



Reception of 300 (dir. Zack Snyder, 2006)

HPAH5044/6044 – ARMIES AND NAVIES

Reception of the Ancient World

- ▶ Reception can include:
 - ▶ Film/TV
 - ▶ Music
 - ▶ Books
 - ▶ Art
 - ▶ Architecture
 - ▶ And more...
- ▶ Reception is **not** about spotting historical inaccuracies!
- ▶ Some Reception journals:
 - ▶ *Classical Receptions Journal* ([Issues | Classical Receptions Journal | Oxford Academic \(oup.com\)](#)).
 - ▶ *Imagines Project* ([Journal thesites \(imagines-project.org\)](#)).

Considering *Why*

“I am not interested in the question of *how* Hollywood gets history wrong, since lists of cinema’s historical inaccuracies tell us nothing and get us nowhere. But questioning *why* Hollywood opts to recast history in a certain light is of real importance.” – Llewellyn-Jones 2018, pp. 194

- ▶ When?
 - ▶ Iranophobia in the United States
 - ▶ George W. Bush’s “War on Terror”

Considering Why

- ▶ Persians = Iranians as “others”
- ▶ Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones claims September 11th, 2001 is the kicking off point for a resurgence of Iranophobia despite numerous attempts by Iran to express their condolences
- ▶ Political overtones and malicious intent?

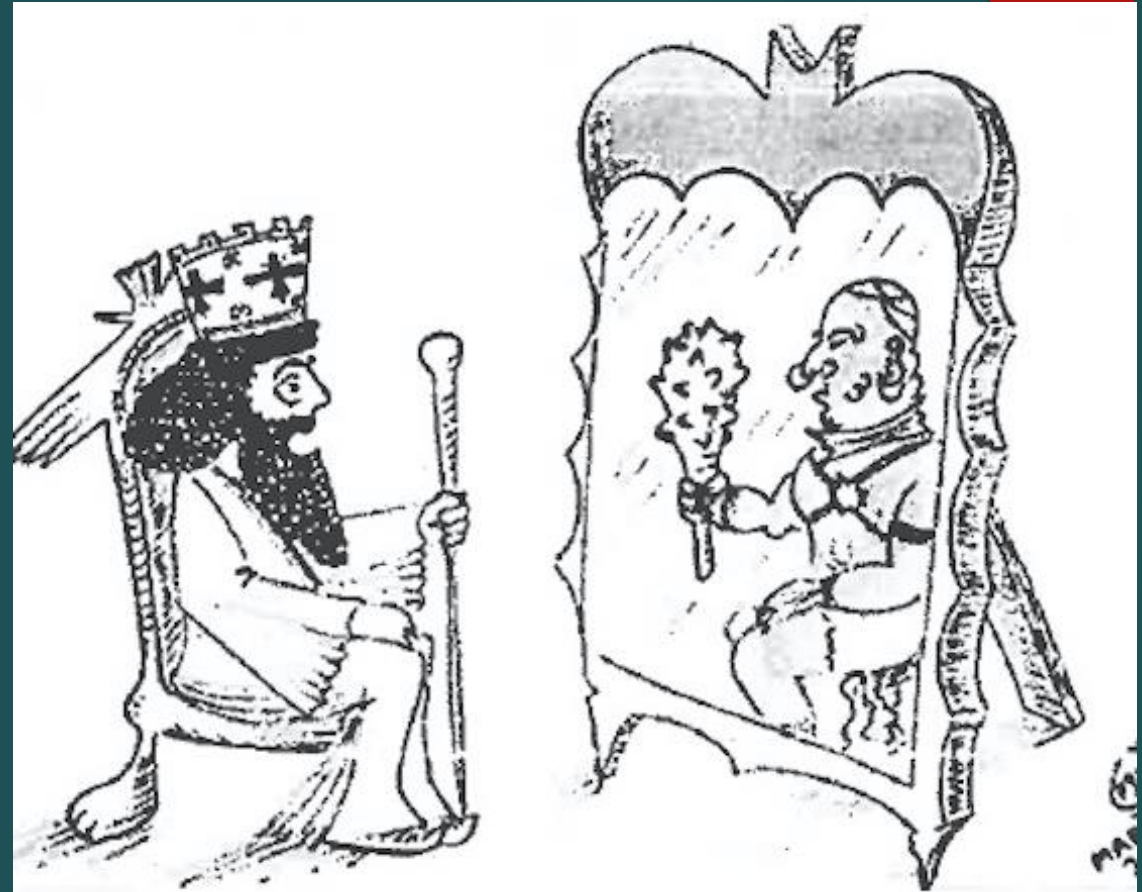


Figure 12.2 The Great King Xerxes looks at his Hollywood image through distorting mirror. Iranian cartoon, March 2007. Author's copy.

“[the cartoon] laughs at the United States and makes a laughingstock of Hollywood and Frank Miller.” - Llewellyn-Jones 2018, pp. 203

'Hollywood tries to sell movies'

- ▶ "Hollywood tries to sell movies and does not care if they are historically accurate, but movies also carry a subtle message which has very effective and current consequences." – Touraj Daryaee 2007
- ▶ Prof. Touraj Daryaee is a Persian immigrant to the United States
 - ▶ Professor of Iranian history in the Persian world at the University of California, Irvine
- ▶ Claims certain classical sources are used in the film but only when it serves their biased anti-Eastern narrative
- ▶ Responses are less to do with inaccuracies and more to do with suspected motive and its possible use in the war on terror

“Determining a people’s identity”

- ▶ Prof. Cyrus Kar is an Iranian born professor at the University of Phoenix
- ▶ “What is so distressing about this movie is the realization of the tremendous power Hollywood wields in determining a people's identity. It is the same nightmare Native Americans endured during the whole 'cowboy-movie' genre.” – Cyrus Kar, *Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies*
- ▶ “Perhaps the movie '300' was a necessary wake-up call for the Iranian/Persian community to support responsible filmmakers, who report history with honesty and integrity.” – Cyrus Kar - *Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies*

"Iranians as monsters"

- ▶ Dr. Kaveh Farrokh is Iranian-Greek and is a student of both Ancient Greece and Ancient Iran
- ▶ "...portraying Iranians as monsters, troglodytes, degenerates, and demons is 'artistic entertainment', but other nationalities are exempt from this 'art form' as this would be 'tasteless and politically incorrect' and would be regarded as a 'hate crime'." – Dr. Kaveh Farrokh, *Ghandchi*

“Boy lovers”

- ▶ Prof. Paul Cartledge disagrees with the idea that Middle Eastern affairs were considered in the making of 300, “simply because it takes a long time to develop a film.” – Cartledge, *The Guardian*, 2007
- ▶ Cartledge’s reactions to the film are fairly positive, though he does criticize one main point on historical inaccuracy and one of the “Us vs Them” narratives:
 - “The irony is that the Spartans were literally boy lovers: they incorporated a form of pederasty into their educational system.” - Cartledge, *The Guardian*, 2007
 - “A caveat about black and white, 'West' (goodies) vs 'East' (baddies) polarization... It's never a good thing to do that, I think, and least of all now!” – Cartledge, *USA Today*, 2007

Considering *How*

- ▶ “300's most noteworthy abuse of history: the Persians are turned into monsters, but the non-Spartan Greeks are simply all too human.” – Ephraim Lytle, *The Star*, 2007
- ▶ “No mention is made in 300 of the fact that at the same time a vastly outnumbered fleet led by Athenians was holding off the Persians in the straits adjacent to Thermopylae, or that Athenians would soon save all of Greece by destroying the Persian fleet at Salamis. This would wreck 300's vision, in which Greek ideals are selectively embodied in their only worthy champions, the Spartans.” – Ephraim Lytle, *The Star*, 2007

“Blame Herodotus”

- ▶ “If you want to see what happened at Thermopylae, this movie won’t necessarily help you do it.” – Victor Davis Hanson, *City Journal*, 2007
- ▶ “If the Spartans seem too cocky and self-assured in their belief that they are the more effective warriors of a superior culture, blame Herodotus, not Zack Snyder.” – Victor Davis Hanson, *City Journal*, 2007
- ▶ The film consciously abandons a realistic portrayal of history, though in doing so, aligns itself more closely with the more fanciful works of Herodotus.

“There has been no agenda on the part of the original novelist, movie director, cast and crew to promote an anti-Iranian agenda. The movie however (no matter how sincerely it was intended as entertainment), is nevertheless purveying messages; messages most certainly unintended by Miller or the film producers.”

- Dr. Kaveh Farrokh, *Ghandchi*



“Source raiding and leather underwear”

- ▶ “... It knows how to be a properly guilty pleasure, and this makes it the absolute last word on reception of ancient Greece in contemporary mass culture.” – Gideon Nisbet 2008, pp. 151
- ▶ Nisbet essentially states that 300 didn't bother with attempting to be respectable like *Troy* and *Alexander* did.
- ▶ “... Opting into *Xena*'s cheerful enthusiasms for source-raiding and leather underwear, it brings back to life the scantily clad...” - Gideon Nisbet 2008, pp. 151

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