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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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REMEMBERING WAR: HISTORY, CULTURE AND MEMORY

The Persian Gulf War

> was expressly manufactured for the screen and a global audience, complete with a premiere date (January 15, 1991) and a cast of familiar characters (the evil, dark tyrant; the fearless newsman; the infallible weaponry). In one sense, the history of the Persian Gulf War was written before it began; it was, like the reinscriptions of Hollywood cinema, a spectacular orchestration of a new ending for the Vietnam War[1].
>
> Asu Aksoy & Kevin Robins

The Persian Gulf War was most probably the moment in history that initiated the globalisation of conflict as we know it today. The witnessing of American fighter planes bombing Baghdad through laser-type images launched the iconography which has characterised the conflict and become synonymous with the type of virtual images that Baudrillard identifies with, as discussed in Chapter 1. In conjunction, the narrativisation of 'real' events merely contributed to our understanding of the 'real' world through fiction principles. Alongside the merging of fiction tools and narrative principles with real events, the 21st Century has been dictated by a postmodern understanding of the world, where one gets information through a diverse mix of codes, styles and resources: such as newspapers, magazines, television and the internet. This mix allows for a disjointed understanding of the world, merging high art and mass culture and providing a huge variety of means to obtain information. This chapter will examine notions of history, memory and culture, and how these construct memories of the past and

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ENDNOTES

[1] Aksoy, A & Robins, K. 1992. "Exterminating Angels" in Gerbner, G, Mowlana, H et al (eds.) *Triumph of the Image: The Media's War in the Persian Gulf – A global Perspective*. Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, pg 206.

contribute to the identity of a nation[2]. The discussion also focuses on instant history (news), cultural memory (photographs and films) and how these interact in maintaining very specific ideologies.

MEMORY

Alongside the tangible means one can use to obtain information, there is always the eye-witness account and the memory of an event which forms the foundation of any account. Marita Sturken in her book *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*[3], focuses on memory and how it interacts with the historical and the cultural in an attempt at creating the identity of the American nation. She writes,

> Memory forms the fabric of human life, affecting everything from the ability to perform simple, everyday tasks to the recognition of the self. Memory establishes life's continuity; it gives meaning to the present, as each moment is constituted by the past. As the means by which we remember who we are, memory provides the very core of identity[4].

Since 2001, Americans remember the attack on the World Trade Centre, the Pentagon and the exact place where the hijacked plane went down in Louisiana every year on September, 11. This ritual is crucial to America's identity in the post 9-11 era. The ceremony, which includes having all the names of the victims read out to a gong,

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[2] The theoretical framework of this chapter was initially discussed in my Masters dissertation entitled, Šakota-Kokot, T. 2001. *The Construction of a Preferred Reading in the Television Documentary The Death of Yugoslavia.* MA Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand. It was then revised in a published article entitled "Baghdad Café: Rhetoric, 'Embedded' Journalists and the 'Other' in the War in Iraq". The article was presented at the Visual Culture/Explorations Conference held at the University of Pretoria on 9th-10th July 2004 and then published in 2005. See Šakota-Kokot, T. 2005. "Baghdad Café: Rhetoric, 'Embedded' Journalists and the 'Other' in the War in Iraq" http://www.up.ac.za/academic/humanities/eng/eng/visart/eng/conference.htm, accessed 2008-10-28.

[3] Sturken, M. 1997. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.

[4] Ibid, pg 1

enhances Sturken's[5] position that "memory establishes life's continuity; it gives meaning to the present, as each moment is constituted by the past". The memorial service, serves to remember each victim, but it also serves to identify and justify America's position in the international environment today as a result of the initial attack. Each memorial that has been erected, temporary or completed, functions not only to avoid forgetting the victims but also constitutes part of the historical events of that day and serves to validate the resulting political and military implications. Since 2001, the Bush administration has implemented a War on Terror and a War in Iraq. By publicising the memorial services each year on September 11, the administration, through the media, is able to advocate the necessity for these two ongoing conflicts. In addition, a film such as *The Kingdom*, on a cultural level further adds to this political agenda by re-instating the memory of 9-11 and the obligation for the War on Terror.

Although the film is based in the Middle East, the characters Agent Fleury and Agent Mayes both make reference to Al Qaeda and the War on Terror, thereby associating the events within this film with terrorist attacks in the 'real' world. In the third Act, Al-Ghazi takes Fleury to find 'the Big Fish', Talal, the retired bomb-maker who applied for amnesty and is currently doing community service[6]. Al-Ghazi explains,

> At one time, Talal was Arafat's senior bomb-maker and planner in the occupied territories. He joined Bin-Laden when Al Qaeda brought the fight to the Royal Family.

To which Fleury replies,

> Does he know where Bin-Laden is, 'cause that could be a really good promotion for me.

[5] Ibid
[6] Sequence starts at Time Code 01:07:00

This sequence serves on two levels. Firstly, it links the fictional character and bomb-maker Talal to the actual people Arafat and Bin-Laden. The film classifies Arafat and Bin-Laden as terrorists because they are connected to people like Talal. In so doing, the film states its political point of view as well as reminds the audience that the boundaries which define fact and fiction are in fact blurred because the events in this film are so similar to other terrorist attacks in the 'real', historical world. By taking this point of view, the film hegemonically incorporates its viewer into the central message of the film. Secondly, Fleury's comment provides a little humour but it also reminds the audience that the search for Bin-Laden is authentic and that bomb-makers will continue to manufacture home-made ammunition so long as there is the War on Terror.

Later, Fleury and Al-Ghazi inspect the room where the Saudi's have destroyed the amateur terrorist cell[7]. The two find photographs of all the housing compounds in Riyadh[8] and images of the Italian, Japanese, Korean, Norway and English Embassies. Fleury comments, "The Coalition … These are all countries with Troops in Iraq". This sequence also functions on two levels, firstly as with the previous example, it serves to remind the audience of the film's historicity and relevance and secondly, by referring to the War in Iraq reminds the audience that America and its Coalition are in a state of war and the fiction film is merely mimicking the reality of the world, a message that remains in-sync with the dominant ideology.

[7] Sequence starts at Time Code 01:12:50
[8] Capital city of Saudi Arabia

Richard Reid[9] argues, "the memory of war, and the articulation of that memory in various forms, is as crucial as war itself in the creation and consolidation of identity". It is evident that memory and culture are an integral part of the historical (see also Lipsitz[10], Confino[11], Zemon Davis and Starn[12]). One remembers conflict through information, cultural artefacts as well as the memory of the witnesses. In her work, Sturken focuses on 'history', 'culture' and 'memory' and how they contribute to the American memory of the Vietnam and Gulf conflicts which impacts on the general American identity today. This chapter will examine iconic events from the Vietnam and Gulf wars and discuss their significance to the relevant case study in an attempt to examine how "remembrance [has been] crucial to the forging of political and cultural communities, and, more recently to the building of nations"[13].

Although the Vietnam and Gulf Wars centred on very different issues, they were similar because they attempted to construct a national identity through difference. The Gulf War functioned as an antidote to Vietnam and made way for The New World Order[14], allowing America to assert and lead the political aspirations of the West. Similarly, one could argue that the war in Iraq will offer closure to the Persian Gulf War (this is evident through the pamphlet and radio message campaigns that the coalition forces released

[9] Reid, R. 2006. "War and Remembrance: Orality, Literacy and Conflict in the Horn" in *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol 18 (1): 89.
[10] Lipsitz, G. 2001. *Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture*. USA: University of Minnesota Press.
[11] Confino, A. 1997. "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method" in *The American Historical Review*, Vol 102 (5):1386-1403.
[12] Zemon Davis, N and Starn, R. 1989. "Introduction" in *Representations. Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory*, Vol (26): 1-6.
[13] Reid, R. 2006. "War and Remembrance: Orality, Literacy and Conflict in the Horn" in *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol 18 (1): 89.
[14] This was evident in President Bush's declaration at the onset of the Persian Gulf War: "The Vietnam Syndrome is over" (see Sturken, M. 1997. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, pg 124).

during the initial conflict). Some of the messages have included "we are here to help you, we will not abandon you[15] …". The Saddam Hussein regime continued to exist after the Gulf War and according to the Western media, instilled fear and oppression amongst its people. President Bush and Prime Minister Blair vowed that this lack of freedom and expression would change once the conflict is completely over and the people democratically install a new leadership. Although the American troops are still very much in Iraq, there are still Coalition casualties despite the new, democratically elected government. This research is not about politics however, but rather to investigate the ways in which the representation of America and its identity is politically constructed and motivated within the cultural media, because films that refer to conflicts that have occurred historically, draw on the memory of the actual event as described by the eye-witnesses and the veterans. The characters in *The Kingdom* each draw on the memory of 9-11 and the War on Terror in order to understand the attack at the housing compound. The film thus makes reference to the World Trade Centre and Al Qaeda, so as to draw a comparison of the factual event with the fiction.

In contrast, *Hotel Rwanda* depicts the emotional journey of one man during the Rwandan genocide. However, his account acts as a representation of all the Tutsi victims of the war. In an interview, director Terry George talks about his motivations for the film during a visit to Murambi in Southern Rwanda with Paul, Tatiana and some of the survivors from the hotel. He says,

[15] Journalists such as Emma Hurst from the BBC constantly explained that this message campaign was not a propaganda campaign but used to try and overcome the resentment from the Iraqis who claimed that they were abandoned by the US forces after the Gulf War and left to deal with the terror from the regime.

> In April 1994, the Hutu mayor promised the Tutsis of the region protection if they gathered at the technical college. Forty thousand if them sought shelter and over the course of just four days they were slaughtered. Their bodies were thrown into pits and covered with lime. Somehow the lime preserved the bodies. Today scores of those bodies are laid out on tables in the rooms where they died. They are frozen in the last desperate moments of their agony, hands pleading, heads cradled by arms, skulls cracked open by merciless machetes. There's a babies room where tiny skeletons bear the same silent testimony to the horror … I made a promise there to make our film no matter what. Three years later it is done. It is called *Hotel Rwanda*. It doesn't tell the story of Murambi. I deliberately steered away from the overwhelming horror and tried to focus on the incredible resilience and courage of Paul Rusesabagina so that people would be moved and encouraged by the triumph of this great good man over evil. *Hotel Rwanda* is not about the ghosts of Murambi but it is for them[16].

In this instance, although the massacre, which motivated the consciousness to create this film, is not depicted, the film acts as a tribute and homage to the memory of the victims of the Murambi Massacre. Through the film and subsequent interviews, director Terry George keeps the memory of the victims alive so that their untimely death is at least remembered and kept alive in hope that this sort of event will not be repeated. The sequence[17] where Paul and Gregoire drive on the road littered with dead Tutsis at the end of the second Act, speaks directly to the victims of Murambi "frozen in the last desperate moments of their agony"[18].

Both films draw on the notion of memory, but from slightly different angles, *The Kingdom* draws on the actual memory of all suicide bomber and terrorist attacks whereas *Hotel Rwanda* is a tribute to the memory of the victims of the Rwandan genocide. Both films draw from the memory of the victims and their testimony in order to create the

[16] George, T. 2004. "*Hotel Rwanda*" http://www.landmarktheatres.com/mn/hotelrwanda.html, accessed 2008-05-08.
[17] Sequence starts at Time Code 01:09:03
[18] George, T. 2004. "*Hotel Rwanda*" http://www.landmarktheatres.com/mn/hotelrwanda.html, accessed 2008-05-08.

cultural artefacts, namely, the films. In addition, the historicity of the film's narrative acts as a reference to the 'real' events which occurred on 9-11 and in Rwanda, thereby taking on the position that factual evidence is the base of both film messages and the audience should interpret them along realistic lines. Both films are dedicated to the memory of someone. *Hotel Rwanda* is dedicated to the memory of the Murambi massacre and *The Kingdom* is dedicated to three crew members who died during filming. Tom Aguillar, a prop-maker died of prostate cancer, one week after filming commenced, Lance Gunnin, a construction worker died in a motor vehicle accident on his way to work and Nicholas Papac, a prop master, died in an on-set collision during one of the chase sequences. Although these three individuals were not victims in relation to the narrative, the fact that the film acts as a tribute to their memory, merely emphasises to what extent memory and culture intertwine.

Cultural Memory

Memories have been captured through testimonials, articles and interviews as well as on film. This has an impact on the historical because in order to create history one has to rely on the memory of the events (which are usually communicated via the veteran), and are incorporated into the cultural aspect of a society[19]. Society, thus, creates history at the intersection of 'fact', memory and culture[20]. Each functions in producing and re-producing meanings, which according to Fiske[21], maintains the social dynamics of the

[19] The integration of memory, culture and history becomes evident when one examines the history of apartheid within South Africa. Each cultural group had its own interpretation of the memories during the apartheid years.
[20] Sturken, M. 1997. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, pg 1.
[21] Fiske, J. 1987. *Television Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, pg 1.

society. One can assume that today's generation will 'remember' Vietnam through its repetition in fiction films, whereas their parents will recall the war through television news images of the 1960s. Both will contribute to the history of the war for the next generation.

Very often the collective memory of a culture can appear similar to the memory of an individual, but the actual process of cultural memory is entangled in a complex web of political stakes and meanings[22]. The way a nation remembers a war and constructs its history will have a direct relationship with the way that war is propagated[23]. This argument is crucial in understanding the intersection of history, culture and memory as well as its contribution to the representation and identity of a nation within the global environment. Sturken[24] argues that the spectacle of virtual television images did not tell us anything about the narrative of the Gulf War, in contrast, it told us a lot about America's weaponry. It became a 'virtual war' based on computerised images and satellite technology where the laser-type images contributed to the production of "instant history"[25]. This process allows the viewer to witness events as they are happening from the privileged position of his/her home. President George Bush, Saddam Hussein and CNN's estimate of one billion people in 108 nations[26] watched the unfolding of historic events as they were happening during the Gulf War. This process also allowed the

[22] Sturken, M. 1997. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, pg 1.
[23] Ibid, pg 122
[24] Ibid, pg 124
[25] Gerbner, G. 1992. "Persian Gulf War: The Movie" in Gerbner, G, Mowlana, H et al (eds.) *Triumph of the Image: The Media's War in the Persian Gulf – A global Perspective*. Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, pg 244.
[26] Mitchell, W, J, T. 1992. "From CNN to JFK: Paranoia, Melodrama and American Mass Media in 1991" in *Afterimage* (May): 13-17.

viewer to bear witness to the events as they were taking place and lead to a new type of news reporting where information is reported before it is verified and the story emerges as a fragmented narrative until all the facts are uncovered. This formulates one element of how we view conflict, the second, contributes to how we remember war, namely, memory.

Signal Crime as Memory

Martin Innes[27], in his article "Crime as a Signal, Crime as a Memory" looks at how certain crimes are presented in the media and how they contribute to social memory. He writes,

> the manufacture of a signal crime via mass mediated communication involves a crime incident being constructed by journalists through their use of particular representational and rhetorical techniques, and interpreted by audiences, as an index of the state of society and social order[28].

Innes' position views the media as a device, which focuses on certain events and uses these crimes as signals to create a reaction or awareness within society. His argument focuses on the abduction and murder of schoolgirl, Amanda Dowler in Surrey, on 21 March 2002, but his argument is relevant to all crime reporting. When the media focuses on specific events, it creates awareness but this process contributes to collective memory, which according to Innes can be fluid or socially framed according to the concerns of the present[29]. One can therefore argue, "what people remember, how they remember it and why, is shaped by the social networks and institutions within which they are

[27] Innes, M. 2004. "Crime as a Signal, Crime as a Memory" in *Journal for Crime, Conflict and the Media,* Vol 1 (2):15-22.
[28] Ibid, pg 16-17
[29] Ibid, pg 20

embedded"[30]. This relates back to my point that a society will re-visit a traumatic event until that society finds the closure they need. As a result, films such as *The Kingdom* will continue to emerge from Hollywood until American society finds closure or comes to terms with the events that happened on 9-11.

Innes'[31] argument also introduces the position that a single crime can function to represent the whole, hence the term "signal". *Hotel Rwanda* uses this approach, as the evidence of the massacres that occur in the film is representative of all massacres that happened during the genocide. Innes[32] argues that crime stories play a wider role in shaping and defining the production and reproduction of cultural order because they frame collective understandings of crime and order. The audience or viewer then assumes an understanding of all events that bear a similarity to the signal crime; the film viewer after interpreting *Hotel Rwanda* then presupposes that he/she will understand all mass murders that occur in Africa. This gives a false impression of the continent and merely reinforces existing stereotypes and prejudices.

Iconography and prejudicial stereotypes remains synonymous with representation. Frances Harding[33] discusses Africa's representation through the popular television reality series, *Big Brother Africa,* (Endemol, 2003). She draws on an event when producers secretly changed one of the housemates from *Big Brother UK,* (Endemol, 2003) with one

[30] see Mitzal, B. 2003. *Theories of Social Remembering*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
[31] Innes, M. 2004. "Crime as a Signal, Crime as a Memory" in *Journal for Crime, Conflict and the Media,* Vol 1 (2): 20.
[32] Ibid
[33] Harding, F. 2003. "Africa and the Moving Image: Television, Film and Video" in *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol 16 (1): 69-84.

of the housemates from *Big Brother, Africa*. In both houses, "there was little evidence among the residents … of significant or stressful cultural gaps in the encounter". Harding identifies this exchange as a positive representation of Africa, something very different to the previous signifiers which have characterised the continent. She writes,

> To many viewers outside Africa it must have come as a surprise to be presented with a television image of Africa that was not associated with poverty, famine, war, disease and emigration, or alternatively, with wild animals and safari holidays[34].

Although Harding's article relates to reality television, her argument is relevant to how one understands the continent and presumes specific representation of the images coming out of Africa. Harding's comment also draws awareness to how the media has influenced one's perception of a continent either riddled with famine or a perfect holiday destination. These perceptions are as a result of the images and stories that the media has initially promoted through the iconography of wars and conflict in Africa.

The fact of the matter remains that the icons of the conflicts/crimes have a great influence in understanding and remembering the conflicts but they become politically constructed because according to Harding, they may influence one's perception of society. Sturken[35] touches on this position when she writes,

> … saying that memory is changeable does not imply that it is only constructed through the agendas of the present. Rather, it shifts the discussion of memory, in particular cultural memory, away from questions of truth and toward questions of political intent.

[34] Ibid, pg 72
[35] Sturken, M. 1997. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, pg 9.

Hence, Innes argues that one will remember an event according to how the media shapes the information; Harding focuses on how prejudice and stereotyping can influence one's perception of a society/culture and Sturken's position includes that one's memory can shift according to how culture re-visits the memory. The audience will keep viewing the events of a crisis in the same fashion until there is political closure and some form of resolution. As technology progresses, so will the speed and means in which we receive the information change.

INSTANT HISTORY[36]

The notion of instant history became synonymous with the Gulf War. Once the initial laser spectacle ended in Baghdad, reporter Scott Simon spoke to American soldiers waiting in line, to telephone the United States. Upon asking whether the soldiers were telephoning home to speak to loved ones before the ground war started[37], one of the paratroopers replied that he was

> Calling to find out what's happening in this war. My folks can really see it […] Sometimes I have to remind myself that when I say 'I was there – I saw that', I saw that only on television, just like the people watching the war in Kansas or Kenosha[38].

This soldier's account merely accentuates how one integrates one's perception of the real world with the technological images that accompany the events. The Gulf War seemed to become a 'video game'[39], with minimal face-to-face combat reported and broadcast,

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[36] See Šakota-Kokot, T. 2005. "Baghdad Café: Rhetoric, 'Embedded' Journalists and the 'Other' in the War in Iraq" http://www.up.ac.za/academic/humanities/eng/eng/visart/eng/conference.htm, accessed 2008-10-28.
[37] Simon, S. 1992. "Weekend Edition" National Public Radio, Jan 18, 1992.
[38] Ibid
[39] The 'video game' type footage is very specific because it presents its 'enemy' as a target position on a computer screen, who is denied any human identity, whilst the viewer watches from a privileged 'safe' position.

highlighting the notion that this was clearly a war about weaponry, taking place in real time. Viewers identified the enemy as a target on a computer screen, stripped of personality and human quality. This process also allowed the viewer to bear witness to the events as they were taking place, he/she could therefore watch instant history from the privileged position in the safety of his/her home. This relates to what Fiske and Hartley[40] identify as "clawback", where the violence which supposedly exists further away, outside of the viewer's society, is clearly separated from the viewer.

In *Television Culture*, Fiske[41] develops the original proposal into three stages of "clawback" that correspond with spaces that are both material and symbolic. The central space exists in the television studio, which is occupied by the anchor or television newsreader that tells the viewer the "objective discourse of 'the truth'"[42]. Spatially, situated further away is the reporter, who according to Fiske is discursively subordinated, but functions in mediating the "raw reality" and the final "truth" spoken by the newsreader. In addition, the reporter merely functions in re-instating the authority of the newsreader. Finally, the furthest away from the newsreader, is the eyewitness, who has to be brought under discursive control. This creates an immediate irony; one has "the truth" positioned in the studio, but in actual fact, geographically, it is the most distant to "raw reality" and "the truth". Broadcasters have less control when they allow events to unfold live; the network overcomes this by allowing the anchor the ultimate position of authority and control over a story. The audience then ideologically consents to the narrative by identifying with the anchor, who controls how the events unfold in real time.

[40] Fiske, J & Hartley, J. 1978. *Reading Television*. London: Methuen, pg 87.
[41] Fiske, J. 1990. *Television Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, pg 288.
[42] Ibid

Vivian Sobchack[43] identifies the concept of instant history as "history in the making", where the popular audience "see themselves not only as spectators of history, but also as participants in and adjudicators of it" because the audience 'feels' as if they are directly engaging in the action. The Gulf War not only created instant history but it also confirmed America's Military superiority to the world. This allowed the American state and its image to the world to assume a specific position of hierarchy, not only in relation to the Iraqis but also on a global level. Those viewers who identified with America and the Bush Administration were separate from the enemy and became a homogeneous audience through the process of interpellation by consenting to the 'preferred' reading of the television text[44]. This was the first step in creating The New World Order, which united heterogeneous groups, and more substantially contributed to the current national identity amongst Americans. Here, instant history works on an ideological level, with reference to Larrain[45] because it creates a social consciousness and awareness. In his study of Marx's theory, Larrain developed a distinction between a positive and negative conception of ideology. The positive according to Larrain[46] was more concerned with the construction of social consciousness, the negative conception, however, referred to some form of distorted thought. Thus there is a binary definition promoting a sense of social consciousness or distorted thought. An important point to consider, however, is who decides whether something is conscious or distorted and in relation to whom?

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[43] Sobchak, V (ed.) 1996. *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modern Event*. New York and London: Routledge, pg 7.
[44] The audience becomes homogeneous because it accepts the reading that this war is necessary in achieving overall good and is a step towards greater democracy.
[45] Hunt, A & Purvis, T. 1993. "Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology…" in *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol 44 (3): 477.
[46] Ibid

The Kingdom touches on the ability to watch instant history unfold and draws on the personal memory of all Americans on 9-11. When Agent Fleury is visiting Kevin's school at the beginning of the film, his cellular phone rings[47], Fleury walks out the room "Fran?" he asks surprised. Agent Fran walks around the injured and dead, and replies in a shattered voice "You getting this yet?" (implying that Fleury is viewing the events after the explosion on television). The Gulf War was the moment in history which allowed the television audience to witness events instantaneously; this has become so much part of modern existence that the film does not even have to explain what Fran is assuming because the notion of instant history is so much part of the modern audience's existence. As a result of satellite communication and videophone technology, the television audience is able to access most events as they happen.

Hotel Rwanda does not address the notion of instant history but is more critical of the Developed world because it questions the type of images that were coming out of Rwanda during the genocide. Throughout the film, there is ongoing tension between the producer and cameraman[48]. The cameraman Jake says "There's a big news story out there! We need to get out and cover it" to which the producer replies, "We're not going outside the hotel grounds unless we have an armoured car. That's the ground rules … We cover the story from here until we can get proper protection". It is thus evident that *The Kingdom* refers to the ability of the media today whereas *Hotel Rwanda* presents the process of a story. The fact that cameramen have been on the Frontline since 1915 (see

[47] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:09:18
[48] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:36:37

Chapter 1), raises questions regarding their presence on the Frontlines of Africa. Although both films present different functions of the media, both stories indicate how the media actually needs to be 'on site' for an event 'to happen' in the public mind. The failure of the media to engage with the Rwandan crisis is often seen as reason for the lack of public outcry and involvement. The producer in *Hotel Rwanda* will not record the genocide happening because he is afraid of what will happen to him if he goes outside the hotel walls. This fear has a direct impact on the entire recording of the events of the war because the world will only witness the conflict through the eyes of the camera. If the camera is not present, it cannot record the events and the viewer will receive an incomplete account. One has to agree that these minor hiccups will have a huge impact on how networks broadcast events via the news story. This political stance is further complicated when one takes Tom Giles and Fergal Keane's point of view as discussed in Chapter 1, where the Western media tried to simplify the very complex social history of the war and concentrated on broadcasting images of humanitarian aid as opposed to dead bodies.

Both films make reference to the media, *Hotel Rwanda* questions the motivations and limitations evident at the source of a story, which results in a specific and often limited account of events. These limitations will bear influence on how a reporter reports an event before one even starts to examine the political processes and interests of the broadcaster. *The Kingdom* takes on the postmodern perspective of watching instant history through obtaining information via a fragmented and disjointed narrative which emerged with the Gulf War, because it was the first war that networks were able to

broadcast in real time, as the events were happening. This resulted in an eclectic mix of short snippets of unverified information dominating the airwaves, until networks were able to accumulate and verify all the facts from the various sources. Even though the Rwandan Genocide happened after the Gulf War, the type of reporting which characterised the Gulf War did not follow through with Rwanda. *Hotel Rwanda* voices this and presents to what extent the media uses selective coverage.

In their introduction to the book *Journalism After September 11*, Barbie Zelizer and Stuart Allan[49] argue that the notion of instant history particularly after 9-11 initiated a new role of the journalist - whilst experiencing the emotional trauma of watching the events unfold, journalists had the larger public responsibility to report the events in a professional and accurate way, despite their emotional turmoil[50]. This position is relevant to all war reporting because the trauma that the journalist is witnessing will affect his/her understanding of an event. What makes 9-11 different is that it was the first attack on the Mainland since the War of Independence. In addition, the American journalists who were working on 9-11 were patriotically as well as personally involved in how the events developed.

One could argue that *The Kingdom* uses instant history and draws on the personal memory of all Americans because it is shot in the post 9-11 era. It is also embroiled in the patriotic fervour that ensued. *Hotel Rwanda* does not suffer from these aspects because it depicts events from 1994 which firstly, can be considered a different media era

[49] Zellizer, B & Allan, S. 2002. *Journalism After September 11*. London and New York: Routledge.
[50] Ibid, pg 3

(because it is pre 9-11), but more importantly, with reference to journalism and personal memory the journalists who commented on the Rwandan genocide were not personally involved in the conflict. They were Western journalists who were commenting on events from the outside, looking in on a society.

ENCODING/DECODING

Although Cottle[51], Sobchak[52] and Fiske[53] focus specifically on news media, their arguments are relevant to film because the understandings created within the media leak into film theory. In his article "Encoding/Decoding", Stuart Hall[54] examines the process involved in understanding messages and his argument is particularly relevant to film. Within the current media environment, there is the emotion from the journalist and on the other end of the spectrum, there is the viewer, who according to Stuart Hall[55] is crucial because ultimately, a text will only generate meaning once its audience reads and interprets it.

Hall[56] argues that there are certain hypothetical codes which may position a viewer's reading and assist in naturalising messages. Hall[57] classifies the codes as the 'dominant', 'negotiated', or 'oppositional':

> The codes demonstrate the degree of habituation produced when there is a fundamental alignment and reciprocity – an achieved equivalence – between the

[51] Cottle, S. 2006. *Mediatized Conflict*. UK: Open University Press.
[52] Sobchak, V (ed.) 1996. *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modern Event*. New York and London: Routledge.
[53] Fiske, J. 1990. *Television Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.
[54] Hall, S. 1980. "Encoding/Decoding" in Hall, S (ed.) *Culture, Media and Language*. London: Hutchinson in association with CCCS, University of Birmingham, pg 128-138.
[55] Ibid
[56] Ibid
[57] Ibid, pg 132

> encoding and decoding sides of an exchange of meanings. The functioning of the codes on the decoding side will frequently assume the status of naturalised perceptions.

According to Hall, the events portrayed become so "naturalised" through the cause and effect relationship established by the text that the viewer almost assumes the position of submitting him/herself to the 'preferred' reading of a text. In view of the discussion thus far, there are numerous influences from practical accessibility to network filters and cultural prejudices which will influence the message of a text and play a vital role in the representation of an event. This becomes a key feature in both films because through the ideological constructs of the narrative, the audience aligns him/herself with the protagonists.

Hall[58] also identifies that the process of naturalising codes is not as clear-cut and simple as one would think. In contrast he sees the process as a "work" which is required to "enforce, win plausibility for and command as legitimate a decoding of the event within the limit of dominant definitions in which it has been connotatively signified"[59]. Although a filmmaker may promote a certain 'preferred' reading (intentionally or unintentionally), the filmmaker cannot fully control this because he/she does not have complete control of the "decoding" process of a message (which occurs when the viewer interprets a piece of information). One can expect that an Arab or Hutu viewer will more than likely view each film from a 'negotiated' or 'oppositional' point of view. It is thus

[58] Ibid, pg 135
[59] Ibid

evident that there are constant 'gaps' in the process of interpretation, which mirrors the 'moments of rupture' highlighted by Gramsci's[60] concept of "hegemony".

In watching the television narrative unfold, the viewer assumes that he/she is in a privileged position, but in fact, according to Althusser[61], this has been ideologically constructed through interpellation, which is the mechanism that produces subjects in such a way that they recognise their own existence in terms of the dominant ideology of the society in which they live[62]. Louis Althusser's[63], thesis advocates "ideology interpellates individuals as subjects" ideology, then constructs its subjects, because there are ideological state apparatuses (such as the educational system, the family and the media) whose primary "function is to reproduce the social relations of production by producing individual subjects who recognise themselves in the dominant ideology, and therefore acquiesce to it"[64]. The spectator will then read the text accordingly and submerge into the dominant reading of the text. In addition, as news agencies move more towards the 24/7 instant format, the viewer moves towards the position of spectator because he/she actively engages with the events as they occur.

[60] According to King, Gramsci uses the notion of hegemony precisely to counteract his notion of incorporation. Hegemony is not the disappearance or destruction of differences. It is the construction of a collective will through differences, it is the articulation of differences which do not disappear. See King, A, D (ed.) 1991. *Culture Globalisation and The-World-System*. London: Macmillan.
[61] Althusser, L. 1984. *Essays on Ideology*. London: Verso, pg 44.
[62] See Althusser, L. 1971. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, *translated by Brewster, B*. London: New Left Books.
[63] Althusser, L. 1984. *Essays on Ideology*. London: Verso, pg 44.
[64] Macey, D. 2001. *Dictionary of Critical Theory*. London and New York: Penguin, pg 197-198.

Robert Stam[65] identifies the viewer's position of watching instant history during the Gulf War specifically as a "voyeur", namely, a passive bystander with a privileged point of view. I would argue for a more critical reading, such as that of Allen Feldman[66] who argues that: "the perpetual entanglement with the video simulation of the war was crucial to the manufacturing of consent and, thus, politically and instrumentally implicated the viewing public in the action of violence". Feldman's argument views the process of witnessing historic events as they take place as a hegemonic process in the Gramsci sense which will manufacture a general consensus to the war and promote a particular reading and consciousness[67]. The viewer thus becomes an active participant on a 'virtual level', engaging in the combat from one's own home, and, thereby, constructing a social consciousness which forms part of the positive concept of ideology as highlighted by Larrain[68].

The 'American might' represented in The Gulf War was dispersed by the events of 9/11, where American civilians were the victims and the American state was no longer the unified army presented during The Gulf War. The images of 9/11 created a new American identity and consciousness, namely, the victim. The war in Iraq played directly into this image where the audience witnessed a new representation of America, on the one hand, there was the victim and memory of 9/11, and on the other hand, there was the

[65] Feldman, A. 1994. "On Cultural Anaesthesia: From Desert Storm to Rodney King" in *American* Ethnologist, Vol 210 (2): 404-418.
[66] Ibid, pg 408
[67] According to Gramsci, "ideology" has an "integrating effect, which is based on its ability to win the free consent of the people. This hegemonic quality of a world-view is manifested in the solidity of popular beliefs (see Larrain, J. 1983. *Marxism and Ideology*. London: Macmillan, pg 81). Thus the society almost 'absorbs' its differences in preference for those views which have become naturalised or popular.
[68] Hunt, A & Purvis, T. 1993. "Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology…" in *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol 44 (3): 477.

organised, mass of military artillery moving towards Baghdad in their search for the "Ace of Spades"[69]. The image of the American military might and knowledge is the core of *The Kingdom*. Fleury acknowledges this to Prince Thamer[70] when he demands access into Saudi Arabia: "I want in and I want in immediately". His statement and slight arrogance functions firstly, to gain his respect, because the audience reads his attitude as a man with authority. Secondly, his comment implies that if the Prince does not allow him to conduct his own investigation, no one else will solve the crime. This comment within the film, functions to confirm America's expertise in the field. As most films following the Hollywood formula, the American protagonist and his group are the brains and military specialists behind solving the case. The film merely reinstates American supremacy and strength through the brilliance and expertise of the American group and their ability to solve the case.

RECORDING HISTORY

At numerous points, throughout the thesis, I have made reference to postmodernism and the eclectic manner in which we receive information, namely: the internet, television, film, newspapers, billboards and other print media. As a result, the question arises from a viewer's perspective - where did the conflict actually take place? Was it virtual or did it actually take place as Baudrillard suggests. This question merely highlights the fact that since the Gulf War, the whole concept of war and its representation thereof has changed. It is not only about conflicting groups but also about the process of how instant history takes place and how the messages play into the dominant ideology. The television camera

[69] I refer directly to the pack of cards with the images of the 55 most wanted men in Iraq that was distributed to the coalition troops, Saddam Hussein's card being the "Ace of Spades".
[70] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:21:27

records the moment but the networks constantly update information, thereby having full control of the story and monitoring what information they will broadcast. The function of how the camera functions within conflict and in relation to global culture is a theme which emerges in both *The Kingdom* and *Hotel Rwanda* and is a point necessary to discuss because very often news and film terminology coincide when they are examined from a theoretical perspective.

The interlinking of factual (news) and fictional (film) concepts is clear in George Gerbner's[71] article "Persian Gulf War, the Movie". He writes,

> We had gone from oral to scribal, to literate, to audio-visual-digital-cybernetic mass-produced culture. The quantum leap had occurred when satellites connected them all around the world. The stage had then been set for centrally scripted real-time live global imagery, evoking instant reaction, feeding vents back into an ongoing crisis, and giving the deliberate sorting out of historical meanings a swift kick in the pants.

Gerbner's position merely re-instates how media reporting has changed but I would argue that despite the 24/7 instant history news format, broadcasters are still able to control the central message as they verify and re-address events as they unfold, thereby maintaining control of the story. *The Kingdom*, for example, draws on the memory of 9-11 and the attack on innocent civilians. The news narrative within the film shows that as the events are initially unclear, one element remains constant; the victims were civilians and that the final explosion, which drew in the most casualties, was as a result of extremist suicide bombers. The audience draws from the intertextuality with all other suicide bomber scenarios; this is the controlling element of the instant news story which warrants that the

[71] Gerbner, G, Mowlana, H et al (eds.) 1992. *Triumph of the Image: The Media's War in the Persian Gulf – A global Perspective*. Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, pg 244.

audience will interpret the text according to the ideology of all other relevant and comparable events. This element of consistency will guarantee the controlling element needed to maintain a dominant hegemonic reading of a text. In addition, Gerbner's point emphasises the link between an event and the ability to broadcast it to its audience. The Iraqi conflict as well as the War on Terror has not only been about bringing down the perpetrators but also about reporting the events in real time.

In contrast *Hotel Rwanda* touches on the function of the media with the news crew. Once Jake ignores the producer[72] and obtains footage of a massacre just outside of the hotel, he apologises to Paul, who replies, "I'm glad you filmed this. Now the West will have to stop it". Paul's statement refers directly to the power and influence of the media in the global world, as discussed in Chapter 1. The film presents the media as a source and vessel of information and knowledge but the script, through the head producer, criticises how the media did not achieve what they could, despite their power (implied or actual) because the world continued to do nothing.

CULTURAL ARTEFACTS[73]

Once information has been verified and the initial conflict is over, the memory and cultural tributes to the veterans emerge. After the 1960s, the Hollywood films, yellow

[72] Sequence starts at Time Code 00:41:45

[73] The theoretical framework of this section was initially discussed in my Masters dissertation entitled, Šakota-Kokot, T. 2001. *The Construction of a Preferred Reading in the Television Documentary The Death of Yugoslavia*. MA Dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand. It was then revised in a published article entitled "Baghdad Café: Rhetoric, 'Embedded' Journalists and the 'Other' in the War in Iraq". The article was presented at the Visual Culture/Explorations Conference held at the University of Pretoria on 9th-10th July 2004 and then published in 2005. See Šakota-Kokot, T. 2005. "Baghdad Café: Rhetoric, 'Embedded' Journalists and the 'Other' in the War in Iraq" http://www.up.ac.za/academic/humanities/eng/eng/visart/eng/conference.htm, accessed 2008-10-28.

ribbons and the Vietnam Veteran Memorial all contribute to the cathartic process and 'healing' of the nation which confirms that the Vietnam War is a painful part of American History. The memories of the veterans have contributed to the making of the fiction films [such as *The Losers*, (Jack Starrett, 1970), *The Big Bounce*, (Alex March, 1969)] which in turn, have now become part of American culture and memory. One re-visits events through culture, as this occurs, the actual event or memory thereof including the experiences and memories of those who took part in the war and those who remember viewing news coverage of it are woven into the narratives of popular films. All the experiences become part of the cultural memory. Veteran William Adams[74] personifies this in his comment "what 'really' happened is now so thoroughly mixed up in my mind with what has been said about what happened that the pure experience is no longer there". Through remembering, society interlinks the veteran experience with popular culture. George Bush, Oliver Stone, Arthur John Rambo are a few of the war veterans who have also become part of the historical narratives in popular film. These men thus contribute to the greater picture of American memory, culture and history because today's audience starts to witness the events of Vietnam through their stories and the cultural artefacts, which have emerged.

The Vietnam veterans witnessed their war in ways very different to the Gulf veterans. This is evident through the 'icons' or visual codes which have now become synonymous with each war. For example, the Vietnam War is depicted through the following images: "American bombs fall endlessly on forested landscapes, the pleading faces of Vietnamese villagers, American soldiers laden with equipment walking through burned-out villages,

[74] Adams, W. 1988. "Still Shooting After all these Years" in *Mother Jones* (Jan): 49.

GI's running away from the rotating blades of a helicopter"[75]. The Gulf War, in contrast, is associated with laser images, smart bombs, MIG jets, burning oil wells and desert landscapes. Both wars are relevant to this discussion because of the way they portray 'the enemy'.

In Vietnam and the Gulf, one bears witness to the enemy through the landscape and burning objects. One does not confront the enemy as an individual but rather as a symbolic representation of violence and destruction. In the eyes of the American people, the American war veteran in Vietnam emerged as the ultimate victim, having lost his innocence and having been betrayed by a nation[76], where the enemy who were nameless and faceless were confined to the unknown depths of the Vietnam jungle. The civilian tragedy became evident through the Vietnamese civilians caught in the crossfire and the documented photographs of innocent civilians weeping, running away and trying to come to terms with their fate, for example, the photographs which were released after the My Lai Massacre (1968) and the accidental napalm strike on Trang Bang Village (1972).

The documented images, which have emerged from these historic occasions, include the girl (Kim Phuc) running away from the toxic gas naked. She had removed her clothing because her clothes exacerbated the reaction of the toxic gas on her skin. There is also the iconic image of the Chief of the South Vietnamese National Police pointing a gun to the head of an innocent man and killing him; each image has focused on the effects of the war on the civilian population. Throughout, the enemy remains nameless and faceless

[75] Sturken, M. 1997. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, pg 90.
[76] Ibid, pg 104

with the focus on the innocent men, women and children who were not directly involved in the war. These historic images, form part of the memory of Vietnam as well as contribute to the cultural make-up and identity of the American nation because they focus on America's past and also draw attention to America's role in Vietnam.

The iconography of the 'Flower Children' during the 1960s and the 1970s was very different to the spy espionage type of images across the Iron Curtain which surfaced during the 1980s. As history progressed, the concept of instant history and The New World Order in the 1990s generated a new type of iconography, synonymous with deserted landscapes, F16's and smart bombs. All of these images have contributed to the way in which America has identified itself in relation to the rest of the world. With the attack on the Twin Towers, ideology and the image of the villain has changed once again. It is thus evident that each new era has generated a specific image of American society and its villains.

As time has moved on, the American image as a result of Vietnam has shifted as new iconography has emerged which include the images of the aftermath of a suicide bombing, such as scraps of metal, buildings without facades, debris and disorientated people walking aimlessly. *The Kingdom* uses these images to advocate its authenticity. The film also draws on America's past and current identity in order to present a more cynical representation of America today. By creating this image, the film advocates certain legitimacy because it does not present America as an idealised, powerful and invincible nation. The beginning of the film focuses on the innocence of the American

people and how vulnerable they are despite the high security around the compound. As the film progresses, it reinforces the memory of the victims, but the knowledge and precision of the FBI team, re-establishes the American might. The final comment[77] of the film, "We'll kill them all", however, confirms that there is no resolution; the War on Terror continues to be necessary as all Americans are at risk.

Reid[78] argues that the way one remembers images actually creates a perception of the past. He writes that a culture will define and characterise their history through

> the manner in which conflict has been framed within popular imagination and 'memory' … how war and more generally hardship, sacrifice and loss have shaped that imagination and have been used to underpin the self-images of modern states and communities[79].

In other words, the way in which one frames memory within popular culture will have an impact on the current image of a community or society, whether this is from the Periphery or from America. One cannot ignore the fact that memory becomes entangled with history and popular culture and one can classify films that are based on factual evidence as docudramas.

History and cultural memory converge in the form of docudrama which is, "in essence a mimetic interpretation of the past"[80]. Here, films are produced, narrating events and in so doing, giving them closure. This is evident through the mass of films which Hollywood produced post-Vietnam. Films such as *Platoon* (Oliver Stone, 1986), *Full Metal Jacket*

[77] Sequence starts at Time Code 01:38:51
[78] Reid, R. 2006. "War and Remembrance: Orality, Literacy and Conflict in the Horn" in *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol 18 (1): 90.
[79] Ibid
[80] Sturken, M. 1997. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, pg 85.

(Stanley Kubrick, 1987), *Casualties of War* (Brian de Palma, 1989), *Born on the Fourth of July* (Oliver Stone, 1986) all contributed to a post-war catharsis surrounding unresolved issues, allowing the American people to come to terms with the war because as veteran William Adams[81] claims, "[the memory of the war] is no longer a definite so much as it is a collective and mobile script in which we continue to scrawl, erase, re-write our conflicting and changing view of ourselves". His point emphasizes that his memory has been jarred or 're-written' by the constant re-visiting of Vietnam through cultural artefacts. As is evident in this Chapter, society uses this means in order to rationalise the initial conflict. This catharsis also occurred with the Gulf War, *Courage Under Fire* (Edward Zwick, 1996), *Three Kings* (David O. Russel, 1999) and the same applies to Iraq with *In the Valley of Elah,* (Paul Haggis, 2007), *Redacted* (Brian De Palma, 2007) and *Rendition* (Gavin Hood, 2007). It is clear that each film is a cultural artefact which producers create in order to come to terms with the conflict and meet its audience demands. As a result one has a heavily *mediated* narrative, which is basically a subjective version of the role of various participants in a conflict, designed to be 'entertaining' to its specific audience. The final product therefore has a clear ideological function and may have little resemblance to the historical referent, although it claims to be 'based' on fact.

There are two opposing means of obtaining information. On the one hand, there is the representation of conflict in the news narrative and on the other; there are the fiction films which emerge as a result of the conflicts. Thus far, it is evident that fiction draws on popular ideologies created from the news narrative and assumes a position of

[81] Adams, W. 1988. "Still Shooting After all these Years" in *Mother Jones* (Jan): 49.

authority, as the films become part of cultural memory. Both films *The Kingdom* and *Hotel Rwanda,* function to keep the memory of the conflicts alive and both function to uphold a specific ideology and to use Sturken's approach both form part of cultural memory.

Hotel Rwanda, on the other hand, draws on all the stereotypes regarding Africa in its representation. The white people, who are all from the West, have all the knowledge (Colonel Oliver, the news crew, the President of Sabena, Mr Godefroid and Madame Archer). The black people are merely the victims who cannot help themselves, Paul and all the Tutsis at the hotel are momentarily safe because they have the protection of the UN and have access to influential contacts in the West, but there is the constant threat that once these contacts dry up, the Hutus **will** kill them. Both films are cultural artefacts which claim that the films represent legitimate accounts of the events, therefore blurring the fictional world with 'reality'.

FORGETTING

When discussing memory, one has to examine the concept of "amnesia" because as the media updates, verifies and brings information under discursive control, the memory shifts accordingly. Milan Kundera[82] writes,

> Forgetting is a form of death ever present within life … But forgetting is also the great problem of politics. When a big power wants to deprive a small country of its national consciousness it uses the method of organised forgetting … A nation which loses awareness of its past gradually loses itself.

[82] Griffith, L. 2004. *The War on Terrorism and the Terror of God.* UK: Eerdmans Publishing, pg 39.

I would argue that the media and cultural artefacts function in the same way. Both films thrive on memory but their memory is selective because both films are very specific in what events they remember. Although *Hotel Rwanda* focuses on the genocide, it does not touch on the social and political events, which contributed to the hate messages, Rwanda's colonial past, is only touched on at the beginning of the film, but the film does not deal with many of the events, which initiated the conflict. One cannot condemn a film for including or not including certain information, but through this elimination it is evident that memory is a selective process. It is impossible to remember everything, "what we remember is highly selective and how we remember it says as much about desire and denial as it dies about remembrance"[83]. *The Kingdom* chooses to remember 9-11 and the terrorist attacks on American Embassies around the world because the memory functions to authenticate the fiction with the factual event.

Robert Burgoyne[84] identifies a historical narrative as "a performative discourse, a product of the same kinds of actions that produce historical events; the investing of the world with symbolic meaning". It has already been established that when one narrates events, one engages in discourse, which is symbolically constructed, the war film merely further contributes to the symbolic representations by encoding its political position. When one examines the historical (news), memory (eye-witness accounts) and culture (films, exhibitions and memorials), the ideology of each text emerges. It is quite evident that both films (culture) communicate the same message as the news reports (historical) but

[83] Sturken, M. 1997. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, pg 7.
[84] Sobchak, V (ed.) 1996. *The Persistence of History: Cinema, Television and the Modern Event*. New York and London: Routledge, pg 58.

may differ to the eye-witness accounts (memory). Fiske and Sturken both mention that memory or the eye-witness account is fluid, it is the element of contestation which can be re-visited, forgotten but in order to maintain the dominant ideology, it has to be brought under discursive control and the event should be remembered as a united and shared process.

Martin Innes discusses two approaches to collective memory. The first, the functionalist approach, focuses on what collective memories do as described by Durkheim and Halbwachs[85]. The second, the constructionist approach, examines how collective memories are manufactured as described by Mead[86]. Both approaches are necessary to consider because they both highlight that memory is not only about testimony from the eye witness but it functions within the whole ideological process of a society and nation. On the one hand, collective memory functions to uphold a certain point of view whereas the second approach addresses the notion that certain institutions manufacture and keep memories alive for political reasons. Both films are cultural artefacts that manufacture a collective memory of the events so as to create a political awareness in order to feed into a specific way of thinking with regards to the War on Terror and the general attitude towards Africa.

Sturken's position is an essential component to examine within this chapter because she links film which is a cultural medium to history and identity. She introduces the concept that all three (history, memory and culture) are linked and that when one remembers, the

[85] Innes, M. 2004. "Crime as a Signal, Crime as a Memory" in *Journal for Crime, Conflict and the Media,* Vol 1 (2): 20.
[86] Ibid

memory is not clear-cut, but it is a foggy conglomerate of the historical intercepting with the cultural and this accumulation has a direct impact on identity. Her position towards instant history and cultural memory is necessary to discuss because the American identity and cultural memory, which emerged after the Vietnam and Gulf Wars, has affected the representation of America in mainstream film today. The images relating to history and memory are necessary to decode as they provide an analysis of how the global environment functions through cinematic representation and how images create identities and perceptions of different cultures. In addition Reid[87] argues that the way one interprets and understands violence and conflict through popular culture has a direct influence in shaping societies and cultures as well as creating political mythologies. The theoretical principle remains the same; the only difference is how popular culture perceives and represents the Developed world as opposed to the Periphery states. This is particularly important when comparing images of conflicts within Africa with those of areas where certain super-powers such as the USA are involved as is evident in *Hotel Rwanda* and *The Kingdom*.

CONCLUSION

In his book, *Triumph of the Image: The Media's War in the Persian Gulf – A global Perspective*, Gerbner[88] also associates the media's build-up of the Gulf war in the early 1990s[89], to the premier launch of a mainstream fiction film as is seen in Aksoy and

[87] Reid, R. 2006. "War and Remembrance: Orality, Literacy and Conflict in the Horn" in *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, Vol 18 (1): 102.
[88] Gerbner, G, Mowlana, H et al (eds.) 1992. *Triumph of the Image: The Media's War in the Persian Gulf – A global Perspective*. Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press.
[89] Ibid, pg 243-244

Robins' quotation at the beginning of this chapter. Gerbner's[90] reference that the Gulf War offered "a new ending for the Vietnam War" is particularly relevant as his reference to Vietnam merely emphasizes that one will keep on perpetuating a conflict until one achieves the closure one needs. Gerbner's position (see also Curran and Gurevitch[91]) relates to the way iconography functions with reference to representation and interrogates how the 'image' becomes a weapon in its own right. The burning Twin Towers on 9-11 will remain an iconic image throughout America's history and the memory of the events will continue until Americans find the closure they need. Gerbner's argument on how images function within specific narratives speaks indirectly to Sturken's notion of the way a nation remembers conflict through icons. Sturken looks at how the media's representation of such events affects the memory of the events and contributes ultimately to the identity of the American nation. Gerbner focuses more on the power of the images (see also Gamson, Croteau, Hoynes and Sasson[92]). Both introduce how cultural media, whether it is television, film, art, fiction or documented footage play a role in remembering historical events and contribute to the emerging narrative of the conflict and how it places its viewer quite specifically.

Both films make use of the power of an image. *The Kingdom* thrives on slow motion explosions which are prevalent with the Action genre. *Hotel Rwanda* makes use of the emotive music evident in the Drama genre. However dramatic, both narratives emerge

[90] Sturken, M. 1997. *Tangled Memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, pg, 123.
[91] Curran, J & Gurevitch, M. 2005. *Mass Media and Society: 4th Edition.* New York and London: Hodder Arnold.
[92] Gamson, W, A, Croteau, D, Hoynes, W & Sasson, T. 1992. "Media Images and the Social Construction of Reality" *Annual Review of Sociology* , Vol 18: 373-393.

with iconic images of each historical problem that will contribute to the memory of the events they portray. The image of the burnt shell of the American Embassy building in Kenya, the desert landscapes of Saudi Arabia, the arrogance of the Saudis to the American FBI agents contribute to the message of *The Kingdom*. The film claims that this is the new enemy, an anonymous group who are not easily identifiable and whose aim is to kill innocent American civilians. The image of innocent American civilians running away from suicide bombers now replace the image of Kim Phuc. It is not only the veteran who has lost his/her innocence but now it is the American civilian. In Africa, the cosmopolitan and urban lifestyles which dominates most of its cities remains anonymous in film and the dominant image of Africa remains as a land of war, violence and disease characterised by outbreaks of famine and drought.

Although the Vietnam, Gulf, Rwanda and Iraq Wars occurred during different decades and on different continents, the memory of each event contributes to the identity of the Western nation. The historical facts, memory and cultural artefacts which have emerged in relation to each conflict, is specifically constructed in order to maintain a particular ideology. Producers (either fact or fiction) encode texts with particular outcomes (whether this is to remember or forget) which function to enhance nation identity. We are living in a millennium of instant history, allowing the television medium to re-define our memory of conflict and shaping the image and identity of nations. The War on Terror exemplifies this as the image of America and its military has shifted along the victim-victor paradigm with the memory of its past conflicts contributing to its general identity and culture. In contrast, the Rwandan genocide presents a different tribute to memory

and critiques the lack of coverage of the event within the global media. Both films remain cultural artefacts, which contribute to the history and memory of the events they portray. The following chapter will examine how the way one remembers conflict, creates notions of 'othering'.