Day 6 – Literary Criticism – *Marxist Criticism & Who is this Art guy anyway?*

Group Work



1. How can *Twelfth Night* be considered a Marxist work (or at least reflect Marxist principles)? Use your group well[1] with this question – you have the readings from last night, but you also have your readings on Feminism, and New Historicism which both talk about class struggle (a very important foundational idea within Marxist theory). Divide the readings (Clement's "Post-Feminist Mystique" and Coddon's "Slander in an allow'd fool") up (among your member) and compile a list of Marxist elements within *Twelfth Night* – each of your readings cites specific evidence supporting a Marxist (or "class struggle") interpretation of the play. You MUST have your handouts on Marxism out in order to do this – notice, how the more notes you've taken the easier this is. Be specific – find at least 4 examples.

2. Considering the parameters that determine what makes a work (pro or anti) Marxist, what are the implications then for works of art written before Marxist theory was written down (mid 1800's)? Similarly, what are the implications regarding Marxist interpretations of *Twelfth Night*? **THINK.** We have been talking about *Twelfth Night* exploring issues of class and gender struggle – did those terms, the ideas, exist (in that precise terminology) when Shakespeare was writing? Your reading last night actually directly addresses this idea and you'll want to consult what it says – but don't stop there in your answer.

Does it matter that the exact terminology did not exist? Voltaire said that "[t]he people of the ***dark ages***, did not know they were living in the ***dark ages***." Another way to think about it is to consider all of the aspects of modern psychology that seem to be considered in Shakespeare's play (Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking, Hamlet's guilt about his mother, etc). And yet Shakespeare died hundreds of years before Sigmund Freud was born. Does that make any psychoanalytical interpretation of Shakespeare bogus? Why or why not?
One more example that may help you: consider the monk, Gregor Mendel – he created experiments with fruit flies that accurately described ***the behavior of genetics***, and yet it was many years before ***the mechanism of genetics*** was actually understood. Work this into your answer for this question.

3a. According to Marxist criticism, should art for "art's sake" exist? What then, according to Marxists, should a work of art "do?" Do you or your group members believe that current artist (today) have any positive effect on society? If you are familiar with "street art" – where artists such as Banksy – draw in public spaces artwork that often directly criticizes or satirizes what he sees as profound problems in today's society – where would his artwork fit within a Marxist Model? Does all street art (including tagging and "random" graffiti) fit in this model in the same way? Explain.



3b. In 2011, while *watching Exit Through the Gift Shop*, one of my students remarked that he had never heard of Guantanamo Bay (the place in Cuba that the U.S. keeps what it sees as its most dangerous prisoners from the Iraq/Afghanistan conflict) until he saw the movie – and what Banksy did at Disneyland – then he looked it up – learned about it – and was appalled. Similarly, in 2015 none of my students knew what Abu Ghraib Prison was or what happened there. How does this incident fit in with the Marxist Model of what Art should ***do***?

3c. ***Should*** works of art *do* anything, anyway. Ahhh – here I let you get your group's opinions in – just ground each member's opinion with at least 1 good, specific reason. How does author intentionality fit in? Again, the question of – can the art be separated from the artist (or as you saw in deconstructionism – the dancer separated from the dance).

4. Specifically who in *Twelfth Night* does Smirnov expose as Aristocratic (Bourgeoisie) – whom does he see as being sympathetic (Proletariat). Why (give a reason for each) – and name at least four characters in your answer.

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[1] Notice the double-meaning of "well" here – use your group well (appropriately); use your group well (a source – like a water well of limitless knowledge and inspiration).

5. Believe it or not – 2012's *The Muppets Movie* has been called (by a select few) a work of Communist Propaganda: "Fox Business Network anchor Eric Bolling announced that the new Muppet movie featured a character named Tex Richman, a greedy oil executive who wants to drill under the Muppets' theatre" (Hollywood Reporter). So Marxist Texts (any work of art that advances a Marxist agenda) are not only defined (or misdefined) by those purporting themselves to be Marxist but by those from the "outside" who see Marxist (or communist) Motivation in a text (such as The Muppets) – what does your group make of this (this – first means defining Marxist Texts by those who are not Marxists; second means – "Do you really think The Muppet Movie is communist because it portrays a greedy oil executive (bourgeoisie) wanting to destroy the Muppets (proletariat)?"



6. For years, the performer Beyoncé was decried by many critics and some fans for not having a political element to her work. In January of 2016 she released a video (and song) "Formation", followed the next day by a Super Bowl half-time performance of the same song. *The New York Times* "reported that Beyoncé's newly released song "Formation," which she performed at the Super Bowl, was "among the most politically direct work she's done in her career, with implicit commentary on police brutality, Hurricane Katrina and black financial power" The outcry from conservative critics was immediate and harsh with many calling her a Marxist, traitor, and worse – while some simply said that she should stick to making music without a message. If Marxism believes that no art should exist without political intent (and advancement of the proletariat cause), and others believe that Art should be devoid of politics – where does your group believe songs (videos) like Beyoncé's fit in? This also became a very important issue during the 2016 Political Campaign. Be thoughtful.

Solo Work

1. When you look closely at Smirnov's article – and compare his reasoning to other plays – do you find that it holds up? Specifically – how is Duncan (the height of aristocracy – no?) treated in *Macbeth* (be specific) – how does this undermine Smirnov's thesis? Again, be specific.

2. Look again at Marxism & Art (your handout for today). How did Marxists humanists view the idea of artist as shaper (I think this is the first time I snuck this in) – what in turn is their response to this recognition. Be specific and use at least 1 quote in your answer. How does *the Fallacy of Author Intentionality* work against this goal. Questions 3a & 3b in your Group Work may help you.



2b. In 1978, Polish Journalist/Writer "Kapuściński's wrote his best-known book, *The Emperor*, which concerns itself with the decline of Haile Selassie's anachronistic [corrupt, dictatorial] régime in Ethiopia. The book's story had a special meaning that was not lost on the people of Poland, especially as dissent against communism was taking root" (Wikipedia). The book was seen by many as a thinly disguised allegory for everything that was wrong with Poland's then communist dictatorship. Because he was ostensibly writing about another country – he was able to get the book past the Polish regime's censors. What does this say about 1) Art as a method to advance Marxist (or any ideology's) tenets; 2) author intentionality. Be thoughtful and specific.

3. Is Marxist Criticism the only school of thought that believes Art should have a purpose? When you were a child – do you remember a lot of the stories having morals – what is the difference – to be considered Marxist – what must the purpose of the Art be?

Don't forget your section on Free Thoughts – tie as much as you can together – look over your ENTIRE journal from beginning to end – by now Free Thoughts should approach at least 1 page.

For the Next Day

Find your favorite passage from *Macbeth* or *Twelfth Night* (10 lines or more). Paraphrase (don't simply reword) each line – write your paraphrase next to the original (use 2 columns).After you are done, closely examine each line and note as many changes as you can between the original and the paraphrased lines. Also look for connections between words and lines in the original and the paraphrased (be thorough). Put this as your Day 7 *Questions for Today*.

Jane Austen's *Persuasion* – Chapters 4-8 are due Monday (03/06)
Do NOT read Booth's article until AFTER the Booth lecture. Then spread out the reading over the next few days.– pace yourself and try to read a little bit each day rather than all of it at once – **<u>the first 9 pages are required</u>** (you must read the first designated part – if you read the entire article you will be able to answer extra- credit questions on the exam). The 2nd part of the movie, the exam (and final notebook check will be **next week)** – the movie questions will also be due on the day of the exam – and they will be covered on the exam, so get them done by exam time. **Monday** – Exit Through the Gift Shop Part 2. **Tuesday**- Literary Criticism Exam & 2nd check.