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Homo-hetero-phony-graphy: on Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction*

Quentin Tarantino's film *Pulp Fiction* (1994) depicts ostensible males unsettled by desires for trans-sexuality or trans-sexualization as desire. *Pulp Fiction* turns sexual identity into sexual otherness and something other than sexuality through a host of props, devices and linguistic transfers that set deconstructed sexual difference into motion pictures.

Le film de Quentin Tarantino Pulp Fiction *(1994) décrit des hommes ostensiblement virils travaillés par des désirs de trans-sexualité ou par la trans-sexualisation comme désir.* Pulp Fiction *renverse l'identité sexuelle en une altérité sexuelle, dépassant même la question de la sexualité, au moyen de multiples accessoires, procédés et transferts linguistiques destinés à mettre la différence sexuelle en images mouvantes.*

In memory of Paco Vidarte

In the sequence called "The Gold Watch," Tarantino's film *Pulp Fiction* shows the aging boxer Butch Coolidge (Bruce Willis) deciding not to lose on purpose his boxing match because of his pride about the watch his father and forefathers gave him. Because of this pride, Butch returns into the world of gangsters to get the watch that his girlfriend forgot on his toy kangaroo. This sequence begins by a dream, and a form of memory, and not a real event happening in real time. The character has been sleeping: "The 27-year old Butch Coolidge is dressed in boxing regalia: trunks, shoes and gloves. He lies on a table catching a few zzzzzz's before his big fight. Almost as soon as WE CUT to him, he wakes up with a start. Shaken by the bizarre memory, he wipes his sweaty face with his boxing glove" (Tarantino 69). A "bizarre memory" is "bizarre" because a "memory" of something that never really happened, except as *dream*. The next morning, "Fabian"—in fact Fabienne, Butch's French girlfriend—watches a Vietnam war movie, and "[w]e find Butch still asleep in bed" (84). Again, Butch

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wakes from a dream: "Butch wakes from his sleep, as if a scary monster was chasing him" (85). Foreshadowing of Marsellus Wallace—a violent, black Los Angeles mob boss from whom Butch has accepted a bribe in exchange for losing a match—chasing him into the pawnshop of Zed and Maynard—the Texan rednecks who subsequently rape Marsellus—, the initial point is that Butch doesn't remember his dreams: "It's really rare I remember a dream" (86).

The "Gold Watch" sequence begins with the dream—Captain Koon giving the watch in a scene that is a flashback that Butch will be having while sleeping on the dressing room table. The present verb tense makes explicit his sleep: "He lies on a table catching a few zzzzzz's" (69). To "catch some zzzzz's," slang expression for "to sleep," actually predicts the ironic reversal to come: Butch, after killing Vincent (John Travolta)—a hitman working for the mob boss—and driving his car into Marsellus, is caught by being broadsided by a "Camaro Z-28" (98); later, Butch will catch up Zed's keys to "Grace" (the chopper) off the counter in the pawnshop, keys on a ring "with a large Z connected to the ring" (105). So, if Butch is sleeping and having a dream, then what is he dreaming about, in dreaming about Captain Koon and about his father and his ancestors being killed?

First, Butch never experienced what he dreams about, never was visited by any Capt. Koon, never had that father. The only father Butch has or had is a fantasy; fantasy is always the father; paternity, a "legal fiction," to take up a famous phrase from James Joyce's *Ulysses*. As we'll see by following the inscription of time, this fantasy is palimpsested with the repressed fear of sodomy and homosexuality among men. Klondike, Butch's trainer, tells Butch "It's time" (69). The narrated time is 1972, "we're . . . in the year 1972" (66); in this narrative time, Butch is a "five-year old boy" (or "The CAMERA is the perspective of a five-year old boy" [66]). According to Capt. Koon, Butch's "Dad" was held in the POW camp for "five long years" during which he wore the watch "up his ass" (68). Both Capt. Koon and Butch's "Dad" were "in that Hanoi pit of hell over five years together" (68). After five years in the POW camp, Butch's supposed "Dad" died. After he died, Capt. Koon wore the watch up his "ass." (Just to emphasize the extent to which this is a dream, and not reality, the name "Capt. Koon" is spelled differently: sometimes his name is spelled with a "s" as "Capt. Koons" (66-68) and sometimes without the "s," as "Capt. Koon." Capt. Koon then kept the watch for two more years. The watch has been in the "Hanoi pit of hell" for seven years. Butch is five years old at the moment Capt. Koon gives him the watch. Therefore, Butch cannot be the son of his "Dad," because there is no way Butch could have been conceived. Age, and time, is not one but are many, palimpsested and joined by separation. Butch is "five years old" and 27 at the same time. But he is also 26 and 27, the screenplay variously tells us. "In the *fifth*, your *ass* goes down" (27), Marsellus tells Butch; or, in the fifth year of gestation in the father's anus, Bu/wa/tch went down his father's anal (birth) canal.

The timepiece is a watchword. This *watch* appears in the screenplay when someone *watches* television. Fabian is watching the Vietnam war movie about the Hell's Angels when Butch remembers his missing watch: Butch asks her, "What are you watching?" and "Are you watchin' it?" as *he* stares at the television screen on which can be seen the reflection of Fabian *looking at* Butch but also the Hell's Angels "tear-assin through a Vietnamese prison camp," presumably the one Butch imagines his father to have died in (85). Butch's father is a deferred effect from having watched bad Vietnam movies as a kid over which is imprinted the ghostly hologram of a mother (Butch says Fabian will be his little "mama cita" [83]). In a dream about four generations of men (great-granddaddy, grandfather, Dad, Butch), about military men in uniforms ("the uniform of an American Air Force officer" [66]), about what men do when they are together ("when two men are in a situation like me and your Daddy were, for as long as we were, you take on certain responsibilities of the other" [67]), the watch becomes an over-determined, palimpsested, symbol (of a macho fear of sterility, of male jealousy of women, of male fear of homosexuality).

Butch's timepiece is round; its wristband forms a circle. A round shape, or a circle, like an orifice, mouth or anus. When Capt. Koon shows the watch to the boy Butch, it is a circular watch without the wristband—detached from the strap, no longer a "wristwatch"—with three different times on it in the same scene (4: 35; 1: 00, 12: 00), although Capt. Koon presents the watch as made by the first company ever to have wristwatches, in the time of World War 1 ("up until then, people just carried pocket watches" [67]). The watch represents "time" and time represented by its turning back the clock to a time of pocket watches.

A pocket watch is an anachronism, after the advent of wristwatches. Capt. Koon says: "It was your great-greatgranddaddy's war watch, made by the first company to ever make wrist watches . . .Then . . . he went home to your grandmother, took the watch off his wrist and put it in an ol'coffee can" (67). It *had been* a wristwatch. But in the dream the watch is rather a *pocketed* watch: "The Captain pulls a gold wrist watch out of his pocket" (67). What would a pocket be in a dream of a man about his origins (great-granddaddy, grandfather, dad), about men hiding things in their anus, about men who die of "dysentery"? The pocket shape symbolizes the female space of the womb, that space that carries the foetus, that female maternal space that is the original home and origin. Capt. Koon is the surrogate mother, which is why he replaces the Mother in Butch's "POV" (66) or "point of view" (Koon moves in front of the mother, making her absent from what Butch sees, as Koon takes the watch from his pocket and delivers Butch the watch, his ancestry and his birth).

A dream dominated by men, it is a male dream about having a baby, about the difference between men and women. There are three women in this text: "BUTCH'S MOTHER" (66), Butch's great-grandmother (67), and Butch's grandmother (68). Otherwise, women are absent: the "bizarre memory" ends with the adult male boxer, and his trainer, also a man. In the

dream, Capt. Koon tells the story of all of Butch's male ancestors. These men are surrounded by other men: "other Marines," "those boys," "Winocki, a man," the "son," and "the gooks" and "slopeheads" (68). This creates a relation between men and the watch, which is the relation among war, men and time. When there is war, there are no women; when there is *no* war, there is no watch, but there *are* women: "Then when he had done his duty, he went home to your great-grandmother, took the watch off his wrist and put it in an ol'coffee can" (67). But when there was war, man "wore" the watch ("This watch was on your Daddy's wrist when he was shot down over Hanoi" [68]). There is explicit homophony between "war" and "wore": "Your great-granddaddy *wore* that watch every day he was in the *war*" (67). So what is the relation between the watch and women? When there are women, the watch is "put in an ol'coffee can." The coffee can is a cylinder, round but tubular, like a passage, like a tunnel, like a canal, like an orifice. Women, here, are coffee cans. The coffee can holds the watch in gestation just as a woman holds a foetus in her womb during gestation. The pocket watch as baby, as foetus, however, is the subtext of the watch as male identity.

For the wristwatch is the symbol of male bonding, of linkages between men, because men transmit it to other men. The watch is moreover a symbol of male identity, of becoming a man, the passage from boy to man. The word "boy" is repeated seven times: "five-year old boy"; "the little boy"; "boy's eye-line"; "little man. Boy"; "Doughboy"; "None of those boys"; "his boy's birthright" (66-67). The passage from boy to little man is what the watch symbolizes: "Hello, little *man. Boy* I sure heard a *bunch* about you." We move from "little man" to "Boy" (which is an exclamative, not literal) and then to "bunch" which puns on "Butch," before back: "And *now*, little *man*" (67). The boy becomes a man in the passage. The passage of the watch from one man to another symbolizes the passage from boyhood to manhood. And indeed, immediately after the passage, after the "dream," we CUT to the adult Butch ("the 27 year old Butch Coolidge" [69]). But the text also suggests that Butch is still a boy. Butch only resembles his great-granddaddy, because only Butch and his great-greatddaddy survive premature death. Butch is still alive, at 27 years old, and his great-granddaddy did not die in war. Butch's grandfather and father both die young, in war. Butch is like his great-granddaddy because just as Butch is a "boy" who survives premature death, so too the great-greatgranddaddy is called a "Dough*boy*."

If the wristwatch represents men, and war, the "pocket watch" represents women and birth. The relation between a watch, kept in a coffee can and in pockets, and women, involves the kind of soldiers: Marines. The Marines are land troops, foot soldiers: the "infantry." The "infantry" contains the word "infant," the newborn. Butch's grandfather gives the watch to Winocki so that he'll "*deliver* it to his *infant* son, who he had never seen in the flesh" (68). Butch's father is called an "*infant* father" (68). Not only the presence of the "infant," the watch is, as Capt. Koon puts it, a "birthright"

("his boy's birthright," "the watch was your birthright" [68]). If this watch is the boy's "birthright," why is something *wrong* about Butch's birth, Butch who kills in his boxing match a fighter named, in the movie, *Wilson*? This watch that cannot tell one self-identical time, cannot tell the difference between five and seven years, is not Butch's "birth-*right*"; rather, it is Butch's "birth-*wrong*." The birthwrong resides in its place and displacement, its linguistic distortion (hetero-homo-phony, anal-g-ram, feminine rime) from "dysentery" to "infantry." If the "dysentery" is an image of the breaking of the water of the woman in childbirth, then the "dysentery" of Butch's "infant father," son of an "infantry" Marine, is an image of birth. The watch symbolizes childbirth in a man.

The watch is held in the men's "ass." The "ass" and the "pocket" anamorphize the watch-child/ child's watch (Bu/wa/tch) according to a nomo-topo-trans-graphesis. Butch's boxing agent, Marsellus, is a black man. The name "Capt. Koon" suggests a black man, because his name, "Koon," is a homophone of "coon," a derogative word for a black person. Butch is a name that connotes a man, because the word "Butch" means the male lesbian in a lesbian couple.

When Esmeralda Villalobos, the cab driver who brings Butch back to his hotel after he has won the fight he was supposed to lose, tells Butch her name means "of the wolves," and then asks him what his name means, Butch's denial of onomastic reveals the opposite of its claim: "I'm an American, our names don't mean shit" (75). Butch's denial reveals the opposite truth: his name does have the lesbian connotation. Moreover, if Butch is associated with the male, Marsellus will be associated with the female later in the movie, because it will be Marsellus who is raped by two "Texan rednecks" (99; probably most rape victims are females). Capt. Koon is said to speak in the dream with a "Texas accent" (66). So, in the dream, Capt. Koon by his name "Koon" and his Air Force "uniform" condenses Marsellus the black man and Zed the redneck rapist dressed in police uniform. Raped, Marsellus himself becomes transformed into a woman, true to his name: *Mars*-ell-*us*.

A kangaroo, the *American Heritage Dictionary* explains, is a marsupial, which is to say a mammal of the order Maruspialia. The female lacks a placenta and possesses a *marsupium*, an external abdominal pouch that contains mammary glands and that shelters the young until fully developed. From Latin, *marupium*, "pouch," from Greek, *maripos*, purse (*bourse*), from the Avestan *marsus* or "belly" (like Mars-ell-us). Marsellus-as-kangaroo, the wrist-watch as pocket-watch, are how Tarantino trans-sexualizes his text. Marsellus as kangaroo, the wrist-watch as pocket-watch, are equal to *man as woman*, man re-written as woman. This is why Butch keeps his wristwatch on a toy kangaroo: "on the little kangaroo," "Yes, it was on your little kangaroo," "Bedside table—on the kangaroo."

In the sodomy scene, in the "dungeon" (106) of the pawnshop, the film shows Zed shot in the groin by Marsellus, who uses the "pump action" shotgun belonging to Maynard for this purpose, right after Zed "disengages" from pumping Marsellus from and in the behind. The film clearly shows Zed's scrotum and penis flying up into the air after the shotgun blasts hits him, clearly shows, that is, Zed "dickless." One exchanges penis prostheses with others', a shotgun for an Automatic, as Zed's genitals are blown off by the shotgun of Maynard picked up and adopted for use by Marsellus just as Zed tries to reach for Marsellus's .45 Automatic lying beyond his grasp while looking at Butch's sword bloody from being in "redneck" Maynard (Zed's "eyes go from the tip of Butch's sword to Marsellus' .45 Automatic" [107]). The "pieces of shit" that Vincent Vega will refer to, when speaking to Jules at the end of the film, are "bums," but the "piece of steel" selected for use by Butch so as to save Marsellus from the "pit of Hell" is the samurai sword with which Butch reverse penetrates Maynard, who, standing behind Butch (able to take him by the back) is instead skewered by Butch's thrusting the giant penisword (as one would say of an erection that it's "a magnificent piece of steel") backwards through Maynard, as if Butch had a penis coming out of his anus rather than going into it: Butch "while never taking his eyes off Zed, THRUSTS the sword behind him, SKEWERING Maynard, then EXTRACTS it" (107). In the context of this transfer, between "piece of shit" and "piece of steel," between "bum" and "sword," a third term insinuates itself: "some dickless peace of shit fucks with it," in other words the person ("the fucker" [33]) who "keyed" Vincent Vega's 1964 Malibu convertible. Homophone ("peace" for "piece"), it retrieves also the sword (it "fucks with it," "dickless[ly]" "fuck[ing]" "with it," i.e., with the key, with the prosthesis of the key that replaces the missing "dick" of "dickless," so as, also, to fuck with the car (Vincent Vega says, "You don't fuck another man's vehicle. That's against the rules" [34A], meaning you don't fuck another man's vehicle because his car is his vehicle, the car is the penis, you don't fuck another man's penis, implying that a man does not fuck another man's penis/ vehicle, since it is with the vehicle or penis that one fucks), but also retrieves the rest of the syntagm ("piece of shit," "peace of shit"), displacing us from the bum (i.e., the "piece of shit") to the Zed who is a "Security Officer" in a uniform like that of a police officer, guardian of the peace (hence, a "peace of shit," a peace worth "shit"), who will be executed by Marsellus like Lance says a "dickless peace of shit" should be ("No trial, no jury, straight to execution" [34]). In these ways, homophonies ("peace," "piece") and heterophonies ("shit," "steel") tell of how phony heteros (the "rednecks" Zed, Maynard) catch, but are killed by phony homos (Marsellus the marsupial Wall-ass, and Butch who makes love [oral sex] to his male-named "Fabian").

The piercing of Maynard by the sword of Butch is the way in which Butch not only saves Marsellus from death (as if he were Major Coolidge saving Captain Koon from the "Hanoi pit of hell") but also, strangely, keeps his word to Marsellus: he broke his word by not losing the fight, but his returning to the basement when he really did not need to, insofar as

Marsellus was certain to die, whereafter Butch would have forever been beyond the reach of Marsellus's revenge, his return restores his word. Butch thereby wins a second time: winning by refusing to lose the prize fight and instead winning it by knock-out, but also winning doubly by winning his freedom from Marsellus's revenge insofar as he risks his life entirely gratuitously by returning to the basement so as to save Marsellus. Butch therefore keeps his word, with the sword, just as "Winocki" "kept his word" (to Butch's grandfather), and Butch therefore not only wins by knockout but by his word/s/word.

In her foreword to the screenplay, Manohla Dargis singled out as Tarantino's tour de force the way its "style" is "at once familiar and wild," mixing "violence" and "sexual identity," but also the way if it's "hook" is "violence," its "sinker" is that even "God gets a chance." If his handling of "sexual identity" or rather sexual *difference* is abundantly evidenced, his treatment of "God," or at least of a "chance" that might be another name of God (and vice versa, "God" as name of "chance") is less. The hook and sinker are connected by a homo-hetero-phonographic line, from "Grace" to "Grease," from a "place" to a "spot." Vincent convinces Lance, a heroin dealer, to take the rapidly overdosing Mia (Uma Thurman)—the mob boss's wife—into Lance's house, despite the dealer's adamant initial refusals ("You're not bringin' that fucked up bitch in my house!"), by telling him that "[t]his fucked up bitch is Marsellus Wallace's wife. Now if she fuckin' croaks on me, I'm a *grease spot*. But before he turns me into a bar soap, I'll be forced to tell 'im about how you coulda saved her life, but instead you let her die on your front lawn" (57). If Vincent avoids here becoming a "grease spot," he doesn't when Butch kills him with Vincent's submachine gun: Butch's "look goes from the *grease spot* in the bathroom that was once Vincent" (96). The "grease spot" is what *was* Vincent, and everyone will think it is because he did something he wasn't supposed to when he took out Mia. Because, just as Mia told Vincent that "nobody knows why Marsellus tossed Tony Rocky Horror out of that window except Marsellus and Tony Rocky Horror" (49), no one except Butch and Marsellus will ever know what happened between them, including how Vincent will have been killed, even though, exactly as in the case of Tony Rocky Horror, everyone will conjecture that Marsellus eliminated Vincent for having done something with Mia—which Jules, a black hitman working alongside Vincent for Marsellus, already predicts when he says, meaning Vincent is doomed to death by this association with Mia, "Bitch's gonna kill more niggers than time."

When Vincent says, "I'm a grease spot," he anagrammatically *names* the future of his present, that future of every present, i.e., death as the ineluctable future: the being-past or 'being'-dead ("the grease spot that *was* once Vincent") that is the certain future of the present, "I'm a grease spot," namely "I'm a" or "Mia," the letters "M-i-a" distended and re-arranged like what was *once* "once," i.e., unified and singular, as Vincent becomes spread out and scrambled, a grease spot, like the letters and punctuation

and spacing that are "I'm a": name of anagram and anagram of name. This spillage from "grease spot" to "grease spot," that signature violence of Quentin Tarantino remarked by Manohla Dargis, may be the hook, but its sinker that lures us, is the homo-hetero-phonographic line between "grease spot" and "place" of "grace." When Zed gets to the Mason-Dixon Pawnshop basement, he asks Maynard, "Hey, is Grace gonna be okay in front of this place?" (102) "Grace," we later learn, is the chopper (probably a Harley Davidson) belonging to Zed, and which Butch will ride to pick up Fabian and make their train to Tennessee. "Grace" is the chance, luck, opportunity, freak occurrence, miracle, or divine intervention, that works with that hook of violence; the "*place*" of "*Grace*," in "front" of rape and murder, but also in front of uncalculated giving (Butch's saving Marsellus; Butch's restoring his father to life in defiance of watch time) is the inverse of the "*spot*" of "*grease*" (evoked by Vincent on Lance's "front" lawn), and both in word and in deed between "Grace" and "grease" is a homophony and a homography that is a heterophony and heterography, a sameness with a difference and a difference in sameness.

Butch calls Fabienne with a boy's name, by the nickname of "sugar pop" (77, 79). When Butch kills Vincent, it is because the "Pop Tarts" that he had put in the toaster happen to "loudly kick up" (96) just as Vincent exits from the toilet bowl to face Butch who aims the M61 submachine gun at him, the loud noise being the shock that makes Butch hit the trigger. Butch's betrayal of Marsellus made Marsellus intend to "scour the earth" for Butch, and if Butch "goes to Indo China," Marsellus plans to put "a nigger" (gangster) in every "bowl of rice" ready to "pop a cap in his ass." Since it is Marsellus himself who emerges from the "bowl of rice" of the "Teriyaki Donut" (an example we will return to) at nine in the morning with his breakfast of twelve donuts, it is Marsellus himself who is associated with the breakfast of either "Pop Tarts" (a jam-filled piece-of-bread-sized wafer eaten for breakfast) or "sugar pop[s]" (also "Sugar Pops," a sweet breakfast cereal marketed to children) or, as in his case, "donuts" that stick out of "bowls of rice." Fabian ("sugar pop") is why Butch cannot stay to have breakfast with her (pancakes), and has to return to his apartment, since she forgot the all-important wristwatch that is his inheritance. Because of "sugar pop," Butch will have for breakfast the "Pop Tarts" back at his place, which he never eats, since their popping out of the toaster is what makes him "pop a cap" in the "ass" (in fact in the torso) of a "nigger" (i.e. Vincent), whereupon Butch's chance encounter with Marsellus interrupts the latter's breakfast. All these concurrences or coincidences of "pop" ("pop a cap in his ass," "Pop Tarts," "sugar pop") are triggered by Butch's attachment to his father, grandfather and great grandfather's wristwatch, and to an odd breakfast occurrence. It is thus more or less obvious in *Pulp Fiction* that it is Butch's "pop," his "grandpop" or great grandpop, who is at the origin of the wristwatch, or the wristwatch that is at the origin of, in fact, both mom and pop, confirming Jacques Derrida's argument that "on sait que la maternité est aussi inférée, construite et interprétée que la

paternité" (Derrida 77), *pace* Sigmund Freud for whom, if paternity is always a "legal fiction," maternity is on the contrary natural and immediately obvious to the senses. It may be less obvious that Butch is listening to the Statler Brother's song on his cassette player in his car when he leaves his apartment after killing Vincent and up to the moment he crashes into Marsellus. The song is about staying up all night, until one watches "Captain Kangaroo," a television show for children that was shown in the mornings when children ate breakfast and got ready to go to school. Captain Kangaroo was a man, surrounded by men (among them, Mr. Green Jeans, the "joke" or queer reading being that maybe these men had something "homosexual" going on), who talked to children (outside the television box, watching it). "Captain Kangaroo" are the words upon which Butch's singing reaches its crescendo just as he and Marsellus recognize each other in their face-to-face (recalling the face-to-face of the African statues in Marsellus's front walk). Marsellus is, in a certain condensed and displaced way, Captain Kangaroo, what happens when you cross Captain Koon, a "gangster," a "scary monster," a "king," and a marsupial: he is the captain, "cap," the *chef*, the head man; especially, in the basement of the pawnshop/"pit of Hell," he is "Captain Koon," the 'coon' that returns in the guise of Captain Koon just as Butch is the re-inscription of Major Coolidge, his own father; Marsellus is the marsupial, the kangaroo. He is the King and he is the Kong, King Kong/Kang/Gang ("everybody's boss MARSELLUS WALLACE. The black man *sounds like* a cross between a *gang*ster and a *king*" [26]).

Freud's *Totem and Taboo* is not only touched on, in *Pulp Fiction*, by the cartoon "Eskimo"'s remark about "he think totem-pole alive," but also by the reference to the "kangaroo" and the taboo on men touching men (as in a man giving a man a foot massage). If Butch is obsessed with his "watch" that he keeps on the "kangaroo" statue on the bedside table (the watch is worn like a ring over the kangaroo's large tail), if the kangaroo seems to be the individual or clan totem (the animal that serves as the identity) for his paternal line (or paternal-as-maternal line), then it is remarkable that the first example of an animal serving as a totem that is given by Freud in *Totem and Taboo* is the kangaroo: "When descent is through the female line, if a man of the Kangaroo totem marries a woman of the Emu totem . . ."; and "the father, who is a Kangaroo, is free to commit incest with his daughters, who are Emus" (Freud 5). In the chapter "Return of Totemism in Childhood," Freud mentions his "Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy," the analysis of "little Hans," and how it taught him something important about "totemism": "children displace some of their feelings from their father on to an animal" (129). Our analysis of "little man, boy," Butch, the five-year old, inversely indicates a displacement from watch-father to kangaroo-father. The features of the totem animal (Freud 101-102) all could apply to Marsellus-as-kangaroo, notably how the totem animal is the guide to the group (he tells Winston Wolf, the fast-speaking

problem-solver, what to do; he commands Jules and Vincent) and foretells the future to the loyal members of its clan (he tells Butch, "your ass goes down in the fifth" for when Butch will lose his fight).

For Freud, the taboos constitute the "nucleus of Totemism" (23). He quotes a passage about the taboo's power: "persons or things which are regarded as taboo may be compared to objects charged with electricity; they are the seat of a tremendous power" (20). It can be taboo to address a king or the king's totem. Butch, like a hero in tragedy, suffers to dissolve the chorus's fear of the (same-sex) taboo, and, so as to dissolve the bond to the totem (i.e., to Marsellus), Butch saves the totem/ Marsellus from death-by-taboo (from death by same-sex sodomy). The taboo is not incest of brother and sister but of brother and brother.

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