

# *The Matrix* and Critical Theory's Desertion of the Real

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*This article uses the narratives of the popular films The Matrix, Matrix: Reloaded, and Matrix: Revolutions as a lens through which to discuss the problems of the real and human agency in contemporary critical theory. Alongside a reading of the films' invocations of social theory, the article describes parallel academic theories whose strongest structuralist and poststructuralist manifestations abandon conceptions of the real and willful human agency. In a field whose pessimistic narrative of Marxism often begins with anti-humanist structuralism, classical Marxist discourse theories offer a viable standpoint-based concept of reality upon which to found solidaristic human action.*

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Perry Anderson argues that, after World War II, “Western Marxism” began an “unending detour” into a discursivist anti-humanism that paved the way for poststructuralist and post-Marxist theory.<sup>1</sup> Further demoralized by the defeats of 1968, an increasingly elite group of intellectuals became detached from actual political practice during the long post-war boom in liberal democratic societies. Disillusioned by Stalinism, they distanced themselves from the classical Marxist tradition, which today is commonly denigrated as a deterministic, Euro-centric master narrative.<sup>2</sup>

Intriguingly, the popular 2002 film *The Matrix* and its sequels replicate the discursive detour in consumable visual form. The trilogy *The Matrix*, *Matrix: Reloaded*, and *Matrix: Revolutions* begins with a vision, albeit limited, of challenging ideology and oppression based on knowledge of the real.<sup>3</sup> However, the subsequent films take us down the rabbit hole of relativism and anti-humanism, when the films'

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heroes discover that there is no “outside” to the discursive discipline of the Matrix. Early in the first film, Morpheus (Lawrence Fishburne), an underground social movement leader, offers its protagonist, a hacker named Neo (Keanu Reeves), the red pill of truth as an antidote to the illusion (represented by a blue pill) of a constructed social world.

This illusory world resembles that of early-21st-century capitalism, where people go to work and engage in all the activities of daily life. Morpheus exposes Neo to the lie (or exposes the lie to Neo) of his existence: In the real world outside of the Matrix, people’s physical bodies serve as organic batteries for sentient machines while their disembodied consciousnesses occupy “the Matrix.”<sup>4</sup> Exposed to what Morpheus names “the desert of the real,”<sup>5</sup> Neo realizes that what he thought was real was illusion; eventually he commits himself to resistance against the machines on behalf of a captive humanity. By the end of the *Matrix* trilogy, however, illusion has blurred with reality, and Neo’s resistance turns out to be folly in an inescapable world of discursive discipline. In the more optimistic first film, Neo’s transformation from nighttime rebel to full-time revolutionary requires his knowledge that the reality of human subjugation contradicts what is “in the true” in the Matrix.<sup>6</sup> Guided by Morpheus, he *experiences* the real world marked by deprivation, struggle, and the life-sucking exploitation by the machines. He chooses to remain in this reality of danger and desperation, because knowing what is real and what is not is the condition of possibility for his freedom. The capacity, illustrated in the films, to distinguish between ideological mystification and real relations of power is the subject of this article.

Of necessity, attention to the films here is curtailed in favor of my main purpose, namely to narrate the trajectory of contemporary theory through the narrative of the films, rather than to interpret the films through the lens of the theories.<sup>7</sup> The films as metonym represent an uncanny and cogent compression of the arc of critical theory over the last several decades. As the Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky argued in his writings on literature and art, cultural works (including academic theories) are bound to the historical conditions of their production; we must attend to their collective influence not as the vanguard of social change but as ideologies that may legitimate and sustain existing social relations.<sup>8</sup> Taken together, the films and contemporary critical cultural and communication theory alike emerge out of an historical moment of political and intellectual pessimism on the Left and express deep skepticism about the possibility of mobilizing people against real oppression. Both narratives, one in popular culture and one in the academy, risk perpetuating an ideology of resignation to existing social relations disguised as critique and resistance.

The films offer two versions of the real. One is an experiential real, in which knowledge of the material base of oppression *contra* mystification generates critical insight and the capacity for action. The film also invokes a Lacanian Real, in which the psychic residue of the lack of wholeness in the Symbolic and the experience of trauma leave persons/subjects uneasy.<sup>9</sup> In the first film, for example, Neo experiences vague unease with his daily life in the Matrix and begins to “hack” into the computer-driven system. While he remains in the symbolic world of the Matrix, he is incapable

of fighting it in a systematic way, because his suspicions are quite literally groundless until he is unplugged from ideology.

In contrast to a Lacanian perspective, this article defines reality as the site of lived experience, the place where the embodied experience of labor generates contradictions with regard to knowledge and consciousness.<sup>10</sup> In capitalism, the division of society into classes and the divergent experiences of members of those classes are real. This definition of the real is standpoint-based, resting on fundamental and divergent interests in a particular society.<sup>11</sup> Marxists are concerned with epistemology, questions of what is true and what is false. But epistemological questions always beg the ontological: true or false *to what or whom?* Although there is no permanent, essential, or universally experienced reality, the category of reality is necessary to political judgment even as it finds intelligibility, conscious meaning, and strategic import in discourse. As the Marxist theorist Georg Lukács explains, lived experience is the dialectical springboard for the production of oppositional truth and action.<sup>12</sup> No matter how complex the process, dialectical materialism asks, quite simply, for a “reality test” of political discourses and ideologies from the standpoint of ordinary people.<sup>13</sup>

While film and theory alike proclaim the end of any such reality, this article advances an argument for a classical Marxist understanding of the rhetorically mediated relationship between reality and consciousness.<sup>14</sup> Classical Marxism addresses the lacuna of agency in poststructuralist and post-Marxist theory in ways that avoid the pitfalls of relativism and anti-humanism. To the end of understanding this problem, the article first surveys theoretical conceptions of reality and agency in structuralist and poststructuralist theory alongside their representations in *The Matrix*, *Matrix: Reloaded*, and *Matrix: Revolutions*. While the first *Matrix* film begins to articulate a dialectical, interested, and solidaristic version of agency, this vision, as in contemporary theory, falls by the wayside as the heroes of the story conclude that there is no way out of the Matrix. The films engagingly represent critical theory’s retreat from notions of truth and reality as sources of agency, and, as Ellen Meiksins Wood and others have argued, from class-based theory and politics.<sup>15</sup>

The second major section of the essay explores the realist philosophy of classical Marxism, particularly the rhetorically rich concepts of real class *interests* (rather than identities) and *solidarity* among those who share real interests. These concepts provide bases for identification and conjoint action across identity differences, avoiding the traps of identity essentialism, anti-humanism, and naïve individualism. Interests and solidarity are the building blocks of a Marxist rhetoric and of a realpolitik of class utterly necessary to challenging the oppression and exploitation of capitalism today. This project has been devalued and dismissed in theories with anti-humanist and nearly exclusively symbolic commitments that give away the ground for political instrumentality. Even rhetorical theory, originally the study of practical interventionist politics, has allowed agency to wither away in the shadow of structuralism and relativism.

## Theories of Agency in Structuralism and Poststructuralism

### *A Prison for Your Mind*

The epistemological and constitutive turns in rhetorical studies<sup>16</sup> have seriously troubled the idea of an experiential real as the basis of human agency.<sup>17</sup> In rhetoric and in cultural studies since the Second World War, scholars have argued against the base–superstructure distinction, pronouncing it mechanistic.<sup>18</sup> Rhetorical and communication studies have followed structuralism’s troubling of political agency and poststructuralism’s turn toward the constitutive rather than instrumental functions of rhetoric.<sup>19</sup> Through encounters with Kenneth Burke, the Birmingham School, and the Frankfurt School, rhetorical studies has claimed a symbol-centered version of Marxism stressing the rhetorical constitution of subjects.<sup>20</sup> Beyond avoiding economic determinism, this series of moves shifted discourse studies away altogether from the subject of class as collective agent and troubled the idea of agency; if we and our knowledge of ourselves are constituted in the discourses around us, on what basis can we act in our own interests? Structuralist theory amplifies this problem in its full-blown articulation of anti-humanism.

A graduate student in my program lamented that her first graduate seminar on discourse and agency assumed the validity of the main ideas of structuralism from the outset. “Since when,” she asked, “were we supposed to accept the death of the subject as a given?”<sup>21</sup> Her seminar had begun its narrative of Marxist theory with Althusserian structuralism’s negation of human agency. According to structuralist theory, institutional discourses tell us who to be, what to believe, and how to behave, individually and collectively. We are born into sets of social relations ordered in discourses and images not of our own making, structured in ways that constrain critique and agency.<sup>22</sup> Althusser describes how individuals are interpellated as almost completely powerless to affect the overall structure of capitalism.<sup>23</sup> For Althusser, the “concert of ideology” is “dominated by a single score” playing out in ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) such as the church, media, school, and family, each of which “contributes to the same result: the reproduction of the relations of production.”<sup>24</sup>

On Althusser’s analysis, the school is the dominant ISA (having replaced the church in the transition from feudalism to capitalism), “ejecting” properly indoctrinated workers into employment.<sup>25</sup> Yet, Althusser lauds the isolated teachers “who, in dreadful conditions, attempt to turn the few weapons they can find in the history and learning they ‘teach’ against the ideology, the system, and the practices in which they are trapped. They are a kind of hero.”<sup>26</sup> There are problems with this “heroic” vision of agency. First, anyone teaching critique from an anti-humanist perspective may enable students to see ideologies for what they are, but they will also teach them that they can do little or nothing to change their situation. A second problem is elitism. Because Althusserianism is, at the end of the day, about the control of the psyche by the state,<sup>27</sup> the isolated radical educator, theorist, and artist occupy elite, privileged places of sight and understanding.<sup>28</sup>

In *The Matrix*, Morpheus occupies this position of structuralist guru. He tells Neo:

Something is wrong with the world. You've felt it all your life. You feel it when you go to work, when you go to church, when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth . . . the truth that you are a slave. You were born into a prison you cannot smell or taste or touch, a prison for your mind.

Structuralist discourse theory, echoed in Morpheus' words, emphasizes the ways in which ideology provides prisons for the mind, blinding people to their situation within social relations of domination. As does Althusser, the film positions only a few theoretically astute characters as agents of transformation, paralleling the problematic privileging of the theorist in Althusserian and Frankfurt School structuralism.<sup>29</sup> Neo, under the tutelage of Morpheus, becomes aware of the system of indoctrination and social control around him. At the end of the first film in the trilogy, he becomes Superman, the only one who can manipulate the Matrix at will, flying high above the allegedly "duped masses."<sup>30</sup>

To be sure, the intervention of structuralism in the field produced an important corrective to the field's traditional conception of the willful individual orator. Attention to structures and systems of oppression opened up communication studies to the study of communicators as always located in an ideological, historical, and political field that shapes their discourses. This system focus is also characteristic of classical Marxism. Yet, as Sue Clegg and Ellen Wood have noted, Althusser's obsession with the structures of language and consciousness both rejected economic struggle and negated any notion of the subject as political agent within a class.<sup>31</sup> Ideological struggle replaces economic organization in Althusser's work: "The Ideological State Apparatuses may be not only the *stake* but also the *site* of class struggle."<sup>32</sup>

While acknowledged as part of the Marxist "canon," Althusser is, in important ways, responsible for the undermining of classical Marxism in having turned Marxism on its head in the name of Marx himself. Bifurcating Marx's career into "humanist" and "scientific" periods, Althusser prioritized the latter and claimed, as the real legacy of Marx, a Marxism that downgraded the possibility of human agency.<sup>33</sup> This anti-humanism makes way for Foucault's elaboration of the idea that there is no "outside" to discursive discipline. Subsequently, poststructuralist theory is left trying to wrest some semblance of human agency from the grip of a post-humanist theoretical world.

### *The Subject of Poststructuralism*

As Foucault argues in *History of Sexuality* and throughout his subsequent writing, in the world of ubiquitous discipline, discourse exists without agent, system without center, and interventions without intent.<sup>34</sup> The subject does not speak but is spoken; resistance is necessarily another form of discipline constituted primarily in discourses.<sup>35</sup> On this argument, power is productive of discourses regulating eventually self-disciplining bodies, emanating not from a discernible, repressive

center (such as the state or the employer) but rather appearing as a set of shifting discursive formations that establish themselves what is real and true.<sup>36</sup> Power on this view is productive of subjectivity and the organization of life without necessary reference to external interests or motivation. This argument has been profoundly influential across the humanities.<sup>37</sup> In poststructuralist theory after Foucault, then, the discursive turn is taken to its logical conclusion in arguments that reject economic interests as foundational to understanding society and motivating struggle, in favor of a politics of textuality.<sup>38</sup>

In microcosmic step with these innovations in discourse theory, the second film in the *Matrix* series, *Matrix: Reloaded*, expresses a Foucauldian take on power and resistance. In the film, Neo begins to discover that many of the people, events, and locations he thought were “outside” the Matrix are part of the illusion, and that his resistance was predicted and planned by the machines. When Neo discovers that he can mentally manipulate objects (for example, machine sentinels on the attack) in them as easily as in what he thought was the Matrix, there seems to be no distinction between reality and illusion; the world is code all the way down.

When Neo finally reaches what he thinks is the center of the Matrix in order to shut down the attack on the resistance community of Zion, he is told by the system’s inventor (The Architect, who takes the persona of Sigmund Freud) that he was programmed to resist and that his resistance is part of the overall project of domination. The Architect states:

You are the eventuality of an anomaly, which despite my sincerest efforts I have been unable to eliminate from what is otherwise a harmony of mathematical precision. While it remains a burden to sedulously avoid it, it is not unexpected, and thus not beyond a measure of control. Which has led you, inexorably, here.

On the one hand, the Architect’s statements deny Neo’s agency and position him as a planned program subject to machine control. On the other hand, his speech implies the existence of an unconscious kernel of resistance in every human psyche. The Architect continually refers to Neo as part of a broader, troublesome humanity with the capacity, if left unchecked, to challenge the system. Yet, the Architect describes Neo’s eventual coming under control as “inexorable.” The machines have smashed Zion several times and would do so once again, but this time around, they need Neo’s powers to eradicate a rampant virus (in the character of Neo’s nemesis, a self-replicating Agent Smith). In this way, Neo and the Zion collective end up willing to suffice with what Gramsci calls “the war of position”<sup>39</sup> against cultural codes and practices, striking a deal that temporarily saves Zion but preserves the machines’ ultimate control.<sup>40</sup>

In the film, the only alternatives to the illusion of individual free will are either the subjection to the illusion entire or the spark of psychological dis-ease, represented by Neo’s initial vague discomfort with his life in the Matrix. The result, as in the formulations of poststructuralist discourse theory, is the necessity to operate, even wittingly, on the terms of the system that produced the regimes of discourse/mystification in the first place. As in the film, post-Marxist poststructuralist theory

gives up the idea of revolution in favor of reformist intervention in, as Laclau and Mouffe put it, “conjunctural imbalances within an evolutionary paradigm”<sup>41</sup> within the prevailing (liberal capitalist) “democratic imaginary.”<sup>42</sup>

Slavoj Žižek is a post-Marxist interested in recovering the possibility of an instrumental challenge to the capitalist system. In spite of his commitment to Lacanian notions of the Real, he regarded the *Matrix* films as potentially revolutionary propaganda.<sup>43</sup> He discussed how he watched the first film seated next to a fellow Slovene, who, upon hearing Morpheus’ critical speech about prisons for one’s mind, leapt to his feet and shouted, “My God, wow, so there is no reality! So we are all puppets!”<sup>44</sup>

While offering little by way of resistance beyond this realization, even Žižek expressed a hope that the final film would resolve its contradictory expressions of epistemology and agency in favor of a blueprint for revolution.<sup>45</sup> However, instead of a call to collective, system-challenging struggle, the third film re-inscribes a conservative view of resistance rendered through sacred individualism in lieu of collective (class) consciousness. Neo becomes more explicitly a Christ-figure, sacrificing himself to defeat the legion of Agents Smith (who also threaten the control of the machines) in an endorsement, ultimately, of mysticism.

Contemporary theory has resolved its contradictions in ways very similar to the conclusions of these films. Ultimately, it becomes a question of reform vs. revolution and of mysticism as a substitute for concrete action.<sup>46</sup> Without the possibility of effective collective resistance and absent anything that would count as *real* transformation, Neo settles for the divine intervention of a reformed machine. The Polish revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg’s 1900 critique of the reformist Eduard Bernstein was prescient. Her argument was that in rejecting economic foundations for political struggle, Bernstein’s program meant “reconciliation with the existing social order and *the transfer of the hopes of the proletariat to the limbo of ethical simulacra.*”<sup>47</sup> In a Foucauldian world, as in *The Matrix*, discourses unfold out of themselves as their own agent, transcending the possibility of instrumental intervention in the production of reality by anyone other than a godlike savior. The natural conclusion of the conflation of discourse and reality today is mysticism.<sup>48</sup>

### What Is To Be Done? Theory and Politics

Lenin’s “What is to be done?” is a question missing from much of what passes for critical theory today in a discipline that was, ironically, founded upon the importance of both *invention* (of self and text) and *intervention* in political life beyond the self.<sup>49</sup> In addition to the spiritual, a prominent metaphor for agency in *The Matrix* is the technical. Neo’s “hacking” allows him to see through the code that constitutes the Matrix. Poststructuralist theories offer similar metaphors of sporadic and limited interventions at the level of discourse.

Poststructuralist theory answers the question of instrumentality in a range of similar ways. The point, says Foucault, is “to arrive at an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject within an historical framework.”<sup>50</sup> One strong

trend from this theoretical stance posits the constitution of subjects in discourse to be the moment of politics. For example, Greene argues that we ought to replace a “logic of influence” with a constitutive model of rhetorical “effectivity,” which describes the production of truths and subjects who, because there is no “outside” to truths regarded as “dominant,” have no authentic resources for conscious instrumentality.<sup>51</sup> In addition, because Greene believes that contemporary capitalism has taken complex transnational form, an instrumental politics founded on the real relationship of class is no longer tenable.<sup>52</sup>

The idea that capitalism is no longer vulnerable to concerted, class-based, systemic attack also lurks behind a second tendency characteristic of the range of poststructuralist theories offering metaphors for agency that share an emphasis on micropolitical *techne*. Foucault, suspicious of Stalinism—and therefore (albeit unnecessarily) of any desire to overcome the capitalist system in the whole—argues that intellectuals and activists should give up a broader systematic struggle in favor of localized efforts in the “fine meshes of power.”<sup>53</sup> Following this line, other poststructuralists argue that in our historical moment, there can be no systemic challenge not recuperated by the system, and no form of social discipline more knowably faithful to our interests than the one in which we find ourselves. The only way forward is the sporadic, ironic, schizophrenic, localized and anarchic rejection of discipline itself.<sup>54</sup>

A brief survey of examples from recent theoretical work provides a sense of the possibilities for agency in poststructuralist thought. On the whole, they are reduced to micro-strategies of discursive interruption, not anything like collective, willful political movement. For example, Barbara Biesecker argues that the moment of political agency is “a ‘getting through’ or ad hoc ‘making do’ by a subject whose resources are necessarily located in and circumscribed by the field within which she operates.”<sup>55</sup> Similarly, other major theorists abandon a reality-based agency in favor of strategizing ironically within and across the constructs of social reality. Social theorists Hardt and Negri, resigned to the permanence of an ineffable Empire, suggest that we perform miscegenation.<sup>56</sup> In this work and in their sequel *Multitude*, Hardt and Negri describe the tropes of nomadism and miscegenation as features of “a space that is defined by the irrepressible movements (legal or clandestine) of individuals and groups.”<sup>57</sup> Greene explains that Hardt and Negri describe a capitalism as “fully implicated in producing life and social being,” immanent in social being without determination or motivation by economic interests beyond the production of society itself.<sup>58</sup> In other words, community and economy are one, indistinct and unmediated. Hardt and Negri write, “The passage to postmodernity and Empire immediately presents communication, production and life as one complex whole.”<sup>59</sup> Consequently, any dialectical tension between real social relations and consciousness of them is impossible. This image is ultimately as mystical as Neo’s merger with the Matrix and its creators.

Hardt and Negri’s theory is an “immaterial paradigm” that describes capitalism as without ontological existence and, in Greene’s phrase, “a world without mediation.”<sup>60</sup> On this argument, there is no real ground for resistance; thus, simply by coming into

being, moving about, and forming relationships in daily life, “the multitude” (an amorphous and disorganized substitute for “class”) may be disrupting the stability of Empire (but there is no way of knowing, really). Ellen Wood, in response to Hardt and Negri’s argument that we are living in a new form of stateless power immune to broad-scale organized challenges, argues that “such views not only miss something truly essential in today’s global order but also leave us powerless to resist the empire of capital.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, she concludes that *Empire* offers little beyond a picture of the world “in which the best we can do is go with the flow, lie back and think of Nike.”<sup>62</sup>

On the gender front, similar approaches to agency hold sway. Feminist scholar Judith Butler argues that the best we can do is to regard our actions as always-already scripted performances. Again, simply being gendered, but conscious of it, is somehow a challenge to regimes of gender in capitalism. Likewise, queer theorist Michael Warner thinks disruptive cultural play, or romping, may be a good metaphor for human agency. He aligns himself with Foucault in rejecting the politics of advocacy in favor of revealing how the conditions of possibility for any such politics are constituted in discourse formations.<sup>63</sup> In Deleuze and Guattari, the metaphor for social disruption is schizophrenia, a haphazard and inarticulate response to discipline.<sup>64</sup> For them, there is nothing outside the cave of illusion, simply a deeper cave, in which “the very idea of a model or privileged position is challenged and overturned.”<sup>65</sup> Following Deleuze and Negri, it seems, Greene’s most recent work lacks any concrete political aims whatsoever, defining democracy not as material freedom or self-rule but rather as an amorphous “productive excess and joy” already present in capitalist society.<sup>66</sup>

*The Matrix* trilogy, particularly the Architect’s speech, echoes this note of resignation to the existing order of things. Neo accepts a tenuous peace in which the machines continue to harvest the bio-power of humans to run their empire. He allows himself to be martyred in his final confrontation with the machines. His allies in the Matrix (such as The Oracle, an elderly black woman whose wisdom guides the rebels and predicts Neo’s singular power) turn out to be errant computer programs who can disrupt the Matrix in small ways (for example, by conjuring the image of a beautiful sunrise at the trilogy’s maudlin end) while the Matrix itself remains intact. The rebel people and programs celebrate the peace that leaves them more or less where they were before they began to fight. The *Matrix*, like the vision of society in much of poststructuralist theory, permits excess and aberration in the shape of Neo and other rebels. Even so, their actions cannot and are not allowed to threaten the reality of machine power, a metaphor for the futility of struggle against a global capitalism posited as centerless, flexible, and invulnerable at the macroscopic level.<sup>67</sup>

To be sure, capitalism is a dynamic system whose particularities belie any historically universal strategies. Thus, Lenin, in the heyday of revolutionary socialism, theorized the possibilities of mass revolution, while Gramsci, in prison trying to understand the appeal of fascism, theorized the importance of cultural struggle in a moment of reaction and constraint. Necessarily, Marxist theory has been tested and amended according to shifts in historical possibility. But Marxism perpetually recognizes that in capitalism, real classes—and therefore the necessity of class

politics—exist. As David Barsamian stated in an interview with Eqbal Ahmad, capitalism has demonstrated both flexibility and resiliency, “but we still have to figure out a way to do away with it.”<sup>68</sup>

Classical Marxist theories of human agency comprise the back story to structuralism’s conversion to poststructuralism. Their narratives would make a good prequel to *The Matrix*, perhaps a forgotten past in which humans organized collectively to control society for themselves. Contrary to straw persons of classical Marxism, this tradition has not assumed as universal any automatic or instinctive strategies for moving a class to action. Rather, Marx and Marxists since have recognized that consciousness is always mediated by discursive intervention based on real conditions, relations, and experience.<sup>69</sup> In this theory, the concepts of class interests, class consciousness, and solidarity define the parameters of agency in ways that escape the relativist void while neither reducing agency to economic determination nor assuming that the working class is an automatic agent of change.

### **The Rhetorical Ma(t)r(i)x**

Classical Marxism has often been accused of economic reductionism and the displacement of human agency by economic determination of reality. Aune sums up this critique, which assumes that “Marxism as a conceptual system has tended to ignore problems of communication.”<sup>70</sup> Laclau and Mouffe charge classical Marxism with putting forward “the illusory prospect of a perfectly unitary and homogeneous collective that will render pointless the moment of politics.”<sup>71</sup> Likewise, Michele Barrett represents Marxist conceptions of ideology as mere illusion in contrast to obvious truths produced by automatically self-conscious working class subjects.<sup>72</sup> Contrary to this anti-dialectical caricature, a close reading of Marxist texts and attention to socialist practice in history demonstrates that from Marx himself, through the Second International (Lenin and Trotsky), to Gramsci’s writings in the 1930s, the moment of politics (i.e., rhetorical intervention) is absolutely crucial. While Marx does name the working class as such, no pre-structuralist Marxist, nor Marx himself, ever claims that it is “perfectly unitary and homogeneous.”

“The moment of politics” is the moment of rhetorical intervention that turns a class in itself—complex and composed of diverse persons of varying beliefs—into a class for itself. Indeed, it has been the goal of socialist revolutionaries since Marx to inject the “political moment” of system analysis into what would otherwise remain a series of fragmented struggles. A constant in this process is the capacity to mobilize critical consciousness by invoking contradictions between experience and ideology, and by articulating together people who share a real relationship of class, across their differences, as the basis of political, not just economic, action. The process is dialectical, as contradictions in experience and consciousness create the possibility of contradicting the capitalist system and its rulers, but dialectical contradiction only opens the door to the possibility of the historic clash between contending classes, which results in social transformation.<sup>73</sup>

As Lukács explains, there is also a dialectical relationship between the immediacy of a worker's existence and the consciousness of her place in a system of social relations.<sup>74</sup> "Yet this antithesis with all its implications is only the *beginning* of the complex process of mediation whose goal is the knowledge of society as a historical totality."<sup>75</sup> In other words, without contradiction, there is no progress.<sup>76</sup> What this means for rhetorical and cultural theory is that class belonging and lived experience comprise an epistemological potential in the contradiction between experience and ideology, not the enactment of that potential. Contradiction is the rhetorical situation for oppositional politics; material conditions are conditions of possibility for human judgment and action. Thus, to collapse reality into discourse is to do away with the dialectical contradiction necessary to critical and political agency.

Gramsci is often given credit for amplifying this dimension of Marxist theory in his writings on fascist politics, the need for workers to struggle for cultural, political, and economic hegemony, and working class education.<sup>77</sup> Gramsci's work is extremely important to critical communication studies in understanding the ideological inducements to consent, the production of identities such as race and gender, and the possibility of disrupting these inducements and identities. Even though Gramsci criticized what he regarded as Marx's (and Rosa Luxemburg's) belief in the spontaneous uprising of the working class, class remained foundational in his writings. His interest in the hegemonic process is first and foremost a critique of how a ruling class wins the "consent" of ordinary people against their own, real, class interests.<sup>78</sup> Further, Gramsci theorized the production of a class-based counter-hegemony. Stuart Hall and others have argued that Gramsci rejected correctly the idea of a pre-given class *identity*.<sup>79</sup> What Gramsci did argue, however, is that workers share a pre-given, fundamental, and real *interest* in overcoming their exploitation that could be the basis for winning them to political organization and class struggle.

Thus, in "Working-Class Education and Culture," Gramsci explains that workers are not dupes, though they may require education conducted by and for them to "truly understand the full implications of the notion of 'ruling class.'"<sup>80</sup> For him, real working class education must debunk "ideologies aimed at reconciling opposing interests" in favor of "the expression of these subaltern classes."<sup>81</sup> Class, then, is neither self-evident nor created discursively out of whole cloth.

Neither is class self-evident for Marx and Engels, who do not often get credit for attention to rhetoric. It is true that, in most instances, Marx was ambivalent about using, in Audre Lorde's words, "the master's tools."<sup>82</sup> (Contrary to Stalinist attempts to ban the language and art of the past, however, Trotsky argued that one could not help but use the master's tools.)<sup>83</sup> Yet, evidence of Marx's appreciation of rhetoric exists, and his writings demonstrate commitment to practical, rhetorical judgment. In a response to an 1842 censorious religious attack on the secular discourse of the *Rheinische Zeitung*,<sup>84</sup> Marx describes rhetoric's rise as an improvement over religious ideologies:

In the age of Pericles, the Sophists, and Socrates, who could be called the embodiment of philosophy, art and rhetoric supplanted religion. The age of Alexander was the age of Aristotle, who rejected the eternity of the “individual” spirit and the God of positive religions. And as for Rome! Read Cicero!<sup>85</sup>

Here, Marx lauds the pragmatism and secularism of Aristotle and Cicero. Marx also writes that the political newspaper should demonstrate eloquent reason: “Philosophy has become worldly and the world has become philosophical.” What is rhetoric, except philosophy become worldly?

Marx distinguishes mysticism from knowledge on the basis of experiential verification.<sup>86</sup> He writes, “The public, which loves truth and knowledge for their own sakes, will be well able to measure its judgment and morality against the judgment and morality of ignorant, servile, inconsistent and venal scribblers.”<sup>87</sup> Far from expressing a view that working people are dupes of ideology, he puts forward a dialectical theory of rhetorical intervention, in which a political discourse’s fidelity to a working class public’s interests is tested by real experience. This does not mean, however, that discourse simply reflects or fails to reflect workers’ reality. The political interventions of revolutionary organizations and discourses must put forward convincing explanations of reality, requiring the rhetorical incorporation of inchoate experience into a theory and a political program.

Citing *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* as an example, Aune argues that in his own practice, Marx exhibits rhetorical skill; clearly he was not leaving the revolution to spontaneous forces of mechanical class contradiction.<sup>88</sup> The *Manifesto of the Communist Party* is another example, its creation nonsensical if one regards Marx and Engels as mechanical materialists who thought the revolution would happen without rhetoric.<sup>89</sup> The *Manifesto* was the rhetorical centerpiece of the formation of the International Workingmen’s Association, or the First International, as a self-conscious organization in the interest of working people.<sup>90</sup>

### *In and For Ourselves: Class Interests and Identification*

Rhetoric may seem unimportant to class politics if one mistakes the category of class for an essential identity position. In Marxist thought, class is a shared *relationship*, and only potentially an identity. Members of the class share a relationship to capital but are much of the time unaware of, disorganized in, or otherwise prevented from realizing their potential common cause. Such ideologies as nationalism and racism—the explanations of reality offered by the Right—offer alternative identifications that must be countered in a progressive rhetoric. On a classical Marxist analysis, everyone who exists in a dependent relationship to production and distribution of the necessities of life and other goods in society—in other words, anyone who must work for a wage or salary and/or who does not control the terms of one’s own labor—is a member of the working class. The working class thus comprises the vast majority of humanity worldwide (of every gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, and nationality), including most students, industrial and service workers, the poorest and the better off (including most people who

consider themselves “middle class”).<sup>91</sup> All members of this class, whether automatically cognizant of it or not, share a fundamental interest in changing their relationship to production to one in which the fruits of their labor and control over their daily lives are their own.

Laclau and Mouffe and other post-Marxist theorists have claimed that there are no fundamental interests and no real antagonisms between actually existing classes, only rhetorical constructions of “classes” and “antagonisms.”<sup>92</sup> As Terry Eagleton has written, in response to this claim, “That social interests do not lie around the place like slabs of concrete waiting to be stumbled over may be cheerfully conceded. There is no reason to suppose that the mere occupancy of some place within society will automatically supply you with an appropriate set of political beliefs and desires.”<sup>93</sup> Lukács argued that class interests are the product of a “definite structural relation” to society as a whole, but these interests represent an “objective possibility” that is transformed into a “class ripe for hegemony” only when those struggling take seriously the need for political and ideological struggle.<sup>94</sup>

While class interests can be the real foundation upon which an anti-capitalist antagonism can be built, their existence is insufficient to the task. Lukács, among others, rejected the idea that class consciousness is an automatic response to proletarian existence. Thus, he criticized the Polish revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg for her insistence on the spontaneity of systematic consciousness and revolution.<sup>95</sup> Along these lines, Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge explain in *Public Sphere and Experience* that interests, grounded in lived experience, are the basis for, but not the realization of, a proletarian public, which is organized in discourse.<sup>96</sup> In Marxist theory and socialist practice historically, the role of rhetorical catalyst is played by the political party or organization, which, emerging out of the working class itself, proceeds to recruit members and to circulate ideas interpersonally and through media in an attempt to win adherence to a particular world view and course of action.<sup>97</sup> Thus, the rhetorical mediation of real interests enables the formation of potentially instrumental political collectivities without resort to individualism, identity politics, or relativism.

In none of these theories are classes expected, as in Aune’s charge, “to see the need for revolution as self-evident.”<sup>98</sup> Engels, who is the usual target of this accusation, wrote that “in the history of society the actors are all endowed with consciousness, are men [sic] acting with deliberation or passion, working towards definite goals; nothing happens without conscious purpose, without intended aim.”<sup>99</sup> There is a difference between a class as an objective entity and *class consciousness*, which is a rhetorically produced understanding of one’s class position. As Negt and Kluge cogently explain, “Class and consciousness are real categories. . . . The Marxist tradition draws them together into a single term so as to outline a program. This program is concerned with the mediation between the coming into being of the proletarian context of living, along with its subjective, ‘conscious’ side,” which is produced rhetorically in a proletarian public sphere (party or union).<sup>100</sup>

Aimed at producing a proletarian public, *The Communist Manifesto* articulates a distinction between what Marx distinguished as a class in itself—unconscious of shared interests in a system frame—and class for itself.<sup>101</sup> Marx explains that workers in isolation may be provoked to sporadic struggle by the grossness of their exploitation, but that it takes cooperation and sociality produced in and through communication to “centralize the numerous local struggles . . . . Every class struggle is a political struggle.”<sup>102</sup>

Rhetoric in this case does more than “reveal” something like a Platonic class essence. It actually changes the nature of the class, from an inert relationship to a group marked by identification and purpose. Situated practical judgment is the essence of rhetorical Marxism, as it is with both Aristotle and Isocrates.<sup>103</sup> In Marxism, identity is a constitution born of intervention in the rhetorical, *kairotic* situation of an a priori contradiction between experience and ideology.<sup>104</sup> In this situation, rhetorical strategies of identification (such as those in *The Communist Manifesto*) among those who share real common ground, can produce a “class for itself,” which, in the Burkean sense, acts with purpose and agency out of a “class in itself,” which may move but does not act in purposeful concert.<sup>105</sup>

Furthermore, Negt and Kluge’s analysis of the formation of working class “publics” describes how a class-based public sphere consists in the “organization of collective experience.” This experience has a real, material basis in workers’ daily experience of violence, oppression, austerity, exploitation, and alienation. Workers “possess material, sensual evidence of the restriction of possibilities in their lives, of their freedom of movement. Accordingly, the resistance to this restriction has a sensual credibility.”<sup>106</sup>

As Marx puts the issue in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, “Men [sic] make their own history—but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past.”<sup>107</sup> In consonance with rhetorical theory, agency for Marx is situational and contingent without being detached from reality. Aijaz Ahmad clarifies this point as follows: “‘Determination’ does not mean, in other words, the kind of entrapment of which structuralists and Foucauldians speak; it refers, rather, to the givenness of the circumstance within which individuals *make* their choices, their lives, their histories.”<sup>108</sup> The “givenness of circumstance” amounts to a rhetorical situation in which a class shifts from motion to action, or from reaction to particular oppressions to more generalized struggle based on a political explanation of experience.

In sum, Marxism from its beginnings has taken the problem of mediation between consciousness and agency quite seriously. It posits a theory of a collective, experiential real as the basis not of *automatic* consciousness, *spontaneous* action, or *transparent* purpose, but rather of consciousness and willed action produced in the dialectical interaction between shared experience and interpretation of that experience. The founding of antagonism on the real allows for a third way between the essentialism of identity politics and the theoretical suspicion and dissolution of common subjectivity. This possibility is solidarity.

*Solidarity: Politics Beyond Identity*

Before the attack of the machines in *Matrix: Reloaded*, Morpheus delivers a rallying speech appealing to the common interests of the inhabitants of Zion to fight back: “Let us be heard. Let us make them remember. We are Zion, and we are not afraid!” This speech resonates with the end of the Communist Manifesto, which reads, “The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of the world unite!”<sup>109</sup> The speech is followed by a sensual dance scene that points up the bodily connections, similarities, and common physical being of the dancers as they leap, touch, and sweat together in diverse pairings and groups.<sup>110</sup> In these scenes, the film expresses the idea of solidarity based on interests and embodied, shared experience rather than any markers of identity or difference. Although sensual pleasures of the collective dance create identification and boost morale, they do not produce the coercive power necessary to win the fight against the machines. Likewise, scholarship celebrating pleasures and cultural resistance are inadequate to theorizing the rhetoric of solidarity and transformative social change.

In contrast, for Marxists, solidarity refers to the process of winning collective identification based on neither shared suffering nor universalizing identity categories (such as race or nation). Rather, more than the shared experience of suffering, material solidarity rests on collective work and collective power.<sup>111</sup> Racialized, gendered, sexualized, and other identifications produced in class society have tremendous influence in justifying exploitation and oppression. Thus, neither critical scholarship nor practical politics can do without these formative categories. However, Paul Gilroy and others have called attention to how struggles based exclusively on identity categories may reify those categories. Gilroy argues that we must “imagine political culture beyond the color line.”<sup>112</sup> Similarly, pragmatist philosopher Richard Rorty argues that we cannot base solidarity on ideas of essential identity, shared human nature, or universal moral code.<sup>113</sup> In addition, Gayatri Spivak has cautioned scholars against assuming that “subaltern” subjects can speak or be spoken for on the basis of rhetorically constructed identifications.<sup>114</sup>

In response to such cautions, much of poststructuralist theory posits deconstruction of identity, decentering of agency, and a suspicion of explanatory theory and instrumental action. But dissolution of agency is not the only alternative to identity essentialism. The concept of class-based solidarity is a non-essentialist and pragmatic way of imagining politics beyond identity. Spivak herself argues that the post-structuralist critique of the sovereign subject and the argument that power cannot be touched ignore the realities of labor in global capitalism. She suggests that class is a more productive—concrete but impersonal, systematic but heterogeneous—basis for identification. Again, Kenneth Burke argues that motion is impersonal, while action is the personal product of symbolic identification.<sup>115</sup> As Marx put it in the *Communist Manifesto*, “Class is not personal; it is a social power.”<sup>116</sup>

Being impersonal and heterogeneous, class-based solidarity may involve but does not require emotional or cultural attachment. It moves people toward specific instrumental ends without requiring the absorption of identities into a fictional

whole. It universalizes but not on the basis of any essence. If it is a reduction, it is one based on the most basic social relationship in capitalist society. Class-based solidarity also encompasses the overwhelming majority of humanity. The point of solidarity is not absorption of individuals into an unchanging whole, but rather the strategic power of the collective, consciousness of which must be cultivated in both political discourse and cultural life.<sup>117</sup> It is demonstrated, for example, when unionists strike and support each other's strikes, when men and women join together to demand support for reforms of mutual benefit such as parental leave, and when US citizens stand with Arabs and Muslims against persecution.

As Aijaz Ahmad argues, solidarity takes the form of a conscious political affiliation among people with divergent identities, national origins, and experiences against capitalism and imperialism. In an argument resonant with Trotsky's internationalism, he argues against nationalism and identity politics in postcolonial studies. Instead, the basis of political affiliation among identities is a working class across national identities and boundaries.<sup>118</sup> Certainly students and other members of "the middle class" have acted in solidarity with workers' struggles around the world, including the anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s and more recently in the anti-sweatshop movement.<sup>119</sup>

Without negating the significance of these struggles, I see two problems with regard to cross-class solidarity. First, middle class reformers (including intellectuals) often undermine workers' movements if they exhort workers to moral uplift and other less militant forms of struggle for unnecessarily limited reforms. Mary Triage, for example, shows us how middle class women active in the women's strikes of 1909–1911 would have undermined the struggles had the workers not refused their terms.<sup>120</sup> Importantly, anti-apartheid and anti-sweatshop movements have produced secondary economic pressure and international opprobrium against companies invested in extreme forms of wage slavery. Even so (and this is the second caution against intellectual leadership), students and intellectuals in themselves do not possess the instrumental power of withholding labor to stop exploitative practices.<sup>121</sup> It is incumbent upon us to engage movement struggles with vigilance against intellectual hubris and moralism.

A specifically working class solidarity is key to confronting capitalism because solidarity is not just a form of identification, but also a basis of organizing and action against corporate power.<sup>122</sup> The processes of identification among workers, of moving from class interests to consciousness of interests and from insight to action, are rhetorical; yet they cannot be reduced to discourse without giving up the dialectical basis of human agency—the contradiction between the shared experience among ordinary people of real life, on the one hand, and the dominant rhetorical justifications for exploitation, oppression, and war, on the other hand. As Spivak writes, "If such a critique and such a project are not to be given up, the shifting distinctions between representation within the state and political economy, on the one hand, and within the subject, on the other, must not be obliterated."<sup>123</sup> In other words, critical rhetorical and cultural studies need to get real.

### Conclusion: Marxism Gets Real—And So Should We

This article has argued that communication scholarship has mistakenly begun its narrative of Marxist approaches to discourse with a pessimistic structuralism that backgrounds human agency; subsequent poststructuralist attempts to relocate agency in the psyche or in the ironic strategic intervention in relations of discourses have, in theory, done away with systematic instrumentality. In the name of that which is more complex, more nuanced, and less deterministic, these theories have reduced the classical Marxist tradition to a straw person, unfortunately jettisoning key concepts that offer a theory of agency, which at once rejects naïve liberalism and grounds agency in a notion of the experiential real. Belying this straw person are the ideas of self-interested classes existing in and produced rhetorically by and for themselves; of the dialectical, though not simple, relationship between structure and struggle, ideology and experience, and labor and consciousness; and of the possibility of genuine solidarity in instrumental action.

As one Internet discussant of *Matrix: Reloaded* put it, “The idea that the outside world is part of the Matrix would suck harsh #\$\$%&.”<sup>124</sup> The vituperation behind this statement comes from the recognition that if the Matrix were everything, there would be no basis upon which to liberate oneself from it or from its beneficiaries. As in the film, the collapse in critical discourse theory of the possibility of structurally instrumental agency “sucks harsh #\$\$%&”—all the more so because these theories have positioned themselves as the only viable alternatives in Left theory to naïve humanism.

The Left is alone in rejecting the realpolitik of class. It is now regarded as sophisticated, if not de rigeur, for “materialist” scholars to be (in a delectable instance of doublespeak) out of touch with reality. Although the preponderance of structuralist and poststructuralist theoretical attention is on the matrix of ideology and culture, we must acknowledge that we do not live only in the Matrix. We live in the real world of late capitalism. Bosses, politicians, religious leaders, and media pundits—all understand and intervene as representatives of class interests in the necessary intersections of economics, politics, and culture. At the same time, corporations and nation-states, while operating in ways continuous with modern imperialism, globalization, and labor, perpetuate imaginary forms of belonging that hinder contestation rooted in solidarity across identities and national borders. We are facing a real class war in the form of the eroding standard of living of the majority of the world’s population under the terms of corporate globalization; we are witnessing barbaric wars that kill tens or hundreds of thousands, undertaken in our names but benefiting only what must be named as the ruling class.<sup>125</sup> As Lukács observed, “For the proletariat to become aware of the dialectical nature of its existence is a matter of life and death.”<sup>126</sup>

Conservative pundits and science-fiction film have declared the end of real class antagonism—otherwise articulated as “the end of history.”<sup>127</sup> These declarations are echoed in the academy when theorists declare the irrelevance of Marxism and social movements on their “old” (economic) foundations in a global world allegedly no

longer organized primarily in terms of a class binary. To the “end of history,” contemporary theory has post-ed an Afterword: We are now allegedly post-class, post-mediation, post-dialectics, post-ontology, post-explanation, and post-history. History, however, has a habit of reasserting itself, for example in the wave of recent revolutionary struggles in Latin America and an upsurge of clearly class-based protest for immigrant rights in the US.<sup>128</sup> With the recovery of dialectics, solidarity, class interests, and other concepts from the lost Marxist tradition, the question of practical action can emerge again from communication scholarship, so that we may produce (and become) not only rhetoricians (critics of discourse) but also rhetors, social actors who belong to and act openly as part and on behalf of interested collectivities.

Are the fictions of our Matrix the only truths? Scholarship that answers this question in the affirmative basically concedes that there can be no possible effective, systematic struggle against capitalism, and its imperatives, only micro-struggle within it. The promotion of such theories unnecessarily sacrifices a generation of critical thinkers and potential transformative agents on the altar of futility, leaving us with two questions: the one that Morpheus posed to Neo before his own messianic sacrifice—Do you want the red pill, or the blue one?—and the one that Lenin should continue to pose to us today—What is to be done?

## Notes

- [1] Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: Verso, 1979).
- [2] Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992), 2.
- [3] Larry and Andy Wachowski, *The Matrix* [motion picture] (Warner Brothers, 1999); Larry and Andy Wachowski, *Matrix Reloaded* [motion picture] (Warner Brothers, 2003); Larry and Andy Wachowski, *Matrix: Revolutions* [motion picture] (Warner Brothers, 2003).
- [4] This vision strongly echoes the vision of human constraint in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, who describe power as machine. See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983).
- [5] As when Neo is seen reading Baudrillard’s *Simulacra and Simulations* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 1–42. On the films’ intentional incorporation of critical discourse theory into *The Matrix*, see William Irwin, ed., *The Matrix and Philosophy* (Chicago: Open Court, 2002); and Glenn Yeffeth, ed., *Taking the Red Pill: Science, Philosophy, and the Religion in the Matrix* (Dallas: BenBella Books, 2003).
- [6] Ronald Greene, “Another Materialist Rhetoric,” *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 15 (1998): 21–41.
- [7] For a very different read, see Thomas Frentz and Janice Hocker Rushing, “‘Mother Isn’t Quite Herself Today’: Myth and Spectacle in *The Matrix*,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19 (2002): 64–86.
- [8] Leon Trotsky, *Art and Revolution: Writings on Literature, Politics, and Culture* (New York: Pathfinder, 1992); Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2005).
- [9] Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: An Essay in Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 2000).
- [10] The category of experience in theory is a muddled one. Many scholars, including many Marxists, would include the experience of the symbolic in the category of the real, while others equate the material (economic and bodily) with the real. See Jon Elster, *Making Sense of Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Raymond Guess, *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

- 1981); Sebastiano Timpanaro, *On Materialism* (Atlantic Heights, NJ: Humanities Press, 1975).
- [11] On standpoint theory, see Nancy Hartsock, *Money, Sex, and Power: Towards a Feminist Historical Materialism* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1985); Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness; Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968), 149–59, 165 has a discussion of the standpoint of the working class.
- [12] Lukács, 169.
- [13] As opposed to dialectical, historical materialism, rhetorical studies sometimes acknowledges the materiality of the body as a conditioning influence on consciousness and discourse. See Sharon Crowley and Jack Selzer, ed., *Rhetorical Bodies* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999); Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954).
- [14] Along with Perry Anderson, I define classical Marxism as the set of Marxist ideas produced between the 1840s and the Second World War, including the writings of Marx and Engels, Antonio Gramsci, and Georg Lukács, among others. This tradition includes the political, rhetorical, and philosophical theories of Bolsheviks, including Lenin and Trotsky, but regards Stalinism as a repudiation and a defeat of their revolution and approaches toward organizing and discourse.
- [15] Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat from Class: A New 'True' Socialism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1998).
- [16] Robert L. Scott, "On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic," *Central States Speech Journal* 18 (1967): 9–17; Greene, "Another Materialist Rhetoric"; and Ronald Greene "Rhetoric and Capitalism," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 37 (2004): 188–206.
- [17] For more extensive accounts of definitions of ideology criticism in rhetoric, see James Arnt Aune, *Rhetoric and Marxism* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1994); Dana L. Cloud, "The Materiality of Discourse as Oxymoron," *Western Journal of Communication* 58 (1994): 141–63; Sharon S. Crowley, "Reflections on an Argument that Won't Go Away: Or, a Turn of the Ideological Screw," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 78 (1992): 450–465. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61 (1975): 235–49; Michael Calvin McGee, "The Ideograph: A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 66 (1980): 1–17; Philip Wander, "The Ideological Turn in Modern Criticism," *Central States Speech Journal* 34 (1983): 1–18; "The Third Persona: An Ideological Turn in Rhetorical Theory," *Central States Speech Journal* 35 (1984): 197–216.
- [18] See Stuart Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity," and "The Problem of Ideology," both in *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10 (1986); see also T. J. Jackson Lears, "The Concept of Cultural Hegemony," *American Historical Review* (June 1985): 572; and Raymond Williams, "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," in John Higgins, ed., *The Raymond Williams Reader* (London: Blackwell, 2001), 158–78.
- [19] Kenneth Burke, whose work originated in a Marxist context, defined class as a *symbolic* construction and argued at the (Communist) American Writers' Congress in 1935. Kenneth Burke, "Revolutionary Symbolism in America" (speech to American Writer's Congress, 26 April 1935), in Herbert Simons and Trevor Melia, eds., *The Legacy of Kenneth Burke* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 267–73. See also Kenneth Burke, *Permanence and Change*; Kenneth Burke, *Rhetoric of Motives* (1950; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969). Michael Calvin McGee, "In Search of 'the People': A Rhetorical Alternative," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61 (1975): 235–49.
- [20] On the Frankfurt and Birmingham Schools, see Douglass Kellner and Stephen Eric Bronner, *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1989); Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); see also Simon During, ed. *The Cultural Studies Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1999). In the concept of "cultural materialism" and his rejection of the base–superstructure distinction, Williams

- makes an idealist break with the Marxist tradition. See also Lawrence Grossberg, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: Interview with Stuart Hall," in David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, ed., *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996), 131–50.
- [21] Similarly, my first seminar in rhetoric and ideology as a graduate student began with Althusser and other structuralists and included no readings from the classical Marxist tradition. Although a web search for similar classes led to a few syllabi that made minor mention of the classical tradition, many did not include classical Marxism at all.
- [22] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (1971; New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 127–86
- [23] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 154.
- [24] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 154.
- [25] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 155.
- [26] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 156–57.
- [27] See Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 162–63, 165 where the Lacanian idea of the Imaginary is invoked to explain the way in which ISAs produce a materially real construct that represents people's real conditions of their existence to themselves.
- [28] Louis Althusser, "On the Marxist Dialectic," in *For Marx* (London: Verso, 1979), 167–69.
- [29] Edith Kurzweil, *The Age of Structuralism: Lévis-Strauss to Foucault* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).
- [30] Just to be clear, I have no truck with the idea of the "duped masses."
- [31] Sue Clegg, "The Remains of Louis Althusser," *International Socialism Journal* 53 (winter 1991): 57–78.
- [32] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 147.
- [33] Althusser was also heavily influenced by Stalinism, which may have led him to stress the penetration of state power into private life as form of indoctrination.
- [34] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, An Introduction* (New York: Vintage, 1980); Paul Rabinow and James Faubion, ed., *Essential Works of Foucault* (three volumes), trans. Robert Hurley (New York: New Press, 1998–2001). See also Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
- [35] In early interviews, Foucault acknowledges economic and extra-discursive coercive levels of power; see "Truth and Power," in Paul Rabinow, ed., *The Foucault Reader* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984).
- [36] Like Gramsci and Althusser, Foucault's work usefully points out that modern power is not only or even primarily a matter of outright repression, but a process of persuasion. Unlike Gramsci, however, Foucault and Althusser posit that there is nothing outside governing apparatuses, ironically re-establishing a de-facto absolute repression.
- [37] See Jean Baudrillard, *Mirror of Production*, Mark Poster, trans. (St. Louis, MO: Telos Press, 1995); Butler, *Bodies that Matter*; Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985); Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans., Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 84.
- [38] This argument is developed by Dana L. Cloud, "The Affirmative Masquerade," *American Communication Journal* 4 (2001), <http://www.acjournal.org/holdings/vol4/iss3/special/cloud.htm> (accessed 1 April 2001).
- [39] Antonio Gramsci, "War of Position and War of Manoeuvre or Frontal War," in *An Antonio Gramsci Reader* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/editions/reader/index.htm>.

- [40] Ironically, it could be Agent Smith in solidarity with the replicas of himself who has the material power to bring down the machines. On this interpretation, Neo (as metonym for the reformism of the academic Left) actually thwarts revolutionary change.
- [41] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2001), 3. This is straightforward liberalism, not anything resembling Marxism.
- [42] Laclau and Mouffe, 2, 176. For a more complete summary and critique of Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxist project, see Cloud, "Socialism."
- [43] Yet Žižek also posits real experiential antagonism as a springboard for oppositional consciousness. See Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), 153–99 for his more thorough discussion of the Real.
- [44] Slavoj Žižek, "Ideology Reloaded," *In These Times*, 6 June 2003, [http://www.inthesetimes.com/comments.php?id=220\\_0\\_4\\_0\\_C](http://www.inthesetimes.com/comments.php?id=220_0_4_0_C) (accessed 12 June 2003).
- [45] Žižek, "Ideology Reloaded."
- [46] See Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1900/reform-revolution/index.htm> (accessed 12 June 2003).
- [47] *Reform and Revolution*, chapter 9, at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1900/reform-revolution/ch09.htm>, emphasis added (accessed 5 June 2003).
- [48] Marx makes a similar critique of Hegelian mysticism in *The German Ideology*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/index.htm> (accessed 5 June 2003) and *The Grundrisse*, excerpted in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton, 1978), 237.
- [49] V.I. Lenin, *What is to be Done?* (New York: Penguin, 1988).
- [50] Foucault, "Truth and Power," 59.
- [51] Ronald Walter Greene, "The Aesthetic Turn and the Rhetorical Perspective on Argumentation," *Argumentation and Advocacy* 35 (1998). Downloaded from EBSCO Academic Search Premier on 23 October 2003; Greene, "Another Materialism." More recently, on the premise that capitalism no longer takes a shape confrontable by organized instrumental antagonism, Greene argues material real as basis for instrumental political action; "Rhetoric and Capitalism."
- [52] Greene, "Rhetoric and Capitalism" 203. Jim Aune, Dana Cloud, and Stephen Macek have argued that Greene's account of capitalism's development is inaccurate and unnecessarily pessimistic. See James Arndt Aune, Dana L. Cloud, and Stephen Macek, "'The Limbo of Ethical Simulacra': A Reply to Ron Greene," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 39 (2006): 72–84; also Dana L. Cloud, "Bringing Down Suharto: Globalization, the State, and Social Movement in Indonesia," in Robert Asen and Dan Brouwer, eds., *Counterpublics and the State* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001): 235–64.
- [53] Foucault, "Truth and Power," 58.
- [54] Laclau and Mouffe are something of an exception to this rule, as they embrace collective movement.
- [55] Barbara A. Biesecker, "Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women Into the History of Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25 (1992): 155.
- [56] See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); *Multitude* (New York: Penguin, 2005); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
- [57] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, 362.
- [58] Ronald Walter Geene, "The Concept of Global Citizenship in Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire*: A Challenge to Three Ideas of Rhetorical Mediation," In Gerard Hauser and Amy Grim, Eds., *Rhetorical Democracy: Discursive Practices of Civic Engagement* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence-Erlbaum, 2004), 166.
- [59] *Empire*, 404.
- [60] Greene "Global Citizenship" 168.

- [61] Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Empire of Capital* (London: Verso, 2003), 6; see also Gopal Balakrishnan, *Debating Empire* (London: Verso, 2003) and Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, eds., *Empire Reloaded* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2005).
- [62] Ellen Meiksins Wood, "A Manifesto for Global Capital?" in Gopal Balakrishnan, ed., *Debating Empire* (London: Verso, 2003), 61.
- [63] Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 154.
- [64] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*.
- [65] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (London: Athlone, 1994), 69.
- [66] "Capitalism" 204.
- [67] For a discussion of this "doomsday globalization hypothesis," see Cloud, "Suharto" 235–64. See also J.K. Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (as We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996); Hardt and Negri; Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).
- [68] Ahmad, 120.
- [69] Marxists have long accounted for the complexities of global capitalism; see, for example Lenin's observations on globalization in *Imperialism; The Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline* (1918; New York: International, 1939). To put the lie to the irrelevance of collective action against neoliberalism today, one need only look at recent events in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Venezuela, the Ukraine, and many others. See Larry Rohter, "Leftist Chief is Installed in Uruguay," *New York Times* (2 March 2005), A1; Juan Forero, "The Chavez Victory: A Blow to the Bush Administration," *New York Times* (20 August 2004), A1. "Bolivia's Leader Says He Plans to Offer his Resignation Today," *New York Times* (7 March 2005), A1; Myers, Steven Lee, "Ukrainians Enact Reforms, Clearing Way for New Vote," *New York Times* (9 December 2004), A3; Tom Lewis, "Rebellion in Bolivia," [http://www.socialistworker.org/2003-2/473/473\\_12\\_Bolivia.shtml](http://www.socialistworker.org/2003-2/473/473_12_Bolivia.shtml) and "The New Surge in Bolivia's Rebellion," <http://www.isreview.org/issues/42/>. Jesse Muldoon, "Argentina Rocked by General Strike," [http://www.socialistworker.org/2001/374/374\\_07\\_Argentina.shtml](http://www.socialistworker.org/2001/374/374_07_Argentina.shtml); Closer to home, the UPS strike of 1997 and the global justice movement exploding out of Seattle in 1999 are cases in point.
- [70] Aune.
- [71] Aune, 2.
- [72] Michelle Barrett, *Politics of Truth* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 71–80. Regarding Barrett's and other critiques of Marxist epistemology, see Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991), 14–39; Jon Elster, *Making Sense of Marx* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Guess, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*.
- [73] There is too a large body of work and significant controversy regarding Marxist dialectics to cover in this article; see Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/soc-utop/ch02.htm#014> (accessed 30 June 2005); *Anti-Duhring* (1877), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/index.htm> (accessed 30 June 2005); Leon Trotsky, "The ABCs of Materialist Dialectics," <http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/works/1939/1939-abc.htm> (accessed 30 June 2005) and Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, excerpted in Tucker, 66–125. Lukács in *History and Class Consciousness* elaborated on the concept of dialectics in ways that emphasized the rhetorical intervention of the party and on the worker's will and consciousness. See Anderson, 60–70.
- [74] Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 168.
- [75] Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, 171.
- [76] Paraphrase of Frederick Douglass, "Without struggle there is no progress."
- [77] See Aune, 72.
- [78] David Forgacs, introduction to "Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc," [excerpts], in *An Antonio Gramsci Reader*, p. 190.

- [79] Hall, "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity."
- [80] In David Forgacs, ed., *An Antonio Gramsci Reader* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 72.
- [81] "Hegemony, Relations of Force, Historical Bloc," in Forgacs, 197.
- [82] Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984). Aune, 38, notes this ambivalence.
- [83] Marx's use of the word "rhetoric" sometimes occurs when he is deriding one of his opponents (such as the anarchist Proudhon) for superficial reasoning or emotional excess. In various places, he and Engels called rhetoric hollow "liquefying pap." Engels, in *Anti-Duhring*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/ch07.htm> (accessed 15 July 2005). In other places, the word is used to describe the flowery mystifications of ruling class discourse, in an equation of rhetoric with ideology; for example, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, when he mentions the failures of the hollow rhetoric of Louis Napoleon's minister Barrot, at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch04.htm> (accessed 15 July 2005); likewise when he accuses the anarchist Proudhon of getting worked up into a "sudden flush of rhetoric"; [http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1865/letters/65\\_01\\_24.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1865/letters/65_01_24.htm) (accessed 15 July 2005). And in the *Communist Manifesto* he writes that the ruling class cloaks itself in "speculative cobwebs, embroidered with the flowers of rhetoric," <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/manifest.txt>. In *The Poverty of Philosophy*, he accuses Proudhon of having proficiency in "rhetoric rather than in logic." <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/poverty-philosophy/ch01.htm> (accessed 15 July 2005).
- [84] The *Rheinische Zeitung* was a democratic reform periodical opposed to Prussian Absolutism from 1842 until 1843, when it was suppressed. Marx edited this publication; it is also where he met and began his collaboration with Friedrich Engels.
- [85] "The Leading Article in No. 179 of the *Kölnische Zeitung*," in *Rheinische Zeitung* N. 191, 10 July 1842, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/01/10.htm> (accessed 15 July 2005).
- [86] He would also condemn psychoanalytic theory on these grounds. While utopian socialists such as Charles Fourier advocated manipulation of workers' desires and drives to organize them, Marx, in Habermasian mode, insisted on a reasonable eloquence. In practice, however, he was not against stirring the emotions.
- [87] "The Leading Article in No. 179 of the *Kölnische Zeitung*," in *Rheinische Zeitung* N. 191, 10 July 1842, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/01/10.htm> (accessed 15 July 2005).
- [88] Aune, 38; see also Dominick LaCapra, "Reading Marx," *Rethinking Intellectual History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983).
- [89] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848; New York: Monthly Review, 1998).
- [90] Aune also argues that Marxism needs to understand that persuasion always happens in a cultural context and must not neglect the role of "communal values, emotions, and the need for identification" (48). I agree, yet believe that in the analysis of cultural texts as ideology, many Marxist critics are finely attuned to, and critical of, the rhetorical force of values, emotion, and identification, particularly with regard to nationalism. In practical politics, it is true that Marxists must adapt discourse to the situation and use the available means of persuasion, yet not at the expense of articulating specifically a class consciousness.
- [91] For an elaboration of this perspective on class, see Lindsay German, *A Question of Class* (London: Bookmarks, 1973); Michael Zweig, *The Working Class Majority: America's Best-Kept Secret* (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 200); Wood, *Retreat from Class*.
- [92] See Laclau and Mouffe; Paul Hirst, "Economic Classes and Politics," in Alan Hunt, ed., *Class and Class Structure* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1977); for a critique see Wood, *Retreat from Class*; also Dana Cloud, "Socialism of the Mind," in Herbert W. Simons and Michael

- Billig, ed. *After Postmodernism: Reconstructing Ideology Critique* (London: Sage, 1994): 222–52.
- [93] Eagleton, *Ideology*, 206.
- [94] Lukács, 70–71, chastises what he calls “vulgar Marxists” who assume consciousness proceeds directly from experience. As I am arguing, however, even Marx and Engels did not express a “vulgar” position in this regard.
- [95] Lukács, 279.
- [96] Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 250.
- [97] One common misconception about the vanguard party is that it comes from outside the class and imposes a party line on workers. On the idea of the organic party organization, see Antonio Gramsci, “The Modern Prince” in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, [http://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/editions/spn/modern\\_prince/ch15.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/editions/spn/modern_prince/ch15.htm) (accessed 30 July 2005); also see Negt & Kluge, 258–63, 54–95; and Lukács 295–342. Of course, the Stalinist party did not enact the role of rhetorical catalyst of a democratic movement. In Trotsky’s writings and the activities of other Marxists through the 4th International, the party offers rhetorical and organizational leadership; however, the idea of the “vanguard” really means no more in this context than it would in any liberal or conservative political party that sees as its role the education and mobilization of constituents around shared interests and goals that may not have been spontaneously recognized.
- [98] Aune, 14.
- [99] *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, Part 4 (“Marx”), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1886/ludwig-feuerbach/index.htm> (accessed 15 July 2005).
- [100] Negt and Kluge, 250.
- [101] Originally articulated by Marx (“Strikes and Combinations of Workers,” *Collected Works*, vol. 6 [1845], 211; <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/poverty-philosophy/ch02e.htm>), this distinction was taken up by a succession of Marxists interested in the role of discourse, intellectuals, and political organizations (i.e., parties) in the production of class-consciousness and organization. ([http://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/editions/spn/modern\\_prince/ch15.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/gramsci/editions/spn/modern_prince/ch15.htm)) (accessed 30 June 2005); likewise, Lukács credits the dialectic between ideas and material experience for the production of a class for itself in *The Young Hegel* (1938, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/youngheg/ch38.htm>) (accessed 30 June 2005). In 1932, Trotsky wrote, “The proletariat assumes an independent role only at that moment when, from a social class in itself, it becomes a political class for itself. This cannot take place other than through the medium of a party. The party is that historical organ by means of which the class becomes class conscious” (“What’s Next?,” <http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/document/ibt/bt02.htm>) (accessed 30 July 2005). Following this line, Negt and Kluge argue that the working class forms a public that can respond to bourgeois ideas and the political state in party organization (p. 61).
- [102] <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm> (accessed 30 June 2005). See Negt and Kluge, 83.
- [103] See Eskatarina Haskins in *Logos and Power in Isocrates and Aristotle* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004). Alisdair MacIntyre identifies Trotskyism with Aristotelian “philosophy of action.” See Emile Perea Saussine, “Alisdair MacIntyre Between Aristotle and Marx” (monograph) (Chicago: Committee on Social Thought, ?). Alisdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1984).
- [104] *Kairos* generally refers to situated judgment, opportunity, and timing on the part of a rhetor. Haskins opposes it to the stiffer category of genre, which summarizes an audience’s formal expectations of a situation rather than the flexibility, judgment and timing of the *kairotic*.
- [105] The Burkean distinction between motion and action, respectively, maps readily onto the distinction between a class in, which simply moves, and a class for itself, moved to identity

and action. See Kenneth Burke, *Grammar of Motives* (1945; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 135–37. Burke argues in *Rhetoric of Motives*, 19–59, that identification is the primal rhetorical force, produced when people with something substantial in common “share substances” through communication, and is made stronger in the invocation of antagonism against a shared foe. Although Burke broke with the idea of extra-rhetorical class interests and class antagonism, theory of identification and the distinction between action and motion are fruitful ways to understand class-based rhetorical intervention.

- [106] Negt and Kluge, 43.
- [107] Marx, *Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*.
- [108] Ahmad, 6. Ahmad notes the irony of poststructuralism’s theories of agency as actually much more constrained than Marxism’s.
- [109] Marx, *Communist Manifesto*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm> (accessed 15 June 2005).
- [110] The anti-racist theorist Cornell West even makes a cameo appearance as a Zion elder, indicating a self-conscious anti-racism in the film. The diverse and radical community of Zion does not seem to embrace homosexuality, however, as there are no visible gay or lesbian characters in the mix.
- [111] The basic definition of solidarity, from the Marxist Internet archive, is “the fundamental ethical value of the workers’ movement, which obliges workers to support the struggles of other workers.” <http://www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/s/o.htm> (accessed 30 June 2005). This definition does not elaborate the basis for solidarity, which is located in a realist concept of workers as a discrete class with real interests of their own.
- [112] Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000). With regard to gender essentialism, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*.
- [113] Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 189.
- [114] Gayatri Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1988), 276. Ahmad likewise rejects poststructuralism’s end of the social, impossibility of stable subject positions, and death of politics as antithetical to a project that can confront imperialism; Ahmad, 65.
- [115] Burke, *Grammar* 76–77.
- [116] Marx, *Communist Manifesto*, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch01.htm> (accessed 15 June 2005).
- [117] While I agree with Rorty that there is no *universal* basis for human solidarity, there is a *class* basis for it; in other words, it can be constructed out of very large and very real pieces. Marxist scholar Norman Geras criticizes Rorty for giving up on the possibility of foundational solidarity, nullifying the ethical content of the term in rendering it a matter of one language game or the other. *Solidarity in the Conversation of Humankind: The Ungroundable Liberalism of Richard Rorty* (London: Verso, 1995), 112–13.
- [118] Ahmad, 5–11, 82–104, 195–230, 267–71.
- [119] What Marx called the “petit bourgeoisie,” a very small category that shifts over time but generally includes students (who will likely, however, have to work for a living), small farmers, intellectuals, professionals (though doctors and pilots increasingly have been proletarianized), and small business owners, who generally identify with capitalist interests and are generally conservative during times of social struggle. Solidarity between middle class persons and workers is evident when students in the US demanding divestment from the South African economy become instrumental in bringing down apartheid in South African, when activists in the US challenge corporations employing sweated labor at home and abroad, and when intellectuals take off their esoteric robes and stop telling people the world is too complex for them to fight.

- [120] Mary Triece, *Protest and Popular Culture: Women in the US Labor Movement, 1894–1917* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000).
- [121] It should be said that there are sweatshops here in the US and very close to home at the US–Mexico border and elsewhere. See United Students Against Sweatshops (<http://www.usas.org>) (accessed 25 May 2005) and the student-led Workers’ Rights Consortium (<http://www.workersrights.org>) (accessed 25 May 2005). There are some sweatshop union activists who argue that consumer boycotts in the West are counterproductive and jeopardize workers’ jobs, such as they are. For suggestions on how we can help, see <http://www.globalexchange.org/getInvolved/actnow/> (accessed 25 May 2005).
- [122] For example, the UPS strike of 1997 cost UPS \$1.6 billion and won workers’ demands.
- [123] Spivak, 276.
- [124] Online at <http://www.geekroar.com/film/archives/000250.php> (accessed 30 May 2005), where there is a 635-page-long discussion of the Architect’s speech.
- [125] Amid rampant spending on war and occupation, attacks on health care and social security at home and an incredible consumer and debt crisis internationally, the gap between rich and poor is growing. See Tom Lewis, “The Growing Gap Between Rich and Poor,” Report from the 2003 Global Policy Forum, <http://www.globalpolicy.org/soecon/inequal/2003/0801gap.htm>. Paul Krugman, *The Great Unraveling: Losing Our Way in the New Century* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004). Institute of Governmental Studies, Public Affairs Report (Berkeley: University of California 2001), <http://www.igs.berkeley.edu/publications/par/summer2001/poverty.html> (accessed 30 June 2005).
- [126] Lukács, 164.
- [127] This phrase was the infamous pronouncement of right-wing pundit Francis Fukuyama in *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992). He took back his claim that capitalism had triumphed once and for all after the explosion of the global justice movement in Seattle, in 1999.
- [128] See Justin Akers-Chacón, “The New Immigrant Civil Rights Movement,” *International Socialist Review* 47 (May–June 2006), <http://isreview.org/issues/47/newmovement.shtml> (accessed 9 May 2006); Tom Lewis, “Latin America on Fire,” *International Socialist Review* 46 (March–April 2006), <http://isreview.org/issues/44/latinamericafire.shtml> (accessed 9 May 2006). Capitalism has indeed “produced” the categories of illegal worker and revolutionary agent, but only in reference to a real capitalist system that benefits from the first and is in reality threatened by the second.