**Review**

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Paula L. M. Moya and Michael Hames-Garcia, eds.,
*Reclaiming Identity: Realist Theory and the Predicament of Postmodernism*

     Post-positivist realism, the philosophical position displayed and explored in *Reclaiming Identity*, in many ways brings fresh air into the halls of academe. Asserting that postmodernism's war upon the notion of identity as intrinsically essentialist has resulted in an aporia-ridden epistemology and a paralysis-ridden politics, the contributors to this volume variously argue for a notion of reality as at once socially constructed and objectively knowable. Realism--understood in the philosophical, not literary, sense--need not be hamstrung by the naively empiricist premise that objectivity entails knowledge free of presuppositions; moreover, experience need not be reduced to the realm of an emotionality a priori theorized as pre-rational. Instead, the essayists here contend, the experiential sphere--where people's identities are, for better or worse, primarily shaped--is a site informed by cognitive processes and possessed of the further capacity to render knowledge of the world. Several useful insights, supplying the ground for epistemological and political critique, flow from this formulation of identity. First, it becomes possible--indeed, politically desirable--to differentiate between identities providing greater or lesser access to what can be generally understood as human needs: racism and racist identity promote ill being, antiracism and antiracist identity promote well being. Second, as a corollary, fact need no longer be sundered from value: there emerges the basis for arguing that a praxis which is better for people ethically is also truer to their needs as human beings. Third, the proposition that identity is the product of attempts--either healthy or self-destructive--to define a social self means that it is susceptible to historical change. Error, rather than constituting a realm of necessarily injurious mistaking, plays a crucial role in the movement toward truth: in particular, if an individual attempts to grapple with her/his oppression, her/his dialectical movement toward wholeness will reveal truths simultaneously individual and social.

     In expressing admiration for central features of the post-positivist realist program, I write as a Marxist who discerns important points of tangency between this program and the methodology of historical materialism. Indeed, in some arenas, post-positivist realism potentially supplements Marxism. While Marx and Engel's insisted upon the class-bound nature of morality and chastised the utopian socialists of their day for embracing ahistorical notions of human good and human need, their own indignation at the suffering produced by capitalism often invoked what appeared to be universal moral standards. (One need only think of the account of the consequences of enclosure in Volume I of *Capital*.) Post-positivist realism, refusing to sunder fact from value, offers the political leftist a well-articulated and stable ground upon which to argue for the moral superiority of egalitarian to class societies. Moreover, post-positivist realism potentially expands the domain of praxis in Marxist epistemology, insofar as it expands the domain of the experientially-based knowledges that are relevant to the formation of explanatory paradigms which then enable deeper and fuller theory and practice. Finally, the post-positivist realist notion of epistemic privilege provides theoretical grounding for the guiding principle, canonical among most leftists, that those who are most oppressed are most likely to have the fewest illusions about capitalism, to be most receptive to totalizing class analysis, and to make the largest contributions to emancipatory theory and practice.

     I could thus devote much of this essay to noting the many places where I found myself nodding in agreement as I perused *Reclaiming Identity*. I shall concentrate, however, on the many other places where--also as a Marxist--I found myself registering disagreement. Let me sketch the main lines of my critique. Part of my discomfiture stems from the near-complete erasure of Marxism, and Marxist categories of analysis, by almost all the contributors to *Reclaiming Identity*, despite their frequent nods toward terms and concepts drawn from the Marxist tradition. (The exception is Caroline S. Hau's essay on Third World Marxist intellectuals, to which I shall turn in the final section of these comments.) This lack is troubling, first, for historical reasons: starting with Lenin and Lukacs, many Marxist theorists have explicitly addressed what it means to embrace a reflectionist paradigm, which is surely part of the realist tradition to which *Reclaiming Identity* makes its contribution. Indeed, Marx's methodology in *Capital*, if not fully theorized epistemologically, draws upon a mass of theory-saturated data in its claim to offer a critique of political economy.

     The absence of any serious engagement with the Marxist tradition in the volume is still more troubling, however, for political reasons. Marxism has put itself forward as not just a theory but a means to liberate the oppressed; in the course of the twentieth century, millions espousing the identity of worker--or its hammer-and-sickle companion, peasant--have attached their wagons to the socialist or communist star. If we leave aside for the moment whatever one might think about the particular historical projects accomplished in the name of Marxism, it is still puzzling that Marxism's central category of identity--class--is not once considered as the basis of even *one possible* *identity among several* by the contributors to *Reclaiming Identity*. Although the contributors occasional mentions of class and exploitation suggest that they consider themselves in some way aligned with the Marxist tradition, their particular failure to engage with the fundamental Marxist concepts relevant to the problem of identity--in particular, ideology and objective interest--renders them incapable of disengaging with liberal pluralism. Post-positivist realism's methodological compatibility with Marxism in the abstract does not guarantee that, when enlisted in the cause of what I shall here call second-wave identity politics, it transcends the limits of the politics of the first wave.

     I disagree, finally, with the essayist's underlying premise that postmodernism's most serious problem has been its epistemological relativism, leading to an erasure of the truth-value of the experientially-based identities that, properly theorized, are crucial to emancipatory social movements. Instead, as I see it, the cardinal sin of postmodernism was--and remains--its relentless war upon totality, which itself must be understood not just as (or even primarily as) an attack on Western rationalism but as part and parcel of the Cold War-era attack upon communism (however etiolated egalitarian practices may have been under really existing socialism). For a Marxist, a totalized understanding of the dialectical process that is society entails recognizing that the primary dynamic shaping this process is--in our moment--capital's drive to exploit. This understanding further means that the great majority of the world's denizens--whatever their nation, race, gender, ethnicity, or sexuality--have an objective interest in abolishing the wage relation and living in a classless society. This does not mean that identities other than class identities are not real or not important; nor does it mean that these other identities can or should be reduced to class. Indeed, it may be through the prism of these other identities that a given individual primarily experiences her or his contradictory relation to capital. From the Marxist standpoint, however, *all* identities are molded by the individual's insertion in the multiple structural relations generated by the capitalist mode of production; any project for a better world is therefore assimilable to--indeed, supportive of--a pro-capitalist liberal pluralism if it does not explicitly take on--and work toward abolishing--these relations. To the extent that identity politics (second-and first-wave alike) invoke, implicitly or explicitly, a model of multiple oppressions derived from multiple--and discrete--causes, they cannot offer structural explanations for why it is that the ordinary people who need to live in the better world can be motivated by ideas and feelings--racist, sexist, nationalist, homophobic--that further their entanglement in hierarchical ideas, attitudes, and practices.

     In my view, only a Marxist notion of ideology--encompassing such unfashionable components as false consciousness and social control--can adequately account for the phenomenon that millions of otherwise good people possess ideas that are--as post-positivist realism so astutely demonstrates--bad. Moreover, only the notion of objective interests can offer a more than missionary or humanitarian reason for why anyone who is not a member of the ruling class should make common cause with another non-rulers struggle for a fuller life. While post-positivist realism is well positioned to explore--indeed, deepen--our comprehension of the mechanisms of ideology and the dimensions of objective interest, its current ensnarement in the project of reconstituting identity politics vitiates this potential. Indeed, as I shall suggest in my closing comments, *Reclaiming Identity* may be significant mainly for its demonstration that postmodernism's antipathy to totalization is so hegemonic that even programs purporting to be diametrically opposed to postmodernism end up perpetuating a number of its principal tenets and assumptions.

     At the end of her lucid and informative introduction to the volume, Paula M. L. Moya expresses her conviction that post-positivist realism has the potential to push intellectual inquiry (especially in the humanities) in theoretically productive directions. Accordingly, she generously invites the reader "in the spirit of cooperation . . . to take seriously [the writers] various claims and to show us where we--individually or collectively--might amend, revise, or advance our thinking about the task we have undertaken" (23). Sharing with Moya and her co-contributors the belief that we muddle our way toward truth through error, I offer my comments here in the same dialectical spirit, hoping that my occasionally polemical tone will be justified, or at least understood, by our common recognition of the issues--the realities--that are at stake in our debates.

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     Satya P. Mohanty is, more than any other single figure, the progenitor of what we might call post-positivist realism for literary theorists; his "The Epistemic Status of Cultural Identity: On *Beloved* and the Postcolonial Condition"--originally published in 1993, and subsequently included in his *Literary Theory and the Claims of History: Postmodernism, Objectivity, Multicultural Politics* (1997)--is reprinted at the beginning of *Reclaiming Identity* and furnishes its Ur-Text. Since almost all the contributors to the volume refer to this seminal essay, it all the more bears careful scrutiny. Mohanty sets forth here the central tenets of post-positivist realism, locates it in the moral realist paradigm worked out by philosophers of science like Richard Boyd, and then fleshes it out in two extended narrative examples. Citing Naomi Scheman's commentary upon a now-famous abused woman named Alice, Mohanty demonstrates persuasively that Alice's anger, released and processed through her participation in a women's consciousness-raising group, is the theoretical prism through which she views her world and herself in it correctly. Her emotions are based in an objective assessment of her situation and are thus rational and justified--and both more moral and more true that those of her antagonistic and benighted husband. However fragmentary and untheorized, Alice's experience contains a cognitive component that both reflects and furthers her understanding of her world.

     Mohanty further argues that Toni Morrison' s *Beloved*, by validating Sethe's murder of her baby as a manifestation of the epistemic privilege afforded the slave mother, enacts the procedures by which knowledge is achieved through error. Sethe achieves identity by affirming her capacity for self-determination (54). Paul D, by acknowledging that in his lust for Beloved he had been escorted to some "ocean-deep" place he once belonged to, learns that he had been wrong to accuse Sethe of having four feet, not two. "Both motherhood and the gendered division of labor on which slavery was built," Mohanty concludes, "are objective historical and social facts that shape what he knows and what he does not, [and] that--consequently--influence the moral judgment he makes" (52, 61). The processes by which the historical Alice and the fictional Paul D attain knowledge through error exemplify, for Mohanty, the centrality of identity--as understood through the methodology of post-positivist realism--to transformative political practice.

     Although Mohanty's essay makes an able case for a realist reclaiming of identity, its case for a far-reaching liberatory practice is not, to me, as persuasive. For Mohanty makes it clear that the "collective political struggles and oppositional social movements" (41) which will be aided by this second-wave identity politics can proceed within the limits of existing social arrangements. Indeed, he starts by considering the immediate practical benefits of his program: If multiculturalism is to be a goal of educational and political institutions, we need a workable notion of how a social group is unified by a common culture, as well as the ability to identify genuine cultural differences (and similarities) across groups. The we who wish to translate our dreams of diversity into social visions and agendas presumably take as given the existing institutions of capitalist society and simply wish to level the playing field.

     I do not deny that those of us who have progressive--indeed, revolutionary--social visions and agendas are constrained to fight our present-day battles on the terrain of reform. As a veteran of many a struggle in the Delegate Assembly of the Modern Language Association, I know full well how vital it is to seize--or at least invade--the ground of the bourgeoisie and turn it into a site of struggle. But there is a world of difference between entering the reformist domain in order to raise consciousness about the necessity of getting rid of capitalism and entering this domain in order to increase confidence in the ability of the system to cleanse itself of iniquity--and inequity. Mohanty makes passing reference to Marx's famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach and states that "sexism and racism" offer a distorted representation [that] "benefits the powerful and established groups and institutions" (40). But the nature of this benefit--much less a designation of its recipient--is never spelled out. Mohanty's recognition that "the institutions of social reproduction and cultural transmission--schools, libraries, newspapers, and museums, for instance--are oriented to the dominant cultural and social perspectives" does not lead him to develop a theory of ideology but instead to call for the elimination of bias by guaranteeing that these institutions are guided by people of diverse backgrounds. Mohanty tiptoes to the edge of a class analysis but draws back, concluding only that ending the repression of alternative sources of experience and value will enable "a more accurate understanding of the world we all share" (63). Presumably there is no fundamental clash between the we--of whatever sex or color--who run think-tanks and universities that serve the banks and corporations and the we--of whatever sex or color--who feel the impact of the rulers policies.

     Furthermore, Mohanty's reading of *Beloved*, while hailed as an exemplary instance of the use of literature in philosophical inquiry by the other contributors to *Reclaiming Identity*,is,to me, seriously flawed--not just as a textual interpretation, but as an exemplification of Mohanty's method. To begin with, Mohanty's description of what Paul D learns in both an emotional sense--"to have faith in the intergenerational lineage of black women whose primordial presence frames his moral questioning"--and a cognitive sense comes perilously close to affirming mythic and ahistorical notions of black womanhood. Rather than supporting Mohanty's conclusion that what Paul D has come to understand cognitively--that his history is "constructed and sustained by generations of black mothers"--flows from what he has absorbed affectively, these formulations suggest the dependence of emotion upon a raced and gendered essentialism (52,53).

     In addition, I think Mohanty quite seriously misreads the function of Paul D in Morrison's novel. While the reader glimpses Paul D's thoughts just before his return to Sethe, it cannot be forgotten that he has been absent for a long time, from both Sethe's life and the text itself: after Paul D makes his brutal declaration to Sethe that she has two legs, not four, he disappears, allowing Morrison to demonstrate that Sethe can and will contend with her two daughters, and her past, on her own. That he returns at all is a function as much of Stamp Paid's continuing intervention, and of the larger community's reacceptance of Sethe, as of any generalized lesson that he has learned. Indeed, by deciding retrospectively to summarize in a couple of pages near the very end of the narrative Paul Ds quite extraordinary experiences during the Civil War (not to be confused with his hellish period in the prison farm in Alfred, Georgia), Morrison signals to her reader that she could have decided to explore these events, had this been Paul D's story. Sethe's closing recognition that she can now put her story next to his, and vice versa, implicitly acknowledges this fact. In other words, Morrison's subordination of Paul D's story to Sethe's is largely accomplished through the formidable narrative resources of which Morrison is in such remarkable command. Mohanty's decision to read the novel as a transparent rendition of knowledges gained and lessons learned treats the characters as though they are real people, virtually collapsing the distinction between the analysis of Paul D and the analysis of Alice. While his interpretation of the lessons Alice gains from her anger is exciting and persuasive, Mohanty in effect ignores the text's rhetorical dimension--a problem common to the other discussions of literature in the volume as we will soon see.

     My critique of Mohanty's reading of *Beloved* is not, let me stress, based upon formalistic quibble or interpretive disagreement, but instead upon my conviction that fundamental limitations inform the project of second-wave identity politics. For Mohanty's commentary upon the cognitive component of *Beloved* rests upon the premise that what the character learns in a novel is the key to what the reader learns, both by way of affirming an already-held moral value (in this instance, slavery is wrong, freedom is right) and by way of expanding her/his knowledge (in this instance, of the particular historical experiences of African American enslaved women). While this formulation appears to possess broad applicability to literature, it is actually limited to texts in which the reader is assumed always already to agree with the moral values undergirding the plot. For, despite its great emotional power, much of the authority of *Beloved* derives from the fact that it interpellates a reader who lives in a society that (at least officially) condemns slavery. In its cognitive component, the novel--here I consult not only my own students response to *Beloved* but also comments Morrison has made about the novel in various interviews--aims to urge African American readers in particular to face the ghost of slavery that haunts not just the house on Bluestone Road but, she believes, the repressed memory of many African Americans to this day: rememory of yesterday makes possible tomorrow. Learning from experience, in other words, entails the recovery of what was always already known.

     But what can be said of the relation of fact to value in texts that are written from a standpoint invoking values not or not yet shared--at least officially--by a substantial public in any given society? What has Mohanty's approach to tell us, for instance, about texts that take as their premise the immorality of *wage* slavery? Here Mohanty misses, I think, the implications of the historical contingency acknowledged in the argument he cites from Boyd about the dependency of moral knowledge upon social and political experiments. For Boyd argues that "we would not have understood the role of political democracy in [shaping our conception of the human] good had the conditions not arisen in which the first limited democracies developed. Only after the moral insights gained from the first democratic experiments were in hand, were we equipped to see the depth of the moral peculiarity of slavery. Only since the establishment of the first socialist societies are we even beginning to obtain the data necessary to assess the role of egalitarian social practices in fostering the good" (40).

     In other words, the spectre of egalitarianism haunting the bourgeois conscience has not yet managed to equate freedom with wagelessness in the social imaginary. Movements for socialism and communism may have upped the ante, but the globe's inhabitants are just beginning to associate the good with the eradication of social hierarchy. Arguably, indeed, the failure of those movements (thus far) has had the specifically literary consequence of rendering it all the more difficult to create texts that can assume a readership in agreement with radically egalitarian values; the audience that was at least partially available to, say, writers of Depression-era proletarian novels is less present today. Yet while some proletarian writers of the 1930s chose to indict capitalism by depicting characters acquiring a revolutionary class consciousness (one thinks of Jack Conroys *The Disinherited* or Myra Pages *Moscow Yankee*), many others did so by portraying individuals whose experiences fail to afford them the knowledge of totality that might free them from alienation and exploitation (one thinks of Richard Wright's s *Lawd Today* and *Native Son* or Tille Olsen's *Yonnondio*).

     In proletarian novels portraying aborted class consciousness, the writer's task was to discover other didactic means through which to signal that it is capitalism that--through terror, economic coercion, and/or ideology--precludes such self-identification as a member of the working class, not only for the text's protagonist but for the many like her/him in the real world. What was true in the 1930s is, given the twists and turns of twentieth-century movements for socialism and communism, still more true today. Any text written from a radically anticapitalist standpoint cannot assume that its reader always already agrees that wage slavery is immoral; instead, the text must in fact direct many of its rhetorical resources toward instilling precisely this understanding in the reader. In such texts, the character's experience--even when worked up and theorized by a reader or critic of a post-positivist realist persuasion--cannot render cognition of the world, and in fact renders false cognition: that is, ideology. It is only the experience of the collective working class, worked up as a theoretical critique of exploitation that logically implies the necessity for (real) communism, which fully illuminates the structured totality giving rise to individual experience--and ideology--in the first place.

     While this discursus upon proletarian fiction may seem to have taken us somewhat afield, what I hope to have suggested is that Mohanty's formulation of the truth-telling and value-laden capacities of the experiences encoded in narratives about and by the oppressed is largely limited to texts that invoke notions of identity that are widely shared, indeed, held to be self-evident. Much of the cognition supplied in such texts is in fact *re*-cognition. Part of what distinguishes second-wave identity politics from the first wave, indeed, is precisely the fact that such politics have become, to a significant degree, normative. The celebration of diversity based upon gender and race--sexuality still has a ways to go--is in fact a staple of capitalist liberal pluralism. As a methodology, post-positivist realism can and should be enlisted to support the Marxist argument that the eradication of capitalism, and the institution of a wageless social order run by the producers, is the good. But this demonstration must be based in the philosophical recognition that access to the structured totality that is capitalist social relations is--at least at this current historical juncture--rarely available through individual experience--or narratives about such experience--alone.

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     Various implications and potentialities in the post-positivist realist projectare explored in a number of the essays gathered in *Reclaiming Identity*. Moya's discussion of the realist project she sees embeddedin Cherrie Moraga's theory of the flesh takes issue with Donna Haraway's and Judith Butler's postmodernist feminism, which, as much as the gender essentialism accompanying most **C**hicano cultural nationalism, limits the theoretical domain and undermines the political practice that can and should characterize real Chicana identity. Michael R. Hames-Garcia, in hiscall for an identity politicsthat can reappropriate multiplicity from the post-structuralists, launches an effective broadside against the notion of strategic essentialism, which, he argues, claims that **"**norms are unavoidable but can only be . . . arbitrary . . . or accidental**"** (118). Minh T. Nguyen, following the lineaments of Mohanty's treatment of *Beloved*, argues that an understanding of the epistemic status of emotions and values in the novels of Joy Kogawa furnishes pedagogue and reader alike with an alternative to the disabling postmodernization of Asian American literature(172-3). Brent R. Henze, formulating a theory of agency out of the notion of epistemic privilege, argues that different participants bring different knowledges to political movements, thereby moving beyond separatism and enabling outsiders and the oppressed alike legitimate, if highly differentiated, roles. John H. Zammito cogently intervenes in current historiographical debates by arguing for a version of historical facts and documents as at once theory-mediated and possessing factual value. Linda Martin Alcoff situates post-positivist realism as a challenge to the skeptical tradition in Western philosophy that, from Hegel to Foucault, equates the **"**accepting [of] social categories of identity with a form of subordination**"** (334). William S. Wilkerson provides a fascinating discussion of the transformative**--**and necessarily political**--**process involved in coming out of the closet, a process that richly illustrates the role of error in post-positivist realism:

Coming out . . . represents a rejection of an ideological and distorted view of a person's experience, a view that suppressed certain relevant patterns in one's life and which must be set aside as inaccurate in light of the more comprehensive view granted by the acceptance of gay identity (277).

While there is much to be learned here, however, several of the contributions to *Reclaiming Identity*, when examined from a Marxist standpoint, evince shortcomings, theoretical and practical, similar to those accompanying Mohanty's project. A few of the contributors at least make no claim to being in the historical materialist tradition. Zammito, for one, disclaims any connection to Marxism whatsoever, evincing a weariness with left and liberal politics alike but casting his lot unambiguously with the latter: "Like democracy [in society], we could call [democracy in our discipline] the worst political system (for intellectual life)," he writes, "except for all the others that have been tried." Nguyen, too, appears to be far more at ease with the discourse of humanist liberalism informing her analysis of Kogawa--whom she values for articulating an alternate conception of love enabling healing--than she is with the leftist political categories required to discuss the distinction between rebellion and revolution (191) in the writings of the anticapitalist radical (to Nyguyen, social activist) Grace Lee Boggs.

     Zammito and Nguyen exhibit an unabashed preference for the discourse of liberal humanism. The absence of a serious engagement with Marxism is more disappointing in Alcoff's essay, which addresses the dialectical tradition in Western philosophy. In Alcoff's view, post-positivist realism--which she heroizes as "talking heresy" and "risk tak[ing] . . . by people already at risk in the academy"--offers the first significant challenge to two hundred years of philosophy during which identity has been theorized deterministically, as primarily the product of external--and oppressive--conditions. Sweeping aside two centuries of thinking that contains at least some significant dialectical elements, Alcoff offers a one-sided view of the attempts to theorize a subject constituted by the interaction of self and world undertaken by a whole range of thinkers--from Hegel to Freud to Sartre (a genealogy from which Marx is notably absent). Alcoff's claim that post-positivist realism has achieved a genuinely dialectical theorization of identity--as at once entailing "a location in social space" and "depend[ing] on any given individual's active self-understanding"--thus ends up falling back upon the subject in the subject/object dialectic, for she does not take into account the effects that ideology and class struggle--indeed, history itself--have in shaping (determining?) how individuals achieve "active self-understanding." The consequence of Alcoff's idealist approach to subjectivity emerges with particular clarity in her closing remarks about political practice, where she posits the importance of a rally speaker's identity--e.g., being African-American--in addressing a specific circumstance--e.g., police brutality. What is involved here is not "authenticity" as such, Alcoff argues, but simply the fact that, for African Americans, "identity [makes] a difference in what they [know] about and how they approac[h] a problem that we all face." But she concludes--in a glancing reference to Althusser--that "to respond to interpellation by accepting the hail, even in the context of racialized identities, is not simply to capitulate to power but to actively engage in the construction of a self" (p. 340). The historical materialist theorization of identity formation in relation to ideology is reduced to a determinist caricature ("simply to capitulate to power") in order to be counterposed with the empowering antiracist agency presumably enabled by post-positivist realism. Where a genuinely historical materialist analysis of the basis of the African-American speaker's epistemic privilege in addressing police brutality would stress her/his location in exploitative social relations of production that are shored up by racist ideology and practice, Alcoff's explanatory model largely assigns the speaker's greater capacity to speak accurately about this subject to the discursive self-fashioning enabled by experience.

     Other contributors to *Reclaiming Identity* allude familiarly to the Marxist tradition but then go on to ignore its cardinal principles. In spite of occasional gestures toward a Marxian notion of praxis, I do not think I encountered the word "capitalism" more than once or twice in the entire volume. Nor does any of the contributors once suggest that the term "worker" might supply the basis for an identity that could be "transformative." Moya lists gender, race, class, and sexuality as "the different social categories . . . that together constitute an individual's social location" (81), mentioning the internalized racism and classism that for years kept Moraga from developing a Chicana identity. While post structuralists have been rightly criticized for their bogus deconstruction of class, Moya's "classism" does not remedy the problem insofar is it implies--in the parallel with sexism and racism--that it is wrong to discriminate against someone on the basis of her/his class. Marxists in fact call upon the world's workers to "discriminate against" the ruling class--to replace the dictatorship of Capital with the dictatorship of the proletariat.

     In addition, even as mere subject position class is apparently unimportant, since it disappears from Moya's analysis of the politicized Chicana identity that she finds objectively present--if not theoretically articulated--in Moraga's text. Hames-Garcia rhetorically shifts the ground of his argument from categories inviting class analysis to vitiating it. He starts by remarking that "at issue in realism's understanding of social identity are the coherence and accuracy with which theories about groups account for the real social features of the systems of exploitation that give those social groups their political salience" (109). Two paragraphs later, however, he reformulates his terms, stating that "realism sees that apparently separate identities result from real relations of oppression and exploitation that structure our society." He then continues:

The social processes of domination and exploitation become obscured by the reified appearance social groups take within an essentialist framework. Domination benefits from the naturalization of social identities, which is also therefore the naturalization of domination. Resistance to domination must recognize that immediacy is always already mediated by the conditions of existence in which experience is comprehended. Far from yielding the truth of experience, immediacy is thus untruth naturalized by domination. (110)

Having moved from the Marxist concept of exploitation to the non-Marxist notion of domination through the bridge term oppression, Hames-Garcia ends up calling for "nondominating intersubjective self-recognition" (123) as the goal of a political practice based upon multiplicity.

     While domination and oppression are not realities unrelated to exploitation, they are not equivalent; the price paid by the blurring of terms becomes clear when Hames-Garcia subsequently attempts to reintroduce the notion of exploitation when analyzing a toothpaste commercial featuring two women of color kissing. Inquiring whether "the traditional conception of the subject [has] been altered or challenged significantly if the toothpaste is produced by exploited workers in an unsafe workplace in a polluted county in North Carolina" or "if the toothpaste company is controlled by a wealthy group of international shareholders bent upon the maximization of surplus profit" (124), Hames-Garcia presumably raises these questions in order to focus upon the issue of class. But his formulation implies that exploitation consists in *super*exploitation; would it be all right if the toothpaste were produced by better-paid wage-laborers in a clean factory in New Jersey? It suggests, moreover, that there is something particularly nefarious about an *international* group of investors; would it be better if the shareholders were all born in the U.S.A.? While these might seem like hair-splitting complaints, my point is that Hames-Garcia assimilates chosen elements of the Marxist paradigm to a liberal reformist discourse that is hardly aimed at abolishing capitalism, and in fact could be said to strengthen it through offering a partial critique of abuses that are in fact partially remediable. Moreover, his call for nondominating intersubjective self-recognition as not just the means but the end of reclaimed identity politics leaves precious little room for activists motivated by a totalizing analysis of the mode of production.

     Henze's essay on agency exemplifies perhaps better than any other piece in *Reclaiming Identity* the extent to which postmodernist categories continue to inform the post-positivist realist discourse from which they have purportedly been excised. Henze's project potentially offers a powerful critique of essentialist models of group identity, as well as of the paralysis--inducing postmodernist recoil against essentialism. But his insistence upon naming as outsiders--a term drawn from Mohanty--those not-immediate-victims (presumably often intellectuals) who enter political movements precludes any notion of conjoined agency based upon common interest:

Outsiders cannot simply investigate the effects of oppressive power structures in their own lives; on the contrary, their relationships to the oppressed require them to understand systems of oppression from the perspectives of the oppressed, producing a less partial awareness of matrices of power, as well as their specific relationships with those matrices (including the broader implications of their experiences of enablement). Only by becoming conscious of the experience of the garment worker can I properly understand my contribution to the power structure that incongruously yields me a T-shirt and yields the laborer a penny of every dollar I spend. Without working to understand her perspective, my own partial perspective is ineffectual. But by supplementing my perspective with hers, I am enabled to make better-informed choices about my own actions--actions that resist or contribute to the oppression that I may only witness secondhand. (246-7)

The reconception of our experiences can then affect our own actions and perspectives, Henze concludes, facilitating our resistance to structures of oppression in passive or active ways (e.g., by no longer choosing to buy Gap T-shirts, or by actively motivating others to take the same step) (247).

     To its credit, Henze's formulation targets the fatuousness, not to say hypocrisy, of Bill Clinton's famous I can feel your pain. It also reminds us that the capitalist division of mental from manual labor can produce an arrogance in mental laborers undermining even their (our?) best intentions to ally them(our?)selves with the more workerly segments of the working class. But Henze's formulation both presupposes and promotes a politics of guilt that forecloses any serious attempt to figure out exactly how, say, T-shirt-buying U.S. graduate students--who hardly sit on the top of the financial heap--and El Salvadoran factory workers perform different roles in the realization of capital. That the people in some parts of the world are designated as buyers of the products created by people in other parts of the world does not mean that the former are not themselves exploited workers or that they benefit from imperialism as a world system. The proposal that buying ones T-shirts at someplace other than the Gap would somehow constitute an act of resistance demonstrates, further, the shallowness of an analysis of social relations based upon the category of experience. For is there a single T-shirt anywhere on the planet not produced by superexploited labor, most likely of people--especially women--of color?

     Henze's discussion of outsiders bears a more than superficial resemblance to the familiar postmodernist mischaracterization of class analysis as class reductionism. For, in both, the assertion of common interest is conflated, falsely, with the claim to sameness of position. That people who labor under capitalism are differentially inserted in its social relations of production does not mean that the vast majority do not have the same interest in abolishing those relations of production. Indeed, part of the struggle to comprehend capitalism in its totality entails an understanding precisely of the dialectics of similarity and difference--among nations, "races," classes, and class sectors--that Henze rules out of court. But then, Henze is not really talking about capitalism, but about matrices of power: the Foucauldian grounding of his argument is all the more significant for its being unacknowledged.

     Most of the political movements referenced and advocated in *Reclaiming Identity* are, at least to some degree, multi-racial and multi-gendered; the writers' cautions with regard to non-dominance are understood in the context of an alliance politics hoping to get beyond the essentialist separatisms associated with first-wave identity politics. At first glance, then, Amie A. Macdonald's "Racial Authenticity and White Separatism" is an anomaly, for it advocates racial separatism in college housing as a positive social good. Especially familiar with Cornell University--where presumably she was a graduate student--Macdonald is clearly concerned about campus racism, for she has compiled an impressively thorough roster of recent incidents in which students of color have been the targets of abuse and discrimination in both social and educational settings (205). Since the moral indignation guiding her project is unmistakable, her call for segregated housing is therefore all the more troubling. Enlisting Mohanty's notions of "epistemic need" and "field of moral inquiry" (209), Macdonald proposes that, above and beyond any value they might have in enabling students of color to earn better grades or feel more comfortable, race-based housing programs are valuable because they preserve "racially defined communities of meaning" (221), thereby expanding the epistemological base of knowledge. Since "the basic mission of the university, she opines, is to pursue truth and produce knowledge about the social, political, scientific, and aesthetic worlds we encounter as humans" (222), race-based housing programs further this purpose:

Anyone concerned with the long-range goal of securing broad-based freedom and autonomy should be committed to the continued existence of racially defined communities on the grounds that different racial identities provide people with different experiences of the world. If we are to have a hope of effectively interpreting the world we need to draw upon all epistemic resources. The preservation of racially defined communities of meaning secures the continued diversity of interpretations of the social world, thereby providing a richer array of knowledges from which to construct social political aesthetic, spiritual, and scientific accounts of our experience. (213)

Anticipating and rejecting counter-arguments charging her with racial essentialism (or, equally bad, strategic essentialism), Macdonald maintains that acts of self-segregation undertaken in pursuit of racial specificity are worlds apart from acts of segregation imposed in pursuit of white supremacy. She gestures toward the notion that self-segregation is a means to a larger--and presumably unified--end, noting that "it is both theoretically and practically possible to conceive of racial groups that are at one and the same time ultimately diverse" (219). At present, however, program houses are a positive good and ought not merely to be tolerated but aggressively instituted, since they "provide a safe social and intellectual space for students of color and white students to address themselves to these questions and thus foster the development of inessentialist racial identities" (219). According to Macdonald's argument, white students and students of color should inhabit different dormitories so that they may learn how bad racism is.

     I think that Macdonald's position is wrong. To begin with, Macdonald invokes a version of the history of U.S. struggles against racism that partakes of what Adolph Reed has called the romance of Jim Crow by denying, ignoring, or trivializing the record of activist (indeed epic) multi-racial unity--from Bacon's Rebellion and the abolitionist movement to the Communist-led struggles of the 1930s, the Civil Rights Movement and beyond. Moreover, Macdonald appropriates Marx to defend not proletarian internationalism but racial separatism:

Perhaps most famously asserted by Marx, writes Macdonald, people who are at one and the same time both *oppressed by* and *central to* the continued existence of an economic, social, or political system have a unique opportunity to understand and analyze that system. (212)

Here the communist conception of the proletariat as the group objectively positioned to abolish class society--and in the process effect its own self-abolition as a class--is turned into a rationale for viewing groups organized around racial specificity as carriers of emancipatory truth.

     In addition, Macdonald adheres to an oddly utopian view of the university as a site beyond politics. She may acknowledge--in a footnote--that "the culturally specific attitude toward education of the ruling class entails legitimizing one's proper place in corporate leadership, preserving family fortunes (often to the exclusion of community wealth), and generating individual economic growth under capitalism" (210). Nonetheless, she also asserts, "given that the most general function of the university is to provide an arena in which people may search for the truth, nowhere is this epistemic diversity more necessary than on our university campuses" (213). One wonders if Macdonald is suggesting, by default, that the faculties who set up curricula, the administrators who oversee housing, and the boards of trustees who hire them--at places like Cornell, no less!--are more to be trusted as agents of progressive change than are the students whose fates they mold. Apparently the students themselves cannot be trusted to interact in ways that will diminish the racism that saturates U.S. society: better that they should be kept apart from one another, since the notions about "race" with which they have been imbued cannot be altered through *experiences* proving otherwise.

     Macdonald appears to discern no contradiction between her position that students of different racial groups are best deprived of the experience of interaction and the canonical post-positivist realist principle--we might call it the Alice principle--that experience, even if fragmentary and affect-laden, contains cognitive elements that can serve as the basis for higher orders of cognition. Moreover, Macdonald's claim, cited above, that "it is both theoretically and practically possible to conceive of racial groups that are at one and the same time ultimately diverse" does not logically mesh with the rest of her argument about racial specificity. For while she seemingly invokes the proposition, canonical among evolutionary biologists, that race is socially constructed, and that races are possessed of greater internal heterogeneity than populations grouped according to other principles, Macdonald acknowledges that racial groups are ultimately diverse not in order to abolish the notion of race but in order to retain it. Indeed--in tandem with the position that racial specificity has progressive outcomes because of its epistemic consequences in sustaining a diversity of racial communities of meaning--it would be, arguably, a positive development if the United States followed the path of Haiti, designating eight-five different categories of mulatto, all neatly set apart in recognition of the epistemic value that they contribute to the post-positivist realist project.

     One might argue that Macdonald reenacts on one level the essentialism that she has repudiated on another. But in my view her falling back upon essentialism is more a manifestation than a cause of the principal flaw in her position, which is that she takes as given the premise that a racial group's *choosing* to engage in self-segregation is in itself sufficient moral grounds for validating the product of such a choice as a field of moral inquiry. Macdonald quotes Lucius Outlaw to the effect that "for many persons--and I place myself in this group--the continued existence of race and ethnic based communities of meaning is highly desirable *even if, in the very next instant, racism and perverted, invidious ethnocentrism in every form and manifestation would disappear forever"* (Outlaws italics) (214). Mohanty, in his book, asserts rightly that "good identities are based on good explanations of the social world" (Mohanty, 238). Yet here it seems quite clear that "good identities" exceed entirely such explanations, an excess which, it would seem, renders such identities, on post-positivist grounds, beyond rational justification and thus, indeed, essentialist.

     Further, citing an opinion--crucially for Macdonald's rhetoric here, that of an African American--does not in itself guarantee that an argument has been proved. Clearly there is validity in Macdonald's assertion that imposed segregation differs qualitatively from self-segregation; but this still does not mean that self-segregation is objectively a social good. For a crucial component of moral realism--the ethics with which the epistemology of post-positivist realism is presumably allied--is the proposition that social goods must be demonstrated, not assumed.

     The Marxist argument against segregation--that it is bad because it goes against the material interest that all non-ruling class people share in common--may not be self-evident; indeed, it may appear far less self-evident than Macdonald's identity politics-based call for self-segregation; nonetheless, the Marxist argument is susceptible to just this kind of moral realist proof, logical and empirical. That Macdonald feels no necessity to engage in such a demonstration suggests the extent to which she presupposes a liberal doctrine of rights, in which individual autonomy figures as an uninterrogated good and supplies the epistemological ground for a notion of group autonomy as self-determination. While Macdonald's conflation of group autonomy with racial specificity smacks of essentialism, then, this is a consequence more of the flawed political assumptions undergirding her argument than of any covert biologism. That post-positivist realism can be deployed to valorize racial segregation for its presumably salutary epistemic consequences indicates that while philosophical realism may be a necessary component of the good, it is not sufficient.

     The implicit reliance of Macdonald's argument upon a politics privileging autonomy and self-determination brings me to the final issue I wish to discuss here--namely, the relationship of the post-positivist realist project of reclaiming identity to the problematic of nationalism. Caroline Hau's powerful essay--"On Representing Others: Intellectuals, Pedagogy, and the Uses of Error"--at once embodies this project's potential for lucid critique and testifies to the need for a critical confrontation with the nationalist underpinnings of the project of reclaiming identity. To me, the great strength of Hau's discussion of the place of intellectuals in Third-World liberation movements is her strong defense of the role of revolutionary theory and her corresponding refutation of the notion--here associated with Gayatri Spivak, but endemic among postmodernist theorists--that the act of speaking for others is "necessarily authoritarian and suspect" (136). Analyzing the relation of theory to practice in Mao Zedong's description of the process by which the masses become agents of their own liberation, Hau points out that Mao fails to theorize the role played by error in the attaining of knowledge, rendering it "a pragmatic rather than an intellectual concern" (141). While Frantz Fanon's notion of political education--recognizing how class and other differences among the colonized people can inform the epistemic project of forging a national culture--has the advantage of allow[ing] the people to pass from total, indiscriminatory nationalism to social and economic awareness, his "romanticized notion" that "the masses present pure unmediated truth" and therefore "embody history" makes the intellectual merely the supplier of "empty form" (143). For Amilcar Cabral, by contrast, "'the people' are not only defined existentially by anticolonial struggle, but theoretically by the desire for 'what corresponds to the fundamental necessity of the history of our land'" (144). In other words, for Cabral, to talk about the people is to *theorize* history and to realize that [the revolutionary consciousness of the masses of the people] "'*is not and never was spontaneous in any part of the world*'"(his italics, 147). In working out a theory of interests (148) that will produce a revolutionary practice successfully unify[ing] the domains of elite and popular politics on the national level, moreover, it is crucial not only to comprehend the role of error in the movement toward greater truth but also to have a theory of ideology capable of producing a "precise understanding of the nature and sources of error and mystification" (160).

     Haus' discussion is valuable, to begin with, for its dialectical understanding of the relation of intellectuals (really, theorists) to Third World mass movements and its refusal to engage in an a prioristic--and politically paralyzing--formulation of intellectuals as "outsiders." This achievement is enabled to no small degree because she has a notion of interests as factual and therefore capable of yielding objective knowledge (162 n.). Haus analysis is further strengthened by her insistence that ideology lies at the heart of the inadequate or distorted understandings of social reality that produce error. To engage in the post-positivist realist project of seeing "error as *constitutive* (Haus italics) of the condition of possibility, indeed, the necessity, of truth" is simultaneously to undertake a critique of the false consciousness that impedes objective inquiry and, among other things, creates mistaken identifications of friends and enemies. "Liberation struggles are, indeed, the best schools of good sense," she concludes, "because they deepen our understanding not only of what is involved in the fight for radical change but also of what is involved in the principled study of reality" (165).

     While Hau's methodology persuasively demonstrates the role that post-positivist realism can play in illuminating the dialectics of historical movements, in its propositional content--that is, in its concrete analysis of, and assertions about, the politics of national liberation struggles--her argument casts a different sort of light upon the political assumptions embedded in the project of reclaiming identity, at least as it is worked out by other essayists in the collection. For implicit in Hau's entire discussion is the premise that, in "nationalitarian" liberation movements, the contradiction between classes internal to the nation is nonantagonistic; indeed, the problem of the revolutionary intellectual--usually a renegade from the petty bourgeoisie or even the bourgeoisie--is conflated with the more general problem of all-class unity against the colonial oppressor. In this context, she gives too short shrift, I think, to Mao's call upon revolutionary intellectuals to change from one class to another (139) and instead stresses the problems--admittedly real--in his formulation of mass agency. What Hau's argument assumes, indeed, is the proposition that the bad nationalism of colonialism and imperialism can, indeed, must, be counterposed with the good nationalism of anticolonial and antiimperialist liberation movements.

     But although the conception of good nationalism has been canonical to much left doctrine since the time of Lenin, it should, when viewed from the vantage-point of post-positivist realism, be subjected to as thorough scrutiny as any other proposition making a claim to being a social good. The record of broken promises and betrayed ideals that accompanies the history of national liberation movements in the twentieth century requires that we do no less. The increasing class polarities in South Africa, which under the leadership of the African National Congress abolished political and social apartheid only to transfer substantial economic power to an emergent black bourgeoisie, testify not to the incompleteness of the nationalist phase of social revolution, according to Leninist principle, but instead to the bankruptcy of the notion that this bourgeoisie and the African working class have--or ever had--a common interest.

     And as of this writing in March 2002, the inability of the Yasir Arafat-led Palestinian Authority any longer to contain the rebellious energies of oppressed and exploited Palestinian workers and youth testifies to the convergence of good nationalism with bad. Even when it could be said to have taken on the greater evil of an imperial state--here, Israel, backed up by the still greater imperialism of the U.S.--bourgeois nationalist leadership continually manifests its antipathetic class relationship to the subaltern proletariat and can hardly be viewed any longer as anti-imperialist.

     I dwell upon Hau's largely uninterrogated embrace of good nationalism not because I think it points to significant methodological flaws in her argument--it does not--but because it affords key insight into the conceptual--may I say, ideological?--framework in which the problem of identity is conceived in several other places in the volume. In the epigraph to Moya's introductory essay, Elizabeth Martinez states:

The bitter truth is that in a racist society where a brown skin (along with other colors) can cost lives, people will embrace any ideology that seems to offer the hope of change. Even when that ideology proves counter-productive, the hope persists. . . . [N]ationalism, then, has to be seen as a complicated, two-edged sword. it can't be fully understood if we just dismiss it as identity politics. (1)

In fact, several of the contributions to *Reclaiming Identity*, including those of the editors, have an abiding nationalist tinge. Moya may point out, in her commentary on Moraga, that "the cultural nationalist emphasis on cultural survival in an Anglo-dominated society further instituted strict controls on the sexual autonomy of Chicanas" (89). Yet Moya views Moraga's theory of the flesh--approvingly--not as a repudiation, but instead an antisexist refinement and supersession, of the nationalist project that, in the 1960s and 1970s, worked "within existing democratic structures and institutions" for economic improvement and "within existing institutions of higher education . . . to increase cultural consciousness and pride" (88). What distinguishes second-wave from first-wave identity politics, it would seem, is not that they propose a critique of nationalism's simultaneous division of the working class and embrace of capitalist democracy, but that they call for a more multivalent and internally nonhegemonic nationalism. Moraga manages to move beyond some other feminists of color whose writings seem to imply a self-evident relationship among social location, knowledge, and identity not because she repudiates this relationship as such, but because she insists that it be understood not as self-evident but as "*theoretically mediated* " (92) (Moya's italics). And although Moya has nodded toward Marx via Mohanty, asserting that "the subjugation of various peoples, ideas, and practices is fundamental to the colonial, neocolonial, imperial, or capitalist project" (86), it would appear that the major asset of Moraga's formulation of Chicana identity--to both Chicanas and society at large--is that it enriches the cognitive terrain inhabited by one and all. A multiculturalism based upon such epistemically sophisticated reclaimed identities would at once proliferate the nationalisms constituting the body politic and affirm the Nation to which that body politic corresponds.

     While a nationalist paradigm is implicit rather than explicit in most of the essays in *Reclaiming Identity*, its rhetoric figures centrally in some. That Mohanty, Hames-Garcia, and Alcoff give the term self-determination--the single most important term in the discourse of twentieth-century anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist movements--a primarily psychological, and identity-based, signification, does not mean that they do not invoke key moments in the term's political history. Thus Mohanty opines, discussing *Beloved*, that Sethe's situation and that of other slave mothers reminds us that "humanity is itself measured in terms of a moral personhood, a capacity for self-determination, which the institution of slavery denied the slave" (54). Hames-Garcia concludes that his theorization of multiplicity acknowledges the possibility of more and less objective knowledge of universal human needs and interests, "like the need for self-determination and freedom from gender, racial, and economic slavery, or the interest in being a whole and multiple self" (127). Alcoff's criticism of Hegel for mak[ing] "self-determination parasitic upon a process ontology within an open dialectic" presupposes that self-determination is the basis of the identity that she hopes more successfully, and more dialectically, to theorize.

     The meaning that these theorists attach to self-determination on the personal level would appear to be unarguable: it *is* a social good that people make decisions for themselves and not be enslaved or otherwise controlled by others. Given its history, moreover, the term carries revolutionary overtones, implying that, in the case of a person negatively targeted by societal racism, sexism, or homophobia, the individual's struggle for an emancipated identity--moral personhood--is analogous with a colonized people's struggle for autonomy from colonial domination. But just as movements for national liberation have routinely become enmired in class contradictions, movements based upon identity politics, of whatever wave, come up against the limitations posed by the postulation of multiple, and disarticulated, causalities. Indeed, for all their protestations against the localism, fragmentation, and relativism promoted by postmodernism, the various arguments for reclaiming identity gathered in this volume suggest the extent to which the postmodernist disarticulation of social causalities has assumed near-aprioristic status. The Marxist left's inadvertent contribution to this process, through the etiolation of the call for good nationalism into the call for disparate identities, would be a fascinating--if tragic and deeply ironic--narrative to trace.

     In highlighting the correspondence between the rhetoric of Third World movements for national liberation and the rhetoric of contemporaneous movements based upon identity politics--first and second-wave alike--I am not, let me emphasize, collapsing the latter into the former. The call for self-determination issued by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in the wake of the Great War was intended to expose the specious discourse of self-determination in the discourse of the League of (Imperial) Nations, as well as the deeply racist and Eurocentric view of colonial peoples taken by the Second International, which saw nothing wrong with the proposition that superexploited workers of color from the periphery should contribute to developing the forces of production in the metropole, thus hastening the coming of socialism. The tremendous appeal of the Leninist formulation to revolutionaries of color around the globe, and the formation of the Third International largely upon this basis, testifies to the logic, at the time, of contradistinguishing good from bad nationalisms--even though any number of revolutionaries, including Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin himself, recognized the class-collaborationist danger being risked.

     Fanon, Cabral, and especially Mao were thus involved in political struggles that envisioned the movement for national liberation as a flawed but necessary first step in a process that would lead toward socialism and eventually communism. While in retrospect we can see that the advocacy of this stagist doctrine resulted in socialist stillbirth, Monday-morning quarterbacking in examining class struggles of such world-historical scale and heroic intent must surely be undertaken with a deeply dialectical humility, to say the least. But when the rhetoric of self-determination and autonomy is invoked in calls for reclaiming identity in the context of the bourgeois university--or for students of different racial groups to engage in voluntary self-segregation in the name of antiracism--history repeats itself as farce.

     Indeed, those of us who as students participated in Vietnam-war era campus campaigns against university-based war research, ROTC, and CIA/Dow Chemical recruitment, and became Marxists as the result of our experiences in this process may find it odd that, in thirty years, the bourgeois university has somehow altered its class character and now, as a privileged site enabling the reclamation of identity, serves the cause of human emancipation, providing "an arena in which people may search for the truth."

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     I hope to have demonstrated that the project of reclaiming identity from the standpoint of post-positivist realism encounters some serious logical and political difficulties. While post-positivist realism has important methodological affinities with Marxism, its enlistment in the cause of second-wave identity politics cannot move beyond a multiple-causation model of oppression that perpetuates the notion that capitalism is not at the root of the multiple oppressions variously experienced by the great majority of the world's people. Aspiring to supersede the paralyzing aporias of postmodernism, the move to reclaim identity politics on the putatively firmer ground of post-positivist realism encounters aporias of its own. Capable of providing, finally, only scattered and local insights into the very real crises, political and epistemological, of our day, the project outlined in *Reclaiming Identity*--and the experience involved in studying it may afford a cognition more symptomatic than substantive. That the potential post-positivist realism holds for enhancing dialectical materialism should be to a significant degree dissipated in a program amounting, in large part, to postmodernism divested of relativism, should indicate to us how completely postmodernism has gone into the groundwater of contemporary theory.

     I have composed this critique in a somewhat polemical manner because, first, I feel that vital issues are at stake, and, second, because the contributors to *Reclaiming Identity* are clearly committed to engaging in serious and constructive debate about the best methodology to adopt in understanding, and acting to change, the troublesome historical reality that we inhabit. I hope that my comments here will be received as they are intended, as a constructive contribution to this debate, and that we will together be able to put our various shoulders to various wheels, theoretical and practical, in the dire days ahead.



 **Note**

[1](#ref1) I would like to thank Gregory Meyerson and Marcial Gonzalez for the many useful insights they have given me into the project of post-positivist realism; any erroneous assertions or judgments are, needless to say, my own.