

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### ***Argo*. Ben Afflek. Warner Bros, 2012. Film.**

*Argo* is a desperate attempt by Ben Afflek to make a film in Iran, where he has never been or seem to have enough knowledge about its rich and ancient cultures. The film is set in Turkey and claims to be based on the historical event of the Iranian hostage crisis of 1979. In the midst of this crisis, six American diplomat managed to escape Iran through the combined and covert efforts of the CIA and Canadian embassy in Tehran. While the basic storyline of *Argo* is somewhat close to the historical event, it is extremely shallow and a typical Hollywood film in which a single Hollywood hero, played by Afflek himself, performs the impossible. In this film, a CIA agent is able to enter Iran and heroically rescue his countrymen, and victoriously return to the United State to reunite with his family. This is yet another dishonest and partial account of an event in which the animosity between the US government and its official enemy manifests itself in depiction of a nation as savage people in yet another Hollywood action thriller.

Curiously enough, there seems to be a link between the timing of this film and the current heated discourse of war against Iran, popularized by some in the US administration and Israeli lobby groups. In other words, while the war drums are beaten yet again, Hollywood seems to be ready to prepare the mindless mass who rush to the theatres to praise another piece of propaganda. The pattern that was in place prior and during the US war against Iraq seems to be repeating itself over and over again. I chose this film because it readily fits Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model and provides material for an in depth analysis of Hollywood propaganda machine.

Ben Affleck is an American actor and film director who has played in a number of Hollywood political thriller and war films such as *The Sum of All Fears* (2002), *Pearl Harbor* (2001), and *State of Play* (2009).

**Dijk, Teun A. van. *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: SAGE Publications, 1998. Print.**

In *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, Dijk approaches concepts such as ideology and political discourse in a systematic and theory-driven manner. The author concern himself with the relationship between these two concepts, and is interested to find out whether all properties of political discourse are influenced by the underlying ideologies. Dijk concludes that only those properties of discourse can be influenced by ideologies where there is contextual variable presence. This scholarly book is particularly focused on the use of language as well as the overall strategies used in most political discourses. The author introduces his theory of “ideological square”<sup>1</sup> through which the polarizing *Us* and *Them* political ideology becomes a discourse. Dijk’s theory consists of four possibilities:

- Emphasize *Our* good things
- Emphasize *Their* bad things
- De-emphasize *Our* bad things
- De-emphasize *Their* good things.<sup>2</sup>

Teun Adrianus van Dijk is a Dutch scholar and prolific author who teaches at the Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona and has taught at different universities in Europe and Latin America. Dijk’s scholarly focus is on the fields of text linguistics, ideologies, and critical discourse analysis. I am considering Dijk’s theory in order to examine the *Us* and *Them* political discourse embedded in Hollywood productions.

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<sup>1</sup> Dijk, Teun A. van. *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: SAGE Publications, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

**Hall, Stuart. Encoding/Decoding, in Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Love, and Paul Willis (eds.), *Culture, Media, Language*. London: Hutchinson, 1980. Print.**

In his *Encoding/Decoding*, Stuart Hall suggests that visual representation in the contemporary world of the media contains codes that carry ideological messages. Hall argues that these codes, which he regularly calls the “maps of meaning”,<sup>3</sup> potentially suggest how our social life are to be rendered or classified. Hall reminds his readers that it is necessary to uncover the ideological meanings embedded in media representations since our culture today is saturated with their messages. Hall suggest that, to understand these “maps of meaning”,<sup>4</sup> we must first try to disentangle the codes in order to see how and what meanings are constructed and organized for us. *Encoding/Decoding* further shows us that we need to distinguish between the encoding of media content which is done by those who produce them and the decoding task that needs to be performed by those who are subjected to media content. Hall’s technique in decoding the embedded meaning in films is particularly useful.

Stuart Hall is a Jamaican cultural theorist and sociologist who is also one of the founders of The Birmingham School of Cultural Studies. Hall has written numerous books and articles on the concepts such as representation, media, political ideologies, as well as multiculturalism—he was called the “godfather of multiculturalism”<sup>5</sup> by The Guardian.

**Herman, Edward and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon, 1988. Print.**

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<sup>3</sup> Hall, Stuart. *Encoding/Decoding*, in Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Love, and Paul Willis (eds.), *Culture, Media, Language*. London: Hutchinson, 1980.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2012/feb/11/saturday-interview-stuart-hall>

In *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman present an analysis based on a propaganda model and examine the influence of market forces on media content. According to Chomsky and Herman's model, corporate and state power is situated in a strong regulatory linkage that cause the media to manufacture consent to policies that seldom represent the interests or voices of people. Herman and Chomsky demonstrate that the free-market economics model of media leads inevitably to limited reportage and biased content that serves the interested of the privileged few.

Edward S. Herman is an American economist and media analyst who teaches at the University of Pennsylvania. Noam Chomsky is an American linguist, philosopher, historian, political critic, and Professor Emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Herman and Chomsky are both known as prominent scholars who have developed a large body of work critical of US foreign policy and the role of the media in promoting state and corporate interests. Although their works have been deemed controversial by some, Herman and Chomsky remind their readers of the fragility of democracy and how it can easily slip into the hands of a selected few.

I am considering this book as the primary source for my research in order to show that the stories told by Hollywood are subject to Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model. By examining this model against a number of films, I will show Hollywood's engagement in political discourses is by design and exist to particularly serve the interests of particular groups and their agendas.

**Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. *Under the Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses*, in *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. Print.**

In *Under the Western Eyes*, Chandra Talpade Mohanty criticizes homogeneous perspectives and presuppositions in some of the Western feminist texts that focus on women in the third world. More specifically, the author anchors her accounts of Western feminism in a select group of texts produced by some Western feminists and published by Zed Press in what is entitled the Third World Series. According to Mohanty, these writers draw attention to the codification of scholarly writings that discursively colonize and ghettoize non-Western, Third World women as the collective Other. She argues that the universal categorization of a large group of women in non-Western countries is mostly done through constructed monolithic terms and classifications. This approach is keen, she argues, to label women in the Third World countries as “poor, uneducated, and victimized”.<sup>6</sup>

Mohanty is a postcolonial and transnational feminist theorist and Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies and Dean’s Professor of the Humanities at the University of Syracuse. Mohanty is aware that given the inherence of politics in the discourse of culture, lack of consciousness about the effect of Western scholarship on the Third World—and universally positing Third World women as victims in need of saviour—can lead to grave and broader consequences and potentially play into the hands of contemporary imperialism.

I am considering this material for my research in order to show that colonial discourses can potentially assist Hollywood in stereotyping non-Western people and feed

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<sup>6</sup> Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. “Under the Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003.

into the *Us* and *Them* political ideology. The George W. Bush era is an example in which pervasive Hollywood propaganda machinery used such discourses prior to the US attack on Afghanistan, a propaganda campaign that essentially advertised an imperialist war as one that was concerned with the liberation of Afghan women. The discourse that Mohanty refers to was used by number of Hollywood films both prior to the US attack to mentally prepare people and also after the attack in order to legitimize and excuse the use of military force in Afghanistan and Iraq.