of Pulp.

The magazines reached their peak during the period of the Two World Wars and the Great Depression, where people and life were grey. Readers saw an escape from the hard reality of wars and the economic failure in these magazines ensuring constant demand. As pulp historian Jess Nevins notes, “The lurid covers were crucial in attracting readers who sought adventure, horror, or fantasy far from their daily lives” (Nevins 37). The bold dramatic and colorful designed covers, these magazines were able to attract the eyes and attention of the readers, making the titles catchy, large and stylized and hand painted illustrations. On the contrary to other magazines, that showed action-packed scenes whether it was a detective in a trench coat walking to a dark alley or a damsel in distress or aliens battling space explorers; this made the magazines stand out in the

kiosques and newsstands and drew in readers promising them excitement, drawing attention and promising excitement. It also brought new themes and characters such as masked vigilantes and anti-heroes, hardboiled detectives and monsters and aliens.

The narrative style which unlike the conventional literature at that time was fast-paced and filled with action that would start the moment the reader opens the magazine accompanied by a dialogue that was short and sharp often containing sarcasm and cynicism. It made the readers absorbed in the story and living it. Pulp scholar Lee Server notes that “pulp stories grabbed readers by the collar and never let go, using sensational plots and punchy language to keep the pages turning” (Server 14). What helped captivating the readers more was the description that realistically painted an authentic image for the reader, mixing it with a poetic description of certain scenes and actions, such as giving an explosive ring to violence and exaggerating danger. Another prime element was the use of cliffhangers that ensured the readers would buy the next issue. This all contributed to a large-scale success for pulp magazines with skyrocketing sales, with certain pulps selling hundreds of thousands of copies per issue.

Although it was a bit of gamble where it is mentioned by Theodore Peterson in *Magazines in The Twentieth Century* in which he states that “the publishers of pulp fiction magazines walked a thin line between profit and loss. The net on an issue of 100,000 copies often amounted only to somewhere between \$460 and \$730” (Peterson 79). This indicates that quantity does not always assure high profit, and with the constant shift of public favor every magazine was in threat of being killed off, nevertheless the publishers were willing to take the risk, because most of them owned multiple magazines which allowed flexibility and the ability to drop failed magazines and create other ones, as stated also by Peterson “some publishers endured over the years by killing off titles that slipped in public favor and replacing them with new ones. Street & Smith, a leading publisher of

pulp magazines after the nineties, was ever quick to drop titles when readers began to lose interest in them, just as quick to replace them with new ones.

6.2. Prime Published Works

Although the market was flooded with numerous magazines, there were standout magazines that took the lead when it came to popularity and sales and directly and indirectly influenced each of the audience, literary styles and cinema. Munsey's *The Golden Argosy* is undeniably the origin and anchor to all other pulp magazines and although it had its success, it did not last that long and underwent a lot of modification and change, until it eventually got merged with *The All Story* and lost most of its buzz but only after paving the road for other magazines to emerge and gain major popularity and success and cause a great deal of influence such as:

6.2.1. Black Mask

The *Black Mask Magazine* was founded and started publishing in 1920 by H.L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan, focused mainly on crime and mystery fiction, and was the one that created the hardboiled morally ambiguous detective character which emerged in *Black Mask*'s notable published works such "The Maltese Falcon" and "The Big sleep" (Penzler 13). *Black mask* embodied realism and gave the magazine authenticity and had a major impact on American literature and film, inspiring genres and characters, that can be seen in literary works and cinematics such as James M. Cain's novel "The Postman Always Rings Twice" and movies like Tarantino, who drew heavily from pulp magazines in his work *Pulp fiction* and Hanson's *L.A Confidential*.

6.2.2. Weird Tales

Weird Tales Magazine came out in 1923 by J.C. Henneberger, was mainly a horror and fiction magazine that helped in popularizing the speculative fiction genre as its tagline "The Unique Magazine" suggested. It was the one that introduced aspiring writers who

would later become pioneers of the horror fiction genre and changed the literary movement, the likes of Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, Seabury Quinn and the brilliant H. P. Lovecraft the man who made the supernatural horror genre a leading one in the literary movement. He states in the opening of his autobiography “Supernatural Horror in Literature:” “The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown” (Lovecraft 5). This shows the elusiveness and creativity he had and how he was able to create a genre that did not exist before him.

6.2.3. Amazing Stories

The *Amazing Stories Magazines*, launched in 1926 by Hugo Gernsback, was exclusively dedicated to science fiction and Gernsback its founder was often labeled as the father of science fiction, the magazine was the first to implement science facts with thrilling fiction, which helped educate, entertain and inform readers; it also encouraged forward thinking. The magazine helped in establishing science fiction as a standalone literary genre with writers like E.E. “Doc” Smith and his Skylark series, and Philip Francis Nolan with Buck Rogers, which are considered as landmarks and cornerstones of the science fiction genre and all the works that came after drew heavily from them.

6.3. The Collapse of Pulp Fiction/Magazines

The period in between the Two World Wars marked the prime days of pulp magazines, where the sales were high and the demand was higher, sub-categories emerged from the main categories and pulps flooded the market, yet in the span of ten years and shortly after World War II, pulps started to show early signs of extinction, the aftermath of the war did a fatal economic blow to the pulp publishers. With the increasing production cost and paper shortage to which Goulart commented, “Then, too, during and immediately after World War II, publishers of pulps were hit especially hard by swiftly rising production costs, which increased 72 percent between the end of 1944 and mid-1947.

Their revenue was no longer enough” (Goulart 182). This meant that to continue pulp production and publishing was a risk nobody was willing to take as it was not worth and could mean bankruptcy.

After the war, audience began to lose interest and felt like they were stuck in rut and started demanding change made the publishers abandon pulp production and seek better alternatives such as slick magazines, which the leading Street & Smith Publications did by announcing that they will drop four of their most successful pulps; *The Shadow*, *Doc Savage*, *Detective Story* and *Western Story* as they were failing to generate any real revenue. Goulart also stated: “The mystery men chuckling in their capes and the bronze geniuses leaping out of penthouses didn’t fit very well in the world as it was after Hitler and Hiroshima. By 1946, though there was still a large public for cheap thrills, they were beginning to want them in new shapes and new formats” (182).

Competition also contributed in the fall of pulps, as slick magazines began to gain popularity along with comic books and the paperback book, and thereafter the television, all of which provided an alternative source of entertainment, Peterson mentions “The paperback book had offered itself as an alternative; the comic book, and later television, provided the same sort of romantic and adventurous escape in a form that required less effort and attention” (Peterson 309). Consequently, most pulps were transformed into slick magazines they would later be called Men’s Magazines.

6.3.1. Cinema Influence

Pulp magazines undoubtedly made a crucial impact on the movie industry, and it began as early as 1912 when producers noticed the potential that lay in pulp magazines and so they started licensing them for screen adaptation. Although the movie industry, with its growing popularity, switched into adapting from stage plays and mainstream novels seeking to attract a larger audiences that were at the time more dialogue oriented and

drawn into melodramas and comedies, thus neglecting pulp magazines to a certain extent, few pulp adaptations were brought to the silver screen and gained success such as Tarzan, Zorro, Sam Spade, Doc Savage, Conan the Barbarian, and John Carter of Mars. The episodic format of pulp magazines and their endings that often ended with cliffhangers helped in developing movie serials which manifested the core essence of the magazines on screen (Goulart 130–31).

6.4. Genre Inspiration

The magazines introduced new genres aside from the mainstream ones that existed at that time, helping in broadening the horizons of film making for the writers and producers which made the silver screen business much more successful. As Dr. Anthony Camara, in his article “*The Non-Euclidean Gothic*” states: “Many of the identifiable genres we see today fantasy, horror, science fiction their birth was connected to these pulp magazines” (51), which indicates that many iconic genres came to life thanks to the pulp magazines such as: “Noir film, Neo-noir like and Crime thrillers that laid the groundwork for works like *Pulp Fiction*, *Chinatown*, *L.A Confidential*, Fantasy epics that introduced the like of *Conan The Barbarian* and *The Witcher*, Sci-Fi which created *Star Wars*, *The Matrix*, *Star Trek* and many other Blockbusters, Action-adventure like *Indiana Jones* and *The Mummy*.

6.5. Storytelling Shift

The emergence of pulp magazines in the early 20th century profoundly shifted the nature of storytelling in movies, steering cinema away from theatrical melodrama and literary adaptations toward dynamic, genre-driven narratives that emphasized action, suspense, and emotional immediacy. Pulp brought with them a distinct narrative style, gritty, fast-paced, and sensational, that resonated with a mass audience hungry for escapism and thrill. Their influence is most visible in the rise of serialized storytelling in cinema,

with cliffhanger endings. This shift also brought about a democratization of storytelling: films based on pulp material often centered on working-class protagonists, exotic locations, or speculative futures, appealing to popular tastes rather than elite sensibilities. By embracing the sensational, the pulps helped cinema evolve into a medium that celebrated bold plots, larger-than-life heroes, and the boundless possibilities of genre fiction, permanently transforming Hollywood's narrative landscape.

6.5.1. Unconventional Character Introduction

Pulp magazines revolutionized cinema by introducing unconventional characters who defied the archetypes of traditional storytelling and brought raw complexity, moral ambiguity, and rebellious energy to the screen. Before the rise of pulp-inspired narratives, movie protagonists were often idealized heroes noble, clean-cut, and morally upright, drawn from theatrical tradition or classic literature. Pulps defied that by producing characters who operated on the edges of society: private detectives who played by their own rules, jungle explorers hardened by war and wilderness, doomed romantics entangled in crime, and cynical antiheroes who did not always win, but who always survived. These characters, such as Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade or Robert E. Howard's Conan the Barbarian, brought a crude authenticity and inner conflict to their roles, often questioning authority, distrusting institutions, and navigating chaotic worlds where the line between good and evil was blurred. In essence, pulp magazines dismantled the idea of the classical hero and instead elevated the outlaw, the drifter, the mad scientist, and the morally gray rebel characters whose complexity continues to define some of the most iconic roles in film history.

6.5.2. Visual Style Influence

The pulps' imagery emphasized atmosphere as much as action, encouraging directors and cinematographers to frame scenes with heightened tension, stylized grit, and

dreamlike surrealism. In science fiction, the wild visuals of *Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic Adventures*—bristling spaceships, futuristic cities, and tentacle aliens—pushed the boundaries of cinematic design, influencing everything from the retro-futurism of *Metropolis* (1927) to the space operatic of *Star Wars*. Horror and fantasy films likewise borrowed from *Weird Tales*' eerie artwork, producing expressionistic set designs and monstrous makeup effects that mirrored pulp's love for the grotesque and supernatural. Even the pacing and visual rhythm of action sequences took cues from pulp storytelling, sharp, punchy, often exaggerated in a way that matched the thrill-ride tone of the magazines.

Costume design, too, was shaped by pulp sensibilities: trench coats, fedoras, wide-brimmed hats, and slinky evening dresses became shorthand for noir, just as loincloths and battle armor became fantasy staples. Ultimately, pulp magazines didn't just provide stories, they offered a visual imagination, a blueprint of intensity and spectacle that cinema absorbed and amplified, shaping the look and feel of popular movies for decades to come.

7. *Pulp Fiction* “The Movie”

Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994) is a groundbreaking, genre-defying film that redefined modern American cinema and elevated pulp-style storytelling to an art form. As its title suggests, the film pays direct homage to the gritty, sensationalist narratives of 20th century pulp magazines, embracing their raw energy, violent flair, and morally ambiguous characters. From its iconic opening diner scene to its explosive and darkly comic confrontations, the film balances stylized violence with philosophical dialogue, infusing everyday conversations with existential wonder.

Characters like Vincent Vega, Jules Winnfield, and Mia Wallace are as much archetypes as they are subversions, embodying the cool bravado and fatalism of pulp

fiction while simultaneously questioning its moral logic and narrative predictability. Backed by a sharply composed soundtrack, snappy dialogue, and a cast led by John Travolta, Uma Thurman, and Samuel L. Jackson, *Pulp Fiction* was both a critical and commercial success, winning the Palme d'Or at Cannes and an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay. It was more than just a film; it became a cultural phenomenon reviving careers and marking a new era in independent filmmaking where pulp sensibilities could be infused with intellectual complexity and cinematic innovation. *Pulp Fiction* marked a new era in independent filmmaking by proving that movies outside the traditional Hollywood system could achieve both critical acclaim and commercial success.

7.1. Movie Director

Quentin Tarantino, the visionary director of *Pulp Fiction*, is one of the most influential and distinctive filmmakers of modern cinema. Born in Knoxville, Tennessee in 1963 and raised in Los Angeles, Tarantino began his career as a video store clerk, where he developed an appetite for films of every genre. Without formal film school training, he educated himself by studying movies obsessively, which led to a style that fuses homage with innovation.

Tarantino burst onto the scene with his debut film *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), a tightly wound crime thriller that immediately established him as a bold new voice in independent film. However, it was *Pulp Fiction* (1994) that cemented his reputation as a master of cinematic storytelling. Known for his intricate screenwriting, nonlinear plots, and pop-savvy dialogue, Tarantino brought a new sensibility to the screen—one that blurred the lines between high and low art, fusing the aesthetics of pulp literature and B-movies with sharp narrative intelligence and stylistic flair. He often collaborates with recurring actors, crafts memorable soundtracks, and employs long, tension-building takes, all while injecting humor and cultural commentary into scenes of brutal violence.

As a director, Tarantino is both a student of film history and a rebel against its conventions, drawing from a diverse array of global influences including Japanese samurai cinema, Hong Kong action, and Italian Giallo. With *Pulp Fiction*, he not only redefined what an independent film could be but also sparked a broader movement in 1990s cinema toward stylized, postmodern storytelling.

7.2. Re-shaping Hollywood

Pulp Fiction reshaped Hollywood by shattering the mold of conventional storytelling and proving that independent cinema could be both critically revered and commercially successful, setting the stage for a new era of writer-driven filmmaking in the 1990s and beyond. Quentin Tarantino's genre-bending masterpiece arrived at a time when Hollywood was dominated by formulaic blockbusters and studio-safe narratives, yet it dared to present a fragmented, nonlinear storyline filled with morally ambiguous characters, stylized violence, pop culture references, and long stretches of philosophical, even mundane, dialogue that defied traditional pacing. The film's success winning the Palme d'Or at Cannes and grossing over \$200 million worldwide on an \$8 million budget, according to the box office archives.

This demolished the idea that only mainstream studios could produce hit films. It opened the door for independent film studios like Miramax to thrive and gave rise to a new generation of screenwriters and directors who embraced bold, unconventional storytelling. Tarantino's blend of pulp fiction with postmodern self-awareness, breathed new life into tired genres like crime, noir, and action, revitalizing interest in stylized genre cinema and making it cool to reference and remix film history. *Pulp Fiction* also redefined the role of dialogue in film, transforming casual banter into scenes of dramatic tension and thematic depth, and inspired countless imitators who sought to replicate its tone, structure, and character archetypes. Moreover, it changed the way actors were cast and perceived in

Hollywood; John Travolta's career was resurrected, Samuel L. Jackson became an icon, and ensemble casting gained more popularity. Beyond style, *Pulp Fiction* challenged Hollywood's moral compass by presenting characters who were criminals and killers yet deeply human and at times even philosophical, compelling audiences to invest emotionally in figures far removed from traditional heroes. In essence, *Pulp Fiction* did not just disrupt Hollywood—it rewired its creative DNA, proving that films could be violent and intellectual, referential yet original, and rooted in the aesthetics of pulp while achieving lasting artistic significance.

8. Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has tackled three main ideas. The first one, Gadamer's framework proves to be the best way to analyze *Pulp Fiction*, as Jules Winnfield's recitation of Ezekiel 25:17 exemplifies how meaning emerges through the collision of text, performer, and audience. The "horizon" of the Bible's original message clashes with Tarantino's pulp aesthetic, creating a new, hybrid understanding. Also, Marcion's 2nd-century edits to the Bible mirror Tarantino's creative license, underscoring that textual manipulation is not new but embedded in the history of religious and cultural storytelling. Both acts reveal how authority is constructed through selective reinterpretation.

The chapter also presented *Pulp Fiction* from a postmodern lens to early Christian textual practices, where repetition, performance, and audience participation transform a fabricated verse into a locus of mythic power. By framing Tarantino's work within these broader hermeneutic and historical conversations, this chapter has made the groundwork for the deeper analysis in chapter two, which will show the specific mechanisms of Ezekiel 25:17's distortion in *Pulp Fiction* and its cultural implications.

Ultimately, the interplay of pulp cinema and sacred text challenges assumptions about fixed meanings, inviting viewers to confront the fragility of authoritative sacred

texts in both religion and art.

Chapter Two

Hollywood Revelation: Ezekiel 25:17

1. Introduction

In examining Tarantino's fictional scripture alongside early Christian textual changes and Gadamer's hermeneutics, this chapter will show that sacred biblical texts are built, edited, and understood by people over time, and not simple, unchanging messages from God. It shows that it was interpreted to serve the human needs depending on their own views, needs, and beliefs.

The upcoming verse here may sound like an authentic biblical scripture, but it is a cinematic invention where the director Tarantino blurs the line between sacred truth and creative storytelling. The real Verse is 25:17 "I will execute great vengeance on them with furious rebukes; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I lay My vengeance upon them" (Ezekiel 25:17). However, in the movie, Ezekiel 25:17 is:

The path of the righteous man is beset on all sides by the inequities of the selfish and the tyranny of evil men. Blessed is he who, in the name of charity and good will, shepherds the weak through the valley of the darkness. For he is truly his brother's keeper and the finder of lost children. And I will strike down upon thee with great vengeance and furious anger those who attempt to poison and destroy my brothers. And you will know I am the Lord when I lay my vengeance upon you. (*Pulp Fiction*, dir. Quentin Tarantino).

In *Pulp Fiction*, the character Jules Winnfield, played by Samuel L. Jackson, delivers a dramatic speech that he claims comes from Ezekiel 25:17. He speaks it with a serious tone, as if it gives moral or spiritual meaning to his violent actions with a cover of righteous vengeance. However, the passage is not actually from the Bible. Instead, it is

a made-up version, created by mixing real-sounding biblical phrases with invented lines transforming what might appear as sacred text into a stylized piece of narrative fiction. Tarantino uses this fake scripture to give weight to Jules' character, but also to show how easy it is to change religious language to fit a story. This choice does more than make the scene interesting but also makes Tarantino's fictional scripture demonstrates how easily religious language can be recontextualized, repurposed, and reimagined to serve new narratives.

This idea is not new. It echoes historical precedents in the development of religious ideologies, particularly within early Christianity. During that period, Theologians such as Marcion of Sinope made big changes to religious writings. Marcion believed the God of the Old Testament was different from the God of the New Testament; he presented a radical dualism that distinguished the God of the Hebrew Bible from the God revealed through Christ. In other words, he reinterpreted and rejected portions of the biblical canon to support his theological visions. Like Tarantino's pastiche scripture, Marcion's canon shows how religious texts are often shaped less by divine revelation than by human intervention which in Islamic thought is called *tahrif*, meaning the alteration or distortion of scripture.

From a hermeneutic perspective, the philosopher Gadamer helps to explain this idea with his theory of interpretation, called the "fusion of horizons;" understanding emerges through the interaction between the historical context of the text and the present understanding of the interpreter, in other words he believed that when reading a text, humans bring their own ideas and background to it and this mixes with the meaning of the text itself. In this light, the Bible, much like *Pulp Fiction*, is not a fixed or purely divine document but a living text, it is also shaped by how people read and understand it over time. The same thing happens when audiences watch *Pulp Fiction* and think about

Jules' speech: different viewers may see different meanings in it, depending on their own ideas and experiences.

So, *Pulp Fiction* may not have been made to comment on religion and seen as an unintentional critique of biblical preservation and authority, but it still gives us a way to think about how the Bible religious texts work and how vulnerable to manipulation, reinterpretation, and recontextualization it is. Tarantino's fake Bible verse shows that both storytelling and biblical texts rely on interpretation, putting Tarantino's narrative techniques with early Christian theological revisions in a reality that they are not always purely unchanged; they are made and remade by people. This makes *Pulp Fiction* an interesting example of how tales, whether in movies or in the Bible, are shaped by those who tell them and those who read or hear them.

2. The Myth of Scriptural Preservation and Human Intervention

People throughout history have always thought of the Bible as a divinely unchangeable text. However, a closer look shows and reveals the truth that the human intervention, the decisions through editing, translation, and canon formation played a central role in shaping what they call divine scriptures. This title explores how the most important and figures like Marcion, early church councils, and scribes contributed to the appearance and distortion of sacred texts. Drawing on hermeneutic theory and textual history, it argues that the Bible is not a fixed divine artifact, but a dynamic anthology shaped by centuries of human interpretation and intervention.

2.1. From Marcion to Manuscripts: How the Bible Was Shaped by Human Hands

Throughout history, many people believe that sacred books like the Bible are totally preserved regarding it as being divine and unalterable. However, when looking closely, it becomes clear that human intervention has changed these texts over time.

For example, Marcion, who believed that the God of the Old Testament was different from the God revealed through Jesus, chose to separate it into two opposing parts (Tertullian 1.1). By rejecting the Old Testament and imposing that dualism, he ignored the important stories and promises that connect to the New Testament also the dynamic nature of biblical revelation. His way of reading the Bible misses the deep connections that make the Christian story rich and united. In a Hermeneutical context, meaning comes from a conversation between the text and the reader over time. Marcion only accepted what fit his idea (that the Old Testament was bad and only the New Testament was good) closed off this conversation by sticking to a very narrow view.

Not just Marcion followed this wave; looking at early Christianity, many Christian communities had different letters and gospels. That is because of the process of determining the biblical canon where church leaders are the ones who decide which writings truly belonged in the Bible; writings, such as the Gospel of Thomas or the Shepherd of Hermas, were left out because they either taught different ideas or were written too late (Ehrman 108). They only kept the ones they believed were faithful to the teachings of Jesus. The final list of New Testament books became more official by the fourth century, especially at councils like the Synod of Hippo in 393 AD (McDonald 241). By looking more into the word “official,” the canon was not fully “official” or universally accepted by all Christian groups at that time, it took until later councils, like the Council of Carthage in 397 AD (McDonald 246). So, basically the process of deciding which books belonged in the New Testament was just about the decisions made at these councils and what different Christian communities were already reading and using in their worship at that time.

All these factors help to confirm that sacred texts were not always fixed or untouched but were shaped by human hands; that lead to the idea that distortion becomes

important. Distortion means changing, twisting, or misrepresenting the original meaning of a text, either on purpose or by mistake. As Sarah Salih and Bridget Trower explain, distortion can happen through “perversion, unnoticed alteration, impairment, caricature, twisting, corruption, misrepresentation, or deviation” (5). Understanding distortion helps to see that even religious texts went through changes and understand them as dynamic rather than static entities.

At this point the argument is that the Bible is more like an anthology; a collection of different writings, edited and shaped by human hands over centuries. Where they have the choice of deciding which books to include, which to reject, and not preserved and divinely as they presume. Meanwhile, distortion plays a major role in this process, and by distortion it does not only mean small mistakes or blurry corruption; it can also include subtle changes, shifts in meaning, or edits that slowly reshape a text. When church leaders edited, translated, and interpreted the sacred texts, even with good intentions, they inevitably introduced distortions. This shows that the Bible that exists today is the result of centuries of human activity, not a fixed, untouchable divine artifact, whether accidental or not.

To further illustrate this point, one can look at the differences between early biblical manuscripts, *Codex Vaticanus* and *Codex Sinaiticus*, both are from the same period and era (fourth century), though they show differences in spelling, wording, and even missing or added verses. One of the most famous examples is the Gospel of Mark. In these manuscripts, the longer ending of Mark (Mark 16:9–20), which describes Jesus appearing to his disciples after the resurrection, is missing. As biblical scholar Bart D. Ehrman explains, many well-known passages in the Bible “were not originally in the New Testament” but were added by scribes over time (6). These facts clear the idea of human intervention and involvement in shaping the text, challenging the idea of a

perfectly preserved and unchanged Bible.

It can be simply summarized by saying that: human editors were like “invisible hands” shaping what later generations believed was pure. They silently changed the words now called “divine.”

2.2. The Fusion of Horizons and the Construction of Sacred Texts

The conception of the fusion of horizons for Gadamer is a key element in his theory of interpretation, as explained in *Truth and Method*, which give a fine example of how understanding happens amongst individuals, culture, and time periods. For Gadamer, interpretation is made when a fusion, formed by unique historicity, prejudices, and experiences occurs between the horizon of the interpreter and that of the text, artwork, or whatever is being interpreted. Each person has their own “horizon,” shaped by their background, culture, experiences, and beliefs. Similarly, the text or artwork comes from its own time and place with its own meanings. Understanding is not about forgetting these differences or trying to be completely objective; instead, it happens through a real conversation between the interpreter and the work. Here comes a place for assumptions and expectations into the process, but rather than blocking understanding, they help start it. Through this back-and-forth process, our own view of the world can grow and change (Gadamer 306).

Gadamer believed that understanding is an active and dynamic process where the two interacting horizons mutually question and transform one another. The interpreter is equipped with presumptions he is aware of, which may not serve as obstacles but rather as necessary starting points and through a genuine dialogical engagement, the interpreter’s horizon expands. This model changes the idea of understanding being purely methodological and detached; instead it insists that all interpretation is historically based and dialogical in nature. The Fusion of Horizons expresses the act of making meaning by

placing this process within a context that acknowledges the relationship connecting the past and the present. This implies that understanding cannot simply be a reconstruction of an original authorial intention detached from the text, but rather it is to engage with the text to honor the integrity of that text while at the same time the meaning-making process necessarily implicates the interpreter (Gadamer 305–307).

On this view, Gadamer’s theory has far-reaching implications for the humanities, especially in literature, history, theology, and art criticism, where scholars are invited by him to approach texts not as unchanging artifacts to be decoded but as living dialogues that challenge and transform our very own views.

Based on all that its clearly that the argument is that the evolving horizons of believers throughout history, shaped by their cultural contexts, political views, lack of education, and traditionally inherited ideas, strongly influenced by how they interpreted and accepted scripture: unthinking of the processes that edited, translated, and compiled the very texts they refer to as divine truth. For most believers, this combination was not original manuscripts but shaped by councils, scribes, and translators, each with their sets of assumptions and their theological agendas. Creation of the Christian biblical canon at councils such as Nicaea, translation into the Latin Vulgate, and later in the King James Bible, example human choices about what would be regarded as “true,” and which existed with an apocryphal or heretical status.

Yet, since the horizon of most believers was restricting an unquestioning trust in religious authority which of course was a result of lacking knowledge about historical-critical methods and a worldview, that equated the divine will with institutional power—these edited scriptures were received as pure and “error free.” This can be explained as follows: the believers’ horizon met with that of the sacred text in its constructed form in faith and tradition, where meaning fuses with no critical distance. However, this uncritical

fusion is problematic because it hides the fact that scripture is not fixed and unchanging, but a collection of texts shaped by history, human decisions, and changes in language.

These edited versions as direct divine communication sold off to believers as a direct message from God, the great lack of cleanness and messiness in their making of faith texts. This allowed religious institutions to maintain strong control over interpretation. It has left embedded truths; this has often happened to adopt theological doctrines or moral teachings, being based more on reserved readings than the whole, complicated history of the texts. In other words, making it seem based on selective readings rather than the full, complicated history of the texts.

A critical perspective should recognize the power structures behind the formation of scripture, question the assumption of infallible texts, and advocate for enduring and reflective engagement with sacred texts, one that respects both their complex history and their spiritual meaning, instead of blindly accepting traditional interpretations.

3. “Ezekiel 25:17”: Hollywood revelation?

The character Jules Winnfield, in Tarantino’s *Pulp Fiction* (1994) before executing any of his opposites carrying out acts of violence, he recites a passage identified as Ezekiel 25:17. However, when looking closely at the real Bible, it seems clearly that the version Jules says is very different from what is actually written. This difference provides an opportunity for an analysis of how Tarantino adapts religious language to support the film’s story and analyzing how *Pulp Fiction* reinterprets sacred scripture to explore ideas such as morality, redemption, and fate.

3.1. From Chiba to Tarantino: The Hermeneutics of a Made-Up Scripture

As it is already presented, what is said in the film as Ezekiel 25:17 is not a direct quote from the Bible. It is important to understand that it has changed over time and the passage has been rewritten and reused in different ways.

Starring Sonny Chiba, in 1973 Japanese film was released called *The Bodyguard* (*Karate Kiba*). The film opens with a text that includes a made-up Bible verse, which says:

The path of the righteous man is beset on all sides by the inequities of the selfish and the tyranny of evil men. Blessed is he who, in the name of charity and good will, shepherds the weak through the valley of the darkness. For he is truly his brother's keeper and the finder of lost children. And I will strike down upon thee with great vengeance and furious anger those who attempt to poison and destroy my brothers. And you will know I am Chiba the Bodyguard when I lay my vengeance upon you. (*The Bodyguard* 1973)

This verse does not appear in any recognized version of the Bible, but it is the passage recited by Jules Winnfield in *Pulp Fiction* which was introduced as a biblical quotation from Ezekiel 25:17, knowing also that Tarantino is well known for being a fan of Japanese cinema and openly expressed his admiration for Sonny Chiba multiple times. Tarantino even cast Sonny Chiba as Hattori Hanzō in *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* (2003).

This is clearly an intertextual borrowing that illustrates how cultural works reinterpret sacred texts for new artistic purposes, As Holmlund notes, Tarantino is known for blending pop culture references with moral ambiguity, creating layered narratives that question traditional values (119). He is known for involving the recontextualization of genres and dialogues and that is how his broader cinematic style works and that also explains his choice and decision to use a modified version of this quote in *Pulp Fiction*.

Here it is clear that the meaning of each adaptation and interpretation depends on the narrative and cultural context in which it is used and plays a crucial role in shaping it. In *the Bodyguard*, the quote functions as a stylized introduction to a violent revenge story, where brutality is not only looked at but justified through righteous language, this

religious type of language with acts of violence contributes to the film's larger atmosphere of justified vengeance and moral ambiguity.

However, when Jules Winnfield recites it in *Pulp Fiction*, the same passage plays a more complex and transformative role. It meant like nothing more than a dramatic introduction to kill. Then when the narrative precedes the quote's repetitive tone becomes a symbol of inner change. When reaching the ending, Jules has a moment of realization deeply on the words he has been using, knowing that he never truly understood them before; the violent language once used to justify execution now calls for a personal moral awakening in his inner self.

This does not just go through a conventional character development, this shift in explains how violence and morality are framed in cinematic universes. It explains that even invented religious language can influence behavior and belief if it is convincing and it is "biblical" enough, in world of *Pulp Fiction*, such a made-up scripture carries emotional and philosophical weight, shaping character choices and audience perception.

From a deeper analytical perception, in fictional worlds where religious texts are changed and manipulated by the script writer to be more aggressive or absolutist and serve the film's narrative, characters may absorb these distorted values. A more violent "Bible" as presented in *The Bodyguard* and also making the already modified scripture even more modified by Tarantino, might suggest a world where divine justice is understood through power and taking revenge. This could hypothetically result in societies adapting more of the acceptance of extremism, where violent heroes (or "badasses") emerge and be considered as being righteous. so in this case mirroring this fictional worlds of films with reality the quote becomes not just a narrative device that serves the film or characters but a reflection of how texts shape culture, behavior, and ethical boundaries.

So going back to *Pulp Fiction's* verse by tracing its origins to *The Bodyguard*, it is

obvious from this example that *Pulp Fiction* is not just reinterpreting the verse but also participates in a Hermeneutical Conversation about how language, especially religious language, can be reshaped in cinema. This reflects how human intervention can lead to the remix of cultural elements across boundaries, allowing new meanings to emerge through context and contrast

3.2. The Fusion of Horizons and Pulp Fiction

Similarly, Gadamer's concept of the fusion of horizons can be an appropriate approach to understanding the depth of audience interpretation when they hear Jules Winnfield's dramatic recitation of Ezekiel 25:17 in *Pulp Fiction*. The speech by Jules, delivered with an exaggerated intensity before he executes a man, apparently has all the characteristics of being a righteous biblical condemnation invoking divine authority to justify his act of violence.

As viewers engage with this moment, their personal horizons, shaped by their knowledge of scripture, cultural views on religion, experiences with authority figures, and understanding of cinematic conventions, all interact with the meaning of the film. For some people, familiarity with the Bible might lead to dissonance; the passage Jules quotes is only very loosely based on actual scripture, revealing manipulation by Tarantino of religious language for purposes of drama and irony. Others might view him as undermining moral authority: not a prophet of justice but a tortured soul bringing meaning into an already violent life. Others take the performance itself, Samuel L. Jackson's controlled rage, the stylized dialogue, and the cinematic tension of the scene-as cues to the fact that this moment is about power and transformation rather than theology.

The essence of cinema, a stylized, violent, ironic world wherein characters casually discuss burgers before pulling guns this changes more the meaning of the passage. At this moment, the viewer's horizon of religious seriousness deference to authority, and

traditional narrative morality clashes with the film's constructed world of pulp crime and ironic detachment. This collision makes the fusion; viewers are pushed to reinterpret the biblical reference not as a straightforward moral statement, but as part of a larger exploration of violence, redemption, and personal change.

Thus, Gadamer helps us understand that this scene has no one set meaning; rather it gains meaning in the dialogue between what the viewer brings in expectation and what the film offers within its complex layering of narrative. The understanding of the viewer evolves as the narrative continues and as Jules later interprets the same quote as a personal awakening—from justification for killing to a representation of salvation.

The horizon, first shaped by notions of religious authority or tropes common to cinema, will now fuse with the film's perspective, allowing the viewer to understand Jules's character arc as not linear but reflective, philosophical, and fully human. This fusion creates an interpretation that is richer and more personal, where the viewer is recreating meaning through his or her historical and cultural lens rather than integrating the unfolding of the story. In this way, Gadamer's fusion of horizons makes it evident that a single monologue in *Pulp Fiction* can generate multiple layers of meaning depending on how that viewer's worldview collides with the film's complex, moral, and narrative structures.

4. *Pulp Fiction* as a Cinematic Gospel (Embracing *Pulp fiction*'s Distortion)

Pulp Fiction, nowadays, serves the purpose of a modern cinema gospel, one that is not based on sacred truth or real history, but on style, repeated symbols, and the power of belief. The film narrates a group of disconnected thematically related stories and imparts morals through characters starving to violence, sin, and other moments of choice and transformation. Jules Winnfield's arc mimics that as it is a gospel; from a merciless executioner with scripture taken as a weapon, to a near-death experience, which can be

interpreted as a divine intervention, he rises to a kind of spiritual awakening by interpreting the hollow recitation of Ezekiel which he experiences as a genuine call for redemption. Meanwhile, Butch's narrative of honor and loyalty, becomes a lesson not so much of sacrifice but karmic lesson on consequence, while Vincent Vega, who disregards all signs of anything different and keeps his nihilistic routine, finds himself dead off-screen in a punishment almost biblical where spiritual shiftlessness is concerned. These figures serve as messengers of flawed humanity through blood and irony and transformation, rather than sermons.

Yet, *Pulp Fiction* does not ask to believe in literal truth or moral certainty. Rather, it constructs its mythologies through the nonlinear structure cinematic style, repeated motifs, and the stylized dialogue that assumes power not from its realism but from its rhythm and ritualistic recurrence. The glowing briefcase with the repeated visits to diners and hallways and framed speeches with even dancing scenes become rituals to a cinematic liturgy that forms myth, not from divine source but cultural resonance. Tarantino creates a world where redemption can only be achieved through self-awareness, decision making, and the viewer's own interpretive ability.

Thus, the movie presents itself as secular gospel, where the characters act like imperfect apostles, spreading their message through what they do. the audience absorbs the meaning via repetition and reflection, *Pulp Fiction* becomes a myth not through claiming truth, but by performing it over and over until the idea of believing not in what the story says but in how it says it takes control.

The making of the myth function of *Pulp Fiction*, presented in stylized storytelling, repetition, and interpretive engagement, presents several parallels in the manner of writing, transmitting, and receiving of the early Christian texts. Based on this, holly scripture and modern film narrative seem to be closely related. Just as the gospels

underwent evolution through oral traditions before their written form, *Pulp Fiction* bears a similar concept loaded with a chain of oral parables wherein the characters serve monologues, exchange philosophical comments, and perform symbolic actions, which sound more like preaching or fables than anything one would call ordinary dialogue. In similar fashion, early Christian churches used oral narrative as their medium, adjusting the words and deeds of Jesus to the moral and cultural concerns of disparate people. Tarantino does something similar in adapting pulp archetypes and clichés to pose existential and moral questions to a very modern, postmodern, and arguably cynical audience.

The gospel writers; Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John each told selective, edited narratives, choosing and creating material to emphasize theological concerns relevant to their churches, much like Tarantino assembles his nonsequential plot to redefine morality, consequence, and redemption through a broken lens. Both genres rely on dramatization, miracle, Pharisee face-offs, crucifixion narratives in the gospels are all utilized to bring about maximum emotional reaction and point up spiritual insights; in *Pulp Fiction*, violence, coincidences rooted in surreality, and rhythms in language have the same functions to do this, again not as factual, but as a mythic hyperbole of the human condition. Ultimately, both forms of storytelling engage their public in participation, not via passivity, but through interpretation. The gospels were composed not merely to report but to transform, to be retold, reinterpreted, and incarnated over centuries. Likewise, *Pulp Fiction* is successful not necessarily because of what it is about, but because of how audiences return to it, quote it, talk about it, and even mythologize it in popular culture. In both cases, belief relies not on historicity but on narrative, resonance, repetition, and performative power. What the movie does offer, as do the early Christian texts, is a living text, one that blurs the boundaries between performance and sermon, fact and meaning, and in doing so, constructs a myth not out of what is literally true, but out of what feels

morally or spiritually significant in the course of being told and retold.

Through a hermeneutic and critical lens, *Pulp Fiction* can be interpreted as a sly parody of the means by which religious narratives are established, evolve, and persist. Not through divine revelation or objective truth, but through repetition, performance, stylization, and communal belief. The film's nonlinear storytelling, symbolic thematic recurrence, and moral ambiguity mimic the way that sacred scriptures, such as those of early Christianity were written through oral tradition, selective memory, and editorial shaping to suit the needs of their audience.

The figures of Jules Winnfield, along with other characters in *Pulp Fiction*, are transformed into modern prophets or apostles, not by the possession of truth but by acting it with conviction. His repeated invocation of the allegedly Ezekiel 25:17, a quotation fabricated and loosely based on real scripture, is a prime example of how religious authority is more often a question of performing belief rather than theological accuracy. Jules does not begin by knowing the passage he quotes, it exists first as a theatrical device, a verbal ritual called upon to lend justification to violence. Only later, through what he perceives as divine intervention, does he reinterpret the passage as a personal call to redemption.

This reversal is deeply ironic and revelatory; it shows how meaning is typically belatedly imposed upon texts, and how religious conversion is less a result of divine revelation, and more of a human desire to find moral lessons in trauma, coincidence, or survival. Parodying this process, Tarantino deconstructs the way sacred authority may ascend out of repetition and faith rather than authenticity, suggesting that religious conviction was probably set up the same way through mythic stylization, charismatic narrative, and retroactive significance. The movie's glowing briefcase, which never reveals what is inside, becomes a kind of holy object or sacred relic invested with

incredible power not because of its contents, but by what people think it is. Similarly, the audience is never given an omniscient perspective but rather fragments just as early Christians were given fragments of oral gospel tradition, filtered through interpretation and context.

Tarantino's deliberate mixing of high and low culture scripture and profanity, philosophy and pop reference mirrors the way that early Christianity would borrow from surrounding cultures, appropriating stories, symbols, and language to craft narratives that could survive the centuries. By exaggerating these elements with his trademark stylization, Tarantino does not mock religion itself but instead exposes the processes by which religious myths are generated through ritualistic language, symbolic drama, charismatic leadership, and the human impulse to impose meaning on chaos. So, then, *Pulp Fiction* is a self-aware film gospel, not of transcendent truth, but of cultural myth a gospel that parodies the genesis of Christianity by illustrating how, in a universe without certainty, faith still clings to style, structure, and the comforting illusion of meaning.

General Conclusion

The analysis that was conducted in this study as it is shows did expose the fragility of biblical sacred texts, like cinematic narratives, it is not static but evolve through interpretation, adaptation, and cultural reinvention. *Pulp Fiction* in its own way has fictionalized the use of Ezekiel 25:17 to work as a symbol of the larger historical and philosophical processes by which meaning is constructed and not the superficial use of dramatical devices. This dissertation has shown that just as sacred scriptures have been shaped by human hands across centuries, so too does a modern medium participate in the ongoing re-creation of myth and morality.

Ezekiel 25:17 went from an obscure Old Testament verse to a fake fictional monologue in a Japanese film and then to its iconic delivery in *Pulp Fiction*. This journey that this Bible verse went through does nothing but serves as a powerful metaphor for the dynamic nature of textual meaning. Tarantino's creative manipulation of the verse exposes the fragility of language and challenges audiences to reconsider the authority of sacred texts. In doing so, *Pulp Fiction* becomes more than a film; it becomes a "postmodern gospel" one that delivers existential and ethical reflections through violence, satire, and stylized storytelling.

Gadamer's concept of the "fusion of horizons," is a one way of the many ways that shows that understanding emerges not from recovering a fixed original meaning but through a dialogical engagement between the text and the interpreter's context. Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* exemplifies this hermeneutic principle by inviting viewers into a fusion of cinematic and theological horizons. Audiences bring their personal, cultural, and spiritual lenses to Jules Winnfield's monologue, interpreting it either as parody, revelation, or something in between. The meaning of the scene, and indeed the entire film,

is co-created in this interaction much like the interpretation of scripture across generations.

Moreover, this dissertation does more than just analyzing the film or the biblical sacred text; it draws a line between the processes of Gospel formation in early Christianity and the construction of narrative meaning in *Pulp Fiction*. As early church leaders selected and edited texts to suit theological agendas and community needs, so does Tarantino selectively remix religious revelations, pulp tropes, and moral societal phenomena to craft a cinematic scripture for the modern age. In this sense, *Pulp Fiction* functions as a myth making machine, where morality is not dictated but discovered, not imposed but interpreted.

This study puts the film under the tradition of the hermeneutical philosophical thinking and compares it to several historical examples of how religious texts were changed such as the interventions of Marcion of Sinope. The study underscores that all texts are shaped by those who transmit and receive them and it is up to the people's interpretation. Whether it is in a church or a movie theater, stories only become powerful through the beliefs of those who receive them. Tarantino's use of ambiguity and the well-known non-linear style of writing highlights how open to interpretation both films and scriptures can be, raising questions about truth, authorship, and what we consider sacred.

This dissertation affirms that *Pulp Fiction* is not only an exercise in cinematic style and it is not a conventional movie, but a sophisticated engagement with the deeper philosophical questions of meaning, morality, and myth. By analyzing the fictionalized Ezekiel 25:17 as a case study in hermeneutic reinterpretation, it becomes clear and out of the collected evidence that sacred texts and secular films alike are living documents always open to re-reading, distortion, and renewal. Ultimately, *Pulp Fiction* is an invitation not only

to watch, but to reflect, interpret, and participate in the ongoing dialogue between belief and storytelling, and it makes the glimpse of the myth of the fragility of sacred biblical texts shine again.

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الملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل فيلم بولب فيكشن (1994) للكاتب كوينتين تارانتينو، وتحديدًا إعادة تفسيره للاقتباس الشهير من حزقيال 25: 17 من آية الكتاب المقدس. تُستخدم العملية التأويلية لتشويه النص الديني وصنع المعنى من خلال التدخل البشري وتوظيف مفهوم هانز جادامير عن "اندماج الأفاق" لدراسة كيفية تفاعل الجماهير المختلفة مع النصوص المعاد تفسيرها. الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو مناقشة كيف يمكن التلاعب بسهولة بالنصوص الكتابية المقدسة وكيف يمكن للتدخل البشري أن يحول كلمة الله إلى "ريمكس". يُظهر هذا البحث أيضًا أنماطًا أوسع لتشويه النص الديني وصنع المعنى. مع توضيح كيف يمثل هذا المثال للتدخل البشري والتغيير في النصوص المقدسة الكتابية نقطة تحول في كيفية تكيف "كلمة الله" وإعادة تصورها عبر التاريخ وفي وسائل الإعلام الحديثة. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تتضمن هذه الدراسة تحليل أحد أشهر أفلام الخيال العلمي في هوليوود من إخراج كوينتين تارانتينو. وأخيرًا، يربط الكتاب بين فيلم Pulp Fiction ومجلات Pulp Fiction، ويحلل كيف يؤثر أسلوبهم السردى وغير الخطي على نهج تارانتينو في سرد القصص والغموض لأخلاقي وكيف دفعه ذلك إلى إعادة تفسير آية الكتاب المقدس لتكون مناسبة وتخدم السيناريو وتطوير الشخصيات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التأويل، التشويه الديني، حزقيال 25: 17، بولب فيكشن، كوينتين تارانتينو.