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My war, your war: understanding conflict in Africa and the Middle East through fiction film: Hotel Rwanda and The Kingdom

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LES AUTRES NE SONT PAS POUR MOI…

(The others are not for me…)

> It used to be said that facts speak for themselves. This is, of course, untrue. The facts speak only when the historian calls on them: it is he who decides to which facts to give the floor and in what order or context[1].
>
> Edward H. Carr

Thus far I have concentrated on the Hollywood system and how film draws on history, culture and memory in order to understand events that have occurred in the 'real', historical world. This chapter will examine how the narratives actually function in creating 'others' which distance the audience from specific communities that exist within the films. I shall initiate my discussion with cultural identities and then focus on varying positions towards the 'other' in relation to both *The Kingdom* and *Hotel Rwanda*.

POLITICAL AGENDAS

Since the 1970s academic thought has increasingly moved away from the broader agencies of class separation or the constitutional state as defined by Marxism[2]. The debate has taken a more cultural perspective advocating the need to define groups according to ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation[3] and falling under the broad umbrella of identity politics. This movement embraces cultural diversity and the right to be different, but I would argue that the media has merely created very large generalised representations of minority groups which merely define them according to generic

[1] Carr, E, H. 1987. *What is History? 2nd Edition*. London: Penguin, pg 11.
[2] Macey, D. 2001. *Dictionary of Critical Theory*. London and New York: Penguin, pg 197.
[3] Ibid

stereotypes rather than contrasting differences. According to Sari Pietikäinen[4], the power of the media creates "one of the most visible and significant arenas for constructing identity" as the media contributes to what we see and how we identify with events and groups (see also Allan[5], Grossberg et al[6], Zelizer[7]). By having an effect on how people see themselves as well as their relation to other groups, the media influences social relations and identities. Lichtenberg[8] argues that the media's point of view depends on the economic and political structure, the institutional role of the press and the characteristics of the media itself. This is not a new argument, Noam Chomsky[9], a world famous professor of linguistics and a controversial intellectual, introduced the concept of the Propaganda Model[10] with Edward Herman. In their book, *Manufacturing Consent*, Chomsky and Herman[11] argue that news reporting remains superficial because any news story will pass through a series of filters before a network will broadcast it and this process merely 'manufactures consent for those in power'. Although their argument pertains to news discourse, their argument is relevant to all forms of media because as

[4] Pietikäinen, S. 2003. "Indigenous Identity in Print: Representations of the Sami in News Discourse" in *Discourse and Ideology*, Vol 14 (5): 586.
[5] Allan, S. 1999. *News Culture.* Buckingham: Open University Press.
[6] Grossberg, L, Wartella, E and Whitney, D, C. 1998. *Mediamaking, Mass Media in a Popular Culture*. London: Sage.
[7] Zelizer, B. 1997. "Journalists as Interpretive Communities" in Berkowitz, D (ed.) *Social Meaning of News.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pg 401- 419.
[8] Lichtenberg, J. 1991. "Foundation and Limits of Freedom of the Press" in Lichtenberg, J (ed.) *Freedom of the Press*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pg 102-136.
[9] Chomsky, N & Herman, E, S. 1994. *Manufacturing Consent*. London: Vintage.
[10] The Propaganda Model provides a useful description of market-led media, since it was first introduced, it has however, received several critiques (see Entman, R. 1990. "News as Propaganda"in *Journal of Communication*, Vol 40 (winter): 124-127, Klaehn, J. 2003. "Behind the Invisible Curtain of Scholarly Criticism: Revisiting the Propaganda Model" in *Journalism Studies*, Vol 4 (3): 363 and Corner, J. 2003. "Debate: The Model in Question. A Response to Klaehn on Herman and Chomsky" in *European Journal of Communication*, Vol 18 (3): 367-374. In 2002, Jeffery Klaehn published an article in the *European Journal of Communication* about the Propaganda Model and some criticisms about it. John Corner then responded to the initial Klaehn article in 2003 and Klaehn responded to Corners criticism in the same 2003 journal). The use of the model within this research is merely to highlight the filtration process of information and will not be discussed on a critical level. For the purpose of this reading, it will be referred to according to its initial application.
[11] Ibid, pg 1-35

one can see from the previous chapters, different types of media merely continue the original positions created within the news, including film. In addition, The Propaganda Model deals specifically with news media, but it is applicable to film. The next section will first examine the model before applying it to *The Kingdom* and *Hotel Rwanda*.

In a retrospective article on the Propaganda Model, Herman[12] writes that because the model suggests that the media serves antidemocratic ends, mainstream debates on media bias often exclude it. He also argues that the dominant media are entrenched in the market system, "they are profit-seeking businesses, owned by very wealthy people (or companies): and they are funded largely by advertisers who are also profit-seeking entities, and who want their ads to appear in a supportive selling environment"[13]. The model is important because it serves as a platform which links the reporting of events with commerce and industry. The model also highlights to what extent political and economic interests influence news reporting.

Chomsky and Herman[14] identify that the news filters may work independently of individuals and organisations but ultimately the model "describes a decentralised and nonconspiratorial market system of control and processing". The model is characterised by five filters; the first filter Size, Ownership and Profit Orientation, acknowledges that we live in an era where a few large conglomerate corporations own news media[15]. The second filter Advertising License refers to income for the station. Advertisers will pay to

[12] Herman, E, S. 2003. "The Propaganda Model: A Retrospective" http://www.chomsky.infor/onchomsky/20031209.htm, pg 1, accessed 2008-11-17.
[13] Ibid, pg 2.
[14] Ibid
[15] Chomsky, N & Herman, E, S. 1994. *Manufacturing Consent*. London: Vintage, pg 3.

have their adverts broadcast, but this is very specific to the types of programmes, target audience and audience expectation[16]. An advertiser will only want his/her advertisements to appear in a supportive selling environment[17]. The third filter Sourcing, refers to who the journalists are and how deadlines to get a story to air, influence the production process. This plays a crucial role in today's competitive 'instant' environment[18]. This filter also includes who is given a voice as discussed at the end of Chapter 2. One obtains a perspective of the ideology of a text, when one examines who is interviewed and what has been broadcast from the interview. In addition, how producers frame issues for an audience will have a direct influence on how an audience perceives an event/culture/society. The way in which a story frames an event can promote notions of 'othering' which will be discussed in detail later on in this chapter. The fourth filter Flak, refers to the negative responses of a news item. These are eventually absorbed into the system through the hegemonic process[19]. The fact that our media resource centres are now only limited to the Associated Press and Reuters enhances the fact that "those who subsidise the media by providing sources for copy gain greater leverage"[20]. In addition, the inclusion of PR agencies and their ability to manipulate press coverage on behalf of the corporate/government paying clients has a direct influence on how the media transmits information[21]. The final filter refers to the Ideological Assumptions created during the cold war, mainly with the superiority of capitalism over communism[22]. This

[16] Ibid, pg 14.
[17] Herman, E, S. 2003. "The Propaganda Model: A Retrospective" http://www.chomsky.infor/onchomsky/20031209.htm, pg 2, accessed 2008-11-17.
[18] Chomsky, N & Herman, E, S. 1994. *Manufacturing Consent*. London: Vintage, pg 18.
[19] Ibid, pg 26.
[20] Herman, E, S. 2003. "The Propaganda Model: A Retrospective" http://www.chomsky.infor/onchomsky/20031209.htm, pg 7, accessed 2008-11-17.
[21] Ibid, pg 8
Chomsky, N & Herman, E, S. 1994. *Manufacturing Consent*. London: Vintage, pg 29.

filter has weakened with the collapse of the Soviet Union, but a new ideological force has taken over, namely, the global powers and the affects of market industries. The entire global economy has been affected by the recent volatility of the American and European markets. The recent bankruptcies of huge American banks ricochet into the global market, causing a recession which is penetrating on a global level.

According to Chomsky and Herman the filters function to demonstrate media behaviour and performance and not media affects. The model demonstrates how information passes through the system and how the media operates on the basis of a set of ideological premises[23], a notion that one can link to Baudrillard's concept of mass communication (see Chapter 1). The information remains superficial because it has passed through the filtration system. It remains a commodity because it is clearly styled and packaged for its audience.

If one looks back on the findings of Chapter 1, it is evident that the whole Hollywood system is based on its financial strength and ultimately the investors will affect how and what is produced in terms of film content. One can use Chomsky and Herman's filters to understand the process of producing a film. The first filter Size, Ownership and Profit Orientation , will have a direct affect on how the media will present certain groups within a narrative. The investors will control their own representation. This position has direct reference to how each film presents the Arabs or the people of Rwanda. As will become

[23] Herman, E, S. 2003. "The Propaganda Model: A Retrospective" http://www.chomsky.infor/onchomsky/20031209.htm, pg 1, accessed 2008-11-17.

evident in this chapter, both films base their representations on typical stereotypes already created within other texts.

The second filter Advertising License, will influence the flow of information so that it suits its target audience. *Hotel Rwanda* was an Anglo-Italian-South African production and falls under the alternative film stream[24], this fact merely accentuates how the income source affects the nature and type of story. The film received many awards, 3 Oscar nominations, another 28 nominations with 12 wins[25]. This success aligns the film with Hollywood mainstream, which implies that the mainstream sector is starting to take note of stories from the Periphery. It falls apart, however, when one looks at history repeating itself with the genocide occurring in Darfur and how long the genocide took place before the international community started to take note of events in that region. The *New York Times* on 13 April 2006 commented, "Rwanda should have taught us all something; it is tragic that it apparently has not ... referring to the genocide taking place in Darfur"[26]. It was only when celebrities (such as Bono, George Clooney and Sharon Stone) started to talk, that the world started to take notice of the events that were happening in Darfur. The advertising sector becomes important because the advertising slots provide one with information regarding the target audience and whether that audience is able to make a change within the current political environment. As became evident with Darfur, once

[24] In the early 1980s, Auteurism and independence converged as Hollywood conglomerated (see Chapter 1, footnote 56, pg 26) with the new Hollywood studios devoting their attention to blockbuster filmmaking. The creativity that fueled the type of films which emerged during the 1970s found new residence on the margins of the studio mainstream. This alternative film stream included the American independent, European, Asian, Latin American or films by diasporas. (See Dennison, S & Lim, H (eds.) 2006. *Remapping World Cinema: Identity, Culture and Politics in Film*. London: Wallflower Press).
[25] IMDB, "*Hotel Rwanda*" http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0359169/, accessed 2008-11-17.
[26] Soares, A. 2004. "*Hotel Rwanda*" http://www.altfg.com/blog/film-reviews/hotel-rwanda-terry-george-don-cheadle, accessed 2008-03-16.

influential people started promoting awareness (through advertising and Public Relations), only then did the international community react. *The Kingdom* on the other hand works on a different level because it is clearly a Hollywood mainstream production and functions to re-instate the status quo and to legitimise the War on Terror.

The third filter Sourcing, in the film scenario would refer to the researchers and sometimes the scriptwriters who examine the historic events (through news media) in order to understand the events and how they initially occurred. The fact that the source of events, namely the news, has already gone through a filtering system of its own, merely enhances to what extent the media dilutes historic information. This position continues within both films with reference to the positioning of the story and the representation of marginalised or Periphery groups.

The fourth filter Flak, does not play a major role in film production because the narrative merely incorporates adverse groups and negative responses through hegemony. Finally, the fifth filter Ideological Assumptions, continue with film because the whole Hollywood system thrives on the success and superiority of the capitalist system. Despite the fact that *Hotel Rwanda* is an alternative production, the success of both films *The Kingdom* as well as *Hotel Rwanda*, may be attributed to their similarity to typical products that emerge out of Hollywood as they both involved Hollywood producers and thus fit within Chomsky and Herman's filtration system.

In an overview of the Propaganda Model, David Cromwell[27] examines media conglomerates in order to show how economic interests can affect cultural representation. He draws on the General Electric (who are also owners of NBC) and Westinghouse merger. He writes, "both are huge, diversified multinational companies heavily involved in the controversial areas of weapons production and nuclear power. It is difficult to conceive that press neutrality would not be compromised in these areas"[28]. Here Cromwell links economic interests to ideological thought. In addition, Cromwell[29] states, "press freedom is limited by the simple fact that the owners of the media corporations are driven by free market ideology" which will impact on how the media represents and identifies different cultures because the representation will serve economic interests.

Although this argument does not relate to film directly, it presents an overview of the current global environment in terms of who is in power and whose stories are told (see Chapter 1). Cromwell's reference to media corporations also emphasizes to what degree the market is saturated in terms of how ownership links to the control of information which shapes ideological perceptions pertaining to cultural identity. This position reinforces Chomsky and Herman's Propaganda Model and underpins to what extent cultural identities are created within the news media and then continued within the cultural media. As has become evident through the analysis of both films in Chapter 2, *Hotel Rwanda* and *The Kingdom* are quite specific in terms of how they represent African and Arab culture.

[27] Cromwell, D. 2002. "The Propaganda Model: An Overview" http://www.chomsky.info/onchomsky/2002----.htm, pg 1, accessed 2008-11-17.
[28] Ibid
[29] Ibid

CULTURAL IDENTITY

Stuart Hall[30] regards the conception of identity as a strategic phenomenon, the subject of continuous play of history, culture and power which is both a matter of becoming, as well as of being. Hall's point of view demonstrates that the whole concept of identity is political and can change according to how history can change via those in power and how culture re-instates this change.

In view of Hall's argument, one can then take the position that identity and culture are fluid and the media can assimilate or discard either one, the most influential being the news. As a result, one views questions of identity and power relations as a discursive construction which one may negotiate or contest, thereby shifting the meaning according to the necessity and requirements of those in power (see Chouliaraki and Fairclough[31], Fairclough and Wodak[32] & Wodak[33]). The Bush Administration has shifted the identity of the Arab world over the last fifteen years in order to accommodate the Patriot Act which was released on 26 October 2001[34]. The government initiated this Act to detect and act on potential security threats in the interests of national security as a result of 9-11.

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[30] Hall, S. 1996. "Who Needs 'Identity'?" in Hall, S & du Gay (eds.) *Questions of Cultural Identity*. London: Sage, pg 1-17.

[31] Chouliaraki, L & Fairclough, N. 1999. *Discourse in Late Modernity. Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

[32] Fairclough, N & Wodak, R. 1997. "Critical Discourse Analysis. An Overview" in van Dijk (ed.) *Discourse Analysis. A Multidisciplinary Introduction*. London: Sage, pg 258-284.

[33] Wodak, R. 2001. "What CDA is About – A Summary of its History, Important Concepts and its Developments" in Wodak, R & Meyer, M (eds.) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage, pg 1-13.

[34] The USA Patriot Act was enacted by the US Congress at the request of then President George Bush in response to the terrorist acts of 9-11. The act revised the nation's surveillance laws that expanded the government's authority to spy on its own citizens, while simultaneously reducing checks on those powers like judicial oversight, public accountability and the ability to challenge government searches in court. See Electronic Privacy Information Centre. 2001. "The Patriot Act" http://epic.org/privacy/terrorism/hr3162.html, accessed 2009-07-17.

Some critics argue that this Act allows American culture to dominate and alienate other groups/cultures and it has resulted in the sometimes unmotivated alienation of the Arabs. One witnesses this with Hollywood film's representation of the villain. During the Cold War (although this was before the 2001 Patriot Act, I am using it to demonstrate what has happened as a result of the Patriot Act), the villains were usually communist Russians whereas post 9-11, the villains are now extremist Arabs. The Patriot Act has merely exacerbated the situation, because any act violence or Human Rights violation can fall away in the interest of national security. This can be as subtle as the way in which an Arab-looking person is treated by a customs official right to the other end of the spectrum which will involve direct force/abuse or physical aggression as one witnessed with the Abu-Graib prison footage. *The Kingdom* plays on the acceptance of the way an official of the American government can treat someone from the Arab world when Agent Fleury threatens the Saudi Prince in order to conduct his investigation[35]. His behaviour is arrogant but he knows he can get away with it, because his motivation is in the interest of national security. With a new President and Administration under Barak Obama now in power for the next four years, it will be interesting to see whether the Arab identity will shift again or whether it will remain stagnant. This relates specifically to the way Americans perceive and treat Arabs as a result of 9-11 (see Chapter 2).

CREATING POLARITIES – THE 'OTHER'[36]

[35] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:21:27

[36] The theoretical framework of this section was initially discussed in my Masters dissertation with reference to documentary theory. Šakota-Kokot, T. 2001. *The Construction of a Preferred Reading in the Television Documentary The Death of Yugoslavia.* MA Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand.

In creating simplified narratives of complex events, the film medium often creates an 'other'. Taking Sturken's notion of the American identity into consideration, the 'other' emerges in numerous conflicts where America has represented itself, namely, Vietnam, the Gulf, Iraq and the genocide in Rwanda. In each conflict, there is a clear distinction of the dominant as opposed to the marginalised. Edward Saïd[37], Renata Salecl[38], Roland Barthes[39] as well as Slavoj Žižek[40] have varying positions regarding the notion of the 'other' (see also Sardar[41], Macfie[42] and Turner[43]). It is necessary to examine these perspectives because they provide insight into the different ways in which the film medium functions in creating an 'other'. Film creates an 'other' when it simplifies its narratives, but it also creates marginalised 'others' when it focuses on Western stories as opposed to stories emerging from the Periphery. This section shall compare and contrast different positions regarding the 'other', commencing with the Oriental position of Saïd and moving to a more multicultural interpretation of the 'other' with Slavoj Žižek.

The Oriental 'other'

In his book, *Orientalism,* Saïd[44] identifies the exotic construction of the Orient as a Western concept. He writes that the idea of the Orient is a

> System of representations framed by political forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness and Western empire. The Orient exists

[37] Saïd, E, W. 1979. *Orientalism.* New York: Vintage Books.
[38] Laclau, E. (ed.) 1994. *The Making of Political Identities.* London and New York: Verso.
[39] Barthes, R. 1957. *Mythologies*. Paris: Editions du Seuil (also available in English translation: Lavers, A. 1989. London: Paladin).
[40] Žižek, S. 1997."Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism" in *New Left Review*, Vol 225 (September/October): 28-51.
[41] Sardar, Z. 1998. *Postmodernism and the Other: The New Imperialism of Western Culture*. USA: Pluto Press.
[42] Macfie, A, L. 2001. *Orientalism: A Reader.* New York: New York University Press.
[43] Turner, B, S. 1989. "From Orientalism to Global Sociology" in *Sociology*, Vol 23 (4): 629-638.
[44] Saïd, E, W. 1979. *Orientalism.* New York: Vintage Books.

> for the West, and is constructed by and in relation to the West. It is a mirror image of what is inferior and alien ("other") to the West[45].

Furthermore, he argues that the "orient", in European discourses, is a term which imagines or inscribes "a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences"[46] where the Orient "has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience[47]. Saïd's position proposes a discussion around who one classifies as 'other' and how one constructs this classification through Western eyes. This is of relevance as it opens a debate about the representation of events, specifically with reference to how Western film represents its 'other' according to Western ideals. It is within this framework that I argue that the Saudi soldiers in the *film* are the 'other': the "image, idea, personality [and] experience"[48] of the soldiers is imagined or constructed as an identity that is used to define the West by contrast, an identity through difference. This perception relates back directly to the analysis of the way *The Kingdom* represents the Saudi Army through General Abdul Malik, during the interrogation sequence[49] as discussed in Chapter 2. The images of Saudi Arabia also feeds into the fundamentalist perceptions associated with the Arabs. However, one is witnessing a turning point as the recent Bush Administration (through the media) has tried to move away from these perceptions in order to justify the war in Iraq whilst maintaining Arab Allies. Yet, despite this shift within the media, *The Kingdom* still thrives on Arab fundamentalist representations. This is epitomised in the

[45] Sered, D. 1996. "Orientalism" http://www.english.emory.edu/Bhari/Orientatlism.html, pg 1, accessed 2008-11-03.
[46] Saïd, E, W. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, pg 1.
[47] Ibid, pg 1-2
[48] Ibid, pg 2
[49] Sequence starts at Time code 00:25:23

first Act, during the interrogation of Sergeant Haytham[50], as discussed in Chapter 2, when Colonel Abdul Malik is assured that Haytham is innocent, the Colonel instructs Haytham should anyone ask about his interrogation injuries, he says "You were injured when you used your vehicle to protect your country. Do you understand?" This comment suggests that there is tyranny and fear within the Arab army which does not allow for any freedom of speech.

The fear towards the Arabs and the current political climate continues during a discussion between Agent Fleury and the other FBI agents at the de-briefing[51]. The dialogue functions within the narrative to inform the audience of the name of the villain behind the attacks. Fleury comments,

> Abu Hamza. Saudi Al Qaeda. Bin-Laden-wanna-be. We know he was in Afghanistan, Iraq … He's clearly becoming increasingly active …

This comment functions on numerous levels. Firstly, the film advocates authenticity by referring directly to Al Qaeda, the crisis in Afghanistan and the War in Iraq. By placing the actual referents within the framework of the fiction validates the message of the film and aligns it with events in the 'real' world. Fleury's comment implies that the villains are obtaining more control, and are functioning in numerous places. Ideologically, the film advocates the War on Terror because it presents the position that those in authority are vulnerable and the extremists may take over. This scene further validates Edward Saïd's[52] concept that one has to examine who classifies the 'other' and how the West

[50] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:14:05
[51] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:13:15
[52] Saïd, E, W. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, pg 2.

constructs this classification through its own eyes. By referring to 'real' conflicts, Agent Fleury identifies the 'other' through his own Western experiences.

The conflict in Rwanda in *film* also draws on typically Western perceptions in order to substantiate the West's understanding of the events within Rwanda. This occurs for two reasons, firstly it relates to Samura's[53] comment that stereotypical labelling is sometimes necessary to initiate change (see Section on **The Surplus 'other'** later in this chapter), but more importantly, it endorses separatism between the Developed and the Developing states. Throughout the film (with the exception of the main characters), *Hotel Rwanda* presents the aggressors as well as the victims as groups who are nameless and faceless. On the one hand, it re-affirms to what extent the killings were merciless and random, but by playing into this principle, the film attributes the same agency. Paul plays directly into this position at the beginning of the film when he goes to fetch money from the *Hotel Diplomat*. When he emerges[54], all his neighbours and family are on their knees on the floor with the army Captain hovering over them with his pistol in his hand. He slaps Paul with the pistol, accuses him of being a traitor and instructs Paul to shoot one of the neighbours because they are Tutsi. Paul manages to save them by commenting, "These are not rebels, look at them. Soon they will be worthless to you. Why not take some money for your work". Although Paul emerges a hero in the situation, he identifies his family and neighbours as the same nameless and faceless mass without individual identities or differences that Saïd proposes, thereby constructing an identity through difference.

[53] Lehrer, J. 2001. "Cry Freetown" http://www.cryfreetown.org, accessed 2008-10-23.
[54] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:25:50

In addition, when this film presents Africa, the images focus on primitive or barbaric elements such as massacred bodies lying in heaps or starving children. These images portray a very negative element and feed into global perceptions regarding Africa (see Shaw[55], Shoemaker and Reese[56], Robinson[57]).

Saïd presents the position that the West should not identify or define the Orient because in doing so, it merely creates an identity through difference. Bernard Lewis[58] critiques Saïd's position by providing an analogy of Oriental studies to Ancient Greek Classical studies. He comments,

> Imagine a situation in which a group if patriots and radicals from Greece decides that the profession of classical studies is insulting to the great heritage of Hellas, and that those engaged in these studies, known as classicists, are the latest manifestation of a deep and evil conspiracy, incubated for centuries, hatched in Western Europe, fledged in America, the purpose of which is to denigrate the Greek achievement and subjugate the Greek land and peoples[59].

Lewis's counter-argument opens a debate around representation and poses the question of who represents and how is it being represented? According to Lewis, if one used the same analogy as Saïd with reference to the ancient Greeks, one would deny a whole

[55] Shaw, M. 1996. *Civil Society and Media in Global Crises: Representing Distant Violence.* London and New York: Pinter.
[56] Shoemaker, P, J & Reese, S, D. 1996. *Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass media Content 2nd Ed*. USA: Longman Publishers.
[57] Robinson, P. 2002. *The CNN Effect: The Myth of News, Foreign Policy and Intervention*. London and New York: Routledge.
[58] Lewis, B. "The Question of Orientalism" http://www.dartmouth.edu, accessed 2007-04-04.
[59] Ibid

movement regarding the knowledge one has of the ancient classicists. Lewis[60] provokes to the extreme when he writes,

> Some non-Greeks may be permitted to join in this great endeavour provided that they give convincing evidence of their competence, as for example by campaigning for the Greek cause in Cyprus, by demonstrating their ill will to the Turks … Non-Greeks who will not or cannot meet these requirements are obviously hostile, and therefore not equipped to teach Greek studies in a fair and reasonable manner.

Although Lewis' analogy seems a little absurd with reference to Greek culture, it opens the debate regarding Orientalism. Who should discuss the Orient and will the discussion always evolve around cultural representation? In order to understand this a little more, one has to look at the roots of the term. Originally 'Orientalism' stemmed from a school of painting, namely, those from Western Europe who visited the Middle East and North Africa[61]. The second refers more to its current definition, as a branch of scholarship[62]. Although, the aim of this research is not to question whether one has the right to discuss the Orient or not, this discussion is merely drawing awareness to how one creates political and cultural identities when considering other cultures. There have been a number of scholars who have spoken around the concept of the 'other'. For the purpose of this chapter, however, I shall only discuss and compare the fantasy, mythical and surplus debates in relation to the case studies.

The fantasy 'other'

[60] Ibid, pg 3
[61] Ibid
[62] Ibid

In her article, "The Crisis of Identity and the Struggle for New Hegemony in the Former Yugoslavia", Renata Salecl[63] draws on Jacques-Alain Miller's[64] psychoanalytic interpretation of the ambiguous process of othering, where one bases one's hatred of the 'other' on the surplus of the 'other'. The enemy becomes a fantasy positioned and representing everything that is 'other'. Salecl's position becomes particularly important with reference to civil conflicts where ethnic identity becomes the core motivation for hatred and warfare. This draws on the 'us-them' type scenario where different groups are polarised and treated according to their ethnic identity. For example, the Hutu extremists fuelled ethnic hatred via radio messages stating that the Tutsi's were cockroaches in Rwanda which resulted in the genocide[65]. Salecl[66] also introduces the concept that "our hatred of the Other is really the hatred of the part (the surplus) of our own enjoyment which we find unbearable and cannot acknowledge and which we transpose ('project") into the Other via a fantasy of the 'Other's enjoyment'". Our hatred of the 'other' includes, therefore, our "hatred of the Other's enjoyment, of the particular way the Other enjoys"[67]. *Hotel Rwanda* depicts the surplus of the 'other' in terms of their drinking habits. The film achieves this through the way in which Paul bribes General Bizimungu. He also makes use of this surplus tendency at the *Hotel Diplomat* when he is trying to remember the combination to the safe[68]. He tells the soldiers who are waiting impatiently "Gentlemen, you'll find some chocolate and maybe a few beers in the fridge. Don't let them go to waste". This position is re-enforced when Paul wants to leave the hotel and

[63] In Laclau, E (ed.) 1994. *The Making of Political Identities.* London and New York: Verso.
[64] Ibid
[65] Kuperman, A, J. 2003. "How the Media Missed the Rwandan Genocide". *International Press Institute* http://www.hawaii.edu/powerkills/COMM.7.8.03/HTM' pg 1, accessed 2006-02-28.
[66] In Laclau, E (ed.) 1994. *The Making of Political Identities.* London and New York: Verso, pg 212.
[67] Ibid, pg 211
[68] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:24:30

sees the soldiers arguing over the chocolates and beer. The imagery within the film presents the audience with an army who are drunken rebels and kill without conscience. George Rutaganda re-affirms this position when Paul visits him for the last time at the end of the film[69]. He sees a group of women in a cage outside, exposed, crying and dressed in only their underclothes. Paul looks over at them to which George comments "Leave them, they're just Tutsi prostitutes". These images confirm that the Hutu rebels are everything extreme and one can identify them according to everything that one is not on Western standards.

The Kingdom also draws on surplus extremities within the Arab culture. When the authorities eventually allow the FBI team authority to engage in their own investigation, Agent Mayes is in the morgue with a Saudi Pathologist[70]. She examines one of the Muslim bodies and as she is about to take the arm for a fingerprint, one of the policemen assaults her in Arabic, pointing a gun towards her. This is an un-translated argument but his aggression towards her, clearly presents the fact that the policemen disapproves of her presence. Sergeant Haytham comments, "You cannot touch any Muslims". This scene draws a distinction between the audience and the Arab world in the film. It differentiates the two cultures and presents the Arab culture as being extreme, especially with their attitude towards women. The film bases one's hatred of the other on the surplus of the other[71], in this instance referring to the cultural differences that separate one (the viewer) from the 'other' (the Arab culture).

[69] Sequence starts at Time Code 01:08:25
[70] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:58:55
[71] Laclau, E (ed.) 1994. *The Making of Political Identities.* London and New York: Verso, pg 212.

The film makes reference to the Arab culture and its attitude towards women at three other points in the film. The first is when the Americans enter their sleeping facility – gym. Colonel Al-Ghazi comments to Agent Mayes that he apologises for her sleeping quarters[72], "We tried to find you pink curtains". This comment subverts Mayes' position within the group. The second occurs the following morning when the group meets the Saudi Prince for the first time. Janet is wearing a short sleeved T-shirt[73], one of the Prince's entourage discretely places Leavitt's jacket over her shoulders to which Mayes looks up defiantly. The third incident that draws on the inequality between men and women in Saudi Arabia is when Colonel Al-Ghazi tells Fleury that Mayes is not welcome at the dinner with the Prince[74].

All of these incidences, within the film, function in creating an 'other' and separating Western liberalism with Middle-Eastern conservatism. Through these scenes, the film assumes a Western, mainly European superiority over all non-European cultures, implying that the West has progressed and developed, whilst the Middle East has remained stagnant and conservative. Edward Saïd[75] writes "There is in addition the hegemony of European ideas about the Orient, themselves reiterating European superiority over Oriental backwardness". Saïd's comment merely reaffirms the presumption that the West will hegemonise any contradictory opinions and absorb them into the general belief that anyone that exists outside of the European norm, is generally 'other'. The film re-instates this position by merely confirming this belief through

[72] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:32:38
[73] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:36:53
[74] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:53:09
[75] Saïd, E, W. 1979. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, pg 7.

focusing on the surplus attitude of the Arab mentality towards Western women (symbolised through Agent Mayes).

The mythical 'other'

One can compare and contrast Salecl's position regarding the surplus and excessiveness of the 'other' with Roland Barthes' notion of myth in the second order of signification (see Chapter 2). Here, Barthes positions "myth" from an anthropological point of view rather than something abstract. It involves the way a culture may conceptualise an abstract topic that is deeply engrained ideologically. Film will represent the 'other', whether they are a fundamentalist, extremist or loyalist in a mythical rather than realistic way, particularly with reference to how the representations of specific groups fit within the narrative. The representation of ethnic individuals has centred on stereotypical iconography and this has become synonymous with the groups they represent. The media repeats popular assumptions such as 'the West is civilised, the Arabs are fundamentalists and Africans are primitive' and continues this type of representation through the memory of each war via the fiction film medium.

Hotel Rwanda draws on all the stereotypic representations of Africa through its cinematography. The film represents the Rwandans, especially the Hutus as primitive and without scruples. This is evident when some Hutu rebels arrive at the hotel in a jeep waving AK-47s and machetes in the air[76]. They throw a UN helmet into the driveway of the hotel. Colonel Oliver picks it up and looks at the bloodied helmet with a bullet hole in it. The film communicates that the Hutus have no respect for neutral peacekeepers

[76] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:42:58

through the image of the rebels dancing and celebrating their power over the United Nations and provoking Colonel Oliver by waving their machetes in his face because they know he is a peace keeper and cannot retaliate.

The Kingdom continues stereotypical perceptions with reference to the Arabs when the Saudi Prince authorises Agent Sykes to investigate the hole of the second explosion. Agent Sykes, climbs into the muddy crater[77], waist deep in mud and looks up at the Saudi police who are there to assist. He addresses them as if they have never assessed a crime scene:

> Fellas, what we want to do is get this water out of here … see what's really going on. Understand? … Got to get a little dirty, people. Crawl up in it. Make deep contact. You get that? (The Saudis look at Sykes blank yet confused, he continues) Get nasty, dirty, filthy.

This scene re-establishes how intelligent and capable the American FBI team are in contrast to the Saudis. The sequence re-affirms American superiority and does not provide any texture to how the film represents the Saudi police, they remain clueless and their only depiction remains a mythical 'other' whose only identity is typecast according to extremist tendencies with no knowledge as to how to conduct the investigation.

In order to understand Barthes position towards 'myth', it is necessary to address how ideology functions within a society. Bill Nichols[78], examines how ideology functions when a filmmaker and a viewer engage with a film text. Although his writings are

[77] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:58:12
[78] Nichols, B. 1981. *Ideology and the Image: Social Representation in the Cinema and OtherMedia*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

specific to the documentary film form, one can link his argument to Barthes concept of myth as well as to fiction film.

In his earlier work, *Ideology and the Image: Social Representation in the Cinema and Other Media*, Nichols[79] focuses on forms of address and the way in which one constructs images together so as to fit within a given ideology[80]. He writes

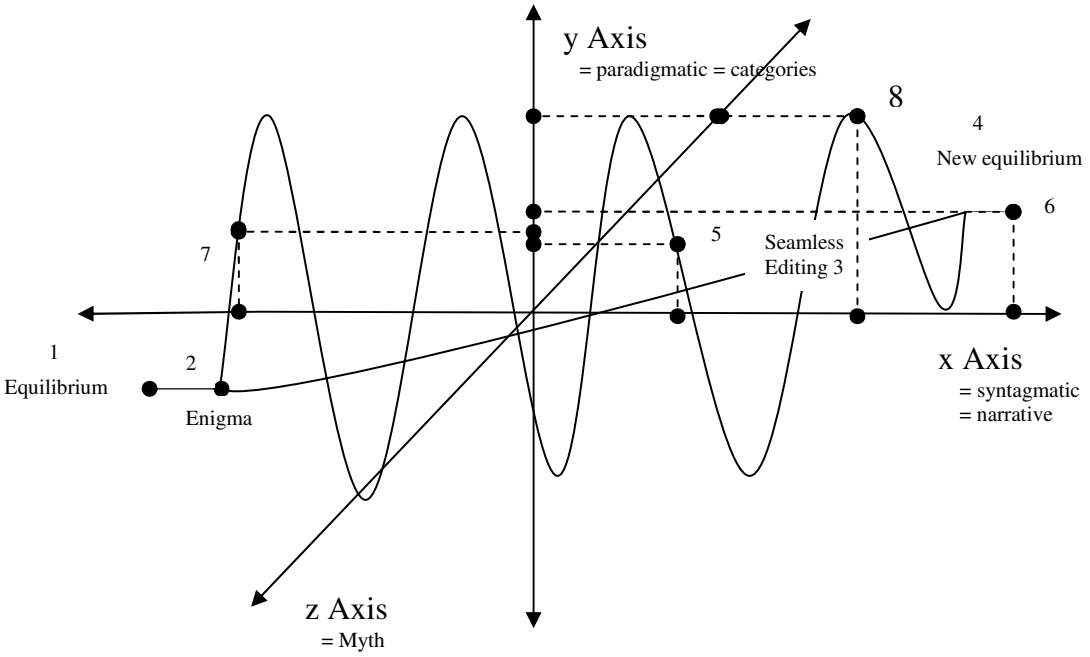
> I want to understand the relation between the cinema and other images and the exploitation at the heart of our economic system. I want to comprehend how our consent to this exploitation is elicited, how images are used to mask or attenuate the experience of oppression in all its forms[81].

He therefore examines the ways in which film images can embody or re-enforce certain positions or beliefs, and how one can use cinema and images to promote ideologies. For Nichols[82], ideology is the image a society gives itself in order to perpetuate itself. He writes "ideology uses the fabrication of images and the processes of representation to persuade us that how things are is how they ought to be and that the place provided for us is the place we ought to have"[83]. Thus, according to Nichols, film continuously re-instates the viewer's position in society. This builds on Marx and Larrain as well as Gramsci's process of hegemony (as discussed in the previous chapter), in which one understands ideology to be, in part, the "construction of social consciousness"[84].

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[79] Ibid
[80] Nichols refers to the term "ideology", quite superficially and merely as a promotion of dominant belief systems.
[81] Nichols, B. 1981. *Ideology and the Image: Social Representation in the Cinema and Other media*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pg ix.
[82] Ibid, pg 1.
[83] Ibid
[84] Hunt, A & Purvis, T. 1993. "Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology..." in *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol 44 (3): 477.

Figure 3: History, Myth and Narrative



If one builds on the graph introduced in Chapter 2 (pgs 55 and 100), one can understand the structure of narrative from a third dimension (*fig. 3*, namely, the z-axis). Nichols[85] introduces the notion of a third axis in his article, "History, Myth and Narrative". Here he argues that a text will reinstate one's position within society and proposes that there are three factors which underlie *all* documentaries. Although Nichols discusses this concept with reference to documentary, the argument is relevant to fiction. The three factors are: 1) reference to the historical body of a social actor (y-axis); 2) the representation of a narrative and/or character (x-axis); and 3) the transformation of the body through the iconography of the heroic or mythic (z-axis)[86].

[85] Nichols, B. 1991. "History, Myth and Narrative in Documentary", in *Film Quarterly*, Vol 41 (1), Fall, 1987: 9 - 20.
[86] Ibid

Fig. 3 takes the initial concepts of the Classic Hollywood Narrative and de Saussure's paradigmatic and syntagmatic axis as discussed in Chapter 2 and added Nichols' proposal of three linear axes which exist at right angles to each other (in the same way as 'x', 'y' and 'z' exist at right angles to each other in a mathematical graph). According to Nichols, a documentary will fall at a point of intersection of the three axes (8), this meeting point helps classify the interpretation and intended reading promoted by the text. The axes, which work in a similar way to the paradigmatic/syntagmatic axes as described in Chapter 2 (page 100), can be identified as follows: 1) the x-axis - narrative, which determines the movement of the film, the resolutions of its enigmas and its closure; 2) the y-axis - history, the referential axis which testifies to the open-endedness of the historical realm within which the 'story' is rooted; and 3) the z-axis - myth, the creation of spectacle and the identification with the 'to-be-looked-at-ness' of the image[87]. One can compare this position to 'history', 'culture' and 'memory' as discussed in the previous chapter, where 'y' is history, 'z' memory and 'x' is equivalent to culture. Every film will have its own, unique position on each of these axes. One can start identifying the extent to which a 'preferred' reading is promoted at the point of intersection of x, y and z because one can examine 'narrative', 'history' and 'myth' in relation to one other in the same way that one examines the syntagmatic in relation to the paradigmatic as discussed in Chapter 2. Roland Barthes[88] originally highlighted this perception in his essay "Myth Today" when he attempted to destroy the obviousness of myth by introducing a historical and political dimension to analysing visuals and texts[89]. What Nichols presents is that

[87] Ibid, pg 13.
[88] Barthes, R. 1957. *Mythologies*. Paris: Editions du Seuil (also available in English translation: Lavers, A. 1989. London: Paladin).
[89] Ibid

there is a degree of magnitude amongst the point of intersection of each axis (8) within a greater narrative structure, thereby introducing how history, myth and narrative function in relation to one another and promote idealised perceptions which according to Nichols, is the 'voice' of the text which was introduced in Chapter 2 but is necessary to examine in greater depth at this point because of its relevance to myth and how it creates the 'other'.

Nichols[90] develops the concept of voice in his article "The Voice of Documentary", where he examines the strategies and styles of the documentary film form, but once again, one can examine his argument in relation to fiction film. He writes that "new strategies must constantly be fabricated to re-present 'things as they are' and still others to contest this very representation"[91]. He focuses on this idea in relation to the 'voice' of the filmmaker in which "far too many filmmakers appear to have lost"[92] the element of contestation. Nichols implies that ideological beliefs influence the 'voice' of the film, thereby, making it unitary and 'naturalised'. Furthermore, one incorporates the viewer into the cause-effect editing technique of the Hollywood narrative as discussed in Chapter 2, so that he/she is absorbed into the position towards the mythical 'other'.

The films further encourage the opinion that the images are authentic because they are based on historical events, but their use within the greater narrative structure is important

[90] Nichols, B. 1988. "The Voice of Documentary", in Rosenthal, A (ed.) *New Challenges for Documentary*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, pg 48.
[91] Ibid
[92] Ibid, pg 50.

because this has an affect on the way one reads and interprets a text, in other words, it has an impact on the way the viewer will be absorbed into the ideology of the text.

In his article "Questions of Magnitude", Nichols[93] calls the moment at which a text submits an audience into its ideology, as *the crisis moment*. He takes the initial idea from Frank Lentricchia[94] who argues that "the aesthetic moment of linkage (between ideology and form), is the manipulative moment at which the subject-audience is submitted to the productive force of ideology". In understanding Nichols' use of Lentricchia, the "submission" into the text is a question of magnitude, in other words, the relationship between the 'x', 'y' and 'z' axes and how each one influences the other. According to Nichols[95], "Art (or the crisis moment of linkage between form and ideology), not only imitates life but equally influences it", and it achieves this by providing a significant form for the very aspects of subjective human experience it claims only to reflect[96]. In reading a film form, the audience becomes 'literate' in that form through repetition and the association of similarities that create a familiarity with the form. The viewer starts to recognise the framework which encompasses a film through identification and association. The audience thus becomes literate in that form, merely by watching it. Therefore, on an ideological level, the fiction film form that is based on fact, fits within the moulded expectations of the viewer. The viewer (who forms part of a society) watches the events which fit within a pre-existing narrative structure (as discussed in Chapter 2). In other words, there is no a priori existence of a form (belief, ideology and

[93] In Corner, J (Ed.) 1986. *Documentary and the Mass Media*. USA: Edward Arnold pg 107 - 122.
[94] Ibid, pg 110.
[95] Ibid
[96] Ibid

human experience) within a society because the viewer forms part of the society. In contrast, the audience has to be able to identify and recognise the form before he/she can understand the essence of the subject matter. In order for this to occur, the essence takes shape around the form of the film (which the audience has become literate in through the act of watching). This becomes evident both in documentary and fiction film forms. Through the act of watching, the viewer becomes familiar with the exposition, followed by a probable closure or resolution evident in many fiction films. This is how one links ideology to a film form – the ideological expectations of the viewer dictate how the film form represents them.

In fiction theory, one can link the ideological expectations as discussed by Nichols' "absorption process" to verisimilitude (probability) [97] as discussed in Chapter 2 (*fig. 1*, pg 55). Both dictate that the intra-diegetic world portrayed within the film narrative has to be believable and identifiable as representing the extra-diegetic world of the 'real', historical world. Through this process, the viewer will be absorbed into the "voice" of the text at the point of contact of the 'x', 'y' and 'z'-axes (8). This is "*the crisis moment* from which consent or contestation emerge[s]"[98]. Thus, the introductory sequence "submits" the viewer into *the crisis moment* and attempts to ensure consent, via the editing, into the idea that the films representation of the 'other' remains valid and truthful.

[97] Cook, P. (ed.) 1985. *The Cinema Book*. London: British Film Institute, pg 216.
[98] Ibid

Hotel Rwanda also magnifies itself towards the mythical axis in its representation of the African 'other'. Although the people who were able to afford staying in the hotel have economic status, the visual never really presents this. The audience only knows this when Paul realises that the UN will not intervene[99], he calls the elite Tutsi refugees and tells them:

> There will be no rescue, no intervention force. We can only save ourselves. Call any influential contacts or friends abroad, tell them what will happen to us. Say goodbye but when you say goodbye, say it as though you're reaching through and shaking their hand. Let them know if they let go of that hand, you will die. We must shame them into sending help.

Only at this point in the film is the audience aware that these individuals are actually part of the Rwandan elite. The visuals of the refugees staying in the hotel do not support this. The victims remain an anonymous mass, walking around barefoot, eating with their hands and sleeping on the floor. Although these actions are well accepted customs in Africa, they are frowned upon from a Western perspective. These visuals within the film talk to the mythical representations of African culture.

The Kingdom draws on all the mythical representations of the Orient as highlighted by Edward Saïd, the desert landscapes, the black VIP convoy vehicles, the conservative women and the dangerous fundamentalists hidden deep within the community.

[99] Sequence starts at Time Code 01:02:02

The surplus 'other'

Žižek[100] introduces the concept of fundamentalism in "Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism". He argues that one will never look at the positive elements of the 'other' but rather the fundamental and radical elements of its customs and politics. This becomes particularly relevant to the way the film medium represents ethnic conflict. It harbours on the negative aspects and creates a fixed identity around those characteristics.

It is thus evident that both Žižek and Salecl's discussions present that the 'other' becomes a fantasy enemy. Žižek argues that the West will always present the 'other' with reference to the negative elements. He writes "any real Other is instantly denounced for its 'fundamentalism', since the kernel of Otherness resides in the regulation of its *jouissance*: the 'real Other' is by definition 'patriarchal', 'violent', never the Other of ethereal wisdom and charming customs"[101]. Neither *The Kingdom*, nor *Hotel Rwanda* focuses on the Arabian or African charm but rather on the violent, fundamentalist Other[102] in the Žižek sense. *The Kingdom* focuses on the fact that the perpetrators are Saudi fundamentalists who exist within the society, Colonel Al-Ghazi confirms this on the rooftop where the attack was originally planned and executed[103]. He says "The man who did this is Saudi – this place, this neighbourhood … if foreigners were up here, someone would say something". This statement re-affirms Žižek's surplus 'other'.

[100] Žižek, S. 1997."Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism" in *New Left Review,* Vol 225 (September/October): 28-51.
[101] Ibid, pg 37
[102] Ibid
[103] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:52:03

The Kingdom creates its 'other' by implying that the Arabs and American cannot make peace at this time because the War on Terror is ongoing. This is evident during the last sequence of the film. At the end of *The Kingdom*, the narrative follows a circular pattern, Agent Fleury visits Al-Ghazi's mourning family in the same way that he visited Agent Fran's family at the beginning of the film. He asks to see Al-Ghazi's son and embarks on the same dialogue as he did with Teddy, Fran's son[104]. Both boys are similar ages, "Tell him that his father was a very brave man … Yeah, I knew his father, your father was a good friend of mine". The audience recognises the repeat dialogue[105], Fleury's comment "Your father was a good friend of mine," adds a touch of hope, but ideologically, the film reinstates the distance between the audience and the Arab culture because Fleury does not say the exact same statement he told Teddy at the beginning of the film "You know your daddy was my friend and now you are my friend". The audience recognises the repeat dialogue but reads the omission that at this point, it is not possible for American and Arabs to be true friends. This comment as well as the final comment[106] of the film "We'll kill them all", contributes to the ideology of the film text and falls within the cultural identity (according to Stuart Hall) and general dominant ideology of the current political climate.

In contrast, the harsh reality of the type of warfare in Africa in *Hotel Rwanda* plays into the associated images and ideologies of Africa but the film creates its 'other' in a very different manner to *The Kingdom* because its central protagonist is a black man, essentially the 'other'. The film achieves this by attributing a very cultural specific

[104] Sequence starts at Time Code 01:35:56
[105] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:19:03
[106] Sequence starts at Time Code 01:38:51

identity towards Paul in contrast to the other Rwandans. Throughout the film, he is given essentially 'Western' traits such as the suit and tie and his knowledge of Western cuisine, for example, which allows the audience to identify with him in contrast to the other Rwandans. In addition Paul's identity is contrasted with the *Interahamwe* who are represented as being ruthless throughout the film, thereby, identifying them as the 'other'.

According to Ngugi[107], in order for an audience to understand a film, it has to be accessible and relevant to them. The challenge of both *The Kingdom* and *Hotel Rwanda* is that both are stories centred on a black hero, a characteristic which is not part of the winning formula of the Hollywood blockbuster " … the conventions of Hollywood but also a long tradition of racism, demands that you look through the eyes of a white star, a white hero"[108]. In order for the film's success, the Western audience has to accept Paul and Agent Fleury as the protagonist and hero. *Hotel Rwanda* achieves this stylistically; Paul and his family have very 'Western' characteristics, thereby aligning them with Western aspirations. He is always dressed in Western clothing and he makes use of typically Western products. For example, he gives his children Coté d'or chocolates at the beginning of the film; he makes use of Perrier water and makes use of typically Western scotch. These signifiers assimilate him as a francophone; these are typically French commodities which the Western audience will identify. Paul is familiar with all of these products, thereby allowing the audience to familiarise themselves with and accept him as a character and protagonist.

[107] Ngugi, N. 2003. "Presenting and (mis)representing History in Fiction Film: Sembene's Camp de Thiaroye and Attenborough's *Cry Freedom*" in *Journal of African Studies*, Vol 16 (1): 61.
[108] Ibid, pg 64

The Kingdom achieves this by making its hero, Agent Fleury, again a black male, as having typically American traits. He has the American accent and sees the events in Saudi Arabia as a direct attack on his fellow countrymen. He never acknowledges his African roots, in contrast throughout the film; he is focused on bringing the terrorists to justice in the name of his country, America. Through his plight, the audience acknowledges his goal and accepts him as a leader and protagonist.

In 1963, the Senegalese novelist Ousmane Sembène[109] created *Borom Sarret* (Donkey-cart Driver) which is described as a "poignant and powerful political commentary on power and economic inequality"[110]. The film builds on a tradition of orality in storytelling. Other films throughout Africa assemble their narrative structures around the conflict between modernity and tradition, while some directors prefer to examine colonial experiences in the form of anti-colonial epics. Within *Borom Sarret*

> there were no heroes fighting against great odds, no exaggerated confrontation between a lone (white) 'man' and the forest ('jungle') or river or desert lands, but straightforward, engaging stories of love and family, of people living out their lives in different geographical environments[111].

These films never brought in the large cash flows that Hollywood blockbusters achieved. Instead the directors distinctly moved away from revealing Africa as the war-torn and disaster-stricken world of international television broadcasts[112]. *Hotel Rwanda* does not fall into this category, but places itself amongst the dominant typecasts of the

[109] Harding, F. 2003. "Africa and the Moving Image: Television, Film and Video" in *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol 16 (1): 79.
[110] Ibid
[111] Ibid, pg 80
[112] Ibid

international community. Sorious Samura[113], a freelance Sierra Leone journalist comments that sometimes this kind of labelled representation is necessary to present the suffering of a people in order for a watching public to initiate change or avoid such a catastrophe in the future. As has already been mentioned, the counter-argument of *Hotel Rwanda* is that despite its noble expectations, a similar kind of genocide occurred in Darfur not even ten years after Rwanda. The question remains: *why is this so*? Perhaps one will never really understand why the international community withdraws away from Africa and its conflicts and continues to present explanations according to an 'us-them' scenario. The narrative of events also distances the viewer from the communities which do not fall within the cultural identity of his/her own culture. This occurs because the audience defines him/herself by who he/she is not[114] and understands different cultures quite specifically as 'other' along the principles of simplified story lines.

In coming to terms with another culture, one creates a mythical representation of that culture. This has happened with the Western concept of Middle-Eastern culture and their extreme traditions of oppression towards women for example, as well as the mythical notions of 'primitive' yet scenic Africa. Salecl's concept of a fantasy enemy does not imply that the enemy does not exist, in contrast, it deals more with the notion that one 'fantasises' about the image of the enemy. A community creates the picture that the enemy is more dangerous and more primitive than they may or may not be in reality. Here, one is not arguing that the enemy does not exist, because, the harsh reality of warfare is definitely pertinent, I am arguing more about the type of representations the

[113] Lehrer, J. 2001. "Cry Freetown" http://www.cryfreetown.org, accessed 2008-10-23.
[114] Pietikäinen, S. 2003. "Indigenous Identity in Print: Representations of the Sami in News Discourse" in *Discourse and Ideology*, Vol 14 (5): 588.

media offers of the warring factions involved and how it creates and reinstates preconceived notions, especially with reference to fundamentalism in the Middle-East and primitivism in Africa which is essentially communicated through the 'New Barbarism Thesis'.

NEW BARBARISM

Robert Kaplan[115], an academic and journalist who is a lecturer for the US Military introduced the "New Barbarism Thesis" (see also Bellamy foster and Clark[116], Iyengar[117] and Anthony[118]), where he communicates that political and social situations are not necessarily relevant factors within conflict because the violence is deeply rooted within the hatred of local cultures or groups. He offers a simple explanation; ethnic hatred has always existed and one cannot link them to economic or political agendas. The 'preferred' reading: that the West can never have any real understanding of the complexities of the ethnic conflicts, which have happened on other continents. Here, Kaplan[119] presents violence as a result of traits embedded in local cultures and not necessarily embedded in economic interests (see also Richards[120]).

His argument centres on the notion that political and social situations are not necessarily relevant factors within conflict because the violence is deeply rooted within the hatred

[115] Tuastad, D. 2003. "Neo-Orientalism and the New Barbarism Thesis: Aspects of Symbolic Violence in the Middle East Conflict(s). *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 24 (4): 591.
[116] Bellamy Foster, J & Clark, B. 2004. "Empire of Barbarism" in *Monthly Review*, Vol 56 (7): 1-22.
[117] Iyengar, S. 1991. *Is Anyone Responsible: How Television Frames Political Issues*. USA: University of Chicago Press.
[118] Anthony G. 2006. "African Politics in Comparative Perspective" in *African Studies Review*, Vol 49 (3): 160-161.
[119] Kaplan, R. 2000. *The Coming of Anarchy*. New York: Random House, pg 26.
[120] Richards, P. 1996. *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth & Resources in Sierra Leone*. Oxford: James Currey.

between local cultures or groups. This position offers an over-simplified and racist explanation; ethnicity engrains the hatred amongst the Hutus and Tutsis and it has always existed within political and social situations. On the other hand, the Arab culture or Middle East crisis is so complex that someone standing on the outside will never really understand the inner dynamics. This reading draws a clear distinction between what is 'civil' (namely Western society) and what is 'barbaric' (those involved in the conflict)[121] and can be linked to Salecl's position regarding the 'other' as a 'fantasy' enemy which is created via ethnic identities. Initially, this position is promoted within the media during the conflict and it is then re-instated through cultural artefacts, in this case, fiction film. Although Kaplan's thesis focuses primarily on Africa, one can use it effectively with reference to the notions of fundamentalism which are being associated with regards to the Middle East. Terminology such as *Jihad*, 'suicide bombers' and 'extremist groups' are all associated with the essentially Arab countries. Again, the film narrative centres on these associations and focuses on these stereotypes.

This position unfortunately presents a very simple understanding of marginal conflicts and plays on the 'Heart of Darkness' associations with the African continent and clear fundamentalist, extremism as far as the Arab world is concerned. By focusing on ethnic hatred and famine, the television and film media avoid complex political agendas, which may not interest the Western viewer, but according to Atkinson[122] may also have a profound affect on Western donators who ultimately supply Humanitarian aid. In Africa,

[121] Tuastad, D. 2003. "Neo-Orientalism and the New Barbarism Thesis: Aspects of Symbolic Violence in the Middle East Conflict (s)" in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 24 (4): 596.
[122] Allen, T & Skelton, T (eds.) 2002. *Culture and Global Change*. London and New York: Routledge, pg 104.

this has focused on food, blankets and shelter and in Iraq the United Nations instated the oil for food programme after the Gulf War. The concept of how one represents a society remains vital because it is not only concerned on a political level, but it has economic influences as well which will affect income and the economic infrastructure of the marginalised cultures of Periphery states.

Tuastad[123] links New Barbarism to Neo Orientalism because no matter who the 'other' may be, in both cases one understands political violence as a resurgence of tribalism, cultural backwardness amongst non-civilised groups and that the violence is irrational and cannot be stopped by means of diplomacy or conciliation. What this argument implies is that New Barbarism serves the political interests of people who are aware of the need to produce images of a conflict as one between civilisation and barbarism[124].

Hollywood, through both films, represents both the Middle East as well as Africa according to the civilisation-barbarism paradigm. One questions this approach and although there are no correct answers, it opens a debate of the way one represents and understands conflict in the current political climate. Samuel Hutington[125] claims that ultimately we are all tribes, he writes, "civilisations are the ultimate human tribes, and the clash of civilisations is tribal conflict on a global scale". Perhaps this is so, but one has to examine how one represents, because the act of depicting another culture as 'other' results in an act of violence in its own right.

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[123] Tuastad, D. 2003. "Neo-Orientalism and the New Barbarism Thesis: Aspects of Symbolic Violence in the Middle East Conflict (s)" in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 24 (4): 596.
[124] Ibid
[125] Hutington, S, P. 1996. *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster, pg 207.

Dag Tuastad[126] argues that when one explains violence as a result of traits embedded in local cultures, one enters the realm of symbolic violence. This kind of violence occurs on two levels; the first is the 'terrorist' stigma and the second Saïd[127] describes with Orientalism, which involves the imaginary Arab mind. Both of these positions highlight a form of racism towards different cultures and promote the superiority of Cultural Imperialism.

CULTURAL IMPERIALISM[128]

Imperialism "connotes the domination of one people, nation or country by another"[129]. The concept initially emerged with the creation and dissolution of the colonial empires[130] and one can link these discussions to economy and culture. Cultural Imperialism works on two levels with reference to the case studies. At the outset the term supports the suggestion that the Developed world has superiority in terms of knowledge, resources and power over those states emerging from the Periphery and the Arab world. Thereafter, one may link the term to economic strength and power of dominant states to promote, distribute and therefore proliferate its first suggestion of superiority.

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[126] Tuastad, D. 2003. "Neo-Orientalism and the New Barbarism Thesis: Aspects of Symbolic Violence in the Middle East Conflict (s)" in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 24 (4): 591.
[127] Ibid, pg 592
[128] As already mentioned in the Introduction (footnote 21, pg 11), debates regarding the term 'cultural imperialism' began in the 1970s where there have been numerous literatures contesting the validity of this concept, especially in the current complex postmodern and interdependent global world, this research utilizes the most widely understood use of the term and will not engage in any critical discussion of the term.
[129] Becker, D, G, Frieden, J, Schatz, S, P & Sklar, R, L. 1987. *Post Imperialism: International Capitalism and Development in the Late Twentieth Century*. Boulder & London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pg 1.
[130] Ibid

Cees Hamelink[131], has written extensively on how the large-scale export of cultural systems threaten the delicate process by which developing societies evolve and adapt. He is a prominent promoter of cultural autonomy and writes that the concept is

> Virtually impossible in a system which attempts to integrate the weak and poor countries in a global community that serves best the interests of only the rich and powerful[132].

Hamelink's position is relevant because he introduces the concept of globalisation in relation to Post-Imperialism on an economic level. His argument is relevant on a cultural level because in the same way that the rich and powerful states integrate the Periphery states on an economic level, so is this happening on the level of cultural identity. This is evident through the concept of cultural or media imperialism, which according to Michael Tracey[133] implies that:

> The modern world media systems have provided an important and strategic means whereby dominant nations have attempted to extend and develop their economic, political and cultural forms of control and power in the global arena.

Tracey's statement links back to the notions of economic power and the influence of globalisation as discussed in Chapter 1. He reiterates to what extent one embeds economic and cultural factors. In the current global environment, there is no classic First, Second and Third world concept as was originally introduced in the late 1960s because the Soviet Union (who was initially regarded as the Second World, no longer exists) and the Third World is now identified as the Emerging and Periphery states on an economic level, as opposed to the original emerging former colonies.

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[131] Tracey, M. 1997. "The Poisoned Chalice? International Television and the Idea of Dominance" in O'Sullivan, T & Jewkes, Y. *The Media Studies Reader*. London, New York & Sydney: Arnold, pg 352.
[132] Hamelink. C. 1983. *Cultural Autonomy in Global Communications*. New York: Longman, pg xiii.
[133] Tracey, M. 1997. "The Poisoned Chalice? International Television and the Idea of Dominance" in O'Sullivan, T & Jewkes, Y. *The Media Studies Reader*. London, New York & Sydney: Arnold, pg 345.

The strength of the transnational corporate domination that exists as a result of globalisation leaves the marginal or Periphery/Developing nations in the world more vulnerable to domination – cultural, military and economic because the former oppositions have collapsed[134]. This allows for the dominant nations to gain an upper hand in terms of serving ideological beliefs as well as by infiltrating the international market and promoting these beliefs. Both films are artefacts which advocate Cultural Imperialism: firstly, ideologically they presume certain superiority over the depiction of the Arabs and Rwandans and secondly, economically they have the distributive strength to promote this philosophy globally. They both accomplish this position through America's more knowledgeable investigative skills over the Arabs in *The Kingdom* and through the promotion that the only ones capable of finding a solution to the Rwandan crisis would be Western intervention in *Hotel Rwanda*.

The Kingdom openly presents its confidence in its ability to solve crimes from the onset. At the beginning of the film, Agent Fleury briefs FBI agents at the Command and Tactical Operations Centre[135],

> Numbers so far: 100+ dead, 200+ injured. The target was a softball game. Rumour is the Killers wore Saudi police Uniforms. Special Agent Fran Manner was killed.

The other agents are sitting in a lecture-style hall. Along the front walls are plasma screens showing images of the crime scene covered by Al-Jazeera. Fleury asks Agent Grant Sykes to comment on the bomb sizes,

[134] Schiller, H. 1991. "Not Yet the Post-Imperialist Era" in *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, Vol (8): 13-28.
[135] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:12:15

> From the craters, looks like they used a High Explosive … possibly military grade: can't fit that much TNT into a vest. Twenty or thirty pounds of PETN: that's something they have. Semtex or C-4: they could get it. The third there, God knows … that crater looks like a plane dropped a 500-pounder …

This exchange functions ideologically because it presents the Americans as knowledgeable and astute. Merely from the images on the plasma screens, Agent Sykes is able to tell the group about the type of explosives that were used and whether the terrorists would have access to them. Agent Leavitt cuts in, "I already know the answer, but if there was ever a time to get boots on Saudi sand …". The de-briefing session emphasises the American will to catch the perpetrators. It presents to the audience that this group is unique and has the ability to resolve the case. The American determination to enter Saudi Arabia and conduct their own investigation continues with Agent Fleury, because it was also his last promise to Agent Fran[136] at the beginning of the film, "You've got to get down here … Don't take 'no' for an answer" to which Fleury replied "I hear you, they're not gonna say no". In addition, the film supports notions of Cultural Imperialism because it implies that only the Americans have the expertise to solve the crime; the film further communicates this through the scenes showing the ignorance of the Saudi investigators[137].

The very last scene of *Hotel Rwanda* shows Paul on a Red Cross bus driving towards Tanzania. A group of soldiers advance out of the bushes, armed and shooting. The meta-narrative[138] through Paul makes one believe that the characters are driving into another

[136] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:09:18
[137] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:44:19
[138] My interpretation of meta-narrative is based on Hayward's definition, "narratives about other narratives within a text […] the interrelatedness of the different levels function to reposition the spectator". See

ambush, but the soldiers run past and aim their shots towards the militia behind the convoy[139]. Paul comments relieved "It's the rebels". Only at this point, does the film hint at a Tutsi uprising, which actually resulted in a counter-genocide that finally moved towards an end to the war. Therefore, in actual fact, Rwanda found its own solution, which is different to the message of reliance on the Western intervention throughout the film. This resolution to the film functions in the same way as *The Kingdom*, by assuming Western authority, the film merely integrates the weak and poor countries in a global community that serves best the interests of only the rich and powerful as highlighted by Cees Hamelink[140].

There are two counter-arguments to the concept of Cultural Imperialism. The first is from Richard Hoggart[141],

> It is claimed that this mass of material coming in from outside is both erasing traditional cultures and inhibiting the emergence of authentic cultural changes. There is no clear evidence that this is in fact happening, nor indeed any that it is not.

Here, Hoggart claims that there has not been enough research to suggest that the strength and economic dominance of Western powers is actually infiltrating traditional cultures. Although this position may be true, one cannot ignore the fact that the messages of both films re-instate Imperialist philosophy.

Hayward, S. 1996. *Key Concepts in Cinema Studies.* London and New York: Routledge, pg 215. Each element (juxtaposition, visual image, sound effect, for example) functions within the greater narrative to position the viewers point of interpretation.

[139] Sequence starts at Time Code 01:50:22

[140] Hamelink. C. 1983. *Cultural Autonomy in Global Communications*. New York: Longman, pg xiii.

[141] Hoggart, R. 1982. "The Mass Media and One Way Flow", in *An English Temper*. London: Chatto & Windus, pg 176.

Mike Featherstone[142] argues that Imperialism no longer exists because postmodernism has moved away from homogenizing processes (such as Cultural Imperialism, Americanisation and mass consumer culture as a proto-universal culture riding on the back of Western economic and political domination). Postmodernism calls for "the diversity, variety and richness of popular and local discourses, codes and practices which resist and play-back systemicity and order"[143] which allows for an awareness of difference and heterogeneity as opposed to homogeneity. One cannot ignore the influence and eclecticism that postmodernism achieves, a new global culture has emerged as a result, but the question remains, has the message and essence of Cultural Imperialism dissolved or has it merely hegemonised into the diversity of a new global popular culture?

Although postmodernism has been influential, the economic distributive power has remained stagnant, as broadcasters continue to use the five Filters as discussed by Chomsky and Herman. As a result, producers incorporate cultural identities into political agendas which sift into culturally manufactured products such as film, art and music. In so doing, the films *The Kingdom* and *Hotel Rwanda* create polarities which distance audiences from alternate communities by creating others based on oriental, fantasy, mythical, surplus or barbarism tendencies. These positions originate from Cultural Imperialism and the disintegration of the former colonies which brings the argument full circle to the concept of cultural dominance and economic power with regards to globalisation as discussed in Chapter 1.

[142] Featherstone, M (ed.) 1990. *Global Culture*. London: Sage, pg 2.
[143] Ibid