

HOWARD UNIVERSITY

**Representing Africa:
African Images in African and Western Films
and the Ideologies that Govern Those Images**

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the differences between Hollywood films and African films made about African Issues. Research shows that Africa has been misrepresented in Hollywood film for many years. The findings from the research provide some insight to some of the differences between Hollywood filmmakers and African filmmakers when depicting an existing social problem in Africa.

The study utilizes a hermeneutics model associated with interpretive research. The researcher performs a close reading of two films, *Hotel Rwanda* and *Sometimes in April*. The former is a Hollywood blockbuster while the latter was written and produced by an African filmmaker. During the analysis specific elements in each film are examined, guided by research questions that examine how the conflict within the country is represented or articulated in the film (the goal being to determine whether the conflict is presented as the central concern in the storyline, or relegated to background), and to look at mechanisms used by the main character(s) to deal with the overarching conflict. Both areas are examined with the use of neocolonial theories and context, and provide material with which to examine the presence of neocolonial relationships conveyed in film.

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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

My research into what I believed were the misrepresentations of Africa in Hollywood films stemmed from my personal history. I was born in 1982 to two Nigerian parents in Los Angeles, home to Hollywood. Because my parents were immigrants, I was often made aware of the cultural difference between growing up in Los Angeles and in Nigeria, as my parents had. As a child of African immigrants I had the opportunity to travel regularly to Nigeria during my childhood and adolescent years. The opportunity to visit Nigeria with regularity allowed me to see many Africans from other countries or cultures. I was able to learn a lot about how daily life is lived in African countries. Three things that have remained consistent in my observation of Africans are the work ethic, intelligence, and determination demonstrated by family members, friends, and acquaintances. In addition, all these people in my life shared a common allegiance and respect to the country where they grew up. Despite this, I have often come across non-Africans who have passed negative judgments on me or other Africans. Though never discouraged as a result of these misconceptions, I have thought much about how incorrect or misinformed ideas about a certain type of people can negatively influence the way many relate to the said group of people. Attitudes about individuals from African countries affect international relations, education, social interactions and many other areas of life. As I've grown older, I have not only noticed but have also studied the development of media in society, and media's ability to shape public perception regarding issues like globalization, economic growth of people, and many other important facets of life. I have chosen to conduct research in an area that will explore differences between how Western attitudes, and attitudes from within the African Diaspora are conveyed on film, an extremely popular sector of media.

The research is set in a theoretical framework informed by the postcolonial and political economy strands of critical theory and modern film theory. Postcolonial theory can also be referred to as postcolonial cultural studies. George Gugelberger (2005) provided an informative discourse on the ideas behind postcolonial studies and how it evolved when he said, “The designation ‘postcolonial’ has been used to describe writing and reading practices grounded in colonial experience occurring outside of Europe but as a consequence of European expansion and exploitation of ‘other’ worlds” (Gugelberger, 2005, ¶ 6). In other words, postcolonial theory challenges traditional academic accounts of colonization. Many of the authors whose studies I examined for the literature review and theoretical framework sections of this thesis are well known as postcolonial writers and theorists. As Gugelberger understands it, post colonialism is more of a social problem than an actual academic discipline; he sees it as a combination of all problems visible in academic fields that are newly emerging, such as various types of minority discourse (Gugelberger, 2005). One of the main problems postcolonial studies examine is the idea “that hegemonized Western (Euro-American) studies have been unduly over-privileged for political reasons” (Gugelberger, 2005, *Postcolonial Cultural Studies: 1 Origins to the 1980s*, ¶ 7). Postcolonial studies aim to intervene and alter the model narrative of Western discourse (Gugelberger, 2005). For the purpose of my research, the discourse being critiqued is found in film.

Political economy theory investigates the relationship between economics and the various forms of culture distributed via major mass media outlets. Political economy theorists study elite control of economic institutions, and then try to show how this control affects many other institutions, including media (Baron & Davis, 2006). For the present research, the relevant institutions are Hollywood film studios and production companies, and the films the studios

produce. Filmmaking is a complex process. Films are driven by motives put forth by executives at large production companies, and these motives affect film content. Media scholars Baron and Davis (2006) remind us that, “In certain respects, political economists accept the classic Marx assumption that the base dominates the superstructure. They investigate the means of production by looking at economic institutions, then expect to find that these institutions will shape media to suit their interests and purposes” (p. 241). It is important to understand the ways that political economy theory seeks to explain the effect corporate decisions have on various types of media content. Herbert I. Schiller, who before his death was noted as one of the most prominent and influential political economists (Baron & Davis, 2006), often wrote that corporate influence permeates almost all aspects of society, from mundane things such as daily diet or fashion choices all the way to larger matters such as personal interactions (as cited in Baron & Davis, 2006, p. 241).

My research will focus on film, a form of media controlled by many corporate decisions that many people have allowed into their lives. This idea of the possible corporate influence on film content, especially in Hollywood, is important because Hollywood films are viewed worldwide. As stated above, most Hollywood films reflect the interests of not only filmmakers, but also the production companies who fund the films. This research is driven by the concern that the values and perspectives conveyed in Hollywood films represent African countries from a Western perspective, and do not adequately address all the elements of the subject matter that Africans would likely view differently. Furthermore, Hollywood filmmakers and production companies have the means of distribution to spread these views to people worldwide. The research should also reveal something about the present-day neocolonial relationship between the Hollywood film industry and smaller independent companies, as seen through the power of

global media conglomerates in relation to independent filmmaking. Film content can be expected to differ between big budget Hollywood films told with a Western perspective and smaller budget films told from an African perspective, and more people have access to Hollywood film. It is necessary to look at the messages that can be taken from the individual industries. Companies with the capacity to fund and distribute films on a global scale help determine film content. Most Hollywood films are funded by such companies, and as a result these films receive larger audiences because of the number of people they reach because of the large spanning distribution in movie theaters and home video releases. By contrast, many independent films lack the financial support that would allow them to reach as many people worldwide as Hollywood films do. As a result, the Hollywood industry has more opportunity to circulate viewpoints, values and other messages found in the content of their films.

Robert Stam's (2000) *Film Theory, An Introduction* provides interesting insight to how film theory is directly connected to postcolonial theories and also acknowledges some aspects of political economy. Stam writes,

In the long view, the history of film, and therefore of film theory, must be seen in the light of the growth of nationalism, within which cinema became a strategic instrument for 'projecting' national imageries. It must also be seen in relation to colonialism, the process by which the European powers reached positions of economic, military, political, and cultural hegemony in much of Asia, Africa, and the Americas... The beginnings of cinema, then, coincided precisely with the very height of imperialism. (Stam, 2000, p. 19)

Throughout this thesis I will refer to basic concepts of film theory as they relate to post colonialism, African representation in film, and eventually political economy. Now that I have given a brief background regarding my experiences with perceptions of Africans in film, and set

three distinct theoretical areas in which my research will be situated, I will proceed to explain the rationale for this study.

Chapter 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Rationale for the Study

Over that last decade I have noticed a growing visibility of African issues and countries in Hollywood films. Many of these pertain to social problems that evolved from the colonization of these countries. Many of the films were thought provoking and provided a good basis to learn more about the topic on which the film was based. For example, *Out of Africa* (1985), a film directed by American filmmaker Sydney Pollack, was set in colonial Kenya from 1914-1931 (www.imdb.com). The movie is based on the real-life story of Karen Von Blixen, a Danish farmer who moved to Kenya to run the coffee plantation that her husband (a self-centered, wealthy aristocrat) had purchased. The film takes us through her difficulties as she struggles to understand the native culture around her, contracts syphilis from her wayward husband, and wishes to be in a loving relationship with one of the only few other Westerners she knows in Kenya. Blixen's husband eventually dies, and as she buries him in the African land, she says goodbye to him the way the Kenyans would. While the film was beautifully shot and acted, its main agenda is the story of Blixen, and her various personal hardships as a privileged woman living in colonial Kenya. We never get a deeper picture of the Kenyans living there, nor of the effects of Western colonialism on their lives (<http://imdb.com/title/tt0089755/plotsummary>). *Out of Africa* provides a good basis for a person who really cares about other countries and had an interest in learning more about colonial Kenya, but lacks depth in depicting a more well rounded view of Kenya and its cultures. Another example of a film addressing social problems in an African country is *Tears of the Sun* (2003). Based on fictitious events during the Nigerian civil war, which lasted from 1967-1970, the film is about an American Navy Seal lieutenant and his

squad, who are posted off the coast of Nigeria to help rescue Americans residing there (<http://imdb.com/title/tt0314353/plotsummary>). Their main task during the film is to recover a United States doctor who has been stationed in Nigeria to tend to victims of the conflict. The doctor has a high level of morality and will not leave without helping the villagers safely arrive at a political asylum near one of the borders. Despite orders from home to remain neutral, the lieutenant and his squad risk their lives to do what they can to help the villagers. Instead of inspiring me to learn more, or empowering me as an African woman, films like *Out of Africa* and *Tears of the Sun* leave me feeling very empty, depressed, and defeated. In conversation, people I know (mostly Americans, or non-Africans) say to me, “That violence and corruption was so horrible” or “Thank God that’s no longer happening”, or most frustrating of all, “Africans always have such problems and it’s a good thing the UN (or some other group) could step in and help them run things”.

I have begun to question what it was about these films that inspired all these thoughts, but more important, I was concerned that I, or others (whether they were of African descent or not), were never able to fully empathize with the emotional struggles of the Africans suffering through the ordeals shown in the films. People *see* the struggle but are not always challenged to think about the issues of other countries once the film has ended. Then I began to wonder if filmmakers were using African stories without truly empathizing with the lives and experiences of the people themselves. I felt there was no reason to bring such circumstances to light in film if they do not actively attempt to tell an accurate story, or to evoke real emotion in those who have enough interest to go watch the film.

Research shows that Africa has been historically misrepresented in Hollywood film. From the early days of Hollywood, filmmakers viewed Africa as an exotic place with terrain that

would lend itself to landscape for a movie. Many scholars of African film believe that filmmakers in the early era of film only used Africa as a backdrop to the stories they wished to tell; most of the films characterized Africans as stereotypically uncivilized, childish, or cruel to White people, the latter being used as justification for triumphant acts by White treasure seekers (Pfaff, 2004). There was no interest in including the people living there as part of the film narrative. Pioneer Senegalese director Ousmane Sembene once shared his ideas about the portrayal of Africans in film. Sembene (as quoted in Pfaff, 1984) said,

Before we started to make films, Europeans had shot films about the African continent.

Most of the Africans we saw in those films were unable to set one foot in front of another by themselves. African landscapes were used as settings. Those films were based on European stories. (Pfaff, 2004, p.2)

Many of the Hollywood films today are not much better, and seem to tell stories from a western, Eurocentric perspective. As mentioned in the introduction, *Out of Africa* (1985) and *Tears from the Sun* (2003), though made almost two decades apart, offer examples of a consistency in storylines that keep Africans in the background of the story. The problem is that as stories told about Africa on film continue to gain popularity, production companies see African subject matter as a way to make profitable films rather than to serve a more socially responsible goal of educating their viewers about social issues. This is particularly evident in the blockbuster film I examine later in the study, *Hotel Rwanda*, which made \$23,472,900 in the United States (http://www.inbaseline.com/project.aspx?view=DomesticBoxOffice&project_id=168946). As profit continues to become the driving factor in filmmaking, there will be less room for creative and accurate storytelling, creating a space for a type of story telling the mainstream public can accept. If more people accept the storylines, they will be more willing to pay to see the film, and

as these films continue to garner interest, creativity, and more emphasis more people will be inundated with images that do not speak highly of African people. Hollywood films have the capacity to influence both Africans and non-Africans; the implications of such a trend suggest that the majority of the stories about Africa with a global reach are told from non-African viewpoints. Ultimately, Europeans are depicting African stories, speaking for Africans instead of Africans speaking for themselves

Specific Purpose or Goal for the Study

Because a large number of films about Africa exist, I have chosen to take a case study approach. The research produced a critical comparative analysis of two films, one by Hollywood filmmakers and the other by an African filmmaker. Both films portray a distinct African nation and the problems within it, within neocolonial contexts. The films are *Hotel Rwanda* (Hollywood) and *Sometimes In April* (African). Both tell compelling stories of the genocide that took place in July of 1994 during the Rwandan Civil War between the Tutsi and Hutu peoples. Much of the tension that caused the civil war grew out of deep-seated hatred and contempt, the result of many years of colonial rule where European powers created divisions among Africans that would ensure European dominance. Historically, colonization has been detrimental to the development of many African countries. Shohat and Stam (1994) provide a brief history on the origins of colonialism, saying that as most people refer to it, the phenomenon of colonization preexisted European colonialism as it was practiced by many ancient European cultures. They write, “The words ‘colonization,’ ‘culture,’ and ‘cult; [that is, religion) all derive from the same Latin verb *colo*...” (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 15). Their studies have led them to look at colonization as a way to occupy land and cultivate the earth, while also transmitting inherited

values to new generations. The roots of colonization were selfish and centered around ideas of acquiring more land, power, and economic advancement for those countries that were colonizers (Duignan & Gann, 1970). According to early critical historians like Duignan and Gann (1970), Colonization stripped many indigenous people of their culture and self worth, and it created a sense of dependency on the Western colonizers. Additionally, not only were various leaders of ethnic groups exploited and used to run new governments under westernized doctrines, colonization also created boundaries within nations that were unnatural; in many cases, new social divisions were drawn with no regard to the existing ethnic groups (Duignan & Gann, 1970). Despite the many difficulties involved in having a successful colonial conquest, two main motives drove colonizers in their objective to change the social structure in African countries: political and economic advancement (Duignan & Gann, 1970). Duignan & Gann (1970) stated, “Virtually all peoples became subject to a central administration, one of the fifty or so colonies. Each of these colonies absorbed politically a far larger number of entities of varying structures that we have come to call traditional political authorities” (p. 404). As a result of the growing number of entities created by new political arrangements, the scale of political administration grew, and the number of separate entities in African lessened, causing major disruptions to boundary lines that had previously been established (Duignan & Gann, 1970).

The negative consequences of colonization continue to cause corrupt governments and long lasting and devastating civil wars, even though African countries have gained their independence. A.B. Davidson (1972) articulates this idea,

An attentive study of the history of popular resistance in Africa will inevitably prove that this struggle acted as one of the most important stimuli to historical development for the African peoples. This struggle has never ended because whenever oppression exists,

resistance to the oppression exists as well; this resistance can change its character and forms but never ceases. (as cited in Betts, 1972, p.159)

For the purpose of this thesis, it should be noted that although Rwanda has been independent for almost half a century, the country is one of many still struggling to deal with lasting effects of colonialism. The conflicts profiled in each of the films can all be traced to a colonial past. Additionally, I will explore the existence of any Eurocentric perceptions and examine the films to see if lasting notions and attitudes from the colonial era are apparent in the filmmaking of each movie.

Lasting

notions and attitudes from the colonial era are visible in various schools of thought.

Eurocentrism is the notion that European schools of thought have been embedded in several cultures outside of Europe based on dominance gained during the colonial era. Shohat and Stam (1994) define contemporary Eurocentrism as the “discursive residue or precipitate of colonialism, the process by which European powers reached positions of economic, military, and cultural hegemony in most of Asia, Africa, and the Americas” (p. 15). Many worldviews are informed by Eurocentric ideas that have been embedded in several cultures for centuries. It makes sense that such ideas could then be apparent in film. Shohat and Stam (1994) wrote,

So embedded is Eurocentrism in everyday life, so pervasive, that it often goes unnoticed.

The residual traces of centuries of axiomatic European domination inform the general culture, the everyday language, and the media, engendering a fictitious sense of the innate superiority of European-derived cultures and peoples. (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 1)

The important idea to note here is the “fictitious sense of the innate superiority of European-derived cultures and peoples”. Movies are one of the mechanisms from which the general public

obtain information or learn about new things. If in most movies there exists an air of superiority favorable to European derived cultures, the story is likely to lack objectivity and perhaps some necessary truths.

It

would be unfair to examine the notion of Eurocentrism without looking at its counterpart – Afrocentric ideas, or Afrocentrism. According to the founding theorist, Asante (1987), “The crystallization of this critical perspective I have named *Afrocentricity*, which means literally, placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior” (p. 2). Schools of thought that emerged from colonialism are not limited to Europeans maintaining a superior attitude towards non-western people and ideologies.

Because the goal of thinking from an Afrocentric perspective is to maintain a thought process that places African ideals at the center of any analysis, some African films made about African countries may depict romanticized scenarios. Any analysis that gives privilege to a specific ideal runs the risk of guiding the analysis with bias. Additionally, some films may depict dramatized ideas about the western world (positive or negative) also resulting from those thoughts derived during colonization. Afrocentrism grew out of a need to challenge traditional (also often referred to as Western) ideas. Well-known professor and proponent of Afrocentrism, Molefi Asante (1987) wrote, “without the Afrocentric perspective the imposition of the European line as *universal* hinders cultural understanding and demeans humanity” (p. 9-10). According to Asante, such tendencies are dangerous because studies about African culture from a different perspective, especially one that sees itself as superior, often fail to include many of the cultural nuances. This notion is important to think about when considering film, and portrayals of culture within a specific storyline. He writes,

A discussion of African cultural history rarely calls forth African culture in the American context when the discussion is made by Eurocentric writers. Like the literary critics, the historians would dismiss the African elements that survived and developed on the American continents as purely temporal. (Asante, 1987, p. 9)

Asante's ideas about Afrocentrism were strongly supported by Maulana Karenga, a writer, scholar and political activist endorsing studies and the practice of Black culture within all aspects of the African Diaspora. Karenga's beliefs largely come from patterns of African rhetorical practice, identity, and culture. When discussing ideas surrounding African tradition, Karenga (2003) writes, "It is a tradition that from its inception has been concerned with building community, reaffirming human dignity, and enhancing the life of the people" (Karenga, 2003, p. 5). Some may have the opinion that this assumption about enhancing human life, community and dignity romanticizes the African experience by placing Africans of various cultures into one hegemonic group, as many tribes spanning various countries on the continent participated in tribal wars, with no relation to colonization, for centuries. While Karenga's supposition does not deny a more complete African history, it is limited in scope, suggesting that various indigenous groups never experienced conflict of any kind. However, acknowledgement of such tribal wars does not negate the fact that within tribes, and most communities, the ideals Karenga discusses were still present and highly regarded. These ideas about community and the reaffirmation of human dignity are examples of some elements posed in my second research question below. The present research examines modern images of Africa in Hollywood film, considering the differences that exist between Hollywood films and African films that depict African circumstances, and what they might suggest. Because the Hollywood film industry is profit driven, I will explore how profit-making affects film content.

Many films have depicted African circumstances, and there are substantial critiques responding to images of Africa in film. The critiques examine images of Africa in Hollywood films, looking for examples of accurate culture in profiled countries. Greenwald (1956) asked whether the “ideas of the entrepreneurs of amusement of profit are the same as the ideas of those interested in the moral, educational, and cultural development of people” (p. 333). This is one of the ideas I will explore in the proposed work. In her book, *Focus on African Films* (2004), Françoise Pfaff (2004) quotes Senegalese filmmaker Ousmane Sembene as saying,

Before we started to make films, Europeans had shot films about the African continent. Most of the Africans we saw in those films were unable to set one foot in front of the other by themselves. African landscapes were used as settings. Those films were based on European stories. (as cited in Pfaff, 2004, p. i)

Pfaff offers possible motives that African filmmakers may have for making movies when she writes:

In order to challenge hegemonic Western iconography and assert their African identity, committed Black directors set out to emphasize Africa’s cultural wealth and diversity—historical, political, economic, social, cultural, ideological, and geographical. (Pfaff, 2004, p. i)

Research Questions

The thesis will answer two main questions:

- 1) How is the problem central to the film represented or articulated? (The goal here will be to determine whether the problem is presented as the central concern in the storyline, or

relegated to background, as well as provide material with which to examine the nature of neocolonial relationships).

- 2) How does the main character(s) deal with the stated problem – individually or with a more collaborative plan of action (possibly involving other members of the community)?

The findings from these questions will provide insight to some of the differences between Hollywood filmmakers and African filmmakers when depicting an existing social problem in Africa. These differences are important and should be studied because movies, especially those made in Hollywood, are available worldwide, with the potential to affect perceptions on a global scale. Additionally, those in African countries may have more access to those films about their continent made in Hollywood from a European perspective than they do films from their own countries. This is interesting to explore because it means that ultimately people in African countries have more opportunity to become informed about Africa through the film medium from Eurocentric perspectives rather than from African perspectives. Thus, Hollywood films have the capacity to influence both Africans and non-Africans. This is an area for deep concern; the implications of such a trend suggest that the majority of the stories about Africa with a global reach are told from non-African viewpoints. Ultimately, Europeans and Americans are depicting African stories; they are speaking for Africans instead of Africans speaking for themselves.

Operational Definitions of Key Terms:

In order to understand clearly the research questions presented above operational definitions of some of the key terms mentioned must be established.

- 1) **Storyline:** The plan, scheme or main plot of a dramatic literary work; in this case, the two films that I will be comparing.

2) **Neocolonial relationships:** Neocolonial relationships are an artifact of neocolonialism, which is generally referred to as the economic and political policies by which a great power indirectly maintains or extends its influence over other areas or people. In my research, neocolonial relationships refer to any established customs or patterns of behavior manifested in exchanges between Africans and Westerners, which are grounded in the values, customs, culture or other aspects of the colonial nation. Such relationships or exchanges may be in the form of physical or mental abuse, obvious racism or disdain for the African, or explicit superior attitudes towards Africans by the colonizer. Colonial relations are also marked by negative attitudes by Africans towards the colonizer, as a result of the colonial process.

One of

the main objectives of this research is to determine what types of differences exist between Hollywood films and African films. In order to do this, definitions of Hollywood film and African film must be established. For this research the criteria for such films are described below.

3) Hollywood Film: Main writer(s) and director(s) considered to be American and thereby eligible for American film awards. An American studio must have produced the Hollywood films. Collaboration with foreign companies, writers or directors is allowable.

4) African Film: Main writer(s) and director(s) are of African descent, and/or were raised in an African country. Collaborative efforts with Westerners are fine, as long as the number of Westerners is not greater than the number of Africans working on the project. Therefore, to qualify as an African film, writers and directors should be mainly of African descent.

This

chapter has provided a brief history of the origin of the relationship between Hollywood and

Africa on film. I examined two different films, which provided some examples of the misrepresentation of Africa in Hollywood film. I also explained how some of these misrepresentations derive from Eurocentric influence, and I provided an alternative to Eurocentric thought by explaining the definition and origins of Afrocentrism. Finally, I outlined the goal of my research and put forth the research questions that will be answered in the analysis.

Chapter 3. OVERVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The analytical framework of my research will be informed by ideas deriving from Eurocentrism, Afrocentrism, postcolonial theory and histories of Africa, political economy of film, and critical film studies. This chapter contains a brief review of the literature on African colonization, the history of the conflict in Rwanda, how film works as a medium, images of Africa on film, and the film industry. Together, these will provide relevant contextual information for my analysis and will contribute to an interpretation of how these themes are relevant to the examination of the two films.

Overview of African Colonization

The following works provide historical facts about the colonization of African countries during the 19th century. Many of the books include several essays written by scholars in the field. They cover a plethora of themes including but not limited to British colonial rule, newly established governments, and most important, the psychological effects colonization has on colonizers and colonized people alike. Additionally, some of the books are set within the framework of particular theories that are applicable to the issues and events they examine.

I begin with a brief look at Baran and Davis (2006), whose overview of mass communication research provides an excellent basis for which to understand a theory important to my work; political economy theory. In their work, Baran and Davis (2006) explain the perspective many political economists have when studying media. They write, “Political economists have examined how economic constraints limit or bias the forms of mass culture that are produced and distributed through the media. These economists.... are concerned with

understanding how the processes of content production and distribution are constrained” (Baran and Davis, 2006, p. 241). As mentioned earlier in the introduction when discussing the main idea of political economy theory, “corporate influence permeates almost all aspects of society, from mundane things the way to larger matters such as personal interactions” (Schiller, 2000, p. 101) (Baron & Davis, 2006, p. 241). The authors explain that the “power of media to mediate an event and bring it into our homes was never before demonstrated so dramatically” (p. xiv). The idea of bringing media into the home was a direct result of television sets in private homes, which created a faster and more direct way of saturating individuals with media content. This power of media is shown to us every day, from the news, to radio, to television to film, which is the focus of my studies. While the authors were specifically referring to television, similar concerns can be raised in regards to other visual media with a broad audience, including Hollywood films, which tend to have a global reach. Baran and Davis (2006) shed light on the influence media have on society, but they do so by using a historical approach to present media theory, touching on many past issues that are beginning to become increasingly relevant again in modern society, such as propaganda.

I begin examining issues surrounding colonialism with a brief look at Raymond Betts’ (1972) compilation, *The Scramble for Africa: Causes and Dimensions of Empire*. More than three decades old, but still relevant, his book investigates the causes and process that Europeans used while conquering many African countries. Betts’ goal is to clarify the gray areas of what is thought about the “Scramble for Africa”. The book seeks to recount events as far back as the fifteenth century up to the present, and stresses the importance of knowing the history of colonization in Africa. Betts (1972) writes,

The metaphor of the scramble has by now revealed its inadequacies, and yet the historical treatment of the problem it describes will still demand further consideration. No isolated occurrence, the partition was actually the most important political development in the modern era of African history, a development which, in turn, had further significance in suggesting the future lines of African political and social patterns. (p. xxi)

Betts (1972) explains that equally as important as political development, the partition of Africa was also the peak of European expansion, an important aspect of European history, and also emphasizes that the partition of Africa has a deep significance that no individual of the twentieth century, Black or White, can or should ignore (Betts, 1972). Betts' book was published almost immediately following the era of decolonization, a time when most African countries achieved autonomy from their ruling colonizers. He sought to correct ideas of what people believed occurred during the scramble for Africa. Betts acknowledges and celebrates scholars and historians who have researched the scramble enough to discern that unlike what many Europeans claim, economic and/or diplomatic motives were not the main driving factors of colonization (Betts, 1972). Betts asserts that a greater appreciation of cultural history, and more in depth scrutiny of local and national archives for respective countries have led scholars to evaluate individual motives during the colonization era (Betts, 1972). *The Scramble for Africa: Causes and Dimensions of Empire* (1972) is an integral part of my research. Though it does not detail the effects of colonialism very well, it serves as a good reference for understanding the beginnings of the colonization process, the vestiges of which may be seen in present day Africa as depicted in both films to be analyzed. Betts's basic information is also a good touchstone for reading further literature about the causes and consequences of colonization, such as Tunde Adeleke's *Critical Perspectives on Historical and Contemporary Issues about Africa and Black America* (2004).

Professor of history, researcher and lecturer Adeleke's (2004) book is a collection of essays that educates readers about the historical significance of the connection between African-Americans, Africans and others of African descent. The essays highlight many of the factors that have contributed to the way people within the African Diaspora view themselves and their history. Adeleke (2004) explains in the introduction the three themes the book addresses. The first part of the book is comprised of studies acknowledging and highlighting divergences and complexities in the historical experiences of Africans and peoples of African descent abroad (Adeleke, 2004). The second part of the book focuses on studies that underscore cultural differences and transformations in the black Diaspora (Adeleke, 2004). The third part of the book covers more recent policy-oriented studies proposing strategies of improving the relationship between continental Africans and blacks in Diaspora, and promoting mutual interests and benefits (Adeleke, 2004). Adeleke (2004) compiled these essays to challenge the idea that experiences suffered in Africa during colonization and in the United States during the era of slavery were the same. Each essay compiled look at important recurring themes within the African and Black Diaspora, and address various topics challenging historical Eurocentric views of Western history as it pertains to the black experience. Adeleke discusses the cultural climate of the last twenty years, acknowledging the increasing amount of revisionist scholarship on the African and black Diaspora historical experiences (Adeleke, 2004). The work helps define ideas about the African Diaspora as taught with a Eurocentric perspective. These ways of teaching and common ideas about black and African people alike will be of good use when I look at some of the reasons why western filmmakers may have certain notions about how they would like to portray the African continent.

Buttner's (1977) *Problems of African History and Anti-Colonial Resistance; Asia, Africa, Latin America, Special Issue 2* (1977) is an anthology of works about African history and the problems colonialism created, especially in instances where native people had the courage to stand up to their colonizers. Though the book is more than 30 years old, many of the problems shown to follow the end of colonization still exist today, making the book just as relevant as it was in 1977. The purpose of this collection is to inform readers about the many problems related to the research of colonialism and development of the anti-colonial forces in Africa (Buttner, 1977). The main objective is to dispel incorrect notions about African countries learned from imperialist ideologies. In the first pages of the book Buttner (1977) writes,

The opportunity to make these results of our work available to a wider readership, not the least in the liberated countries of Africa, is especially important for us since we base ourselves on the duty of all Marxist scientists to write and to evaluate anew, together with the progressive African historians, through well-founded investigation the history of the people of Africa which has been falsified by the colonist and imperialist apologists. (p. 5)

The introduction above helps set the tone of contributors, who wrote their pieces in preparation for a national conference of the socialist countries (Buttner, 1977). This collection is special to the proposed research as it is imperative to understand the problems created by decolonization, even though it was a triumphant period given that many countries were able to regain their autonomy.

Max

Dorsinville (2003) edited two volumes of a compilation of works written by Roger Dorsinville, titled *The Collected Edition of Roger Dorsinville's Post Colonial Literary Criticism in Africa: Volume One 1976-1981* (2003) and *The Collected Edition of Roger Dorsinville's Post Colonial*

Literary Criticism in Africa: Volume Two 1982-1986 (2003)¹. Roger Dorsinville was a theorist and scholar who spent a great deal of time studying postcolonial relationships and their effect on literature written about post-colonialism. The preface to the book gives an in depth overview of Roger Dorsinville's significance. Roger Dorsinville left a prolific body of work in a variety of fields stemming from the twenty-five years he spent in Africa (Dorsinville, 2003). This is a collection of work based on the study of postcolonial literary criticism, focusing on the representation of marginalized cultures and writings in Africa and its Diaspora (Dorsinville, 2003). The editor, Max Dorsinville, explains the fourfold purpose of the work in the foreword when he writes, "First, it contributes to the expansion of knowledge about the African continent through a critic's response to its many forms of representation by writers and scholars inside as well as outside Africa" (Dorsinville, 2003, p. v). In the introduction, Marie-Helene Laforest of the Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples provides some insight about where the collection fits into the historical context of postcolonial studies. She asserts that the two-volume collection fills a much-neglected void in the field of contemporary literary criticism (Dorsinville, 2003). Laforest writes, "The concept of postcoloniality has been the subject of much theorization in the decade or so since its inception in the field of literary studies. The study in the discourse itself has struck a responsive chord in the discourse on multiculturalism in the Americas and in Europe since it purports to consider literatures from two thirds of the world unified by the common experience of colonialism" (Dorsinville, 2003, p. i).

Comparative colonial historian Duignan (1970) co-edited *Colonialism In Africa 1870-1960: The History and Politics of Colonialism 1914-1960* (1970) with Gann, historian. This

¹ Max Dorsinville is the editor of the work. Roger Dorsinville is the author whose works have been compiled into the collection.

collection of works was compiled in the last few years of the 1960's and published in 1970, during a time of growing social awareness regarding imperialism and the treatment of people of color worldwide. In 1970, most of the countries on the African continent had only been autonomous for less than a decade. Duignan and Gann (1970) explain the significance of their work below:

This volume, like its predecessor, therefore, attempts to strike a balance between the Eurocentric and the Afrocentric approach.... The present work takes the story forward from the inter-war period to decolonization. Our object in this second volume is the same as the first. The literature on Europe's imperial record in Africa is already enormous and continues to proliferate. There is a need to synthesize this material. (p. ix.)

In order to analyze the nature of the relationships between not only White and Black, but also western thought vs. African practices, it is necessary to understand the impact imperialism and colonization on the indigenous peoples in African countries and those who forced their rule onto them. Many perceptions of Africa and those who live there have been passed down over time, and many ideas (positive or negative) that were present during the era of colonization remain today. The subject matter this book covers offers some insight to many of the issues created by colonization and provides a good backbone for some aspects of my research. It will be helpful to me, for instance, in critiquing the relationships portrayed in the films between Western powers and the Africans shown in each film. Duignan and Gann (1970) explain rather clearly their methods for the book. They used a topical approach, with various contributors touching a variety of subjects including emerging Black elites, the policies of European powers, the impact of White settlement on selected areas, the military in Africa and decolonization. Additionally, most

of those involved in the collaborative efforts for the book approached their respective subjects from a historical point of view, essentially making the project a work of history.

The education about effects of colonization is abundant, and many authors have brought several differing perspectives to the topic. Scholars Gifford and Louis (1988) have written extensively on various topics involving colonization, African independence, and the effects and consequences of imposed rule post-colonization. In *Decolonization and African Independence: The Transfers of Power, 1960-1980* (1988), Gifford and Louis examine the consequences of colonization on various African countries. The compilation of works examines the process of decolonization and its effects on the countries involved. Gifford and Louis (1988) state that:

Over more than twenty years, we have seen several changes in perspective on the process of decolonization. Beginning with a rather heady and myopic optimism in the early 1960's, assessments are now cautious, pessimistic, and even disconsolate.... In too many African countries there has been imprisonment, torture, and execution. Food and refugee relief has mitigated suffering without improving long-range solutions. (p. xxviii-xxix.)

Though this work was published almost twenty years ago in 1988, many of the issues discussed in the essays still remain prevalent today. Many countries are still experiencing civil war, and some of them have just reached peace settlements to end long fought wars. Gifford and Louis (1988) stated, "We believe that the cumulative lesson of these volumes is that the process of decolonization is lengthy, painful, and discontinuous. Only now are we beginning to discern its full dimensions, to which we hope these volumes remain a useful guide" (p. xxix.).

It is equally as important to understand what the conditions created by colonization do to the psyche

of a human being as it is to understand how colonization affected whole societies.. Albert Memmi is considered by many to be one of the founders of colonial discourse and a scholar in post-colonial cultural studies (Gugelberger, 2005, *Postcolonial Cultural Studies: 1 Origins to the 1980s*, ¶ 4). Memmi taught philosophy in both Paris and Tunis and has authored many books about colonialism. His book, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1965), provides an in depth analysis of his academic perspective on the effects of colonialism on individual people. Memmi (1965) wrote this book immediately following Tunisia's independence from France in 1956. Memmi (1965) had observed hardships faced by many during, and also questioned his place and purpose in life, using writing as method to obtain some clarity. Memmi (1965) explained, "...It became clear to me that a real life for a cultured man was impossible in North Africa at that time [1957].... I first had to understand the colonizer and the colonized, perhaps the entire colonial relationship and situation" (p. vii).

The purpose of the work is to help the reader understand what occurs in the minds of people who suffer through the effect of colonization, as well as those who took part in the process of colonization. Memmi (1965) explains his motives for committing to the investigation of the circumstances affecting colonized peoples:

I undertook this inventory of conditions of colonized people mainly in order to understand myself and to identify my place in the society of other men. It was my readers – not all of them Tunisian – who later convinced me, as I advanced my work on the book, that what I was describing was the fate of a vast multitude across the world. (p. ix.)

Memmi (1965) writes, "My plan was only to reproduce, completely and authentically, the portraits of the two protagonists of the colonial drama and the relationship which binds them" (p. 145). Memmi (1965) also argues that his analysis provides a much-needed look into the effect

colonization had on not only the colonized peoples, but on the colonizers as well, when he writes:

No one had ever shown the pattern and genesis of each role, the genesis of one through the other and the pattern of the colonial relationship, the genesis of the colonial relationship out of the colonial situation.... Finally a complete and careful analysis of those two portraits and that situation led me to conclude that the arrangement could not take place because it was impossible. Contemporary colonization carried an inherent contradiction which, sooner or later, would cause it to die. (p. 145-146)

As Memmi saw it, colonization would eventually end, thus making the colonial wars and uprisings of so many African countries, including Rwanda, inevitable. Memmi's work is beneficial to my research; it provides an intellectual critique of colonized people and colonizers alike. When analyzing my films, it will be essential to note the studied mental states of individuals involved in colonization. This will assist me when looking at whether the films sufficiently capture some of the nuances Memmi offers in his work.

Following his *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Memmi (2004) continued his exploration of the colonization era, focusing on the effects of decolonization. He waited almost 40 years before he wrote his follow up book, *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, which was not published until 2004. In *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, Memmi (2004) mainly looks at the changes that occurred in African countries post colonialism, and examines whether or conditions actually improved for those former colonized people following their independence. He wrote, "During the first years of independence, attentive and well-meaning observers grew concerned about the persistent poverty of formerly colonized peoples. Fifty years later nothing really seems to have

changed, except for the worse” (Memmi, 2004, p. x). Memmi explains that much of his desire to write a new book came from the need he felt to advocate for formerly colonized people. Memmi is able to articulate this well, sharing the urgent need for formerly colonized people to have the opportunity to hear a voice that was speaking on their behalf (Memmi, 2004). He also clearly states the need he felt existed for more research on the relationship and interactions between former colonizers and formerly colonized people (Memmi, 2004).

While writing the book, Memmi (2004) focused on three main points, which he explains clearly in the introduction of the book. Memmi (2004) wrote:

For the most part, this portrait concentrates on three figures: the ex-colonized, who has remained in his country and become a new citizen of an independent state; the immigrant, who has chosen to live abroad, often in the former colonizing nation; and the sons and daughters of the immigrant, born in the country where their parents have settled.

Although they do not coincide with one another, they are three aspects of the same character, and this three-part division forms the basis of my book. (p. xii)

The main areas he chose to study are all quite interesting, given the context in which Memmi wrote the book. As stated earlier in the paper, 2004 was not only the year the Rwandan Genocide finally came to an end but also a time when many African countries were still (and some still are) struggling to deal with the effects of colonization. Many of these effects were actually consequences, many of which caused severe social unrest in several African countries. This work is beneficial to my study because modern attitudes about not only Africa, but also other third world nations stem from ideas that have been shared since the era of colonization, which only ended less than a century ago. Memmi boldly addresses problems of corruption, poverty, and other social issues that were magnified with the end of colonization. He stated, “Unfortunately in

most cases, the long anticipated period of freedom, won at the cost of terrible suffering, brought with it poverty and corruption, violence, and sometimes chaos” (Memmi, 2004, p. 3).

Some may have difficulty linking the relationship between Africa and its colonizers to present day concerns about what it means to be African or from any country that was a victim of colonization or considered to be a “third world” country. Professor Oyekan Owomoyela helps bring some clarity and background to such discussion in his book, *The African Difference: Discourses on Africanness and the Relativity of Cultures* (1996), a compilation of essays addressing ideas of what it means to be African, especially post-colonialism. The works discuss different types of African awareness and desires, from remaining true to African culture, or the want to assimilate into westernized culture, whatever that means for each individual (Owomoyela, 1996). He explained that,

The essays in the following pages were prompted by the realization that, despite the end of an era of direct colonization, and despite the post-independence celebration of the African personality, the disappointments of post-coloniality were lending fresh impetus to the colonialist narratives that had been silenced, or at least considerably muted, by the movements that affected decolonization. (p. ix)

Owomoyela wrote this during a time when ideas of African pride and a sense of “Africanness” had been widely discussed in academic atmospheres. To describe the perspective of the writings Owomoyela (1996) said, “These essays issue from an unabashedly pro-African conviction, and a realization that the debate on Africanness is of much greater import than a mere intellectual exercise” (p. x).

Stam (1994) is a well-known author and critical theorist and co-author (with Shohat) of one the well known *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (1994). In *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (1994), Shohat and Stam provide additional extensive background about post-colonial issues and ideas of multiculturalism in present day popular culture, as pop culture affects not only the United States but also all parts of the world. Below is an excerpt from the introduction that clearly explains the purpose of their book:

Unthinking Eurocentrism focuses on Eurocentrism and multiculturalism in popular culture. It is written in the passionate belief that an awareness of the intellectually debilitating effects of the Eurocentric legacy is indispensable for comprehending not only contemporary media representations but even contemporary subjectivities. (Shohat & Stam, 1994, p. 1)

This book was written to address the various ways academia and media alike contribute to dominant idealistic perceptions of our world, especially Western society and culture. Shohat and Stam (1994) explain:

So imbedded is Eurocentrism in everyday life, so pervasive, that it often goes unnoticed. The residual traces of centuries of axiomatic European domination inform the general culture, the everyday language, and the media, engendering a fictitious sense of the innate superiority of European-derived cultures and peoples. (p. 1)

Both in the media and in the academy, recent years have witnessed energetic debates about the interrelated issues of Eurocentrism, racism, and multiculturalism (Shohat & Stam). There are certain assumptions present in most people that affect their ideas and perceptions about history,

and the different ways in which various histories affect and still affect different people each day.

Shohat and Stam (1994) clarify this notion:

Endemic in present-day thought and education, Eurocentrism is naturalized as ‘common sense.’ Philosophy and literature are assumed to be European philosophy and literature. The ‘best that is thought and written’ is assumed to have been thought and written by Europeans. History is assumed to be European history, everything else reduced to what historian Hugh Trevor-Roper (in 1965!) patronizingly called the ‘unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe’. Standard core courses in universities stress the history of ‘Western’ civilization, with the more liberal universities insisting on token study of ‘other’ civilizations. And even Western civilization is usually taught without reference to the central role of European colonialism within capitalist modernity. (p. 1)

The authors provocatively examine European cultural practices, and look at the way colonization led to a worldwide accepted “Eurocentric” way of thinking. They explain that their method is to deploy a double operation of critique and celebration, divesting and reconstructing, of assessing Eurocentric tendencies within dominant discourse while celebrating the transgressive utopianism of multicultural texts and practices (Shohat & Stam, 1994).

“Dominant discourse” in my interpretation refers to any area of entertainment, academia, news, or anything else where the dominant culture dictates what topics are discussed, and how. The films I look at can be seen as a type of discourse, in the same way that many refer to film as a narrative. The two “Hollywood” films I look at serve can be seen as a dominant discourse within filmmaking, as the films were told from a predominantly American point of view (and in cases

where not wholly American, stories were still told from a “Westernized” perspective. Thus, *Unthinking Eurocentricism* (1994) is an essential piece of work to examine and use towards my research.

While essential to examine the ideas of Eurocentrism in the study, it is equally important to examine ideas associated with Afrocentrism, a school of thought that grew out of opposition to Eurocentrism. Professor and scholar Molefi Kete Asante (1987) wrote *The Afrocentric Idea* to advance the study of and enhance the appreciation of the complexity of African culture and its place in history (Asante, 1987). Asante coined the term Afrocentrism during the 1980s in response to dominant ideologies existing from Eurocentric perspectives. Asante believes that dominant views about culture and heritage derived from European ways of thinking create a limited understanding of other cultures, specifically those with African ties. Asante wrote,

As fifteenth century Europeans could not cease believing the earth was the center of the universe, many today find it difficult to cease viewing European culture as the center of the social universe. Thus, the work they produce seldom considers the possibilities of other realities or, indeed, shared realities (Asante, 1987, p. 7).

This is important to understand, especially when thinking about film and depictions of other cultures. There is a danger in attempting to tell the story of another culture without fully understanding or embracing the nuances within that specific culture. This book is important to my research as it offers an alternative perspective to Eurocentric viewpoints.

Understanding African American Rhetoric, Classical Origins to Contemporary Innovations (2003), edited by Ronald Jackson and Elaine Richardson, is a compilation of articles by scholars

addressing African American rhetoric and placing the subject within broad historical contexts. Maulana Karenga's (2003) article provides an overview of various beliefs, traditions and practices that in African history and culture that have contributed to the understanding of communicative practice as it exists today in the African Diaspora. Karenga (2003) wants to "make a useful contribution to the ancient and ongoing conversation around the definition, field, and function of African communicative practice, using classical African sources" (Karenga, 2003, p. 3). While my own research approach is not in rhetorical practice, Karenga's ideas about the origin and development of such contain elements of Afrocentrism that will help me to identify these within the films to be examined, in relationship to Eurocentrism.

Rwanda History

In order to understand the events leading up to the brutal civil war in Rwanda profiled in both *Hotel Rwanda* and *Sometimes in April*, a brief consideration of the history of Rwanda is required. First, the background on colonization, imperial rule and the western world's relationship with decolonized African countries discussed above, serve as good reference when observing the relationships and interactions between the characters on screen. Second, and more important, are the roots of the problems that caused such horrific conflict. Based on the historical research that has been done I believe the consequences and decolonization not only led to severe social unrest in Rwanda, but also created ideas of African people and how westerners relate to them; these themes can be seen in both films.

The history of Africa's relationship to the western world has never been one of equality. European people began to get impressions of Africa and its inhabitants once many people began to include Africa as part of their travels. Once this began to occur European visitors started to see Africans differently.

As mentioned above, Memmi was a French-language Tunisian novelist and professor. Memmi (2004) attempts to paint the picture of this period in the 1800's. He writes:

If one pays attention, one discovers that the praise comes from tourists, visiting Europeans, and no colonizers, i.e., Europeans who have settled down in the colony. As soon as he is settled, the European no longer takes advantage of this hospitality, but cuts off intercourse and contributes to the barriers which plague the colonized. (Memmi, 2004, p. 84)

Here Memmi describes the beginnings of colonization, and how various Western countries were able to inject their own ruling power into these colonies. Western countries were able to do this by using psychologically manipulating the indigenous people, thus ruining the spirit of the country's native inhabitants. The African continent is historically linked with the western world in two ways: colonization and the slave trade.

Like many other ancient kingdoms, pre-colonial Rwanda operated over a centralized ruling system governed by Tutsi kings who descended from the same ruling family (Official Website of the Republic of Rwanda, ¶ 1, 2007). These kings held autonomous power over all three ethnic groups in the region: Bahutu, Batutsi, and Batwa (also commonly referred to as the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa groups, respectively). Similar to most African countries, Rwanda fell victim to colonization and became a German colony in 1899. However, in 1919 Rwanda became a territory of the League of Nations under Belgian rule, which used Tutsi ruling elite to

effectively run the country. In the 1950's after World War Two, Belgian reforms began to encourage the implementation of more democratic ruling practices (Official Website of the Republic of Rwanda, ¶ 2, 2007). Tutsi people who were comfortable with the current structure resisted the idea of more democratic government institutions; a more democratic government structure would undoubtedly cause a loss in power for the Tutsi people. In response to Tutsi resistance, Belgian officials encouraged a revolt planned by the Hutu population. The revolt proved successful and the Tutsi monarchy was overthrown in 1959. Two years after the revolt the Party of the Hutu Emancipation Movement, sometimes referred to as PARMEHUTU, was named victorious in a UN referendum, and in the 1961 election the party was granted autonomy from Belgium (Official Website of the Republic of Rwanda, ¶ 3, 2007). In 1962, Belgium officially granted independence to Rwanda and the leader of the PARMEHUTU party; Gregoire Kayibanda was elected the first president of Rwanda. As a result of political instability and corruption, the military took over power of Rwanda under Gen. Juvenal Habyarimana, and established the Mouvement Revolutionnaire et National pour le Development (MRND) as the sole political party in Rwanda. The Arusha Peace Agreement of 1993 was signed in an attempt to establish a power sharing agenda with the current regime (Official Website of the Republic of Rwanda, The Arusha Peace Agreement, ¶ 2, 2007). It was during this time that the Hutu Party had begun making plans to implement the mass Genocide that would take place the following year. Between April and July of 1994, over 1 million Rwandese people, mainly Tutsi, were killed by the genocidal regime (Official Website of the Republic of Rwanda, Genocide, ¶ 1, 2007).

Kamukama's (1997) history of Rwanda provides solid background to the Rwandan conflict. The work, titled *Rwanda Conflict, Its Roots and Regional Implications* (1997),

examines the history of Rwanda and the events that led the country to deep seeded conflict. Kamukama (1997) writes, “It is the history and the roots of these conflicts which this book attempts to analyze and document however sparsely....” (p. 4). The book traces all the events leading up to the war and the events leading up to peace in 1994, and was written during the height of the Rwandan conflict.

Kamuk

ama (1997) provides a timeline of historical events leading up to the Rwandan conflict, and all the way through peace. *Hotel Rwanda* and *Sometimes in April* are both based on factual events that occurred during the Rwandan conflict.

Another look at the Rwandan Genocide can be found in Melvern’s (2000), an analytical look at the participation (or lack there of) of the western world in helping to alleviate the conflict in Rwanda. The purpose of her work is to expose the true and factual events that contributed to the Rwandan genocide of 1994, despite resolves by the general international community to never allow genocide to occur in any country again. Melvern (2000) dissects the events that occurred in Rwanda leading to genocide, as well as the factors that contributed to how prolonged the massacres were. The book publisher, Zed Books Ltd., provides a brief synopsis of the book. *A People Betrayed* contains a full narrative account of how the genocide unfolded. It describes its scale, speed and intensity. The overview explains it as a terrible prosecution, not just of the UN Security Council, but of governments and people who should have prevented what was happening but chose not to do so (Melvern, 2000). Melvern draws on numerous primary sources to obtain accounts of what occurred before, during, and after the conflict. Melvern uses a series of in depth interviews to tell her story of the civil war (Melvern, 2000). Some of the people

interviewed include UN peacekeepers and other teams, but refugees as well as those who were victims of the war's violence.

Melver

n's work is beneficial to my research as she is able to give a first hand account of events that took place during the conflict that leaders of many countries may not have shared with the public. This is important because ideas about Africans and what they need or deserve may have stemmed from earlier sentiments developed during colonization. A lack of participation on the western front should be noted; as discussed earlier, a large part of the conflict has been found in numerous studies to be the one of the results of colonization.

Film Studies

In order to effectively examine the connection between colonization, the history of Rwanda, and the depiction of particular African events in film, I must look at some theories of film.

Braudy and Cohen (1999) have written several books on film theory. In the edited work, *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, Braudy and Cohen introduced a compilation of essays and others work that examine various ideas regarding film, and film theory and criticism. The purpose of the book is to introduce readers to different schools of thought on film (such as film as art, film as political critique, film as a narrative, etc.). The collection features both texts considered to be classics and the most current essays from almost a century of thought and writing about the movies (Braudy & Cohen, 1999). Building upon a wide range of selections and the extensive historical coverage that marked previous editions, this collection stretches from

the earliest attempts to define cinema to the most recent efforts to place film in the context of psychology, sociology, and philosophy and to explore issues of gender and race. Braudy and Cohen (1999) explain the different sections of their book. In the text, they write that the sections have been formulated to help lead readers into a richer understanding of what the movies have and can accomplish both as individual works and as contributions to what has been called “the art form of the twentieth century” (Braudy & Cohen, 1999). Braudy and Cohen first compiled the collection of essays for the book in 1974. Although many things have changed in film studies, many issues that encouraged and stimulated early writers and film theorists remain today; some questions inquire about the realism and/or artificiality of film, film as a language, as well as questions about what type of film has the most impact, i.e. silent film vs. film with sound (Braudy & Cohen, 1999). Braudy and Cohen (1999) state, “Early on, theorists began to emphasize the obligation to appreciate what was different, even unique, about film in comparison with the other arts: its formal qualities, its common need for capital investment, and its relation to a mass audience” (p. xv).

The importance of the origins of film and the various schools of thought that have studied film cannot be ignored. However, for the purpose of this research, it is also beneficial to understand film within the context of its own theoretical framework. In 2000, Robert Stam, Professor in the Cinema Studies Department at New York University and writer and co-author several books about film theory, wrote *Film Theory, An Introduction*. His book was written as an academic source to trace the changes in film as a medium, and the different theories that have evolved over time. His book clearly states the origins of film theory and traces the changes that have occurred from its inception to present day. The book offers a comprehensive history of film theory during

the 'century of cinema' and covers many areas including the latest developments in film theory and cultural studies (Stam, 2000). The book also contextualizes film theory within the larger historical and philosophical currents (Stam, 2000). This book is beneficial to my research as it gives an overview of the origins of film theory and relates it back to numerous cultural studies, including postcolonial studies, which is a large section of my research.

I

cannot simply look at film and film studies without at least acknowledging the place film has not only in American society, but in other societies as well. Although George Wilson (1976), a professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California, wrote the essay *Film, Perception, and Point of View* more than 30 years ago, many of his observations remain relevant today. Wilson offers his idea of what the purpose of film is by framing his opinion using various literary theories to examine film point of view, perception, and the natural significance of certain themes. He writes,

Film, in a visual mode, delivers to us or rediscovers for us things or events or aspects of things or events which, for a variety of reasons, ordinary human observers tend to miss entirely or to see with adequate attention to their potential human meanings (Wilson, 1976, p. 1028-1029).

When Wilson wrote this essay, it was time when many social and racial struggles for equality were taking place not only in the United States, but also in Africa, the Caribbean, and other parts of the world. Wilson does not address such problems in his work. Rather, he discusses in depth ideas about the effects of film on its viewers.

Much

of the reason film is viewed as art is a result of the technical and visual aspects that contribute to

making a film. Filmmakers are very knowledgeable in film technique and the art of transferring ideas of their own onto a big screen that can be shared with thousands of other people.

Louis Giannetti (2008), professor emeritus of English and film, gives an excellent overview of film techniques that serve to evoke specific emotions and reactions to the stories being told in his book, *Understanding Movies*. Giannetti describes his purpose as “not to teach viewers how to respond to moving images, but to suggest some of the reasons people respond as they do” (Giannetti, 2008, p. ix.). Movies are a substantial aspect of American culture and entertainment, and millions of people spend a great deal of time watching television or movies, without actually thinking about how the images affect their daily lives and attitudes, or ever assessing how these images may help shape their values (Giannetti, 2008). The book highlights the importance of film interpretation, and also supports the idea that movies do have an influence on the attitude and perceptions of many.

African Representation in Film

Each

section outlined above brings me to the main focus of my research – African representation in film. The purpose of this section is to shed light on the way African issues, as well as individual people, are portrayed on film. Traditionally negative representations of Africa in Western discourse as well as film can be viewed as part of a hegemonic strategy, a strategy created from the European nations' desire to spread their economic and imperial influence in Africa (Thackaway, 2003). A better understanding African image will be beneficial in chapter four, when I analyze the images presented in the two films I have chosen to critique.

Francoise Pfaff (2004), professor of French and Francophone studies, examines the need for more films about Africa made by filmmakers from within the African Diaspora. A compilation of essays written by scholars in various fields spanning African studies, film studies, social theories, and sociology, this work is relevant to my research, especially because each essay focuses on a specific issue, respectively. Authors discuss filmmaking in Africa and its relevance, as well as ideas such as European influences on African film are discussed, as well as portrayals of Africans in different stories. The purpose of her collected works is to provide a basis with which to examine African film, it's origins, and the needs for it. As described by its publisher, the Indiana University Press, the book provides unique perspectives on filmmaking throughout Africa. Additionally, as a whole, the collection highlights the distinct thematic, stylistic, and socioeconomic circumstances of African filmmaking.

Since the independence of most African countries in the late 1950's through the 1960's, there has been a growing number of African made films that can accurately speak to the

conditions and lifestyles of African people. Pfaff expresses these ideas in the introduction to the book. She writes:

The formal independence of a number of African nations in the late 1950's and early 1960's facilitated access to the medium of film, as did the later end of apartheid. African eyes began to offer new perspectives of the continent that contrasted sharply with views popularized by Western jungle melodramas.... Motion pictures implicitly championing such colonial and/or racist ideologies include, for example, *King Solomon's Mines* (1937 and the 1950 remake), films like the 1961 *Hatari*, and the countless Tarzan films. (Pfaff, 2004, p. 1)

The UNITED STATES film industry has made films in or about Africa for many years, many of which portrayed inaccurate images of African people as the filmmakers could only draw from a western perspective. Pfaff discusses the importance of committed black directors and the role they play in challenging preconceived ideas about Africa. She pointedly touches on the issues many black filmmakers must address when making a movie. Many black directors set out to emphasize all of Africa's cultural wealth and diversity, in order to challenge hegemonic Western iconography and assert their African identity (Pfaff, 2004).

Josef Gugler, professor of sociology and director of the Center for Contemporary African Studies at the University of Connecticut, is concerned about the potential positive impact African-made films can have on audience perceptions of the African continent. The purpose of his book, *African Film: Re-Imagining a Continent* (2004), is not only to help westerners regain (or gain in the first place) a positive image of Africa as it is seen on film or other media, but also to help Africans see themselves in more positive light in film and other entertainment forms. As discussed earlier in the introduction, many films about Africa do not accurately represent the

continent and all of its intricacies, nor do they try to. Gugler suggests that most of the African films reaching western audiences are completely different than films they normally see, which consist mostly of Western films set in Africa (Gugler, 2003). Gugler shares the same ideas aforementioned regarding the difference between African made films about Africa, and Western made films about Africa. He writes that in African film, “Africans invariably hold centre stage. Some films tell of African struggles for liberation, others offer critical perspective on postcolonial developments. African films set out to *re-image* Africa, and Western viewers are given an opportunity to *re-imagine* the continent and its people” (Gugler, 2003, p. 4).

Gugler decided to write this book after many years of teaching his passion, African Literature, at the collegiate level. The specific desire to write the book grew from a course he has taught for over fifteen years called *Modern Africa: Re-Imagining Africa with Films and Novels*. Given the works cited in the previously chapters, it is not surprising that Gugler believes that Africa has been misrepresented on film since the earliest days of film. In line with many of the expressed sentiments discussed earlier, Gugler insists that since colonial times, films produced in the United States, Europe, and South Africa have propagated images of Black Africa (Gugler, 2003). Such images have been put forth and dominated by people of European descent with whom Westerners could easily identify (Gugler, 2003). Gugler’s observations fit seamlessly with ideas put forth earlier in this paper. He is acutely aware of the negative ways Africans are portrayed on film, and one of his strongest examples is the film *Out of Africa*, which I mentioned earlier in the introduction. Gugler (2003) writes:

The portrayals of Africans repeated and reinforced negative stereotypes: they appeared as barbaric, savage and bloodthirsty; as servants, mostly incompetent; or simply as part of

the décor. Many of these films are akin to the ‘beautiful Africa’ documentaries: they show us a tourist paradise teeming with wild life, *Out of Africa* the finest example. (p. 2)

Melissa Thackway’s book, *Africa Shoots Back: Alternative Perspectives in Sub-Saharan Francophone African Film* (2003), also looks in depth at the evolution of African film post-colonialism, and the challenges African films pose to the Western world by forcing them to acknowledge images that celebrate the diversity of the African continent, people, customs, language and culture. The book’s aim is to help African films garner the critical attention they deserve (Thackway, 2003), and considers “exactly how Francophone Africa’s directors have approached a medium ‘so compromised’ by its Western origins and legacy of demeaning images of the continent” (Thackway, 2003, p. 1). This book was written to advocate for Sub-Saharan Francophone African films and directors. Since the majority of African countries gained independence in the early sixties, Sub-Saharan films have still yet to obtain adequate recognition in the West (Thackway, 2003). Though one of the main objectives of this book is to focus on Francophone film, the main points are still relevant to my proposed research. In fact, Thackaway addresses one of my main concerns about the consequences of Africa’s misrepresentation on film, which is that continued misrepresentation of African will contribute to the lack of openness many have towards African culture and customs. Many Westerners do not have an understanding of Africa or what it means to be of African heritage. Western ideas about Africa are therefore more likely to be a reflection of Western self-image and perception than of actual understanding of Africa (Thackaway, 2003). Thackaway (2003) finds that “this makes it all the more important to avoid projecting preconceived, Eurocentric perceptions if we are to remain receptive to African expressions of identity” (Thackaway, 2003, p. 19).

Amongst one of the most important themes in Thackway's book is the knowledge that directors are working in a post-colonial context that has inevitably influenced many film agendas and styles, thus allowing for the production of a range of alternative, challenging representations (James Curry Publishers, 2003).

Film editor and film reviewer Robert Maynard (1974) also has written about the many ways Africans have been portrayed in popular film. His book, *Africa on Film: Myth and Reality* (1974) provides interesting insight to the research on Africans in film. His study centers on the idea that despite many academic changes to study Africa as a multi-ethnic, culturally rich continent, preconceived notions about monolithic jungle living and stereotypes about saving the "dark" continent still persist (Maynard, 1974). Maynard's anthology was designed to investigate why such incorrect mythologies about Africa continues to persist despite concrete evidence suggesting otherwise (Maynard, 1974). Maynard explains that, "the purpose of this unit is to expose the deeply ingrained mythology which clouds any objective understanding of African culture" (Maynard, 1974, p. vi). Divided into three parts, the book exposes the deeply ingrained mythology that clouds any objective understanding of African culture (Maynard, 1974). Some of Maynard's findings show that the implications of these misconceptions reflect the fundamental crisis with many race relations and issues in America (Maynard, 1974).

Though many schools of thought exist on the topic of African representation in major films, many who are not necessarily academic theorists or historians have also critiqued the subject. Film critics and editorial writers also play a large part in revealing some of the concerns surrounding Africans in Hollywood film to the greater public, generally those who would not be inclined to research the subject. Additionally, many of the following articles seem to be extensions of conversations many could have after leaving the movie theater, and discuss

negative portrayals as well as some of the actions Hollywood might be taking in an attempt to show more compassion for countries they chose to make films about.

Effects of Money and Profit on Film subject Matter and Content

I have discussed the origins and of colonization in Africa, the end of the colonial era, the effects of such circumstance on the psyche of colonizers and colonized alike, ideas of Eurocentrism that have been shared between whole continents and countries alike, and the effect this has had on the history of Rwanda. I have discussed the history and early days of film, and looked at how African representation on film is a reflection of colonial ideologies that have not yet been put to rest. In Hollywood, the main objective for the industry is to make a profit. The following section looks at how money is the main driving factor in the Hollywood film industry, affecting, thus affecting the potential content of many films.

Film scholars and media theorists Toby Miller, Nitin Govil, John McMurria and Richard Maxwell (2001) collaborated to write *Global Hollywood*, a work that examines the impact of the Hollywood film industry worldwide. The purpose of the book is to explain the reasons behind the success of the Hollywood film industry. In the introduction, the authors explain the purpose of their book. They write, “This book seeks to explain the national and international success of Hollywood.... We address global Hollywood both theoretically and empirically, deploying a mixture of methods from screen studies and communications, via an admixture of critical political economy and cultural studies” (Miller, Govil, McMurria, & Maxwell, 2001, p. 2). The authors do not rely solely on political economy to explain the nuances of the Hollywood film industry, but also try to look at the meanings conveyed in film, and how they affect various

audiences, and in turn how those audiences are likely to support Hollywood. They refer to film as commodities “whose key appeal lies in their meanings” (Miller, Govil, McMurria, & Maxwell, 2001, p. 2).

Janet Wasko (2007), professor of media studies at the University of Oregon, focuses on the political economy of communications, its structures and policies. Wasko’s (2007) book, *How Hollywood Works*, profiles the US movie industry and looks at its structures and policies. It focuses on the commodity nature of Hollywood film, or the process that is involved in turning raw materials and labor into feature films that distributed to retail outlets (Wasko, 2007). The book is a comprehensive look at how Hollywood works; it is an industry that manufactures commodities. The focus of the discussion is on theatrical motion pictures produced by the mainstream film industry, also known as Hollywood (Wasko, 2007). Wasko (2007) writes, “Because of the role that Hollywood films play in the creation and recreation of societal values and ideas, an understanding of the way that this industry works is seriously needed” (p. 2).

Currently our society is more dependent than ever on various media available to us for many different purposes such as entertainment, news, and help with day-to-day tasks. Hollywood is an industry that has the capacity to deeply affect the images people see on a regular basis. Wasko explains that the corporations that control the industry – the Hollywood majors – are part of a diverse group of entertainment conglomerates operating at a global level, relentlessly searching for new markets (Wasko, 2007). Though the majors dominate domestic global markets, not only do their products compete with other commodities in these marketplaces, they are heavily promoted and publicized, as well as protected and defended through various strategies (Wasko, 2007). Wasko refers to the method she used to write her book as the political economy of film. She explains that the political economy of film incorporates those

characteristics that define political economy generally speaking, as well as political economy's application to the study of media and communications (Wasko, 2007). She writes, "Fundamentally, the political economy of film analyzes motion pictures as commodities produced and distributed within a capitalist industrial structure" (Wasko, 2007, p. 9-10). This idea of motion picture as a commodity is present in *Global Hollywood* as well. *How Hollywood Works* discusses the impact of Hollywood within a capitalist structure, and *Global Hollywood* also examines the impact of globalization on the Hollywood industry, and the possible negative factors that may arise from such dominance. "*Global Hollywood* commences with an analysis of the industry's history of globalization and the dilemmas it poses as a sign of American ideology and a perceived threat to national cultures, as detailed in the discourse of cultural imperialism" (Miller, Govil, McMurria, & Maxwell, 2001, p. 3). This idea of American ideology speaks to concerns articulated earlier; who is speaking for African people and from what perspective? The "perceived threat" to other cultures suggests there is a danger when people view stories about their own culture based on the perspectives of people outside of that culture. Wasko uses an analytical approach to the Hollywood industry based on statistical information from various studios, industries, and box office numbers. As described by the publisher, Sage Publications, her work provides an up-to-date survey of the policies and structure of the US film industry, examines the relationship between film and other media industries, looks at the role of major studios and the sectors involved in the industry such as law firms, talent agents, and trade unions and guilds. Her book also provides access to hard-to-find statistical information on the industry (Wasko, 2007). Wasko's book will contribute to the study in the next chapter of the thesis. As I take a look at the factors that contribute to Hollywood films and their profit, it will help me

provide the appropriate background to explain decision making in Hollywood, and as a result, the type of content that is allowed into many films.

In this chapter I have provided some background information for each work I have used to research this subject. The literature review is divided into categories, which serve to help understand the context and different elements of my research. The literature review covers the origins of African colonization, the history of Rwanda, film studies, African representation in film, and finally the effects profit driven industries such as Hollywood have on film content. In the next chapter I will discuss my sample, outline the methods I plan to use to analyze the two films, and finally I will conduct a close reading based on the information in the first three chapters.

Chapter 4. METHODOLOGY

Description of the Population

The films I examined are about the complex warfare in Rwanda leading to genocide by one ethnic group of another. The set of films include the Hollywood-made *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) and the African-made *Sometimes In April* (2005). *Hotel Rwanda* was considered a box office hit in Hollywood cinema, while *Sometimes in April* is relatively unknown. *Hotel Rwanda* was co-written by Northern Irish-American filmmaker Terry George and an American, Keir Pearson; Terry George directed the film. *Sometimes In April* was written and directed by Haitian born (but Congo-raised) Raul Peck. Both films profile the events and circumstances of the Rwandan genocide.

Research Design/Procedure

I conducted an analysis of the films based on a close reading of certain elements within each movie. The close reading sought to answer the two questions laid out in chapter two. First, how is the problem central to the film represented or articulated? (The goal here was to determine whether the problem was presented as the central concern in the storyline, or relegated to background, as well as provide material with which to examine the nature of neocolonial relationships). Second, does the main character(s) deal with the stated problem individually or with or a more collaborative plan of action? The central concern here was whether the film advanced ideas associated with Eurocentrism (and its emphasis on individualism and individual achievement) or Afrocentrism (with its emphasis on the individual's relationship to community and to community building). The questions put forth contained the elements of the specific

content, form and context of the films. The analysis guided by these questions provides insight to some of the differences between Hollywood and African film.

Each film was read as a narrative, whereby I was looking for specific elements (language, interactions between characters, and contexts) that answered the research questions. For the first question I examined one or two scenes from each film that represented or explained the problem, as well as one or two scenes that served as an example of the neocolonial relationship between Rwanda and other (non-African) countries.

In order to answer the second question I examined the role and behavior of the main character in specific scenes. I was looking for how the character behaves in relation to the problem at hand, how the West and Westerners are depicted, among other things.

Not only did this research design provide some answers to the posed research questions, it also provided some insight into the way Hollywood makes money, which, following Wasko's vehement political economy defense, greatly affects film content (Wasko, 2007). Reading and analyzing specific scenes will allow me to observe how the films differ and how they resemble each other. I also looked at certain external factors, such as the ways that the two films were distributed, the composition and extent of the audiences for each, and the amount of money *Hotel Rwanda* and *Sometimes in April* grossed, respectively. This last phase of my research reveals something about the present-day neocolonial economic relationship, as seen especially through the power of global media conglomerates in relation to independent filmmaking. Media conglomerates have the ability to distribute film to the masses, worldwide. As discussed at the end of chapter three, economic power is the main driving force behind what films people can see, and how accessible these films are. Although *Hotel Rwanda* was a film where many studios collaborated, the majority of the film's financial support, especially in the area of distribution,

came from Hollywood studio super powers, MGM and Lionsgate (More detail about production can be found in the analysis). Although *Sometimes in April* was a film that aired on cable superpower HBO, it lacked the potential to reach a large number of people. The distribution level was much smaller and the advertising and marketing could hardly be seen unless people subscribed to that cable channel. These observations suggest that many more people had access to *Hotel Rwanda*, and as a result, many more people saw that film as opposed to *Sometimes in April*. The global nature of Hollywood production, marketing and distribution ensures that more people saw *Hotel Rwanda* than *Sometimes in April*, a clear product of neocolonialism and an example of global capitalism. Based on the monies each film grossed, I attempted to establish a connection between a film's content and its success.

Analysis

In *Sometimes in April*, the conflict, and the people harmed as a result, is depicted as the main concern in the film. The conflict in this film derives from the events associated with the mass genocide that occurred in Rwanda for 100 days in 1994, described at length in chapter three. The film begins with a profound quote from Martin Luther King, Jr., a prominent United States Civil Rights activist who was assassinated in 1968, in the course of his pursuit of racial equality and social justice. The quote appears amidst a black screen and reads, “In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.” This quote is extremely powerful as it both frames and sets the tone for the entire film. It suggests that whatever will have occurred by the end of conflict, those who were in a position to do something to stop the genocide but failed to take any action will never be forgotten. Already, before the film has even begun, we are watching from the perspective of Augustin, the main character and one of many who suffered during the genocide. Following the Martin Luther King, Jr., quote we see an aged map of Africa. Slowly words beginning from the bottom of the screen scroll upwards and deliver the written history of Rwanda, leading up to the Genocide. The history is a detailed explanation beginning before Belgian rule, which began in 1919, and explains the origin of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and social conflicts, the UN power sharing agreement, up to the Hutu extremist plan of Genocide.

Following the brief history, the film narration begins with the main character, Augustin, telling the history of the European conquest of Rwanda from his personal perspective. The violence was always about greed, arrogance, and power (*Sometimes In April*, 2005). The first image we have is one that presents the conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes as the main

concern. It is safe to assume the conflict will not fade into the background as the story develops. The importance of the problem and its possible consequences have been suggested by the quote from Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as reinforced when the main character lends his voice to share what he believes to have been the driving factors to the problem: greed, arrogance, and power. As stated in chapter two, Asante (1987) wrote that Afrocentricity means “placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior” (Asante, p. 2, 1987). The quote from Martin Luther King, Jr., and the narration by Augustin are examples of the filmmakers desire to place Rwandans and their ideals, situations and concerns at the center of the film. These short two to three minutes in the film provide a clear indication to what the average Rwandan may have felt about the genocide, and its causes. The conflict did not grow from ideas about good or evil. According to Raul Peck, as told through the eyes of Augustin, the conflict in Rwanda was generated by arrogance, greed, and a need for power, which fueled long instituted colonial ruling mechanisms imposed on the people of Rwanda. The opening scene thus depicts the problem as a central concern; it addresses the feeling about the genocide from a Rwandan perspective.

An important aspect of how the problem is presented in this particular film is the narration. The entire film is narrated in the voice of the main character, Augustin Muganza. African film is often rich in oral tradition, and *Sometimes In April* is no exception. The element of narration in Black African film is developed from the oral tales and the epic poem narrative tradition (Ukadike, 1994). This is evident in the film as Augustin’s narration takes us through the harrowing events of the genocide, which affected him and more than a million other citizens of Rwanda. His storytelling gives the film a more personal feeling, thus exuding emotion and honesty. Ukadike noted that “the most important element in oral literature (as in the novel and

the cinema) is the story, which builds the structure, the climax, and the resolution” (Ukadike, 1994, p. 203).

Though Augustin is clearly the main character in the film and his personal story provides the cohesive thread to the various events explored, many other stories are also present in the film. Thus, the film has multiple story lines. For example, although his brother, Honoré, is part of the Hutu extremists and friends with many people in the military who have the intent to kill all Tutsi people, Augustin still asks him to escort his wife (a Tutsi) and children to safety after events have begun to escalate, and Augustin is in danger of losing his life. Although he is a Hutu, and therefore not one of the targets, his name has been placed on a government list compiled of supposed traitors to the Hutu plan of action. Honoré is extremely reluctant, not because he doesn't wish to help his brother but because of his genuine belief and loyalty to the Hutu extremist platform. This is important to the film as it allows the viewer to see a trying circumstance through the eyes of someone who is an advocate for the massacre, though not an evil person. Moreover, the fact that the film has multiple story lines that address the many different roles Rwandans had during the genocide further support the notion that the film portrays the conflict as central to the story line.

In an interview that took place on March 18, 2005, the filmmaker, Raul Peck, spoke with National Public Radio about trying to make a film that depicted more than one perspective of the genocide.

It's the whole background, which is missing. As you know, the press don't really tell much about what happened before or try to explain. They just come when it explode, and in fact in the case of the genocide, there were no press during the genocide. They came

before and afterwards. So you are fighting against centuries of absence of information, or prejudice (NPR, 2005).

Someti

mes in April is the story of two brothers, who became estranged due to opposing political alignments during the genocide. It is not about one person, or one family. The story depicts the consequences of mass killing as it affected many different people. Therefore, addressing the second research question, the story does not show Augustin trying to cope with the various problems by himself, but instead shows the journey of many others connected to him, allowing the movie to show how the genocide affected mass communities of people who had to help each other in the desperate struggle to survive. There is not just one hero present. During the NPR interview on March 18, 2005, Raul Peck explained why it was so important for him to try to tell the story of many.

It was important for me to not just tell one story about one survivor in Rwanda. I had to at least try to give background information, to give the whole politics behind it, and why in particular, the rest of the world did nothing to stop the genocide. All this had to be in the film. And also the Rwanda of today. It's not enough to just say well, lets see what happened ten years ago. But we need to know what is happening today, and how are the people coping with that. So the film started in 2004, and then we go back to what happened in 94 (NPR, March 18th, 2005).

In one scene, in the countryside, soldiers have surrounded the school Augustin's daughter attends and where his murdered friend's wife, Martine, teaches. Unable to stop the storm of militia, Martine and her girls confront the soldiers and refuse to separate themselves into Hutu and Tutsi, preferring to die together rather than betray their friends and classmates. The soldiers

murder the girls with machine guns, leaving dead students strewn all over the room. Martine, Agustin's daughter, and one other girl manage to survive. They leave the school and along the way to freedom a village woman offers them shelter. While there she tells the refugees, "My brother and husband are out killing, if they see you they will kill you too" (*Sometimes In April*, 2005). This is another example of the sense of community and humanity that still remained within the country, despite the genocide that was occurring. This scene shows real relationships, and depicts how both Hutu and Tutsi people helped each other despite the political conflict that was tearing the country apart.

This example of communal problem-solving is another element of Afrocentric ideals apparent in the film. My second research question looks at the way the main character deals with the problem, individually or with other members of the community. While the scene I have just looked at does not involve the main character, it does exemplify the sense of community between many different Rwandans, which is an underlying tone throughout the entire film. The scene also highlights the important idea that many Hutu and Tutsi were not against each other, and emphasizes the struggle many suffered as a result of opposing political views. The woman who helped keep the three women safe had a husband who was out killing. If he were out killing, he was most likely a Hutu extremist. The film does not reveal whether the woman is Hutu or Tutsi, but this seems to have been deliberate. The sense of helping others within the community goes beyond the ethnic boundaries of Hutu or Tutsi, even in the midst of a massacre that targeted people based on those very ethnic affiliations. This acknowledges the humanity that exists within individual people, further emphasizing the idea that those involved in the implementation of the genocide were truly extremists, and not representative of an entire culture.

Like *Sometimes in April*, *Hotel Rwanda* is a film based on events that occurred during the genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994. *Hotel Rwanda* is based on the true story of Paul Rusesabagina, manager of the Hotel des Mille Collines, located in Kigali, Rwanda. The hotel was owned by the Belgian airline, Sabena, at the time of the genocide, and Rusesabagina used the hotel to harbor more than one thousand refugees during the worst days of the violence. The conflict in the film *Hotel Rwanda* is the same as in *Sometimes in April*; the film is set amidst rising tensions in Rwanda leading up to and following the 1993 Arusha Peace Agreement that was supposed to end the conflict. These historical events are explained in chapter three of this study. In *Hotel Rwanda*, the conflict in the film is not completely relegated to the background, though the film is about one man's personal story of his experience during the genocide. While the film manages to adequately address main events that occurred, the film's main concern is not only to tell the story of how Rusesabagina helped save the lives of many, but also to show his growth as a person as he realizes his place in the eyes of many Westerners whom he had grown to respect.

Unlike *Sometimes in April*, *Hotel Rwanda* does not provide any background to the origins of the conflict until about 20 minutes into the film; and even in the scene that touches on the historical events, the history is mentioned casually in one or two sentences. This scene is discussed later in the analysis. The film begins with sound from the Hutu extremist radio stating,

When people ask me why I hate the Tutsi? They were collaborators with Belgian forces. They stole our Hutu land, now they have come back, these Tutsi rebels have comeback. Rwanda is Hutu land; we are the majority, they are the minority. We will wipe out the RPF rebels. This is RTLM, Hutu power radio. Stay alert. (*Hotel Rwanda*, 2004)

This radio sound byte has no real historical context or explanation. Rather than providing a complete background of the conflict, this quote instead seems to portray Hutu as the good guys and all Tutsi people as evil and ill intentioned. The discussion about Eurocentrism in chapter two offers the idea that if in most movies there exists an air of superiority favorable to European derived cultures, the story is likely to lack objectivity and perhaps some necessary truths. As just mentioned above, the voiceover of the Hutu extremist radio station portrays the Hutu as hateful and malicious, and the Tutsi as evil. This portrayal downgrades both groups; it is a shallow depiction of both ethnic groups, and reduces both groups to people without morals or favorable values. Because this is from a Western perspective, it can be viewed as the Western world looking down on these two groups who seem to harbor hatred toward each other for no good reason. The host of the show says the Tutsi were “collaborators with Belgian forces” (*Hotel Rwanda*, 2004). This is an example of an area where the story lacks objectivity and some truth. While it is true that the Hutu extremists used propaganda methods illustrated in the film’s text, it should be noted that propaganda is not always based on truth. As discussed in chapter three, where the history of Rwanda is detailed, the Tutsi people were not collaborators with Belgian forces. Rather, they were forced to submit to the Belgian colonists who chose to use their group to run their institution of colonialism. Here it can be argued that this Eurocentric way of setting up the discord between the two groups was done to dramatize the story, especially when Rusesabagina is faced with trying to reconcile these two conflicting groups at different times throughout the duration of the film. Because of this, I argue that in this scene, the conflict is relegated to the background of the story, just by the mere fact that it fails to address enough of the historical background. If all elements of the conflict were addressed, the film would show more commitment to portraying the problem as a central concern in the film.

A few scenes later, in the bar of the hotel, a European journalist is asking a Rwandan about the Hutu and the Tutsi people, and the origins of the fighting. The journalist, named Jack, asks a Rwandan journalist, a man who is friends with Rusesabagina, “So what is the actual difference between the Hutus and the Tutsis?” The man’s response provides a brief and very basic history of the origin of the conflict. He replies,

According to the Belgian colonists, the Tutsis are taller, are more elegant. It was the Belgians that created the division. They picked people, those with thinner noses, lighter skin. They used to measure the width of peoples noses. The Belgians used the Tutsi’s to run the country. Then when they left, they left the power to the Hutus. And of course the Hutus took their revenge on the Tutsis for years of oppression (*Hotel Rwanda*, 2004).

This is the only time where the film attempts to explain the history behind the conflict, and it does so in less than one minute. While this history is true, it falls short as a full explanation of Rwanda before colonial rule, and does not explain the reasons why Belgium supported a revolt led by the Hutu people, after years of ruling through the Tutsi ethnic group. Thus, the conflict is not relegated to the background, but it is clearly not a central concern or priority to give a detailed explanation about the origins of the conflict. Once again, the conflict is not a central concern, exemplifying ideals that are favorable to European culture. A possible explanation for the lack of detail regarding the full history of the events is the reluctance of the Western world to acknowledge the impact colonialism had on Rwanda’s political and social structures, as well as the involvement, or lack thereof, of the Western world before and during the genocide. Later that evening, Rusesabagina is shown having a conversation with friends who are concerned about the threat of mass killing; Rusesabagina responds by saying, “Please, the UN are here now. The world is watching, peace has been signed” (*Hotel Rwanda*, 2004). Rusesabagina is referring to

the signing of the Arusha Peace agreement, which was facilitated by the UN, but did not succeed in alleviating the conflict in Rwanda. This quote shows Rusesabagina's trust in the Western world, something that most likely derived from the relationships he had with Europeans as a result of his managerial duties at the hotel, an element of the neocolonial relationship between Rwanda and Belgium. Though he has attained success and a high social status, these achievements were possible because of the Western influence that remained in Rwanda post colonialism. That night, he finds several of his neighborhoods hiding in his house upon his return from work. The neighbors are terrified because it has just been announced that Tutsi rebels had murdered President Habyarimana, and Hutu extremists were planning to take violent action to retaliate. Rusesabagina's wife, a Tutsi, then pulls him aside to tell him the neighbors all run to him because he is the "only Hutu they can trust" (*Hotel Rwanda*, 2004). This scene contains two key elements. First, the scene establishes Rusesabagina as the person with the ability to help all, thus constructing Rusesabagina as the hero of the film. This is developed in several other scenes throughout the film, establish Rusesabagina as the go-to person, and the one individual with the potential to help others who do not have strong ties to the western world.

Though Rusesabagina calls on many of his Western connections through the film for help (an example of his dependence on Western aid, depicting yet another limitation derived from neocolonialism), he is often left with the burden of having to make tough decisions by himself. He realizes he does not have the support of the west when UN officials and buses arrive to transport only Americans and Europeans from danger, leaving innocent Rwandans to fend for themselves. He realizes he was disillusioned by the idea that the Western world cared about Rwanda and had

truly moved past the ideas present during and post colonization when a UN colonel he thought was an advocate for him and all Rwandans says to him,

You're dirt. We [the west] think you're dirt. They think you're dirt, dumb, worthless.

You're the smartest man here...you could own this hotel, except for one thing. You're black. No you're not even a nigger, you're an African. They're not going to stay, Paul.

They're not going to stop this (*Hotel Rwanda*, 2004).

Not only is this conversation an example of prevailing attitudes of superiority derived from colonialism, but it is also the point in the film at which Rusesabagina realizes he does not have support from those who are truly in a position to stop the genocide, and he must use his wits to help save lives in the best way he can. It is important to note there are a couple of characters from the Western world who seem to try their best to help Rusesabagina and other Rwandan's. However, their roles may serve to mitigate the racism shown by the colonel from the UN.

At the height of the conflict, after going to get more necessities like food and water for the refugees in the hotel, Rusesabagina and the hotel employee who has driven him hit major bumps along the road during the early morning hours. They later realize they have been driving over dead bodies, which stretch out of sight for miles and miles down the road. Upon arriving back at the hotel and attempting to get dressed for the day, Rusesabagina breaks down in sobs and tears as he has realized the extremity of the dire circumstance he and so many others, are in. During this time his main assistant in the hotel attempts to come in after hearing the cries and fearing he may be in trouble. Rusesabagina yells desperately for him to stay out of the room. Soon after he emerges in his suit, completely in control. This scene depicts the trauma he is experiencing, and his take-charge attitude following such heartache shows he is a strong character, capable of making

difficult decisions in the face of adversity. The only real help he receives from non-Westerners in the film is from Rwandans with high involvement in the plans of the genocide; he obtains their help through multiple bribes throughout the movie. Thus, in *Hotel Rwanda*, the main character deals with the conflict more on an individual level, rather than seeking to collaborate with others. The idea of a strong character that is able to take on adversity and make it to a happy ending is critical in much of Hollywood storytelling. As discussed in chapter four, production companies have a distinct goal to make money, and the idea of watching a hero prevail in a film is more marketable, and probably more likely to make money.

Several

elements in both films have been discussed, addressing the presentation of the problem in the films and analyzing the role of the main characters in the film. Some of these elements represent Eurocentric qualities, while some of them represent elements of Afrocentrism. As mentioned above, Raul Peck made *Sometimes in April* with the intention of telling the full story of not only the genocide in Rwanda, but he also strove to give an accurate depiction of the country, culture and people. The story is told in an oral tradition, through narration by the main character, which was one of the nuances that allowed the story to be told from the perspective of a Rwandan citizen. The oral tradition is an element of African cinema, an element that helps maintain and express traditional African values. When discussing how to maintain traditional African elements in cinema, Ukadike writes, “To infuse authenticity and believability into this cinematic struggle, elements evolving as derivatives and elaborations of the oral tradition are indispensable” (Ukadike, 1994, p. 309). Oral tradition is an element of African cinema, and therefore part of Afrocentric ideology. Another element of Afrocentrism present in *Sometimes in April* is the idea of community, the sense of togetherness and the struggle to deal with adversity collaboratively.

As described above, using the example of one scene, the film emphasizes the importance and tradition of members of the community making the effort to help one another in the face of struggle and adversity. Ukadike captures the importance of accurately presenting African tradition and norms in film. He writes, “If the effort to recapture these values is to be based on the power of the image, truth, perspectives and rendered in styles that must not be hidden under egregious limitations of an alien film culture” (Ukadike, 1994, p. 309).

While *Hotel Rwanda* depicts some elements of African culture, such as the importance of family evident in the relationship between Paul Rusesabagina and his wife, and the emphasis they place on keeping their children safe, there are still elements that represent more Eurocentric values, which can serve as an explanation for the film’s classification as a Hollywood film. As discussed earlier, *Hotel Rwanda’s* story focuses on the story of Paul Rusesabagina and his struggle to protect hundreds of refugees from gruesome deaths. While the film does not ignore the events of the genocide, it focuses on the personal struggles endured by Rusesabagina as he strives to help others in the absence of Western aid. In the end, he is able to keep the refugees safely within the confines of the hotel until the massacre finally subsides. He thus emerges as the hero of the film. The idea of the hero is an element of film that is not present in most African cinema, but is rather an element of Eurocentric film structure. In addition, when the film ends, Rusesabagina has been reunited with his family, giving the illusion of a happy ending to an event that has no happy ending. Abraham Ford, a professor at Howard University who has taught a range of film courses at both the graduate and undergraduate level, with an emphasis on the social role and position of film, commented on the idea of the individual hero in *Hotel Rwanda*, compared to *Sometimes in April*. Ford’s opinion is that no one individual person or story, can encapsulate the phenomenon (Personal Communication, March 2008). When speaking

specifically about *Sometimes in April*, Ford said, “No one is dominant, and also there’s no happy ending. Even if its true, the point is, it’s not a happy ending for Rwanda. And Raul Peck, succeeds more effectively in getting across the finality of a loss” (Personal Communication, March 2008).

In the final analysis of the films, I must look at the scope of each film’s distribution. *Hotel Rwanda* was released on December 12, 2004, and has had a cumulative domestic box office gross of \$23,472,900 (http://www.inbaseline.com/project.aspx?view=DomesticBoxOffice&project_id=168946). Eight different distribution companies distributed the film among various countries spanning Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands. When the film was ready for home movie distribution, MGM Studios distributed it. Alternatively, *Sometimes in April* premiered on HBO on March 19, 2005, available only in homes that subscribed to HBO (www.inbaseline.com). HBO is available in more than 50 countries, reaching over 22 million subscribers (www.hbo.com). Because *Sometimes in April* was made for television, the only distribution the film benefited from was HBO International. Subsequently, there is no available data for how much money the film would have grossed at the box office, or how many countries (without access to HBO) it has reached. As discussed in chapter three, Wasko (2007) has used political economy theory to explain how motion pictures are commodities, describing how the political economy of film analyzes motion pictures as commodities produced and distributed within a capitalist structure (Wasko, 2007). As noted, profit is the main driving factor in the Hollywood film industry. In this chapter, I have identified Eurocentric elements of *Hotel Rwanda* that place the film in the Hollywood film category. Because of this classification, *Hotel Rwanda* was distributed on a mass scale worldwide.

Contrarily, *Sometimes in April* did not receive the same type of exposure, because it did not have the depth of monetary support as the Hollywood film industry.

Chapter 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This research was conducted, using a case-study approach, to examine some of the differences that exist between films made about issues prevailing in African countries in the Western world by Western people, and films of the same nature made by Africans. The research was set in a theoretical framework informed by the post-colonial and political economy sectors of critical theory, and modern film theory. These three theoretical areas were outlined carefully in chapter two. In the second chapter, I established that films are driven by various motives put forth by executives at large production companies, and this affects the types of films released, such as films about African circumstances. The research focused on film, a form of media controlled by many corporate decisions that many have allowed into their lives. This idea of the possible corporate influence on film content, especially in Hollywood, is important because Hollywood films are viewed worldwide. In chapter four, I discussed the elements of each film that place them in their specific categories (Hollywood film vs. African film). *Hotel Rwanda* was driven by a Eurocentric ideology.

In the introduction, I stated that the research should provide some information about the present-day neocolonial relationship between the Hollywood film industry and smaller independent companies that also tell stories about Africa. The social and political unrest in Rwanda that led to mass genocide portrayed in each of the films can all be traced to a colonial past. During a close reading of *Hotel Rwanda*, I found that distinct elements of the film reinforce Eurocentric perceptions and lasting notions and attitudes from colonialism. As outlined in the theoretical framework in chapter two, Eurocentrism is the notion that European ideologies have been embedded in several cultures outside of Europe based on dominance gained during the colonial

era. Shohat and Stam (1994) coined contemporary Eurocentrism as the “discursive residue or precipitate of colonialism” (p. 15). Using the research questions as a guide, I found that in distinct scenes, *Hotel Rwanda* was not fully committed to presenting the full scope of the history and events leading up to the conflict. Thus, the conflict is not always a main concern, but is at times relegated to the background to a great story line. The Hutu extremist radio station at the start of the film, which offered strong, hateful language towards Tutsi people without providing any historical context is a strong example of the lack of commitment to defining the problem.

Another example of how the film fails to offer enough historical background about the conflict is the short conversation between a European journalist and a Rwandan man, who gives a brief, glossed over history of Belgian colonization. Given the fact that the conversation was the only real scene in the movie that attempted to tackle the history of the event, it should have been scripted with much more detail and explanation about how the deep seeded tensions between the two groups grew. Together these two scenes ignore major historical elements and create the notion that the ethnic groups have no real substantive reason to be in conflict with one another, making the two groups seem obtuse. This is an example of the imaginary sense of the instinctive superiority of European-derived culture and people described by Shohat and Stam (1994).

Movies are one of the mechanisms from which the general public obtain information or learn about new things. If in most movies there exists an air of superiority favorable to European derived cultures, the story is likely to lack objectivity and perhaps some necessary truths. I found similar Eurocentric notions when examining the problem solving methods the main character, Rusesabagina, used to deal with the struggle and save many lives. Rather than using a partnership or similar mechanism to carry out his ideas to assist many, Rusesabagina was largely self-reliant, exemplifying the idea of individual problem solving, another element that is largely

Eurocentric in nature. In cases where he did call on help from others, it was mostly from his European contacts, later realizing the help he would receive would be little or none at all. This reinforces the neocolonial idea that Africans need to be reliant on Europeans in order to overcome hardships.

Alternatively, during the close reading of *Sometimes in April*, I found many elements that supported the Afrocentric idea, or Afrocentrism. As discussed in chapter two, Afrocentricity is defined as “placing African ideals at the center of any analysis that involves African culture and behavior” (Asante, p. 2, 1987), and grew out of a need to challenge traditional (also often referred to as Western) ideas. This notion is important to think about when thinking about film, and portrayals of culture within a specific storyline. Again, using the research questions as a guide, I was able to identify elements of the film that supported Afrocentric ideologies. Black directors, like Raoul Peck seek to emphasize Africa’s diversity and challenge hegemonic Western iconography.

In contrast to *Hotel Rwanda*, *Sometimes in April* placed African ideals at the very start of film, by providing a detailed explanation of the history and subsequent tensions leading up to the mass genocide in Rwanda. Thus, the film is situated in a historical context before it even begins. This exemplifies the filmmaker’s commitment to presenting a problem that was rich with historical facts, placing African ideals at the forefront. Another example of Afrocentricity found in *Sometimes in April* is the sense of community, and commitment to help one another. During the close reading I examined a scene where a woman helps Martine and the two surviving school children by hiding and feeding them for a short time. The woman was willing to assist them despite the fact that her husband was out killing people. This scene conveys the humanity and love many Rwandan’s had for each other despite the killing surrounding them resulting from

hatred based on ethnic differences. When Karenga wrote about Afrocentrism, he described it as a tradition that “from its inception has been concerned with building community, reaffirming human dignity, and enhancing the life of the people” (Karenga, 2003, p. 5). These ideas about community and the reaffirmation of human dignity can be seen in both of those scenes.

Finally, an integral part of the research was based on the knowledge that the Hollywood film industry is profit driven. I explored the idea that the need to make a large profit affects film content. Greenwald (1956) asked whether the “ideas of the entrepreneurs of amusement of profit are the same as the ideas of those interested in the moral, educational, and cultural development of people” (p. 333). After examining both *Hotel Rwanda* and *Sometimes in April*, my findings prove that the ideas of “entrepreneurs of amusement of profit and those interested in the moral and cultural development of people are not the same. Wasko (2007) uses an analytical approach to the Hollywood industry based on statistical information from various studios, industries, and box office numbers. While both films tell the story of the genocide in Rwanda, only *Hotel Rwanda* was considered a box office success in its genre, grossing \$33,882,243 worldwide. *Hotel Rwanda* was released as a major motion picture, as opposed to *Sometimes in April*, which was made for HBO television. Historically, colonial nations exploited Africa for their own profit and power, caring little about the well-being of the people within those exploited African nations. It seems that when looking at the elements *Hotel Rwanda* lacked, in comparison with the strong distribution effort from its production companies and the total money grossed, the film was ultimately made for profit, similar to that of colonial nations. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, according to HBO’s website, HBO is available in more than 50 countries, reaching over twenty-two million subscribers (www.hbo.com). The only distribution the film benefited from

was HBO International. Subsequently, there is no available data for how much money the film would have grossed, or how many countries (without access to HBO) it has reached.

Although *Sometimes in April* was a film that aired on a cable superpower like HBO, it lacked the potential to reach a large number of people. The distribution level was much smaller and the advertising and marketing could hardly be seen unless people subscribed to that cable channel. Although HBO reports more than 22 million subscribers, it does not mean that 22 million viewers watched the film when it aired. The global nature of Hollywood production, marketing and distribution ensures that more people saw *Hotel Rwanda* than *Sometimes in April*, a clear product of neocolonialism and an example of global capitalism. The more widely viewed and recognized film is *Hotel Rwanda*, produced by Western filmmakers. This proves that African stories told by Westerners and driven by Eurocentric ideologies are still reaching more people than stories about Africa told by Africans. Lasting notions and attitudes from the colonial era continue to permeate the masses.

Miller, Govil, McMurria, & Maxwell (2001) suggest American ideology is a perceived threat to national cultures. This idea of American ideology speaks to concerns articulated earlier; who is speaking for African people and from what perspective? The “perceived threat” to other cultures suggests there is a danger when people view stories about their own culture based on the perspectives of people outside of that culture. These differences have the potential to affect perceptions on a global scale. Additionally, those in African countries may have more access to those films about their continent made in Hollywood from a foreign perspective than they do from their own countries. These differences are important and should be studied because movies, especially those made in Hollywood, are available worldwide, with the potential to dictate global perceptions. Additionally, those in African countries may have more access to those films about

their continent made in Hollywood from a European perspective than they do from their own countries. Distribution plays a large role here, as Western production companies have the capacity to distribute virtually anywhere, whereas smaller independent companies cannot compete with such a large reach. Potentially films made by Africans may not even be able to reach the Western world, a consequence of financial restraints Hollywood does not face. This is interesting to explore because it means that ultimately people in African countries have more opportunity to become informed about Africa through the film medium from alternative perspectives rather than from African perspectives. Hollywood films have the capacity to influence both Africans and non-Africans; the implications of such a trend suggest that the majority of the stories about Africa with a global reach are told from non-African viewpoints. Ultimately, Europeans are depicting African stories, speaking for Africans instead of Africans speaking for themselves.

There are some limitations that exist within this research. Because *Hotel Rwanda* was a theatrical release and *Sometimes in April* was made for television, I was unable to obtain a statistic for the latter which would show the profit the film made. In the future, it would be beneficial to compare two films which both were theatrical releases or both home video releases. With similar comparisons, examining the number of viewers or subscribers vs. the total box office gross, would provide a more accurate analysis.

In order to provide more content, the research questions could be used to examine other films dealing with a specific African conflict directed by an American or European and an African filmmaker. This would provide further insight into prevailing ideas about Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism and provide additional evidence about how influential (or not influential) each was in defining film content. Additionally, there are many theoretical elements I did not examine

in the study, in order to keep the research succinct and focused. Elements of masculinity and the portrayal of characters in masculine roles (especially the way Western men are portrayed as opposed to the way African men are portrayed) would provide further insight to the images dictated by colonialism. A major aspect I did not examine in this research is the glamorization of death in Hollywood film. Dr. Francoise Pfaff, professor of French and Francophone Studies offered some insight about this idea during an interview. She discussed that fact that in some scenes in *Hotel Rwanda*, the horror of the death seemed to be subdued (Personal Communication, March 2008). “It is like some sort of dream-like mystique. So, in that sense I think Hollywood sometimes either is blood thirsty and increases the bloodiness of the scene to attract viewers and shock viewers, or as they subdued it, which is what happened in *Hotel Rwanda*” (Personal Communication, March 2008). This would be an important area to study because on one hand, glorifying violence trivializes events that would otherwise be seen as devastating. On the other hand, subduing the violence in a film as Pfaff suggested, especially a film where the violence portrayed is based on real events, can lower the emotional impact, making the film easier for viewers to watch. This could be detrimental, because viewers would fail to grasp the full severity and significance of the events portrayed. An interesting method that may have enhanced the study would have been the use of focus groups, in order to assess the reaction from various audiences to the different types of filmmaking. Feedback from human subjects who viewed and reacted to the two films would help answer questions centered around the possible effects films about Africa (made by Africans or Westerners) have on the perceptions people have of the continent.

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