



The Affirmative Masquerade

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We do not attempt dogmatically to prefigure the future, but want to find the new world only through criticism of the old. . . . I am speaking of a ruthless criticism of everything existing, ruthless in two senses: Criticism must not be afraid of its own conclusions, nor of conflict with the powers that be. Karl Marx (1972a/1844, pp. 12-13)

The choice is up to the critic, the critic as a real person who listens, speaks, studies the speaking situation, who meditates on purpose, considers the audiences, examines the issues, who does his or her best to say something worthwhile about matters of importance, and who recognizes that there are times when words are not enough. Philip Wander (1983, p. 203)

The most significant difference between conscious political critique and what Jim Kuypers (2000) calls "independent criticism" is that criticism that shuns overt politics is either ignorant of or masking its own investments in the status quo. Despite Kuypers' claim to the contrary, "independent criticism" is quite often the affirmation of the status quo disguised as neutrality. Affirmation bears the privilege of invisibility; it possesses the luxury of never appearing "heavy-handed" (Black's [2000] charge against Marxist critics). Nonetheless, affirmation is an act of advocacy. Even when criticism claims to be descriptive of social reality rather than offering normative correctives to unethical or malign rhetorical practices, the retreat into description is profoundly ideological. As Kenneth Burke (1966) has warned us, the language we use to describe the world necessarily filters our audience's perception of that world--foregrounding what aspects of it are deserving of our attention and backgrounding aspects which are not. Those whose work is visible as political critique--often representing minority, subordinated, or marginalized interests and positions--simply have different, and therefore more visible politics than those masquerading in "descriptive" or "apolitical" criticism.

Kuypers is worried that our field is ruled by left-wing activist gatekeepers: "We confront a very real danger of relegating criticism to automatic reproduction of the correct current political passions of those in charge." Thus, he replicates the paranoid neo-McCarthyist arguments of the anti-political-correctness movement (D'Souza, 1992). These arguments describe an (unfortunately, for me) imaginary universe in which leftists are taking over the academy and its attendant outlets for publication. While Professor Ivie's editorship of the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* may have been more open than others' to overtly political scholarship, his tenure was atypical. In my view, there is no evidence to support a claim that we are on the verge of a left political dictatorship in our field or anywhere else in the academy.

That said, I will not spend the rest of this essay in defense of critique in principle. What I will do, rather, is review the history of ideology critique in rhetorical studies. The argument I shall make is that the versions of ideology critique our field has adopted have been predominantly idealist in orientation, emphasizing consciousness and meaning as the sites of political transformation to the detriment of attention to economic

and other material factors. This foregrounding of the symbolic and textual, even in the most overtly political approaches to rhetorical criticism, has been exacerbated by the poststructuralist turn. Ironically, critical rhetoric in a poststructuralist mode mimics the affirmative masquerade. Far from being in control of the field, the activist left is often discounted *vis á vis* poststructuralist critical modes that are, ultimately, pessimistic about the project of large-scale social change and therefore reduced to description of the constitution of subjects in the rhetorical field. In abandoning material instrumentality, this scholarship may as well have no political investments at all.

The history of the ideological turn in rhetorical criticism has been summarized extensively elsewhere and, given that my narrative is necessarily partial, I refer readers to other interpretations of this disciplinary history (see Aune, 1994; Cloud, 1994; Crowley, 1992; Greene, 1998; Sholle, 1988; Wander, 1991, 1993). The main lesson of my version of the story is that, beginning with the work of Burke (1984/1935; 1969/1950), rhetoric has adopted versions of materialist ideology critique that downplay the economic determination of human action in favor of idealist (textually deterministic) and relativist (anti-realist) incarnations (Cloud, 1994). For example, Burke's analyses of the ways in which language mystifies and legitimizes capitalism in *Permanence and Change* (1984/1935), and his critique of mystifying inducements to consubstantiality in *Rhetoric of Motives* (1969/1950) provide a compelling sense of economic context and motive for ideological discourses. However, in his discussion of being rejected at the 1935 American Writers' Congress (a Communist-Party-sponsored assembly though Burke was not a member of the Party) for proposing that appeals to "the workers" be replaced with appeals to "the people," Burke enacts a kind of retreat from conceptualizing fundamental class antagonism. He replaces the distinction between workers and employers (which Marxists have regarded as a real antagonism outside of its discursive constitution) with the universalizing rhetorical fiction "the people."

Wander (1991) comments, "Burke's was not a doctrinal analysis and it offended the faithful" (p. 204). Cary Nelson (1989) has argued that Burke, in his later work, pre-figured poststructuralist skepticism and relativism. Even as early as the Writer's Congress, he made the argument that there is no distinction between an ideological myth and material reality (Burke, 1989/1935). Other writers present argued against Burke that they, as socialists, were interested in revealing the reality behind the myths of a unified "people" in capitalist society, and in mobilizing not all "people" but an antagonistic working class whose interests diverge from those of their rulers and employers.

Despite his break with the Writer's Congress, Burke's alignment with a left political critique can be understood as a product of the overall radicalization and proletarianization of American intellectual and popular culture during the 1930s (Denning, 1998; Wander, 1991). After Burke's early writings, during the years of fervent anti-communism across American society including the academy, ideology critique became muted in the field of rhetorical studies. Burke's writings were edited to eradicate his open appreciation for socialism (Aune, 1991; Schiappa and Keener, 1991; Wander, 1991). Even as Frankfurt School émigrés pursued Marxist discourse theory with renewed vigor in their attempts to understand and critique the sinister appeal of fascism, their profound pessimism about the possibility of actual mass revolt resulting in human emancipation led them to emphasize the narrower project of shifting culture and consciousness through critical theory.

Around the same time, the Birmingham Centre for Cultural Studies reworked historical materialism into Raymond Williams' "cultural materialism" (Williams, 1958), which replaced traditional Marxist "economic reasoning" (p. 265) with attention to "a whole way of life, and it is to this, rather than to the economic system alone, that the literature has to be related" (p. 281). "The area of a culture," he writes, "is usually proportionate to the area of a language rather than to the area of a class" (p. 320). Hence, the cultural studies project increasingly backgrounded the question of ideologies as they are attached to and represent the interests of antagonistic classes. This is not to say that cultural studies has completely ignored issues of class (see Munt, 2000), even though class has been treated as simply another discursively produced identity in culture rather than as the source of a basic and transformative antagonism. Cultural studies historian Simon During (1993) notes that cultural studies in this period began to emphasize, instead, the structuralist semiotics of a dominating mass culture over and above the practices and politics of the working class (p. 4). As Perry Anderson (1976, 1985) has argued, this early retreat from class can be regarded as a symptom of the socialist left's decline (and betrayal by Stalinism) world-wide during and after the second World War.

Then, in the wake of the student protest movements of the 1960s and 1970s, rhetoric rediscovered ideology.

(Far from being the leading edge of social change, we intellectuals often limp behind it.) The first installment of the debates was carried on around the war in Vietnam and the rhetoric of President Nixon (Campbell, 1972 a and b, 1983; Forum, 1972; Hill, 1972; Newman, 1970). Building on the dispute as to whether "critics should argue their version of the truth about the origin of a war" (Rosenfield, 1983, p. 122), Philip Wander (1983, 1984), Wander and Jenkins (1972), and Michael McGee (1975, 1980, 1982, 1984), among others, argued that it would be productive for rhetoricians to view discourse as an agency of economic and political power. This work brought rhetoric's considerable repertoire of textual analysis skills to bear on understanding how political and economic power is mediated, reinforced, perpetuated, and challenged in the texts we study.

The debates that raged over the initial ideological turns in rhetorical studies employed the same *topoi* upon which Kuypers' (2000) attack rests (see Hill, 1983; Rosenfield, 1983). For example, in 1983, Rosenfield worried that "limiting criticism to the lockstep of Wander's 'ideological turn' would reduce it to a dreary enterprise indeed" (p. 119). One hears premonitions of both Kuypers' anti-partisan warning alongside Black's distaste for the dyspeptic and denunciative here. Further, Rosenfield suggested that rather than the ruthless critique of everything existing, one should engage in *appreciative* criticism, which at least has the merit of not masking its affiliations. Likewise, Hill (1972) argued that no critic should address moral or political issues unless they have discovered the whole truth about a situation, effectively mandating partisans' silence.

As I will argue below, historical materialism appeals to truth claims in evaluating rhetorical discourse, but without embracing a notion of universal, objective truth. However, almost as soon as rhetorical scholars began to foreground such questions about truth and social power as important dimensions of texts, the definitions of truth and power themselves changed with the writing and translation of works by theorist Michel Foucault.

The Discursive Turn

It is difficult to overestimate the influence on critical textual practice across the humanities of poststructuralist scholars, most notably Michel Foucault (1980; see also the three-volume anthology of Foucault's essential writings by Foucault, Rabinow, and Hurley, 1998, 1999; Foucault, Faubion, Gordon, Rabinow and Hurley, 2000.) Briefly stated, Foucault argues that power ought to be conceived as primarily constituted in discourses, unmotivated by extra-discursive economic or political interests, and emanating not from a discernable, repressive center of power (such as the state or the employer) but rather as a set of shifting discursive formations. On this view, discursive formations do not suppress or mystify social relations but rather establish in and of themselves what is real and true. In my view, Foucaultian poststructuralism is a natural outgrowth of Althusser's (1960/1984) structuralism, which argued that ideology and its apparatuses (for example the education system, the family) were determining forces in social relations, warranting a reclassification of ideological outlets such as the church and the schools as "*state apparatuses*" with "relative autonomy" from economic interests and effects. This theory marked a distinctly idealist shift in Marxist thinking. Clegg (1991) argues that as Althusserian (and following him, poststructuralist) Marxists shifted attention away from economic factors and toward ideology, all previous Marxisms were discounted as crudely empiricist and economistic.

With postmodernists and post-Marxists (e.g., Baudrillard, 1975; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Lyotard, 1984), 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. As Cloud (1994) has argued, these theories tend toward both idealism and relativism, negating the possibilities of demystifying a dominant ideology or establishing criteria for judgment--for example, between the competing rhetorical truths of socialism and fascism--and action. In other words, without some idea of the reality of the exploitation of workers, the oppression of women and racialized minorities, and so forth, one has no basis for declaring a progressive political program more emancipatory and faithful to the interests of ordinary people than the racist scapegoating and appeals to order and unity of a fascistic one.

But there are other questions at stake in these theories. First, recent rhetorical and cultural studies have emphasized the role discourses play in constituting subjects, over and against an instrumentalist paradigm featuring how individuals or groups willfully use discourse to achieve intentional ends. In rhetorical studies, this turn was enacted first by Michael McGee (1975) and Maurice Charland (1987), who argue that

rhetoricians should attend to the ways in which rhetorical practices constitute people, rather than (or at least in addition to) the other way around. As Barbara Biesecker (1992) argues in a feminist context, the idea of the human subject as constituted in and by discourses is grounded in the anti-humanism of poststructuralism and challenges the idea that people (in this case, women or feminists) can be said to instrumentally craft and deploy discourses. Instead, the subject is the most salient locus of rhetorical effects for critical rhetoricians. Therefore, the moment of political agency is described as "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, but whose enunciation, in always and already exceeding and falling short of its intending subject, harbors within it the possibility of disrupting, fragmenting, and altering the horizon of human action out of which it emerges" (Biesecker, 1992, p. 155). The entire poststructuralist academy is marked by such a pessimistic redefinition of political agency to "making do" with localized disruptions at the level of subjectivity (see Butler, 1990). This project stands in significant contrast to more modernist (not only liberal individualist but also collectivist, social movement) models of instrumental social transformation.

Critical Rhetoric

Out of the poststructuralist turn in the humanities and social sciences emerged a "critical rhetoric," in which a Foucaultian emphasis on the production and disciplining of subjects amends and/or replaces the concern of the ideological turn with unmasking power in discourse. Raymie McKerrow (1989, 1991a, 1991b) tries to combine the "critique of domination," or of repressive power enacted by interested agents of discourse; and the "critique of freedom," by which he means the Foucaultian project of describing how discourse, as its own agent of power, is productive of subjects and social relations. As Cloud (1994) has argued, these two projects rest on incompatible philosophical foundations.

The critique of domination depends upon our ability to posit dominators who mask an extradiscursive truth and requires what Thompson (1990) endorses as depth hermeneutics (p. 274); yet, following Foucault, McKerrow argues that one cannot identify categories of oppressor or oppressed, nor can one posit the existence of discourses that are truer than others in a "relativized world" (1989, p. 91). McKerrow and the critical rhetoric project have faced some criticism for the way in which the relativist stance might mitigate against the critic having a political project or purpose (*telos*) beyond describing the operation of texts (Charland, 1991; Ono and Sloop, 1992). As Said (1993) puts it, "Cults like post-modernism, discourse analysis, New Historicism, deconstruction, neo-pragmatism transport [intellectuals] into the country of the blue; an astonishing sense of weightlessness with regard to the gravity of history and individual responsibility fritters away attention to public matters, and to public discourse. The result is a kind of floundering about that is most dispiriting to witness" (p. 303).

Another Materialism?

Despite such harsh assessments, other poststructuralist scholars have recommended that criticism eschew teleological concerns entirely. For example, Greene (1998) describes two prevailing materialist "camps" in rhetorical theory: those who favor a persuasion model on which ruling groups use rhetorical practices to protect their power and interests; and a constitution model, which, working from Burke's (1969/1950) concepts of identification and division, emphasizes how subjects are produced as effects of rhetorical action in variously constraining and enabling ways.

Greene argues that rhetoricians ought to transcend this division in an articulation model that emphasizes how rhetoric traverses a governing apparatus as a technology of deliberation, judges and plans reality, and polices populations. He asserts that rhetorical scholars should abandon a logic of representation, which existing materialisms have not done, in favor of a logic of articulation. Greene's emphasis is on how "rhetorical practices distribute different elements into a functioning network of power" (p. 21).

While Greene also says that the shift he is advocating does not require abandoning the insights from either a persuasion model or a constitutive model of rhetorical materialism, it is clear that his model is attempting to "get away" from certain aspects of traditional materialist ideology critique. Namely, he rejects the notion that capitalist society is structured in a bipolar manner in which identifiable antagonistic groups use discourse instrumentally to secure and defend their interests. He therefore also rejects the "hermeneutics of suspicion," or in other words, the idea that one can discredit ideological discourses as false compared to

some underlying truth. Greene's suspicion of suspicion is one way of articulating the relativist point of view that there is no truth underlying discourse; discourses manufacture what is "in the true."

Finally, Greene also rejects an explanatory theory that can identify origins and causes of social phenomena (explaining them, for example, in terms of the economic system) in favor of a radically indeterminate mode of analysis that, he argues, may lead to scholarship that is unpredictable and marked by the description of local, concrete experience as opposed to abstract explanations of social system and structure. Yet where does such localized description get us? In my view, counting everything that is "in the true" as equally true, does a disservice to people who struggle against exploitation and oppression. They require a notion of truth faithful to their standpoint in social, political, and economic hierarchies, and a sense of history that is both descriptive and normative so as to inform current and future struggles. And we need to be able to call a lie a lie.

This last point is well illustrated in a remark made by Rosenfield during the early rounds of the ideological turn. He defends Nixon's "Vietnamization" speech on the grounds that, "No leader employs a whole pattern of the *topoi* of disengagement when he intends to prosecute the war. The best evidence of what Nixon was doing lies right there in the text of the address" (Rosenfield, 1983, p. 125). It doesn't seem to occur to Rosenfield that Nixon was lying; that the argument over disengagement was disingenuous, and indeed, there is credible evidence that Nixon did in fact continue to prosecute the war. Ironically, like Rosenfield, Greene's approach assumes that what is in the text is "in the true" and that there is no relevant extra-textual evidence against which textual truths can be weighed and evaluated.

This is not to say that the question of defining and evaluating truths is always so straightforward. Marx himself was clear that while critique needs a notion of truth, he does not mean anything like a universal, empirical truth, which he called, derisively, "the roast partridges of absolute science" (1972a/1844, p. 13). Rather, he writes, truth is a matter of practical experience: "Man [sic] must prove the truth, that is, the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice" (1972b/1888, p. 144). In other words, the goal of materialist critique is not to reveal some essential, universal truth, but to expose the interested nature or "this-sidedness" of truths and to put forward the counter-truths of the exploited and oppressed.

However, Greene's image of a governing apparatus, which "exists as an ensemble of human technologies dedicated to improving the welfare of a population" (p. 30), fails to ask a question essential to defining materialist scholarship: Who is benefiting from the operations of the apparatus? Whose welfare is "improved"? Most recently, the move to a relativist articulation theory has embraced the ideas of Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), who argue along the same lines as Greene that we should seek to articulate the various components of the late capitalist "machine." In other words, we should describe how subjects, places, and objects are constituted and disciplined in a diffuse system of discourses, bodies, and so forth. This work is often called materialist in so far as it attends not only to texts but also to corporeal experience and inorganic objects as features of the social world that are not entirely fathomable in the reading of texts. Similarly, Judith Butler, in her work *Bodies that Matter* (1993), replies to charges of idealism by formulating a materialism of the body.

If one reserves the label "materialism" for the historical and critical methods of *historical* materialism, however, these innovations in poststructuralist theory are more properly designated "matterism"--attention to the "stuff" of the body and of objects--

than "materialism"--attention to not just *any* thing in the world, but the specific attention to *economic* motives and contexts of discursive production. As Ebert (1996) explains, "Matter in Marxism is not inert mass but the praxis for labor and the contradictions and class conflicts in which it is always involved" (p. 35).

Poststructuralist discourse theory and the discursive turn offer several worthwhile cautions to traditional ideology critics. Namely, (1) it is important for rhetorical critics of any stripe to retain a capacity for surprise and discovery; (2) one cannot assume that texts automatically and entirely reflect the interests or subject positions of their creators; and (3) we cannot claim to know in advance of close attention to particular cases what the balance of dominance and resistance, discipline and emancipation might be in any given formation. However, I believe that such complexity and nuance were always already available in the

classical materialist tradition, which has been unfortunately rendered as an Althusserian straw person in contemporary rhetorical and cultural studies.

Gramsci's (1971/1936) prison writings, for example, explore both how fascism's discourse was persuasive and how oppositional blocs can come to consciousness and act in their better interests. The concept of hegemony, usually defined as the mechanisms by which dominant groups obtain the "consent" of the masses (p. 12), has another side to it. In "The Modern Prince," Gramsci (1971/1936, pp. 166-67) suggests that the analysis of hegemony is also the examination of the social content, resources, demands, strategies, and balance of forces in oppositional social movements, which for Gramsci required the mobilization of the economic clout of organized workers.

Gramsci was a materialist, a Marxist, and a revolutionary. Today, there is a neat trick of doublespeak in taking what he would have recognized as philosophical idealism--an almost entirely text-centered practice disconnected from economic contextualization--and renaming it "materialism," perhaps for the sake of progressive credibility, perhaps out of a set of misunderstandings about what the historical materialist tradition put forward. In a less generous moment, we might regard poststructuralist theories themselves as a kind of ideological mystification, borrowing the label "materialism" for a project that, in reality, encourages pessimism, ineffectual micropolitics, and retreat from explanation and struggle.

The Retreat from Class

At the very least, however, it is clear that poststructuralist discourse theories have left behind some of historical materialism's most valuable conceptual tools for any theoretical and critical practice that aims at informing practical, oppositional political activity on behalf of historically exploited and oppressed groups. As Nancy Hartsock (1983, 1999) and many others have argued (see Ebert 1996; Stabile, 1997; Triage, 2000; Wood, 1999), we need to retain concepts such as standpoint epistemology (wherein truth standards are not absolute or universal but arise from the scholar's alignment with the perspectives of particular classes and groups) and fundamental, class-based interests (as opposed to understanding class as just another discursively-produced identity). We need extra-discursive reality checks on ideological mystification and economic contextualization of discursive phenomena. Most importantly, critical scholars bear the obligation to explain the origins and causes of exploitation and oppression in order better to inform the fight against them.

In poststructuralist discourse theory, the "retreat from class" (Wood, 1999) expresses an unwarranted pessimism about what can be accomplished in late capitalism with regard to understanding and transforming system and structure at the level of the economy and the state. It substitutes meager cultural freedoms for macro-level social transformation even as millions of people around the world feel the global reach of capitalism more deeply than ever before. At the core of the issue is a debate across the humanities and social sciences with regard to whether we live in a "new economy," an allegedly postmodern, information-driven historical moment in which, it is argued, organized mass movements are no longer effective in making material demands of system and structure (Melucci, 1996). In suggesting that global capitalism has so innovated its strategies that there is no alternative to its discipline, arguments proclaiming "a new economy" risk inaccuracy, pessimism, and conservatism (see Cloud, in press). While a thoroughgoing summary is beyond the scope of this essay, there is a great deal of evidence against claims that capitalism has entered a new phase of extraordinary innovation, reach, and scope (see Hirst and Thompson, 1999).

Furthermore, both class polarization (see Mishel, Bernstein, and Schmitt, 2001) and the ideological and management strategies that contain class antagonism (see Cloud, 1998; Parker and Slaughter, 1994) still resemble their pre-postmodern counterparts. A recent report of the Economic Policy Institute concludes that in the 1990s, inequality between rich and poor in the U.S. (as well as around the world) continued to grow, in a context of rising worker productivity, a longer work week for most ordinary Americans, and continued high poverty rates.

Even as the real wage of the median CEO rose nearly 63 percent from 1989, to 1999, more than one in four U.S. workers lives at or below the poverty level. Among these workers, women are disproportionately represented, as are Black and Latino workers. (Notably, unionized workers earn nearly thirty percent more,

on average, than non-unionized workers.) Meanwhile, Disney workers sewing t-shirts and other merchandise in Haiti earn 28 cents an hour. Disney CEO Michael Eisner made nearly six hundred million dollars in 1999--451,000 times the wage of the workers under his employ (Roesch, 1999). According to United Nations and World Bank sources, several trans-national corporations have assets larger than several countries combined. Sub-Saharan Africa and the Russian Federation have seen sharp economic decline, while assets of the world's top three billionaires exceed the GNP of all of the least-developed countries and their combined population of 600 million people (Shawki and D'Amato, 2000, pp. 7-8).

In this context of a real (and clearly bipolar) class divide in late capitalist society, the postmodern party is a masquerade ball, in which theories claiming to offer ways toward emancipation and progressive critical practice in fact encourage scholars and/as activists to abandon any commitment to crafting oppositional political blocs with instrumental and perhaps revolutionary potential. Instead, on their arguments, we must recognize agency as an illusion of humanism and settle for playing with our identities in a mood of irony, excess, and profound skepticism. Marx and Engels' critique of the Young Hegelians applies equally well to the postmodern discursive turn: "They are only fighting against '*phrases*.' They forget, however, that to these phrases they themselves are only opposing other phrases, and that they are in no way combating the real existing world when they are merely combating the phrases of this world" (1976/1932, p. 41).

Of course, the study of "phrases" is important to the project of materialist critique in the field of rhetoric. The point, though, is to explain the connections between phrases on the one hand and economic interests and systems of oppression and exploitation on the other. Marxist ideology critique, understands that classes, motivated by class interest, produce rhetorics wittingly and unwittingly, successfully and unsuccessfully. Those rhetorics are strategically adapted to context and audience. Yet Marxist theory is not naïve in its understanding of intention or individual agency. Challenging *individualist* humanism, Marxist ideology critics regard people as "products of circumstances" (and changed people as products of changed circumstances; Marx, 1972b/1888, p. 144).

Within this understanding, Marxist ideology critics can describe and evaluate cultural discourses such as that of racism or sexism as strategic and complex expressions of both their moment in history and of their class basis. Further, this mode of critique seeks to explain both why and how social reality is fundamentally, systematically oppressive and exploitative, exploring not only the surface of discourses but also their often-complex and multi-vocal motivations and consequences. As Burke (1969/1950) notes, Marxism is both a method of rhetorical criticism and a rhetorical formation itself (pp. 109-110). There is no pretense of neutrality or assumption of transcendent position for the critic.

Teresa Ebert (1996) summarizes the purpose of materialist ideology critique:

Materialist critique is a mode of knowing that inquires into what is not said, into the silences and the suppressed or missing, in order to uncover the concealed operations of power and the socio-economic relations connecting the myriad details and representations of our lives. It shows that apparently disconnected zones of culture are in fact materially linked through the highly differentiated, mediated, and dispersed operation of a systematic logic of exploitation. In sum, materialist critique disrupts 'what is' to *explain* how social differences--specifically gender, race, sexuality, and class--have been systematically produced and continue to operate within regimes of exploitation, so that we can change them. It is the means for producing transformative knowledges. (p. 7)

If I were an intellectual gatekeeper (though more often I am held at the gates), I would not seek to impose my own methods of critical interrogation on others. However, I might expect all scholars to be rigorous in exploring whose interests are being described, evaluated, re-circulated, and/or reinforced in their work. This imperative arises from awareness that all criticism takes up and re-circulates texts that the critic regards as significant in some way. If all criticism is political, the question becomes, whose politics are re-presented in any particular political act? Edwin Black (2000) quotes Marx as saying, "The essential sentiment of criticism is indignation; its essential activity is denunciation" (quotation is from *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*, 1999/1844). But even in Marx and Engels, criticism is not all "dyspeptic" indignation. With regard to the Paris Commune of 1870-1871, for example, Marx (1972c/1871) writes the highest praise tempered with sober analysis of how and why the commune was crushed.

One's political investments are clear when objects are re-circulated in indignant and suspicious interpretive frames as opposed to those met with appreciation and solidarity, not to mention every possible response between approbation and condemnation. One can hardly argue that Marx, who analyzed the workings of capitalism with tremendous elegance and explanatory power, was "closed to discovery" or incapable of surprise. Much less can we fault contemporary ideology critics who, in making their investments and interests explicit, refuse the mask of neutrality in favor of an ethics of open advocacy. We expect those who disagree with us in our projects of advocacy to bear the same burden of political openness.

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