**Dialectical Reading as Performance**

**First Exercise – Reading Matrix Film Poster**

1. Post 3 times over a 24-hour period: a) by Tuesday, 1/14, 11:59pm; b) by Wednesday, 1/15, 6pm; c) by Wednesday, 1/15, 11:59pm. For the first post, post a 250-word thesis, for the second post reply to 3 people with a 100-word antithesis, and for the third post reply to yourself with a 250-word synthesis. We grow ideas through collaborative, dialogic writing over an extended period of time.

2. Assignment: Go to the Project 1 folder (located in PROJECTS) and examine and analyze the official film poster from The Matrix (1999). I have included the link to the official film site where you can watch the official film trailer and some of the official still images. Use this material as background only. Your analysis should be confined to the official film poster.

3. Prompt: How does the Matrix Film Poster persuade one to buy a ticket and watch the film? What rhetorical / propagandistic strategies are at work in the image to "seduce" someone into watching the film? How does the image appeal to political, sexual, psychological, technological, etc.... discourses that make someone want to watch the film?

Note: Don't try to answer every question listed above. Try to isolate one theoretical claim based upon specific evidence in the image. Never try to "cover" a text completely in theory or evidence. If every person in class picks out one idea and develops it through a reading of the text, then the text will be "covered."

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Further Notes on Dialectical Db Process:

***How to Dialectic***

**First Thread (Thesis)**: After reading the primary text, inductively isolate an idea or passage for close examination. What’s your argument? Contextualize and textualize your argument. Ca. 250 words.

**Second Thread (Antithesis):** After everyone in the class has posted his/her/its/their theses, read what your fellow mosaixists/seminarians have written, and choose three posts to "reply" to. Your reply should compare and contrast your idea with that of the other student. What do you find interesting, similar, different about the other post? Where is there agreement, disagreement, extension, continuity, etc? How can you “grow” the idea that are intervening and engaging with? Don’t summarize / report. Not only is it not necessary, since we can all read / summarize / report the material to ourselves, but summarizing doesn’t grow an idea, because it doesn’t stimulate or challenge the apparatus of critical thinking. Ca. 100 words each.

**Third Thread (Synthesis):** After you have written your second post, go back to your original post. Have your peers/colleagues responded to you? If so, read and reflect on what they have said. If not, no problem. Even if no antithetical response awaits you from another student, you have already engaged in antithetical thinking by intervening in the ideas of others. Your original ideas have been influenced, challenged. Can you specify what these changes, additions, subtractions are? Can you revise and synthesize new ideas from your first post? Can you create a richer, more useful idea? Ca. 250 words.

**Exercise 2 – Reading Harry Potter Film Poster**

 1. Post 3 times over a 24-hour period: a) by Monday, 1/18, 11:59pm; b) by Tuesday, 1/19, 6pm; c) by Tuesday, 1/19, 11:59pm. For the first post, post a 250-word thesis, for the second post reply to 3 people with a 100-word antithesis, and for the third post reply to yourself with a 250-word synthesis. We grow ideas through collaborative, dialogic writing over an extended period of time.

2. Prompt:

A. Examine the material located in Projects\_Project 1\_Exercise 2 (Harry Potter). You will find similar material from the first exercise: the official film website (film trailer and still images) and an attachment that contains the offical film poster.

B. Concentrate on the Film Poster only and supply a close, critical-dialectical reading of the Graphic Image (Image and Text) and its possible discursive realms.

C. Consider some of the following questions in your dialectical reflections: (Don't answer everyone, take them as possibilities and just choose one)

1. Does the Graphic Image use rhetorical practices to indicate an idea of Western Culture? That is, is the film really selling an idea, a story of Western Culture? Is so, what is this idea of Western Culture and how does the image re-present it?

2. Does the Graphic Image use rhetorical practices to present a hegemonic discourse of gender, sexuality, race, class? For example, does the image sell whiteness, maleness, hetero-homo-transexuality?

3. Does the Graphic Image use rhetorical practices to sell democracy and capitalism?

4. Does the Graphic Image use rhetorical practices to sell a vision of education, of childhood?

5. Does the Graphic Image somehow sell an idea of spirituality, of religion, or some other collective experience?

6. Does the Graphic Image not only "sell" an idea, but does it possibly "colonize" as well? Does it seek not only persuade, but to compel us to go see the movie?

7. The War on Terror? Filming was from September 2000 to March 2001 and the film was released in November 2001, thus bookending the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks in NYC, which began the U.S. campaign against terrorism, known as GWOT - Global War on Terrorism, which officially was conducted from September 2001 to 2013. The film and advertising campaign were produced before the 9/11 attacks, and, as the saying goes, "hindsight is 20/20," but could one make an argument that the graphic image is somehow channeling the discourse on the War on Terror(ism)?

**Professor’s Commentary to Class**

Dear Class:

1) A reminder for some some not all - a dialectical db is going on right now. It started Mon, 11:59pm goes thru today, 6pm and ends tonight at 11:59pm. Make sure you participate and contribute.

2) The prompt was more directive than the first dialectical db and I myself have intervened in this dialectical db. I have responded to a few people, not all. I am not trying to single people out, but rather leave a "bread crumb trail" for others to follow. I am trying, more like a trainer / coach rather than a professor, to encourage deeper and more pleasurable reading.

3) In general, I would say there is a bit of "powerpointing / lecturing" going on. People are allowing the film poster to dictate terms and ideas. Reading and Writing are playful resistances and ultimately types of freedom (despite what the education system might have trained you to feel about Reading and Writing). Try to read more deeply and analyze more thoroughly. A text is like an Onion with many layers. Try to read more like a scientist rather than a follower or fan. A scientist tries to read the world in a dispassionate and dissonant way. A scientist doubts what he/she/it/they sees. A scientist doubts the received and accepted "story" A scientist doubts his/her/its/their preconceptions and gut instincts. Roland Barthes, a French philosopher who died in the 1980s, coined the term "Scriptor" for such a scientific reader. The Scriptor is a co-author with the author of the text and scripts the text on a more emotionally-cognitive level than the author. To be a scriptor is to be playful as well as scientific and to enjoy the pleasure of uncovering the layers of the text.

**Professorial “Savage Love” Response to a Student\_1**

Dear X:

1) Take a look at your title, "Harry Potter". Does it reflect a contextualization, problematization, theorization? Are you proposing a thesis, making an argument? Why not? "Harry Potter" is INFORMATION, Information that we all know. Why repeat it? Why repeat it without problematizing? Why an Informational title? Because it is safe? Because it is passive and not active? Who is in control with such a titling? You or the movie?

2) "This makes it clear it is a fictional movie" - why point this out? Why point this out and then not analyze it?

3) "the center guy is undoubtedly the hero" - A lot of unexplained preconceptions and assumptions here. What is your evidence / analysis for "undoubtedly" and "hero"?

4) "scar" and "magic" and "magical mystery waiting for us" - i like how you point to the scar, but you don't do anything with it, except indicate mystery and magic. ok, a scar is a symbol that needs to be decoded and has a history. I get that. But does a scar only mean magical mystery? What is "magical"? Is it a code word for "criminal", accidental, spiritual, divine intervention? Try to push past the obvious and the standard response. "Magical and mystery" are exactly the words that the Culture Industry want you to say, because they are seemingly innocuous - "everyone loves magic and mystery" But does this apparent innocence, this seemingly transparent neutrality, actually hiding something or distracting us from something - and not in a good way? Is "Magical Mystey Awaiting Us" just another way of saying "Ignorance is Bliss"? Are Hollywood Movies just drugs by another name? They make us feel good, but they treat symptoms and ultimately don't help us?

**Professorial “Savage Love” Response to a Student\_2**

1) Your title - always keep control of your writing/thinking. don't let others, especially the Culture Industry or the University Industry or the Harry Potter Industry, write titles for you.

2) Good observation, but not enough analysis.

3) you invoke the "scar" just like Abhishek. Interesting. You call it a "famous scar, a signature scar, Harry has led an interesting life..." Problematize the idea of the scar. Scars can signify a lot - both good and bad. They can signify someone who has overcome and survived an accident, a victim who is now a survivor. They can indicate some type of medical/scientific procedure, some form of technoligization. They can indicate some profound moment - the hero or divine human who has sacrificed or survived an ordeal (e.g. Jesus). Scars also can indicate the criminal, the negative. In literary and cinematic tradition, the scar is often an indication of the criminal or the evil character - a great example being the character "Scar" from the Disney Film, "The Lion King". Why don't you read the scar on Harry's forehead in a more negative fashion, or at least in a more ambivalent way, i.e. that the scar indicates both negative and positive attributes.

4) The point I am trying to make with my long-winded criticism is - to read deeply and read the layers. Writers and filmmakers use symbols, metaphors like a scar as a shortcut. The Reader or the Scriptor - that is, us - exercises freedom and pleasure by unpeeling the layers, like an onion.