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2010-03-17T12:17:35Z
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MY WAR, YOUR WAR: UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT IN AFRICA

AND THE MIDDLE EAST THROUGH FICTION FILM

Hotel Rwanda and *The Kingdom*

BY: TANJA ŠAKOTA-KOKOT

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of PhD at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other University.

There are certain theoretical frameworks which I have re-worked from my Masters Dissertation, a published article and a conference paper. I have noted and referenced each of these sections within the thesis.

Šakota-Kokot, T. 2001. *The Construction of a Preferred Reading in the Television Documentary The Death of Yugoslavia*. MA Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand.

Šakota-Kokot, T. 2005. "Baghdad Café: Rhetoric, 'Embedded' Journalists and the 'Other' in the War in Iraq" http://www.up.ac/ac.za/ademic/humanities/eng/eng/visart/eng/conference.htm, accessed 2008-10-28.

Šakota-Kokot, T. 2006. "Heart of Darkness: The Representation of Conflict in Africa on Global Television". Paper presented at the Counter Narratives Conference: Challenging/Conflicting/Confusing Voices held at The University of Winchester on 3rd-6th April 2006.

Tanja Šakota-Kokot

DEDICATION

To my beautiful children Nikita and Aleksa: the two brightest lights in the darkest night.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Prof Nathalie Hyde-Clarke – my Supervisor and Mentor: I can only humbly thank you for this amazing experience. You have not only shared your brilliance and knowledge, but you have also taught me so much more about how to be an excellent supervisor to my own students. Your passion and expertise of your field has made this task a memorable and tremendous exercise. Thank you for your patience and input and I can only wish you much joy as you embark on a new chapter of your life.

Milenko and Gudrun – my Parents: thank you for always encouraging me to follow my dreams.

Mara – my Sister: for being there.

Slavisa – my Husband: everyone needs a place where they can grow.

ABSTRACT

This research will focus on how we understand conflict through fiction film. The thesis will analyse the two case studies *Hotel Rwanda,* Terry George, (2004) and *The Kingdom*, (Peter Berg, 2007), by focusing on three areas of study, namely, globalisation, fictional narratives, and how we remember conflict.

The discussion begins with globalisation with reference to narrative content and the economic and distributive authority of Hollywood. This will be linked to film as a commodity and how popular culture (through fiction film) intersects with the 'real', historical world and promotes ideological perceptions of the events.

Through an analysis of the narrative structure, this research shall investigate how each narrative creates 'preferred' readings around ethnic groups and how it assumes a truthful depiction of its referents. The discussion shall focus on how the Classic Hollywood narrative, voice and rhetoric emerge within the two films.

The investigation will also examine how the films are located within memory of conflict and how they create 'othering' through their representation and 'voice'. This message provides a framework within the global environment. The research will show that although the films are fictional, their global message is very much the same as to what is emerging within global media regarding mainstream as opposed to the marginalised 'other', whether this relates to Cultural Imperialism, fantasy others, mythical others or cultural and political associations of others.

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