

*Critical Exchange*

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The Work of Fredric Jameson

General Editor's Preface JAMES J. SOSNOSKI .....	ii
Introduction STEVE NIMIS.....	iii
Bibliography of Fredric Jameson .....	v
"The Ideological Analysis of Space" FREDRIC JAMESON .....	1
"Does Jameson Have Any Use For Allegory?" CAROL P. JAMES .....	16
"The Jameson Effect" JAMES H. KAVANAUGH .....	29
"The Political Unconscious of Jameson's The Political Unconscious" JAMES IPFLAND.....	40
"The Marxism Deconstruction Debate" MICHAEL RYAN.....	59
"Jameson and the Dialectical Use of Genre Criticism" JUNE HOWARD.....	70
"Imagining the Real: Jameson's Use of Lacan" MICHAEL CLARK.....	81
"Jameson's Utopias" LARYSA MYKYTA.....	90
"The Dialectic of Utopia and Ideology in Spanish Golden Age Poetry" JOHN BEVERLEY.....	102

## GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

James J. Sosnoski

Critical Exchange is a journal of research in progress. It attempts to bridge the gap between the moment of critical articulation and the time of its publication. Under the auspices of the Society for Critical Exchange (SCE), scholars actively involved in researching issues central to the development of contemporary literary theory are brought together to "exchange" their views. Within months of the event, an edited record of their communal inquiry is published in these pages.

Critical Exchange 15 will publish the proceedings of the 1983 MLA session on "The Institutionalization and Professionalization of Literary Studies." It will feature essays by Stanley Fish, Walter Benn Michaels, Richard Ohmann and Samuel Weber and will be edited by David Shumway.

Critical Exchange is circulated only among the members of the Society for Critical Exchange. The Spring issue of CEx is usually devoted to the SCE MLA session. The Fall issue is usually devoted to some other SCE sponsored event. Any member of SCE is welcome to develop a proposal for an "exchange"; and, if it is accepted by the Editorial Board, to guest edit the proceedings. If you have an idea for an "exchange," please write or call.

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## INTRODUCTION

Steve Nimis

At the 1982 MMLA in Cincinnati The Society for Critical Exchange, Miami University of Ohio and its language departments sponsored a series of special events centered around the work of Fredric Jameson, consisting of a symposium in Oxford, an address by Jameson at the MMLA and two sessions of papers on his work to which Jameson responded. The address at the MMLA, "The Ideological Analysis of Space," and the eight papers given in the two MMLA sessions are reproduced herein. These essays and the interest and excitement they aroused are a testament to the profession's recognition and acceptance of the contribution which Marxist criticism has been making to the study of literature, society and culture in America; nor is it without cause that one commentator included in this collection calls this professional recognition "The Jameson Effect," for surely it is the substantial scholarly output of Jameson (see attached bibliography) which has contributed the most to making Marxism unavoidable in America. Is there, however, a pernicious cooptation of Marxism afoot in this professional recognition? Or is Jameson, rather, trying to coopt the rest of the literary enterprise? Is he endangering the pointedness of the Marxist critique of culture by absorbing too much of that enterprise? These questions and many more are addressed in these essays, and indeed, the range of issues which emerge in a discussion of Jameson's work indicates the breadth of the Marxist provenance since Jameson has "taken effect."

As guest editor of this issue of Critical Exchange, I would like to make an observation on that most controversial aspect of The Political Unconscious, the audacious claim that Marxism is the ultimate horizon of all literary inquiry. One should perhaps say the audacity of the claim is controversial, for I suspect that the point is the prospect of any monolith (as opposed to a specifically Marxist one) being proposed in an enterprise which takes pride in its tolerance of competing paradigms that is audacious. From the standpoint of modern academia, in fact, the claim that literary studies have an all-encompassing framework is somewhat of a scandal, since it was the good-natured flexibility of the profession which let these "pinkos" in in the first place. The theoretical plausibility of the "totalizing" impulse behind Jameson's "subsumption" of all other interpretive modes and systems by historicizing them will no doubt be pilloried for sometime to come, and in some quarters Jameson's audacity will provoke immediate dismissal. But most are likely to remain more ambivalent, for the possibility of articulating some unified goal for literary studies has a secret attraction inherent to collective enterprises such as all professions are. In his presidential address to the MMLA, Wayne Booth candidly admits having difficulty identifying the "center" around which the diverse activities of that association swirl, but he is sure there is one.

CRITICAL EXCHANGE

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"Critical understanding" captures it best for Booth; but since he is a diplomat, there is no necessity of embracing this formulation even when spoken ex cathedra:

But I know better than to expect others to accept my proprietary name for the center. Perhaps, after this skirmishing with the impossible task of definition, I could for tonight just ask each of you to slot in, whenever I say 'critical understanding' your own version of whatever central experience attracted you to this profession and keeps you here now. Call it "experience X." (PMLA 98, p. 318)

Naming that "center" is always "tainted" (page 317), always makes one vulnerable to derision. There is something fundamentally different, however, about Booth's waffling and Jameson's "audacity." The former is calculated to maintain the swirl around the center, the latter is calculated to make a landing. However bad-mannered this latter course may be, there is something strategically more attractive about it. The fear that we will somehow be suddenly saddled with a stifling monolith strikes me as an exaggeration of the power of the "Jameson effect." The swirl of our myriad discourses is not likely to disappear; and the essays in this volume critical of various aspects of Jameson's work testify to this fact. But even granting some grounds for this fear, the state of the profession today could use a dose of Jameson's audacity: his explicit call for some collective goal for literary studies may not be superior in all times and all places to Booth's mandate to reproduce in our students some intensely personal experience of literature from our youth, but it may be just the medicine (pharmakon) for the day.

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CRITICAL EXCHANGE

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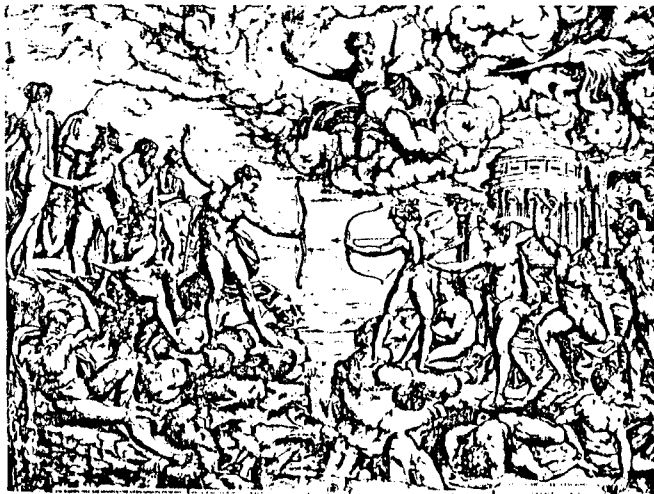
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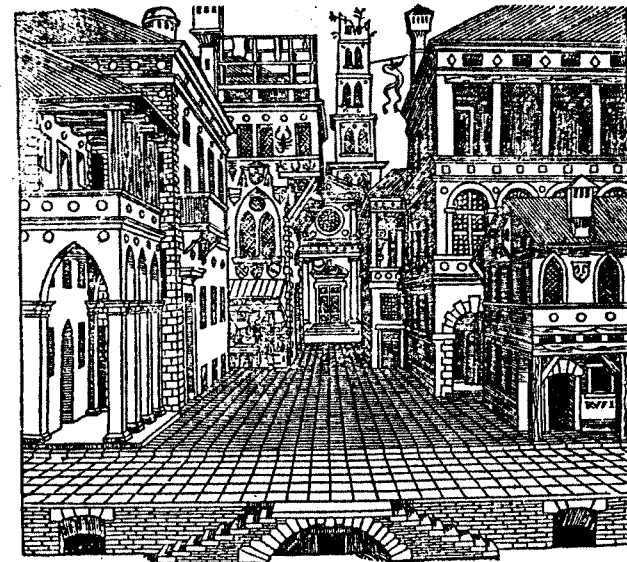
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Combat of Ratio and Libido



Sebastiano Serlio. *Tragic Scene*. Woodcut from *Libro primo . . . d'architettura*, Venice, 1551, fol. 29 v.



Sebastiano Serlio. *Comic Scene*. Woodcut from *Libro primo . . . d'architettura*, Venice, 1551, fol. 28 v.

## "THE IDEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF SPACE"

Fredric Jameson

I originally planned to present some purely literary analyses to you as an illustration of the subject I announced to the planners of this session. I imagine, however, that a number of you would prefer a more wideranging set of reflexions on one of those relatively rare occasions when you have a chance to hear a Marxist speaker; and for myself, I have increasingly felt that the category of literary analysis is too restrictive, for reasons I'll develop in a moment. I take Raymond Williams' point that our object of study should not be construed narrowly as literature, but far more broadly as culture in the widest sense, and better than that, as cultural processes, the processes of cultural production and reception and their social function. I go somewhat further than Williams, however, in suggesting that our fundamental object of study should be what is called cultural revolution, and it is partly owing to the misunderstandings generated by this word that I've felt the need today to define it more precisely.

Coming back for a moment to this question of the "literary" and its specificity, let me suggest to you that one of the liberating features of Marxism - obviously very far from the only one - is its resistance as a system and as a unity of theory and practice to disciplinary specialization and reification of the academic type. The separation of the disciplines has to be sure left its tell-tale mark within Marxism today, and most notably within academic Marxism: but I would have thought that the strength of Marxism lay in its capacity to construct objects of study which transcend the disciplinary boundaries; better still, in its vocation to project mediations, that is, mediatory concepts or codes or languages which allow us to say substantive things about culture, society and politics all at once, and not in separate speeches or articles, or in separate conferences. This means that the literary people among you may well feel that I have misguidedly taken the occasion of a literary convention to make a political statement about socialist revolution. Not to worry: the political people among you will feel the same thing the other way round, that as a political statement what I have to say is irredeemably tainted by an undue emphasis on culture.

Let me speak first to these last: I happen to have just returned from a remarkable and unique conference in which representatives of the socialist and communist movements and parties from virtually every important country in the world were united in dialogue around a single table, from China to the Soviet Union, and from Argentina to Algeria, Zimbabwe, Greece, the United States, the Palestinian movement, and India. This conference, which addressed the so-called

"crisis in Marxism," rather effectively dramatized this last in the utter helplessness of all these movements before the international world crisis, and more particularly in the utter bankruptcy of their concrete visions of socialism or communism as the production of radically new and original social relations. I am here to tell you that as far as pessimism is concerned, no movements are more lugubrious anywhere than the massive and virtually preponderant left movements of France and Italy. Indeed, an Italian comrade inadvertently put his finger on the problem when he observed, I think without irony, that there were two situations in which Marxist movements tended to be stricken with pessimism: one is the situation in which a left movement is unable to come to power, while the other is the situation in which it has precisely come to power. I may say indeed that the only visionary energy at this international conference was manifested by our Yugoslavian hosts, representing along with Cuba, Nicaragua, Zimbabwe and Mozambique one of the rare ongoing successful social revolutions in the world today, and also (perhaps unexpectedly) by our own American delegation, whose conception of the necessity for new forms of class struggle in the third industrial revolution and an era of the shrinking of the industrial labor force, and of the necessity of evolving a conception of politics which includes all the new social movements, was, one felt, unique in addressing our real political and theoretical needs.

I want therefore to speak about the vital role of culture both in the struggle for socialism in capitalist countries, and in the construction of socialist relations in post-capitalist or post-revolutionary ones. I will sometimes express this in terms of the projection of new and properly Marxist Utopian visions of a future society, and I may add in this particular context that the renewal of interest in Utopian texts and in the whole Utopian legacy is one of the great and promising signs of change both in cultural study generally and within Marxism itself. But I will also use the term cultural revolution to describe these processes, and so I need now to specify how this general category can be rich and useful when disengaged from its more local but now extinct Maoist overtones.

The Maoist concept, indeed, designated only one particular historical cultural revolution, that of the transition to socialism. I want to expand this concept to cover a whole range of such transitions in human history from one historical mode of production to the other, something which will require me very briefly to review this traditional Marxian conception of the nature of a mode of production itself.

Let me first list, in as bald or cut-and-dried a way as possible, the conventional six modes of production which for the Marxist

tradition exhaust the typology of societies or social formations in human history. These forms should not too hastily be assimilated into a series of evolutionary stages, although there is obviously a distant family resemblance between the Marxian concept and Darwinian natural selection. The traditional list can be rapidly enumerated: first, primitive communism, or tribal society, generally subdivided into the two distinct moments of the paleolithic horde of nomadic hunters and gatherers, and the neolithic gens of an already more hierarchical and sedentary village society; second (but the order is not a chronological one), the asiatic mode of production or so-called oriental despotism, the great hydraulic empires of the Near and Far East and of pre-Columbian Mexico and Peru, tributary societies that organize a network of villages around the centered power of the sacred god-king with his clerical bureaucracy; third, the ancient mode of production, or the slave-holding oligarchic republic or polis or city-state; fourth, feudalism; fifth, capitalism; and sixth, socialism or communism. Even on the traditional conception, these various modes of production are all conceived as each having a cultural dominant specific to it: myth and the ideology of kinship for primitive communism, the sacred for the asiatic mode, "politics" in the classical sense for the ancient polis, relations of personal domination for feudalism; commodity fetishism for capital itself; and community and self-management for communism.

What complicates this schema is that human societies rarely exhibit these modes of production in any pure and unmixed way: this means that the study of modes of production must at first be differentiated from some purely typologizing or classificatory operation in which the object is simply to drop a given cultural object in this or that box or slot (or in other words to answer questions such as whether Milton "corresponds" to feudalism or capitalism?).

I here presuppose on the contrary that such "pure" social formations have never existed, and that every concrete historical society or social moment is in fact a coexistence of a number of distinct modes of production, the dominant one, but also those which Raymond Williams has conveniently termed "residual" and "emergent": the mode of production in the process of eclipse and dissolution, and that which is already in Utopian emergence within the interstices of the new dominant.

All of which will be clearer, I believe, if we borrow a concept from the recent Chinese experiment and abstract a notion of cultural revolution which can now be applied, well beyond the immediate or future "transition to socialism" in our own time, to all of the various transitional moments of human history. Cultural revolution will therefore be a moment of "nonsynchronous

development" (to use Ernst Bloch's term), a moment of overlap, of the struggle in coexistence between several modes of production at once. We may therefore grasp the Western Enlightenment as part of a properly bourgeois cultural revolution, in which the values and the discourses, the habits and the daily space, of the ancien régime were systematically dismantled so that in their place could be set the new conceptualities, habits and life forms, and value systems of a capitalist market society. This process clearly involved a vaster historical rhythm than such punctual historical events as the French Revolution or the Industrial Revolution, and includes in its longue durée such phenomena as those described by Weber in The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism - a work that can now in its turn be read as a contribution to the study of the bourgeois cultural revolution, just as the corpus of work on romanticism is now repositioned as the study of a significant and ambiguous moment in the resistance to this particular "great transformation," alongside the more specifically "popular" (precapitalist as well as working-class) forms of cultural resistance.

But if this is the case, then we must go further and suggest that all previous modes of production have been accompanied by cultural revolutions specific to them of which the neolithic "cultural revolution," say, the triumph of patriarchy over the older matriarchal or tribal forms, or the victory of Hellenic "justice" and the new legality of the polis over the vendetta system are only the most dramatic manifestations. The concept of cultural revolution, then - or more precisely, the reconstruction of the materials of cultural and literary history in the form of this new "text" or object of study which is cultural revolution - may be expected to project a whole new framework for the humanities, in which the study of culture in the widest sense could be placed on a materialist basis.

This description must now, however, be completed by some account of the role of culture in it, and in particular of the role of the cultural producer, the artist, the writer. I will therefore suggest that the producers of culture are ideologues, but of a very special sort. Each mode of production necessarily produces a special kind of reality and a determinate life world, a distinct time and space in which its subjects must live and which limits their activities and gives them its own unique content. It is therefore necessary for each successive mode of production, as it gradually or violently replaces a previous one, to be accompanied by what can henceforth be called a cultural revolution, which re-trains and reprograms people to live in that particular life world: and this is no sordid or manipulative task but rather a properly demiurgic one. The forms and languages of the artists of a given cultural revolution, therefore, do not merely retrain its sub-



jects' mentalities for life and work in their new space: we can go so far as to suggest that the symbolic acts of the producers of a new culture virtually bring that life world into being for the first time, albeit in an imaginary mode. At any rate something like this is the sense in which I will here want to show that the language of a Flaubert does more than reproduce or replicate the new market space of classical capitalism: it produces that space in the realm of the symbolic, by means of the restructuration and systemic transformation of the older space, the older forms and languages, of an earlier moment or mode of production.

Moving to the narrower or broader realities of language, then, we will try to assert that the 'linguistic' of any given mode of production has as its essential function to recreate at every moment the life world of that particular mode and to keep it in being at every moment like Berkeley's God. But what we would have to try to imagine is that this linguistic reproduction of the world is not a secondary process dependent on the primary one of the material production of that world: but rather that we have here to do with a single immense process on all these levels.

Now we can come back to my perhaps artificial division of your current interests and commitments into those concerned, primarily with literary and formal studies (whether Marxist or non-Marxist) and those concerned primarily with political change and political activism. The conception of cultural revolution is mediatory precisely in the way in which it offers something substantive to both of these kinds of commitments. For scholars of literature it offers a rich historical category in which the very processes and forms of the literature and cultural monuments of the past can be analyzed, reevaluated and situated historically and concretely than is possible in any other historical or non-historical scheme of things. The proposal then as I've said is one which projects a whole new program for literary and historical studies. It does not, may I also say, preempt or exclude other kinds of formal analysis of which contemporary methodology is so rich: on the contrary, it presupposes already that you have a vivid and articulated sense of the individual text according to all those categories of style, genre, poetic form, semiotic process which make up our methodological heritage. But may I also say that the new proposal also presupposes absolutely the more traditional Marxian analysis of culture in terms of ideology and class: I have myself perhaps often been at fault in not sufficiently stressing something which has always seemed to me perfectly obvious and self-evident, namely that all history is the history - indeed the nightmare - of class struggle, and that all cultural texts of whatever sort and from whatever period are terrains for the struggle of the various social classes and for the confrontation of their ideologies. The new proposal is not meant to replace the thematics of

social class with those of the patterning system of this or that mode of production, but rather presupposes that you have already come to sense the role of the literary and cultural text in the never-ending struggle of human history. My proposal in other words aims at a third moment of cultural study: it presupposes that you already know how to read, on the one hand, and that you have already achieved some rudimentary form of political and ideological consciousness on the other; and it specifically aims to build further on the analytical and perceptual findings of both of those earlier, yet indispensable preliminary moments.

Now, turning again to the political members of this public, I want to suggest that the issue of cultural revolution is not merely a historical or archaeological one, but a vital political need and the most urgent and neglected component of any socialist politics today. So for you, let me make a short sketch of the genealogy of this concept in the Marxian tradition proper. The term cultural revolution was of course coined by the central political theorist and strategist of our tradition, namely Lenin himself. Some of you may indeed be aware of the centrality of the problem of culture and cultural revolution in the first period of the Soviet revolution and the Soviet construction of socialism. Let me therefore document Lenin's thinking in a different way by quoting scripture, if you like, and by referring to that very basic document, composed amazingly by Lenin during the agitated period between the February and the October revolutions in the inaugural year 1917. I'm referring to State and Revolution, which lays out Lenin's whole conception of socialist transition and of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the structure which corresponds to the first revolutionary stage of the transition to communism. What is less often remarked are Lenin's brief formulations on the second moment of this process: not the smashing of the bourgeois state and its power, but rather very precisely the withering away of socialism itself, the withering away of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the transition to the second stage of communism proper. If you consult this fundamental text attentively, you will find that Lenin describes this second moment in terms of the acquisition of new habits, that is, very precisely in terms of the acquisition of a new and third form of human nature and in the transformation of human consciousness itself and of human practices.

[When] the necessity of observing the simple, fundamental rules of human intercourse will have become a habit... then the door will be wide open for the transition from the first phase of communist society to its higher phase, and with it to the complete withering away of the state.

State and Revolution, p. 122

This is of course a fundamentally cultural problematic, and I have already suggested that nowhere is the weakness of contemporary Marxism more evident than in the virtual absence of any reflexion on how people's inherited habits and practices are to be changed under socialism and with what they are to be replaced. Contemporary feminism has of course made a fundamental contribution to any enlarged conception of cultural revolution in its insistence on the necessity to transform the immemorial inherited habits and practices of patriarchy and male domination. Cultural production in the Cuban revolution, and most particularly in Cuban film today, gives you an excellent illustration of the attempt systematically to work on deep endemic habits of patriarchy and to transform them. It's a very long process, obviously.

But another and no less significant object of cultural transformation must necessarily be consumerism itself, that is say very largely the penetration of hegemonic American media culture everywhere in the world today. One of the deepest contradictions, indeed, in the very vital emergence of self-management socialism in Yugoslavia is its coexistence with American cultural and export fashions which cannot but perpetuate the most noxious forms and practice of consumerism (including the technologism of a mania for new gadgets and the productivism of a stress on industrialism and the production of ever newer and more useless forms of consumer products).

But let me now return to my brief sketch of the rich alternative formulations of the problematic of cultural revolution within the Marxian tradition, leaving aside the obvious example of classical Maoism proper. It seems to me self-evident, for example (and not only to me), that Antonio Gramsci's notion of revolutionary political and social transformation as a conquest of a new socialist hegemony is to be read in terms of the production of a new and legitimate alternative socialist culture within middle class society. But I believe that with hindsight we can now also reread the works of Frantz Fanon and his analysis of the psychology of the colonized as a vital meditation on the problem of the habits of inferiority, victimization, marginalization, intimidated obedience - in short, subalternity, in working class or colonized peoples - a theme also developed by Gramsci and by Rudolf Bahro in his path-breaking call for cultural revolution in the countries of actually existing socialism in the East, in a book called The Alternative. Finally, one must mention the work of Wilhelm Reich, which proposes to enlarge politics and cultural revolution to include sexual politics and to explore the intricate interrelationships between sexual structures and taboos and the political domination of the ruling classes. I think I've said enough to suggest the richness of such reflexions within Marxism proper and hopefully to disengage the concept of cultural revolution from its narrower and more local

Maoist connotations.

I am today however not planning to explore any of these formulations but to propose yet another one, which brings me to the other and as yet unmentioned theme of my title today, the matter of space and of spatial analysis. Recently, indeed, I have come to feel that a very different kind of mediation is available to us for thinking cultural revolution, and it is what the pioneering work of the great Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre - so shamefully ignored in the United States - has laid out for us in a variety of studies which range from daily life and the festival to urbanism and the city and its great urban revolutions, but nowhere quite so strikingly as in his magnum opus, whose very title is a whole program: The Production of Space. The proposal is therefore this: that the principal vehicle and dimension of cultural revolution, the fundamental area in which a new mode of production secures its superstructures and reprograms and retrains its subjects is to be seen as that of the transformation of space itself, the production of new types of space, which did not exist in the previous mode of production. What must however be insisted on, what cannot be overstressed, is that space is here to be understood as a transcendental organizing category, rather than as an empirical datum. The category of space cannot be reduced to those concrete individual spaces that you can see, such as this hall, this campus, or your own private house, with its various rooms: rather it is that overall category in terms of which those individual spaces are produced and experienced; space in that sense is not something you see, not some mere container: it's what produces the individual places you do see in their formal logic, and this is the sense in which I said a moment ago that space is not to be thought of as a thematics or an interpretive theme among others. Spatial analysis, therefore, does not imply anything so pedestrian as the attention, say, to rooms in novels, nor even to geographical descriptions. We will, it is true, have occasion in what follows to look into a few literary "rooms": but a Lefebvrian criticism is not to be restricted to studies whose titles might be imagined as "The Dwelling in Western Literature", or "Windows in the 19th century Novel". On the other hand, one of the advantages of "space" as a mediatory concept lies in the way in which it allows us to cut across, or to transcend, that great opposition and tension, in which we still live, between the phenomenological and the semiotic, between the description of lived experience and the analysis of impersonal or suprapersonal structures. But the actuality of spatial analysis can also be staged in a different way, for those formed in the great modernist cultural tradition which is now, in post-modernism and in consumer society or late capitalism, coming to an end. I don't have to remind you how obsessively high modernism was organized around a Bergsonian problematic of temporality and of the experience of

time: I can do no more here than to suggest in dogmatic and peremptory fashion that the thematics of temporality is today as dead as high modernism proper, and that we are today in something else, for which spatial analysis (as in the study of a society of the spectacle, of the image, of the simulacrum) is far more adequate.

But I can also suggest the relevance of the new category in yet another way, for the trendier and more theory-oriented among you, and that is by designating the role of space itself in current high theory, most notably in the work of Michel Foucault, whose masterpiece *Discipline and Punish* is an exemplary and innovative practice of new forms of spatial analysis, of the way in which power is produced and organized through our experience of new forms of space itself.

As Foucault, however, also tends to emit dangerously ambiguous and sometimes quite unambiguously anti-Marxist vibrations and overtones, it may not be without value to give you the essentials of a Marxist critique and appropriation of his work by the late Nicos Poulantzas, a description which has the merit of incorporating the whole contemporary reflexion on the problem of the individual subject or psyche and grounding all this squarely back in the labor process itself (*State, Power, Socialism*, 64-5): "Of course, this structure of the relations of production and the labour process does not directly institute the precise forms of individualization assumed by the divided social body. It rather induces a material frame of reference - spatial and temporal matrices which are the presuppositions of the capitalist social division of labour, above all within the production process and at the stage designated by Marx as that of machinery and large-scale industry. This primal material framework is the mould of social atomization and splintering, and it is embodied in the practices of the labour process itself. At one and the same time presupposition of the relations of production and embodiment of the labour process, this framework consists in the organization of a continuous, homogeneous, cracked and fragmented space-time such as lies at the basis of Taylorism: a cross-ruled, segmented and cellular space in which each fragment (individual) has its place, and in which each emplacement, while corresponding to a fragment (individual), must present itself as homogeneous and uniform; and a linear, serial, repetitive and cumulative time, in which the various moments are integrated with one another, and which is itself oriented towards a finished product - namely, the space-time materialized par excellence in the production line. In short, the individual, who is much more than a product of the juridical-political ideology engendered by commodity relations, appears here as the focal point, identical with the human body itself, at which a number of practices within the social division of labour are materially crystallized." May I also say, since you have done me the honor or organizing some of these

proceedings around my own work, that this may better explain what I myself have tended to describe in terms of reification, a concept I have often been criticized for its abstract, or enigmatic, or poorly defined status. Henri Lefebvre has however best described the paradox of capitalist reification: it is a process, he says, which at one and the same time homogenizes and standardizes everything from philosophy and culture to daily life and practices, and simultaneously fragments all those things into monadized enclaves.

My brief literary illustration will try to show this, but we must now go very fast and I can do no more than summarize the more extensive reading I would otherwise have been able to offer you of the Flaubert text which has been distributed, and which is an initial description of the house in his tale Un coeur simple:

Cette maison', revêtu d'ardoises, se trouvait entre un passage et une ruelle aboutissant à la rivière. Elle avait intérieurement des différences de niveau qui faisaient trébucher. Un vestibule étroit séparait la cuisine de la salle où Mme Aubain se tenait tout le long du jour, assise près de la croisée dans un fauteuil de paille. Contre le lambris, peint en blanc, s'alignaient huit chaises d'acajou. Un vieux piano supportait, sous un baromètre, un tas pyramidal de boîtes et de cartons. Deux bergères de tapisserie flanquaient la cheminée en marbre jaune et de style Louis XV. La pendule, au milieu, représentait un temple de Vesta, -- et tout l'appartement sentait un peu le moisi, car le plancher était plus bas que le jardin.

This house had a slate roof and stood between an alleyway and a lane leading down to the river. Inside there were differences in level which were the cause of many a stumble. A narrow entrance-hall separated the kitchen from the parlour, where Mme Aubain sat all day long in a wicker easy-chair by the window. Eight mahogany chairs were lined up against the white-painted wainscoting, and under the barometer stood an old piano loaded with a pyramid of boxes and cartons. On either side of the chimney-piece, which was carved out of yellow marble in the Louis Quinze style, there was a tapestry-covered arm-chair, and in the middle was a clock designed to look like a temple of Vesta. The whole room smelt a little musty, as the floor was on a lower level than the garden.

What I would have wanted to show you, had I had time, was first the emergence of homogenous space in the opening sentence, which does not describe the house but rather its coordinates, as an un-

even grid of parallel lines stretching out geometrically to infinity, alley versus land, and then in the next sentences, differences of levels, and in the third sentence an uneasy and asymmetrical parallelism between kitchen and living room, servant and mistress, which is no longer properly hierarchical, no longer a full binary opposition, since in that sense, as two women, both of these figures and their space are marginalized. I see this Foucault-like penetration of the grid of market space as characteristic of the capitalist cultural revolution: that it does not happen without resistance is then dramatized in the subsequent sentences of the paragraph. An effort is there visible to fight back against the grid by reorganizing space around older sacred centered hierarchical space, first centered in the barometer, and then, pulling the armchairs together around it, on the little temple of Vesta, a moment in which a degraded middle-class kitsch culture manifestly seeks to fight back against spatial reification, offering however only the most desolate caricature of the august collective and social function of the temple in ancient societies, as, for example, Heidegger has described it for us in *The Origins of the Work of Art*. The cultural resistance of the temple is however a failure, as one observes by the return, in force, of the patterning system of uneven parallels in the last sentence. Here I would also have wanted to comment briefly on the only perceptual event of the entire paragraph, the "musty smell", which I see as something of the emergence, fitful and punctual, of the bourgeois subject and of subjectivity itself, inscribed, with a triumphant and desolate flourish, within a henceforth abstract and reified universe.

Now I want, very hastily, to give you a few other examples of spatial readings, spatial politics, and how the whole revolutionary slogan of a transformation of space is to be understood. Flaubert's essentially feminine and marginalized space in this passage might well, for example, have been juxtaposed with Pierre Bourdieu's spatial reading of the Kabyle house and the Kabyle village in his pathbreaking study *An Outline of a Theory of Practice*. He there shows how at some primary level the ideologies and values of that kind of village society are not subjective, but rather the result of the organization of space itself: the space of the village and of the house is the fundamental structure by which ideological practices are here programmed, and this very specifically includes sexual differentiation and patriarchal domination, which is built into village and house by the specific structuring in them of women's space on the one side and male space on the other. All of which might be demonstrated in a far more contemporary way by feminist studies of architecture in our own society, most notably the pathbreaking (and properly Utopian) work of Dolores Hayden on sexist space in the American house and city, and the way in which space is organized to secure the social reproduction of patriarchal practices. All of which suggests that if space is fundamental in social reproduction, then the transformation of space

is a vital terrain of ideological and political struggle.

I am very anxious that you grasp the seriousness of such a proposal and that you understand it as something considerably more concrete and political than a new methodological fad or purely intellectual proposition. My next illustration will therefore be a proposal for a spatial politics which emanates from one of the emergent and politically very significant "new social movements": it is a scandalous proposal and I will hope that you are appropriately shocked, since that is often the only way people discover their own ideological limits. I'm going to quote therefore from an article in the latest issue of *Socialist Review* by the Australian gay activist and theorist Dennis Altman; it is an article which triggered a reaction that stunned the editors of that journal, a spontaneous blast of indignation and hostility, not from the Right, but from their own Left and Marxist readership:

"Public sex" is not just a matter of taste, it is important precisely because it questions one of the basic assumptions that is used to control our sexuality, namely that it should remain totally private. When homosexuality was decriminalized in Britain in 1967, great stress was placed on the protection of privacy -- the result being that threesomes, even in a private home, remain illegal.... The conservative wing of the gay movement wants to use the concept to the right to privacy as the basic argument against the current backlash.

This argument has its tactical uses (it clearly will be very significant in future Supreme Court cases) but sex is not merely a private matter: assumptions about sex and sexual behavior underlie a great deal of state activity and regulation. When conservatives say that they recognize our right to be left alone in private they are really arguing that we should become, once again, invisible. Arresting men for taking part in "public sex" ... is part of a more general intention, namely to a desire to restrict and repress all sexuality that cannot be contained by traditional forms.

Without necessarily accepting the romantic view of "out-law" sex espoused by writers such as John Rechy and Guy Hocquenheim, it can be argued that public sex is a central part of gay male culture, and should be defended as such. The Meat Rack at Fire Island, the Rambles in Central Park, the piers at the end of Christopher Street, are part of our space and we have as much right to demand that they be protected as Irish-Americans have to close Fifth Avenue to traffic for the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Too often, liberals' tolerance for homosexuality extends only to the point where we behave like them, or, more accurately, like an idealized version of how they think they should behave."

This is, in effect, the return of the repressed of the classical

city, among whose traditional "freedoms" that of sexuality, sexual encounter, the pickup, was always included. Even the capitalist city is still fitfully evoked in this way, as in Baudelaire's sonnet, "A une passant," or the Sartrean look, or the American flight from small town puritanism, as in Dreiser. But in the great period of the precapitalist city, as in Boccaccio, city space is always sexualized and suffused with the use value of the erotic. When that is replaced and repressed by the exchange value of the capitalist city, erotic space is submerged, only to return, for its masculine sexual object, in Altman's gay public space, and for its feminine sexual object, in the tenderloins and red light districts of the contemporary city. Altman's proposal, to defend and reconquer a specifically gay public space, can then stand as an illustration of how in general a spatial politics can formulate its demands and of the force of such a spatial politics in general, which is very far from being some mere intellectual or specialized plaything.

But it also raises the question generally of how space is to be transformed. We are, I think, all generally but perhaps not consciously aware of how the space of the city can be punctually transformed. Capital has of course transformed that space in reality, by transforming, on Henri Lefebvre's account, the use value of the classical city into the sheer exchange value of capitalist land speculation. The great high modernist architects, most notably Le Corbusier, then give us a very interesting counterproposition, in their conception of a new architecture which will introduce into the reified space of the contemporary city the disease germ of revolutionary new forms of space, which Le Corbusier believed powerful enough to change life itself, to fan out through the degraded city and transform its mechanical grids, and in some properly bourgeois cultural way (one thinks of the Schiller of the Aesthetic Education of Humankind) to replace a narrowly political revolution and to subsume that under a whole concrete revolutionary transformation of the world. With the death of high modernism in architecture and the emergence of post-modernism, we can no longer be quite so sanguine as to the supreme power of purely aesthetic innovation to achieve this end.

Let's look, for a moment, in conclusion at some other, perhaps more political forms of the possible transformation of the bourgeois space in which we live today. I remind you, for instance, that the privileged event of the socialist realist novel is the strike, which in turn serves as the figure for revolution in general. Meanwhile it is clear that this kind of event involves a massive calling into question of the narrative categories of the bourgeois novel, which spring from experiences of middle class daily life, habits, temporal and spatial organization and the like, as well as from the predominant perspective in middle class liter-

ature of the individual subject, private and personal experience, and so forth. So there are two ways of considering socialist realism and the strike which it attempts to represent: it can be grasped, in its content, as a punctual disorder, a catastrophe, an overthrowing, a subversion into rubble and fragments, of a calm and massive daily order (and then it will always be described as bad literature, since among other things this challenges the very categories of what the older bourgeois novel can do). But to look at socialist realism this way is to look at it precisely from the vantage point and with the values of the class it challenges.

Or - and here I think we begin to move beyond the subversion model - it can be understood as the transformation of older categories of bourgeois daily life and social relations into new ones. Let me try to illustrate this with a few examples. Eyewitnesses have, for instance, pointed out how in the New Haven of the late 1960s, the appearance of tanks coming down Whalley Avenue into Broadway completely transformed the space of the city, turning its familiar urban objects into a very different kind of landscape. A subversion is certainly involved here, but also a transformation into a new, albeit more forbidding, kind of space. The older campus town space of New Haven is defamiliarized, and poetically transformed into something rare and strange, if you like: but the category of defamiliarization is only partially satisfactory precisely because it includes no sense of the radically different final space into which the older city has been transformed.

If now we take the rather different experience of the demonstration - a massive protest march, say, which moves in an orderly fashion from 76th Street all the way down Broadway to Madison Square Garden: here too an immense transformation of the city is in process. The marchers occupy the center of the now empty street and look up at the buildings from out of this central canyon: all of the older functions of city space have here been subverted and transformed, pedestrian space transcended, the relationship of office building walls and windows to their outside utterly inverted. Yet here also a new type of space - which it might be too hasty to call that of festival or carnival - is constructed and substituted, at least momentarily for the older kind.

Take finally the well-known festival of the word, in the Paris of May 68: people pausing to talk passionately to strangers on street corners, the inversion of indoor space onto the new external space of what used to be streets and pavements, again as fundamental a transformation of older city space as the more ominous kind we find in the ruined city, where human marginals use the sidewalks as beds, challenge and subvert the behavioral and juridical proprieties of the street and of movements and relationships in it, and so forth. One might indeed want to go on here to signal some of

the differences between these historic transformations: it would seem, for instance, that the Utopian space of the Popular Front, with its great marches from the Bastille to the Nation, has a rather different organization than the more static massive and millenary occupation of public and external space in the 1960s.

Each, at any rate, invents a new kind of space out of the raw materials of the old, and returning to the strike, nothing is clearer than this process as it seizes on that most peculiar of all private spaces, the factory and the shop floor. The older closed and forbidden backroom spaces of the managers' offices are opened up, the relationship to the machinery itself transformed, the very opposition between public and private challenged and undermined by the presence of workers and whole families who come to live, eat and sleep, within what used to be a carefully structured spatial arrangement for hierarchical and alienated labor.

I now return in conclusion to my initial proposal, in which the union of a cultural politics and a politics of everyday life was to be found in the crucial area of space and of a revolutionary transformation of space itself. Who says space says the city, and the work of Lefebvre, to which I already paid homage, underscores this connection very strongly, since for Lefebvre the urban is the very definition of some new and more adequate properly Utopian conception of communism itself. Such a slogan is of course to be understood dialectically, in both a very concrete and a very abstract sense. It is thus on the one hand the call for an urban politics: indeed, Lefebvre's proposal that the principal unifying theme and demand of a left politics today be the conception of a universal right to housing is an extraordinarily explosive, subversive and imaginative program, which at once transcends the 18th century enlightenment limits of welfare type proposals, such as health care and unemployment insurance and voting rights, and has a concrete content which that related program of a guaranteed annual income does not project. This program is ultimately structurally irreconcilable with the private property system, and particularly the system of real estate property, while on the other hand it points in the direction of greater employment by increased construction. Whatever its ultimate strategic merits, slogans and programs like these are politically energizing, Utopian and revolutionary in the most immediate sense, and are models of the kind of cultural politics and cultural revolution which we intellectuals ought to be proposing, debating and exploring at the present time. This is at least where my own work finds itself at this point, and I appreciate your interest (as well as your patience) in allowing me to sketch it out for you today.

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## DOES JAMESON HAVE ANY USE FOR ALLEGORY?

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As a theorist primarily concerned with history, or rather, History capital H, Fredric Jameson would seem to spend an inordinate amount of time and space on what seems to be a rhetorician's problem, to wit, the naming, definition, and defense of allegory. At least since Marxism and Form, where he closely examined allegory in the works of W. Benjamin and E. Bloch, he has been concerned with a Marxist critical stance toward allegory as a tool of hermeneutics. More recently in The Political Unconscious allegory emerges as the primary mode whereby History becomes text and, conversely, as the way the texts of history are to be read. Everything points to the political unconscious itself as an allegorical structure. As we shall see, Jameson's attempt to transcend a tropological reading or understanding of literature and ultimately its informing History, fails to the extent that he must employ - or that he ends up not being able or wanting to extricate himself from - a methodology predicated on the tropological movement of allegory. Some implications of his strategy for reading allegories and his allegorizing of strategy will be sought out here in an attempt to go beyond a mere cataloguing or recognition of certain critical aporias in a particular critical corpus, and to examine some implications of allegory's role in urging criticism to wander outside a dialectical mode.

The problem of proposing to stand anywhere at all outside dialectical criticism is obviously the ultimate crux; the totalizing necessary to dialectic thinking excludes even the provisory validity of any erasure of telos. To History, nothing is marginal, no stance irrecoverable, no argument unfolded into its bosom. Short of denying History - a life-long clamor bound to be cut off by, of course, History - criticism of dialectical methodology must, in order to observe the workings of the machine, agree to stand somewhere inside the circle and accept all the (temporary) blind spots and dangers of being crushed threatened by such a position.<sup>3</sup> A criticism grounded in dialectical thinking thus will engage a rhetoric that serves its mission of totalization and must figure, as well as derive from, the "essentially hermeneutic, or demystifying and at the same time restorative, nature or dialectical thinking" (MF, p. 307). The primary problem in Marxist literary criticism remains how to interpret literature as a product of history; it must complete the circle of world into word by going from word to world, back into general time through individual manifestations. The ultimate meaning of any textual production, literary or otherwise, lies beyond it in History, in the Real that is not a text, that is Non-Text.<sup>4</sup> Traditionally allegory has been understood as

posing in a text a reflection, figuration, or symptom of a meaning that, because of a moral or theological nature, is not directly accessible. Allegory depends on a meaning blatantly exterior to its text, detachable in a way other than the way signifier and signified or any sign and its relatum are detachable.<sup>5</sup> Since for Marxism History is the ultimate outside and text motivator and literature one of its mediators, Jameson gives the name "allegory" to the process of mapping the inroads History takes into literature. Mysterious as these Holzwege and Umwege may remain,<sup>6</sup> a rhetorical stand has been taken.

Yet Jameson's use and defense of allegory often seem reluctant; thus the double-edged question of my title. Certainly the theological origins of allegory in Biblical exegesis and the concomitant impossibility of shedding allegory's metaphysical underpinnings play their role here. "Allegory and Communism make strange bedfellows" (MF, p. 116), Jameson wrote at the beginning of his study of Ernst Bloch's hermeneutics, going on to dismiss charges that Marxism is a kind of religion by simply encompassing religions among other ideologies: "The revealing analogy, in other words, is at this point not so much that of Marxism with religion, as that of religions with Marxism" (MF, p. 117). Thus is the need for allegory - a legitimate use for it - as "a hermeneutic technique of great flexibility and depth" (MF, p. 117) defended against the taint of religion. In The Political Unconscious a similar strategy of legitimation is engaged in order to refute Althusserian objections that allegorization is a form of "expressive causality" that reduces the multiplicities of reality to oversimplified narratives that impose their own categories of closure and character on "a process without a telos or a subject."<sup>7</sup> Jameson, on the contrary, insists we not reject out of hand allegory as an interpretive tactic despite its reductiveness and ultimate goal of the assimilation of the layers of meaning one into the others. Such a rejection would in effect strike out History because, if in itself History is not textual, there is nothing we can do in order to understand it but allegorize it, give it its capital H. Even though he wishes to avoid - without discrediting it unduly - a Lukacsian model of allegory which supplies a one-to-one translation of elements from realist to allegorical levels,<sup>8</sup> Jameson clearly reads history as being structured like a narrative, "a single great collective story" (PU, p. 19). This is to say that, analogous to Lacan's dictum that the unconscious is structured like a language, Jameson's political unconscious is that which reads history and sets it up as a "single vast unfinished plot. . . that uninterrupted narrative" (PU, p. 20) whose traces find their way into the textual forms of the conscious. The political unconscious is already, unavoidably, allegory.

Allegory as a critical tool that plumbs the depths of meaning, the strata of History that underlie artistic endeavors, appeals to

the Marxist whose task is to demystify the textual, fictitious, rhetorical manifestations by which History makes its way unconsciously into concrete forms. As allegory has traditionally been understood as a paradoxical combination of truth and fiction (and this generic aporia constitutes, I believe, the appeal of allegory to postmodern criticism), the latter covering over the former, Jameson's ideologeme is an avatar of allegory wherein the "symbolic resolution of a concrete historical situation" involves two levels, a rhetorical one where the paradox is a conceptual antinomy, and the historical, underlying level whose contradiction (stemming from fragments of various forms of production existing in the same epoche) is true. The ideologeme is, of course, only part of a vast allegorical schema of History and its texts that Jameson works out in The Political Unconscious. The political unconscious and its structures correspond conceptually to the four-fold allegorical systems of Dante or the medieval exegetes. Jameson today wants recourse to a multi-level allegory in order to preserve the final or anagogical level, the level that unifies all of mankind in a common purpose. He argues his teleological model against Bloch's similar project in order to cast off those clinging religious affinities of Bloch's or any allegorical system.<sup>9</sup> Certainly much of the recent critical reevaluation of allegory began with Northrop Frye who wrote that "all commentary is allegorical interpretation, an attaching of ideas to the structure of poetic imagery," that "actual allegory [occurs] when a poet . . . tries to indicate how a commentary on him should proceed."<sup>10</sup> As part of his excellent analysis of Frye's use of myth and archetype, Jameson criticizes Frye's more modernist version of allegory for not going beyond the ethical of self/body/ego level and its "recontain[ing] . . . the end of history and the culminating struggle of the collectivity" (PU, p. 73); Frye's would be an anagogy of a transformed, libidinalized, cosmic body, a refiguration of the individual and a depolitization of community. Neither does Althusser's history without telos, where an anagogical level in interpretation would be superfluous, coincide with Jameson's belief (and I use that term advisedly) in the "essential mystery of the cultural past,"<sup>11</sup> history's non-textuality, that must be dug out and read multiply using an appropriate methodology. We must conclude then, at this point, that the ultimate usefulness of allegory for Jameson is, first, as a literary convention of encoding and decoding that, given a special twist, becomes a fine tool of dialectical hermeneutics; second, as a model for History's textualization; and third, as a generalized mode of thinking that turns out to be the "properly Marxist" mode of thinking and interpreting evoked throughout The Political Unconscious which, masquerading behind the various defenses of allegory, is minimally Jameson's self-defense (my Marxism is the proper Marxism) and maximally a theory of literature as history's allegory and of History as the anagogy all human forms exist to textualize.



We turn now to a closer look at this allegory which in its own turn tends to recontain the entire genre. Some difficulties of comparability between allegory and the "properly Marxist" (beyond the religious taint mentioned above) present themselves if we shift into a different rhetorical (but not necessarily "more properly rhetorical") examination of Jameson's own text. First of all his use of the term "proper" and especially its intensification into "more properly" becomes hallucinatory in its frequency. The use of this term is disconcerting in a Marxist who would, one would think, seek a rhetorical strategy that avoids all implication of personal property and possession, the "properly Marxist" being, in the final analysis, the exclusive right-ness or ownership of a property by the individual K. Marx. This of course relates to a restrictive hermeneutic and Jameson's initial rejection of the "supplementary" (PU, p. 17) (a canny double strike at both the conventional use of supplementary and its expanded semantic in Derridean and poststructuralist criticism), and posits at the outset the possibility of one and only one right and true interpretation. In this line of thinking allegory is exclusively a tool of recovery and of legitimization of a/the proper power. As a Marxist, Jameson never allows himself to regard allegory as a mere trope, but in the dialectical gymnastics he engages to preserve the usefulness and necessity of allegory, he overlooks allegory as an act of self-interpretation; he never considers the terms of an allegory to be rhetorically interchangeable, or at least unstable in their position as signifiers and signified. He sees the allegorization of *écriture* as a failed attempt at rigorous formalism: "I suspect, as I have suggested elsewhere, that even this extreme and rigorously absolute formalism is not really as formalistic as it means to be, and that in reality - far from constituting a repudiation of interpretation - it is itself an allegorical interpretation whose 'signified' or allegorical key is simply that of language or *écriture* in the text itself."<sup>12</sup> Reversing the terms, the fictional narrative and its key, considering History as allegory's fiction, would be strictly forbidden in a system where the place of History must retain its priority, temporally and existentially, over the "allegorical narrative signifieds [which] reflect a fundamental dimension of our collective thinking and our collective fantasies about history and reality" (PU, p. 34). To allow History as fiction, aside from the "impossible" textualization, would invalidate diachronicity and permit such rhetorical aberrations as "the child father to the man," James' son father to James. Although aware of the "way in which any genuine dialectical criticism must ultimately turn around and question the sources of its own instruments" (MF, pp. 398-99), the places of world and word and the "brutal passage from some inner truth of existence to the external world of history" (MF, p. 400) must retain a one-way street, rhetorically speaking. But to neglect allegory as a signifier betrays a misunderstanding or forgetting of the basic movements of allegorical thought, its enabling dialectic by which "real" forms

are turned into symbolic actions.<sup>13</sup> Reading allegory "properly" prevents Jameson from radicalizing either allegory or History; allegory is a safe house, if not a prison house, of methodology.

For Jameson allegorization is a process of getting from the individual to the general, the synchronic to the diachronic, the Symbolic to the Real. "For it is clear that class consciousness itself . . . is an allegorical mode of thought to the degree to which for it individuals are seen as types and manifestations of social groups to which they belong" (MF, p. 399). Allegory remains preeminently thematic, its tropological force thematized as the symptom of a specific historical moment when there occurs "a breakdown in the autonomy of individual consciousness." Such an event will be textualized allegorically and accounts for the origin of narrative; "the deeper subject of the novel itself is precisely the coming into being of allegory."<sup>14</sup> But the proper signified of allegories, if it be History, will always already be hidden, the Real or absent cause. This impossibility of completely reading all the terms of allegory in turn sets up dialectic hermeneutics as an unending (but still telic) quest which tends in two directions. Either the melancholy allegorist such as Benjamin suffers in "a world in which things have been for whatever reason utterly sundered from meanings" and gives an overparticular, hyperconscious reading; this is allegory as pathology (MF, pp. 71-72). Or the utopist sweepingly projects the ultimate coinciding of things and meaning in an anagogical stage of time; there is "a kind of allegorical structure built into the very forward movement of the Utopian impulse itself, which always points to something other, which can never reveal itself but must always speak in figures, which always calls out structurally for completions and exegeses" (MF, p. 142). All the Marxist allegory reader can do is intertextualize, relying on the documents, official or fictional, of history, in an attempt to understand how literature or any text translates History. Properly allegorizing or properly reading an allegorical text is his supreme wish, a wish whose fulfillment can never be empirically verified.

To say then that the allegorist is deeply involved in wish-fulfilment is not only consistent with Jameson's analysis of the allegory in the Balzacian novel, but is also consistent with the insatiability of allegory itself, its never completed representation.<sup>15</sup> Thus, in the case of Balzac, the author's wish to be "biographical subject, Implied Author, reader, and characters" at one can be allegorically transformed into a narrative apparatus (PU, pp. 155ff. ). As a critic living in a later, post-ironic time, Jameson produces a theoretic apparatus in order to fulfill a wish that is not directly stated but follows from a quote he takes from Ernst Bloch: "Art is a pluralism which . . . follows the indirect and multivocal movement of the allegorical,"<sup>16</sup> which, in Jameson's paraphrase, is "an opening onto otherness or difference" (MF, p. 146).



His understanding of allegory is, of course, based on a Lacanian version of psychoanalytic theory in which desire is translated into symbolic action via the hierarchized processes of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real; the psyche reads the surrounding world allegorically, developing from the ethical (self-image centered) to the allegorical (symbolic participation in the established community) to the anagogical (the unseen cause) stages of allegory.<sup>17</sup> Jameson's avowed desire is to demonstrate how art partakes of History through allegorical processes. His underlying desire will have to be the corollary desire to allegorize History itself so that it cannot be contained in art.

Where Bloch used an aural image of allegory - "multivocal" - Jameson uses a spatial metaphor - an "opening onto." Elsewhere he speaks of the novel as a place "to open up a space . . . to 'manage' those [brute] facts of empirical history" (PU, p. 164). These instances of restating in terms of space are part of a distinct set of metaphors borrowed from art history. If there is any one word as frequent as "proper" in Jameson's critical vocabulary it is "perspective," and in PU his master critical scheme is termed a series of "horizons." "Point of view" and "focus" are further favorites which fall into this category. The difficulty of using these commonplace terms is not their overuse per se but their ultimate validity for a Marxist criticism. While Jameson determines that "point of view is a certain kind of defining pivot point between the Balzacian and the modernist narrative (PU, pp. 156ff.) and uses this argument as exemplary for radically historicizing modes of narrative, he never shifts the problematic to the discourses of criticism, especially not to his own language. In fact, he manages to deconstruct the subject and assert a unified, centered, vision in the same sentence: "From a Marxist point of view, this experience of the decentering of the subject and the theories, especially psychoanalytic, which have been devised to map it are to be seen as the signs of an essentially bourgeois ideology of the subject and of psychic unity or identity" (PU, p. 125).<sup>18</sup> The Marxist, it would seem, has to maintain an angelic eye, must seek an ideal point of view that could see onto the "absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation" (PU, p. 17). The very first page of PU asserts this horizon as "the political perspective" (PU, p. 17, my emphasis) that escapes supplementarity.

Were perspective, point of view, focus, and horizon to be radically historicized, their place as central humanist concepts, formed in the Renaissance and quite literally pictured in space, and their use in bourgeois art criticism<sup>19</sup> would limit their use as critical metaphors and call for a different vocabulary cast in terms of post-modern physics, art, or psychoanalysis. Insisting on focus and perspective locks one into a Cartesian mode of frameworks, minds' eyes, and egocentricity; this mode of linear projection is consistent with

all projects where everything must be laid out, rearranged, criticized, and interpreted in order to be experienced. A perspective, as defined by Renaissance art, is a representation that is valid only within a set space (a square or rectangular frame), is monocular, and arbitrarily asserts a *point de fuite* on a horizon at which vision stops. The idea of a *proper perspective* implies multiple points of view of which only one is valid, and within the context of Renaissance pictorial perspective the horizon defines the proper point of view. If however we step outside the frame, outside this particular representative convention with its fictionalized viewer, and apply even normal individual binocular vision to the "space" of the world, we recognize that a horizon, by definition, is unattainable, ever-receding, having no proper place whatsoever except at an individual moment for an individual subject. Using the horizon metaphor, even under an essentialist alibi as "absolute," seems then a particularly unhappy choice for either a post-structuralist critic or a post-humanist Marxist. A collective political unconscious, a historical *pensée sauvage*, "posited on perspective remains rooted in the individualistic vision. The subsequent horizons are the spatialization of the critical strategy whereby the allegorizations, the textualizations, of History are read; like the shifting horizons, all the instruments of understanding are merely provisional, ready to be scuttled before the ultimate horizon, a ptolemaic edge of the world. The Real is always somewhere beyond in a self-defined u-topia.

In spite of his insistent use of "perspective" and his leaning toward a "proper . . . point of view," Jameson's desire remains to understand how collective rather than individual conditions are textualized. For that he invokes allegory, a mode that deals in grand sweeps and generalities and finds in its impersonality and stereotypicality an escape from the "subjects of history." His defense and use of allegory, however, seem stuck in the perspectivist optic. In an earlier article on allegory and film he defines the allegorical nature of the narrative as two different "pictures" that can be read from the same surface: "the film [*Dog Day Afternoon*] is an ambiguous product at the level of reception; more than that . . . [it] is so structured that it can be focussed in two quite distinct ways which seem to yield two quite distinct narrative experiences."<sup>20</sup> Such a pictorial system, if literalized, would resemble the late Renaissance practice of anamorphosis in which two pictures appear on the same surface but each must be viewed from a radically different point of view. The double reading of such images, the one obvious as seen by a viewer adopting the conventional stance at a certain distance from the canvas, and the other hidden, often to be viewed through a hole in a surrounding frame or in a curved mirror, corresponds to the double figuration of the allegorist. Of the two narrative experiences of the film only one can be read "properly" as suggesting "an evolution, or at least a transformation,

in the figurable class articulation of everyday life."<sup>21</sup> At the end of the article Jameson schematizes the "Analogon" (Sartre's term) by which the external sociological system is inscribed internally (i.e. hidden) in the film. The diagram suggests a focusing on Analogon, a visual triangle where what lies between the "eye" and the "horizon" defined by class and representation is the "illusion of reflexion or representation." Although the political unconscious is a fully articulated critical apparatus, it shares with the chart of the Analogon a perspectival structure where the "illusion of representation" and the successive horizons of interpretation tend toward a single point of focus, a necessarily totalizing or panoptican perspective that claims to be properly Marxist.

If Jameson's use of allegory is inextricably tied to point of view, would it be possible to throw out the latter without abandoning the former? If we look again at anamorphic pictures we realize there are ways to have distortions look "normal," to abandon the privilege of point of view. The anamorphic artists (condemned by Descartes) were considered marginal, engaging in parlor games, but their questioning of space prefigured the critique of representational space that came in the nineteenth century with the non-Euclidean geometries.<sup>22</sup> These changes in spatial concepts paralleled the discovery of the unconscious and the dissolution of the cogito and its concepts of an orderly hierarchized universe. Allegory, which moves between concrete and symbolic axes, no longer deals in "proper" meanings and "keys" but is produced as readings of readings. This intertextual function ought to suit Jameson quite well.

Yet in the end allegorical reading attains its importance for Jameson only after having been secondary: "Our reading 'set' toward the social and historical interpretations which can be allegorically derived from the narrative is thus something like a lateral by-product . . . but this allegorical by-product, once established, reorients the narrative around its new interpretive center. . . . Thus established, the allegorical reading becomes the dominant one" (PU, p. 163). Here in his valorization of allegory Jameson clings as elsewhere to the vocabulary of priority, centeredness, and dominance. It is important to him to redirect a by-product toward the center so that interpretation will find its proper place and at the same time will realize that desire for an opening onto otherness or difference, the decentering movement that marks a multi-perspective.

Perhaps Jameson's avoidance of negative hermeneutic prevents him from deconstructing allegory as a trope and forces him to use allegory primarily as a tool of thematic interpretation. Yet he depends on that unproblematicized, unhistoricized version of allegory as a by-product. The parergonal<sup>23</sup> implications of "by-product" are essential to his need to escape point of view; but para-

doxically, he prefers to install allegory as the central, dominant reading in order to approach the "properly Marxist." Allegory retains its levels; it operates on the ethical<sup>24</sup> (related to the individual, to point of view) horizon and on the anagogical (absolute horizon, angelic eye) level simultaneously. In any text allegory figures an antinomy, the same sort Jameson seeks out in narrative in order to locate underlying historical contradictions. "The co-presence of thematic, exhortative discourse with critical analytic language points to an inherent characteristic of allegorical modes."<sup>25</sup> If we were now to cast Jameson's use of allegory into his own diagram for textual antinomy, we would have the following:

genres and periods + a universally applicable tool of analysis  
vs.  
interpretation by + time / history / change  
allegory

By leaving unexamined allegory's undermining of time - its rhetorical tendency toward reversal of its terms (signifier, signified) and its total disregard for temporal change (time in allegory is either duration or non-time, anagogy) and by depending on allegorical readings to dislodge historical contradictions in a text, Jameson uses a fixed theory of allegory in analyzing historical change. The historical contradiction in such a critical text is that it functions in an older, Renaissance/Cartesian optics (or mode of critical production) and at the same time in a Lacanian framework where the self and its point(s) of view are to be understood as relics of the psyche. The latter refuses to read the "proper meaning"<sup>26</sup> of the former and produces an allegory of criticism. The pre-modern framework of The Political Unconscious and its wished-for post-modern space combine to make a most striking schizo-text. Or maybe we should just call it Modern.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature (Princeton UP, 1971). Henceforth MF.

<sup>2</sup>The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981). Henceforth PU.

<sup>3</sup>Jameson himself commented on the entanglements that threaten even those inside: "The peculiar difficulty of dialectical writing lies indeed in its holistic, 'totalizing' character: as though you could not say any one thing until you had first said everything; as though with each new idea you were bound to recapitulate the entire system. So it is that the attempt to do justice to the most random observation of Hegel ends up drawing the whole tangled, dripping mass of the Hegelian sequence of forms out into the light with it" (MF, p. 306). If the Marxist critic has difficulties, the critic's critic is doubly demented in her undertaking.

<sup>4</sup>"History is not a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise, but that, as an absent cause, it is inaccessible to us except in textual form, and that our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious" (PU, p. 36). Jameson's insistence that History is not a text will be reflected in his use of allegory; allegory always involves an element of ultimate un-understandability, an analogical moment where only the trope itself can project its own telos.

<sup>5</sup>On the "detachability" of allegorical meaning, see Morton Bloomfield, "Allegory as Interpretation," NLH 3 (1972), 301-317.

<sup>6</sup>In spite of the many pages devoted to allegory, Jameson never attempts a basic theory of allegory nor does he specifically relate the levels of allegorical exegesis with the Greimasian schemas he works out to account for textual aporias and the overlapping of historical periods. Michael Clark has spoken of "Jameson's occasionally cavalier attitude concerning the theoretical means toward his interpretive ends" ("Putting Humpty Together Again," Poetics Today 3:1 [1981], 159-170, here p. 163). Leaving these ties to be made by the reader implies a hedging that will betray the fundamental problematic of this entire critical project.

<sup>7</sup>L. Althusser, Réponse à John Lewis (Paris: Maspero, 1973), pp. 91-98. Quoted in PU, p. 29. I am here paraphrasing Jameson's interpretation of Althusser's implied critique of allegory, PU, pp. 28-32.

<sup>8</sup>"The cultural text is taken as an essentially allegorical model of society as a whole, its tokens and elements, such as the literary 'character,' being read as 'typifications' of elements on other levels, and in particular as figures for the various social classes and class fractions" (PU, p. 33).

<sup>9</sup>Which he examines in MF, pp. 116-169.

<sup>10</sup>Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton UP, 1957), pp. 89-90.

<sup>11</sup>PU, p. 19. Jameson underlines mystery, but I think essential deserves an equal or double underlining to emphasize History's necessarily, fundamentally, originarily (etc. for essentializing terminology) sublimated place. This notion of hiddenness would be in opposition to Althusser's ongoing, end-less, movement of History which, denied an analogical dimension, remains visible, clear, and recapturable at any subsequent moment. Not only does mystery already imply the need for a Marxist (i.e. history-oriented) hermeneutic, but it also implies allegorical criticism, and its dialectic or recovery and dis-recovery in subsequent levels, as its methodology.

<sup>12</sup>"Modernism and its Repressed: Robbe-Grillet as Anti-colonialist," Diacritics 6:2 (1976), 7-14, here p. 9, and also The Prison House of Language (Princeton UP, 1972), 182-183.

<sup>13</sup>In his "Figura" (Scenes From the Drama of European Literature [New York: Meridian, 1959], 11-76.) Auerbach recognized the importance of historical truth in the medieval interpretation of Biblical events that were given the four-fold interpretation. And in his work Dante guaranteed the validity of his allegory by connecting it to people of the real world. In a sense this idea of allegory is diametrically opposed to Jameson's because for Jameson it is in the Real that the analogical level exists.

<sup>14</sup>"La Cousine Bette and Allegorical Realism," PMLA, 86 (1971), 241-254, here p. 252.

<sup>15</sup>For some, the incompleteness of allegory lies in the signifier: Angus Fletcher refers to the "unfinished allegorical progression," the lack of an "inherent 'organic' limit of magnitude," and the arbitrary closure of allegory (Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode [Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1964], 174-178); and Joel Fineman: "Distanced at the beginning from its source, allegory will set out on an increasingly futile search for a signifier with which to recuperate the fracture of and at its source, and with each successive

signifier the fracture and the search begin again; a structure of continual yearning, the insatiable desire of allegory" ("The Structure of Allegorical Desire," October No. 12 [1980], 47-66, here p. 60; this article also appears in Allegory and Representation: Selected Papers from the English Institute, 1979-80, ed. S.J. Greenblatt [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1981], 26-60). In Jameson's interpretation, the materiality of the forms allegory takes is of lesser interest than the signifieds because the latter must be sought while the former are determined by the author's position in the class struggle; Jameson is interested not so much in the fact that Balzac chose an old maid and her suitors as in how these characters came to allegorize the contradictions of history.

<sup>16</sup>Ernst Bloch, Tubinger Einleitung in die Philosophie, 2 vols. (Frankfurt/Main, 1963-64), II, pp. 46-47; quoted by Jameson in MF, p. 147.

<sup>17</sup>There is not room here to adequately treat Jameson's appropriations of Lacan. See, however, his "Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan: Marxism, Psychoanalytic Criticism, and the Problem of the Subject," YFS, Nos. 55-56 (1977), 338-395, as well as PU, Chapter 3. For further discussion of Lacan and allegorical structure, see the Fineman article mentioned above, Note 15.

<sup>18</sup>Michael Clark has also pointed out this inconsistency in Jameson's contextualizing of divergent analytical methods into a pre-history where contradictions are merely provisional ("Putting Humpty Together Again," p. 164). Presumably once the absolute horizon is attained, all points of view dissolve; or does the "properly Marxist" take over?

<sup>19</sup>Even today "point of view" criticism persists; a late example is the work of Michael Fried in which he determines modernity in terms of "theatricality," theatricality being based on the (non)exchange of visual focus between viewers and figures in painting. See his Absortion and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1980) for his basic statement.

<sup>20</sup>"Class and Allegory in Contemporary Mass Culture: Dog Day Afternoon as a Political Film," College English, 38:8 (1977), 843-859, here. p. 848.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Modern and postmodern artists have dealt critically with point of view in various ways. Marcel Duchamp used a glass ground and a three-dimensional anamorphosis for his major works and in his writings referred variously to the "allegorical appearance" or "allegorical apparition" in art (see Duchamp du signe: Ecrits [Paris: Flammarion, 1975]). Contemporary artist Jan Dibbets photographs wall drawings to produce anamorphic images that perplex the viewer about illusions of distortion. All Held's canvasses show overlapping geometric forms, seen from many different perspectives, outlined in an indeterminate space. Curiously enough, one of his large white on black paintings was visible in the room of the central "frame-up" scene in the film American Gigolo.

<sup>23</sup>I am referring to Jacques Derrida's "Parergon" in La Verite en peinture (Paris: Flammarion, 1978) and its setting into circulation of the problematic of inside/outside in aesthetics as first questioned by Kant.

<sup>24</sup>"Allegories are always ethical, the term ethical designating the structural interference of two distinct value systems." Paul de Man, Allegories of Reading (New Haven: Yale UP, 1979), p. 206.

<sup>25</sup>De Man, Allegories of Reading, p. 209.

<sup>26</sup>"The Manipulation of point of view is a form of infinite regress inscribed within the metaphor of selfhood: (De Man, Allegories of Reading, p. 217). This is the metaphor that expands into allegory in Jameson's text as "the aberrant proper meaning of metaphor against which the allegory constitutes itself (Allegories of Reading, p. 210).

## THE JAMESON-EFFECT

James H. Kavanagh

A philosophy does not make its appearance in the world as Minerva appeared to the society of Gods and men. It only exists in so far as it occupies a position, and it only occupies a position in so far as it has conquered it in the thick of an already occupied world. It therefore only exists in so far as this conflict has made it something distinct, and this distinctive character can only be won and imposed in an indirect way, by a detour involving ceaseless study of other, existing positions. This detour is the form of the conflict which determines what side a philosophy takes in the battle and on the . . . battlefield which is philosophy. Because if . . . philosophy . . . is this perpetual war . . . , then no philosophy can exist within this theoretical relation of force except in so far as it marks itself off from its opponents and lays siege to that part of the positions which they have had to occupy in order to guarantee their power over the enemy whose impress they bear.<sup>1</sup>

This year's meeting of the English Institute included a session on "Marxism, History, and Textuality." Over two days, the members of the audience heard four talks admonishing them in various ways to attend to the political implications of their work, to the implicit conceptions of history carried therein, and to the ideological nuances of textual criticism. After a final talk by Frank Lentricchia, urging a strong reading of Kenneth Burke as opening paths to political responsibility in criticism, one listener commented to the effect that, when he was an Assistant Professor with Warren and Wellek as senior colleagues, no one could have imagined that twenty years later the most prestigious professional gatherings would have as a central theme the unabashed propagation of Marxist critical discourse. Well, largely through the work of one man, Fredric Jameson, the unimaginable has become the commonplace. There is a lesson about ideology here.

I want to mark this transformation, this re-opening, of a field of theoretical and ideological practice as a non-trivial political accomplishment, of which the present conference is but one more result. Yes, we must recognize the historical conditions of possibility -- the struggle of the Vietnamese, the re-emergence of capitalism's social and economic conditions, etc. -- that set the conditions of possibility for this discursive subject "Fredric Jameson" to be the bearer of a possible ideological project; and we must recognize, too, that this project was effected so powerfully because

a lived subject (however fictional and precarious) made a disciplined, comprehensive, and immanent appropriation-critique of virtually every critical language issuing from the crevices of the Western ideological apparatus, persuasively turning the attention of each to Marxism, such that it is fast becoming unimaginable to do literary theory without taking Marxism sympathetically into account. True, this transformation in the relatively marginal field of literary theory has not yet had, and may never have, any wider historical significance (which only means it is an unfinished accomplishment, finally not tied to a single subject, whose further effects we cannot know in advance); still, given the state of the field twenty years ago, it is no mean feat.

I say all this to foreground my own political responsibilities and felt problems in framing a critical commentary on Fredric Jameson's work. Without pretending entirely to disinvest myself of an unconscious, I can easily enough forgo (or at least defer) the considerable private satisfactions that, as a former student of his, I could derive from an Oedipal attack (poorly disguised by prefatory praise). I have somewhat more difficulty deciding how to negotiate the public and political situation we share as allies, a situation symbolic (with all that word's Jamesonian resonances) of the exhilarating yet curiously discomfiting predicament of Marxism in the literary academy, to which I alluded above.

A simple way of describing this problem is to say that I do not want to frame any criticisms of Fredric Jameson's work in Marxist literary theory, a work which provides one of the real conditions of my possibility, in such a way as to give aid and comfort to those who would like to resist, if not prevent, the development of any work in Marxist literary theory. but questioning this simple formulation reveals an even bigger problem, a source of the most profound unease -- namely, that in the public forums in which such a strategic problems arises, I do not see anybody trying to prevent the development of Marxist literary theory. Lest there be any misunderstanding: I have no illusion that Marxist discourse is dominant, or even widespread, in literary studies; but Marxism is not a theory just like any other<sup>2</sup>, and that it seems to have won even an acknowledged, publicly unchallenged right to a place in an influential discipline is a fact whose exceptional significance can be measured against the previous absolute denial of such a place to Marxism in any discipline, and the continued denial of such a place in any mass-cultural ideological apparatus. I see this apparent integration of Marxism into an institutional literary discourse, tied as it is so closely to Jameson's work, as a mark at once of that work's success, and of its problem; indeed, I would suggest that Jameson's work can be seen as an index of the curious political-ideological space which this work produced, and in which it intervenes.

I am not here repeating the rather well-worn critique of the marginalization of academic Marxism, denouncing the self-perpetuating closure of a high-theoretical, and therefore safe, Marxist discourse, unfolding within a privileged environment, hermetically sealed from the famous "outside world." Such a seemingly radical critique actually prevents posing the most difficult questions. For Marxism would emphatically deny that there could ever be such an absolute separation of the academic from the "outside" world, a separation which implicitly posits this latter "real world" as "society," such that the University itself is again, in a familiar ideological fashion, put outside of society, made "unreal." But I teach in a University whose motto is: "In the Nation's Service"; and they mean it. To address the very real problems of the relationship of Marxist activity within the very real ideological apparatuses of this social world, to Marxist activity, or the supposed lack of it, in other social apparatuses (trade unions, mass organizations, etc.) requires specifying the relationship among such apparatuses, a relationship which never is, as bourgeois ideology always wants to project it, one of total autonomy. In fact, as a Marxist, I do not believe for a second that there is no Marxism out in that American "real world," nor that it has been totally unaffected by what we do in the academy. The perceived, overwhelmingly "obvious" absence of Marxism in the real world is the effect of an ideological media apparatus, an effect that we err in taking at face value. After all, who would guess, from watching the CBS Evening News, that American universities are crawling with Marxists?

It is precisely because an achievement like Jameson's is political in a strong, albeit undeniably limited, sense, that it raises a more disturbing set of problems than those suggested by an absolute inside/outside dichotomy. For neither do I believe that, in this social world where the dominant media apparatuses disseminate a constant barrage of anti-Communist ideology attacking the "virus of Marxism," there is no staunch anti-Marxism in the literary academy. There must be quite a few listeners to the constant demands to historicize, politicize, and materialize literary-critical discourse who do not like what they are hearing. Indeed, everyone knows that such voices are audible and effective at the Department level even if barely discernible in the journals and conferences that form the macro-level of our discipline's ideological dissemination -- just as one would see in many local union halls the Marxists who never appear on television. It is almost as if there has been a curious inversion in the literary academy of the extra-academic relationship of ideological forces: Marxism appears everywhere, and anti-Marxism stays in the shadows.<sup>3</sup> I would suggest that it is Jameson's continual appropriation of non-Marxist theories in a certain way -- what we might call the "Jameson-effect" -- that has been crucial in winning this peculiar, seemingly secure space for Marxism in literary studies; I would contend, too, that this

"Jameson effect" is inevitably an ideological effect, producing a kind of theoretical and professional diegetic space in which determined opposition to Marxism cannot be seen.

I think this is the frame in which Jameson's work, and especially *The Political Unconscious*, deserves to be analyzed. One can easily identify the eclecticism of this book, and begin analyzing the liberties it takes with specific elements of various non-Marxist theories in order to appropriate all these theories for the Jamesonian "totality." But any argument about a specific moment of the book -- whether it be the use of Lacan's notion of the "Real," Althusser's "structural causality," or Frye's "Romance" -- remains beside the point if it does not engage with at least as much seriousness and commitment the explicitly stated (and actually achieved!) end to which the book turns all these concepts -- the construction of a Marxism that can be the meta-ideology for all non-Marxist discourses, the positing of a political interpretation that reveals itself as the horizon of any interpretation. So what if there's a little free play with a few post-structuralist signifiers? Is this not, like any other use of these concepts, a transformative, productive deformation/appropriation of raw materials, to be judged by the skill with which it is executed, and the effect it produces? The critic who would argue with Jameson's particular version of, say, Lacanian concepts, must show how that version disrupts the intended effect, and/or must indicate how more skillfully, and to what other purpose and effect, s/he proposes another transformed (knowing full well that everyone's "original" is already transformed) version of the concepts in question.<sup>4</sup> As Jameson quite correctly remarks:

no interpretation can be effectively disqualified on its own terms by a simple enumeration of inaccuracies or omissions, or by a list of unanswered questions. Interpretation is not an isolated act, but takes place within a Homeric battlefield, on which a host of interpretive options are either openly or implicitly in conflict.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, in response to objections that the way in which his "Marxian interpretive operation" posits "History" as the "untranscendable limit of our understanding in general and our textual interpretations in particular," no differently from the way other theories assign final priority to their favorite limiting "absolutes" (e.g., Language), Jameson explicitly acknowledges "the ultimate sense in which History as ground and untranscendable horizon needs [i.e., can have] no particular theoretical justification" (pp. 100-102). Jameson's point is that objections and alternatives must identify and take responsibility for their positions on an ideological-historical battlefield of interpretive struggles. On this unavoidable terrain I can certainly urge no more important task than "the unmasking of cultural artifacts as socially symbolic acts"

within the "single great collective story . . . [of the] struggle to wrest a realm of Freedom from a realm of Necessity" (pp. 19-20).

Nor can one avoid this point by insisting on the fundamentally imaginary narrativization of history at work here; Jameson already recognizes (as his play with character-izing capitals emphasizes) that: "history is not a text, not a narrative, master or otherwise," and he is only insisting, quite correctly, that one must choose, if not "History," then another intervention in the ceaseless, imaginary work of narrativization through which we must, and do, produce a coherent diegetic space in which our lives become understandable and liveable. Jameson persuasively produces his "History" as imaginary (i.e., as narrative), without specifying what master-narrative s/he -- explicitly or implicitly, but inevitably -- produces as an alternative.

From this perspective (sharing Jameson's ideological goals), one can only criticize a work like The Political Unconscious by relativizing it within a more comprehensive framework, one that does not reject, but that subsumes and explains the work's contradictory ideological and political effects. In critically theorizing Jameson's work, one must preserve its formidable historicizing and politicizing force, and indeed drive that force beyond the self-limitations of his discourse. For this task there is in Jameson's narrative only one theoretical "character" or actant that counts -- that "other Marxism" which for better or worse appears here as elsewhere under the sign of "Althusserianism." Another caution is now necessary: I have no interest in defending a "reified" Althusser against an equally imaginary Hegel, and I agree with Jameson that much Althusserian discourse has constructed an effigy "Hegelianism" through which something else (i.e., Stalinism) could be attacked (PU, pp. 50-51). On the other hand, I cannot, any more than Jameson, escape the unfortunate stable linguistic reification through which important debates over positions are inflected in terms of names. In that sense, I have no more reluctance about identifying myself with the "Althusserian" position as I read it, than he does with the "Hegelian" position.<sup>6</sup>

Nor am I interested, as one might expect, in identifying the inappropriate transformations of concepts that Jameson makes in order explicitly to reject en gros the "Althusserian" for the "Hegelian" problematic while attempting to subsume the former -- or assign a "local place for [its] operations" (p. 35) -- in the latter.<sup>7</sup> For the present analysis, Althusserianism appears the least when it is explicitly "explained" and ostensibly put in its place in The Political Unconscious; these are moments, really, in the production of the discursive space of the "other." More interesting are those moments -- virtually everywhere else in the book -- when Althusserianism is not excluded and not absent, but invisibly present, "in-

side the visible itself because defined by its structure . . . [an] other space . . . in the first space which contains it as its own denegation; [an] other space [that] is the first space in person."<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, the paradox of Jameson's book is that, after explaining away Althusserian theory, it produces Althusserian literary criticism "in person." The Political Unconscious, in Althusserian terminology, becomes Althusserian theory while not recognizing it. This mis-recognition takes the specific form of seeing Althusserianism "held" in one place while not seeing it burst forth all over. The repressed returns unnoticed. The point of my critique, then, could not be to denounce Althusserian errors, but to indicate how this contradiction enables and constrains Jamesonian discourse (and what I call the Jameson-effect), and what might be at stake in this determinate mis-recognition.

I will take up only a few examples of Althusserian theory's invisible presence in The Political Unconscious. One involves the omission of important concepts in Jameson's account of Althusserian theory, at the very moments when they seem most relevant. For example, Jameson spends five pages (pp. 39-44) "correcting" with the concept of mediation the Althusserian critique of "expressive causality," without addressing the concept of overdetermination that surely should be posed as the Althusserian "theoretical analogue" of "mediation." Nor do we find any serious treatment of the "science/ideology" distinction that is Althusserianism's founding, and in a certain sense "weakest," moment.<sup>9</sup> An absence more immediately relevant to Jameson's interpretive theory is that of any extended confrontation with the literary work of Pierre Macherey, Renee and Etienne Balibar, and Terry Eagleton. We also do not find in The Political Unconscious any discussion of Althusser's theory of the four social "instances."

What makes these absences significant is that these same concepts appear later at work within Jameson's own discourse, even if not mentioned explicitly or inflected in another (often but not always "Hegelian") vocabulary. Thus, Jameson uses the work of "a number of contemporary theorists" including Poulantzas, in positing a "social formation" that incorporates different "modes of production," to conclude that

The temptation to classify texts according to the appropriate mode of production is thereby removed, since the texts emerge in a space in which we may expect them to be crisscrossed and intersected by a variety of impulses from contradictory modes of cultural production all at once. (pp. 94-95)

It seems difficult not to remark Jameson's not remarking the concept of overdetermination he puts to work in this passage. Which "con-



temporary theorist," with which concepts, provided the conditions of possibility for Poulantzas's and Jameson's theoretical move? Similarly, when Jameson introduces his chapter on Balzac by noting how the novel "works" on its raw materials, "transforming their 'telling' into its 'showing,' estranging commonplaces against the freshness of some unexpected 'real,' foregrounding convention itself as that through which readers have hitherto received their notions of events, psychology, experience, space, and time" (p. 151), one might expect a footnote on Macherey and/or Eagleton where there is only Roland Barthes. And when Jameson "produces" a concept of dialogical class discourse, "adding" to Bakhtin's notion of the dialogical "the qualification that the normal form of the dialogical is essentially an antagonistic one, and that the dialogue of class struggle is one in which opposing class discourses fight it out within the general unity of a shared code" (p. 84), one might see re-produced here the insertion of "linguistic conflict in its determinant place as that which produces the literary text and which opposes two antagonistic usages--unequal but inseparable--of the common language."<sup>10</sup> But, again, Jameson's text does not seem to recognize what it produces.

Perhaps the most striking example of Jamesonian discourse fairly screaming an Althusserian concept while avoiding Althusserian theory occurs in his recent interview in Diacritics, where he distinguishes between the interpretive interventions we make in teaching undergraduates to question the implicit cultural patterns of reception "which our tradition calls ideologies," and the "laboratory experiments in the study of cultural dynamics . . . loosely analogous to 'scientific research'" that we do in graduate teaching and research.<sup>11</sup>

The science/ideology distinction re-produced here is of particular interest for this analysis, not just because its formulation is similar to one that I recently made in those explicit terms,<sup>12</sup> but because it is precisely the science/ideology distinction so determinately repressed here that can provide a means for re-appropriating Jamesonian discourse in a more comprehensive frame that subsumes while explaining its important effects. Jameson's work must be understood as (exactly what it claims to be) an attempt at constructing a meta-ideology, a project which can only be re-historicized and re-politicized within the operations of a discourse that respects a difference between the theoretical-scientific and the ideological instance. Only such a Marxist discourse, whose necessity is signaled by its determinate absence (or "invisible presence") in Jameson's own work can assign that work its historical and political "local validity."

To generalize, then, I would suggest that Jameson's attempt to appropriate a diluted Althusserian theory as a subset of an explicitly proclaimed Hegelian Marxism continually transforms itself from the inside. The Althusserian parasite hollows out the Hegelian host,

whose outer membrane remains intact only because its elasticity prevents an explosion by continually remodeling the organism in the shape of the beast itself. The question of which discourse assigns "sectoral validity" to the other in The Political Unconscious becomes virtually undecidable. Could it be otherwise? Jameson, after all is doing Marxism and doing it well, and whether we like it or not, the latest important shifting of the Marxist problematic was not effected by Lukacs or Hegel (however correct it is to insist on registering previous movements); what has transpired under the sign of "Althusser" in our moment can no more be successfully "corrected" by reference to Hegel than could what transpired under the sign of "Lukacs" in the 1920s. This suggests, of course, that what is at stake here is not "Althusserian" versus "Hegelian" Marxism, but the construction of Marxism itself.

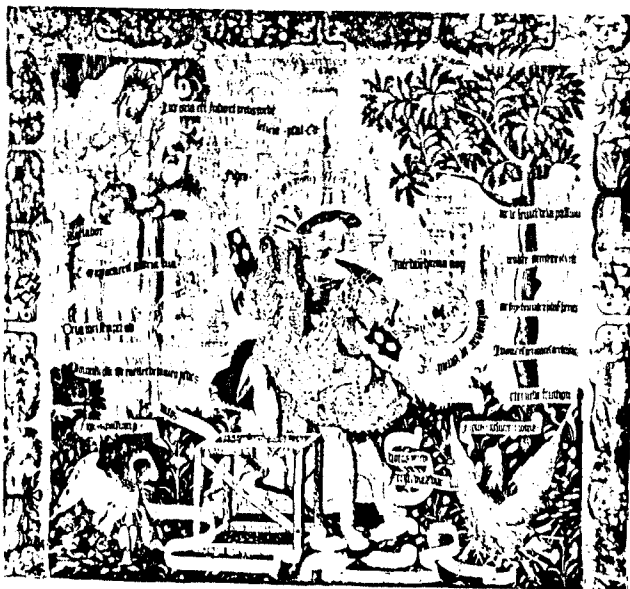
And this observation returns us to the "Jameson-effect" alluded to above. What makes Jamesonian discourse effective, and what gives it its own form of self-limiting ideological closure, is that it continually produces a Marxism that is recognized as something else. The "silence" of a determined anti-Marxism in the literary academy is related to this determinate mis-recognition of Marxism. Jameson's work is an ideological gesture, a "socially symbolic act," that helps to produce this situation in the very powerful and important sense that he defines so well: it produces a "lived" space in which the narrative resolution of an aporia or antimony stands in for the political resolution of a social contradiction. But this gesture is also the product (and allegory) of the social situation itself, in which none of us knows how to recognize Marxism (since Marxism is unrecognizable without a politicized working-class). That this is an ideological effect makes it a no less real effect. We live in it. I do not know that anyone can now propose an alternative in this absolutely crucial ideological "instance." In a social-ideological combinoire in which Marxism will be mis-recognized whichever position it occupies, the situation of the literary academy, where Marxism is mis-recognized in prominence, is certainly preferable to that of the mass media, where it is mis-recognized in exclusion.

So what? What's the point of such an analysis if the ideological gesture identified seems importantly "necessary" in the given conjuncture. Indeed, there is no point to such an analysis, if we remain on the level of the ideological. But if, and only if, we move to the level of theory, where there is an alternative, can we see the precarious incompleteness of the ideology that seemed so full. The narrative production of Marxism as universally-totalizing meta-ideology can be possible and persuasive precisely as long as the political production of social contradictions does not register Marxism as an absolute threat.<sup>13</sup> A Marxist ideology can give us a means of living effectively in the present situation; Marxist theory tells us that the present situation will change. It is important to



know that the possibility of narratively and ideologically "resolving" the incommensurability of Marxism conceived as an "untranscendable horizon that subsumes . . . apparently antagonistic or incommensurable critical operations, assigning them an undoubted sectoral validity within itself" (p. 10), and Marxism conceived as a position on a "Homeric battlefield" (p. 13) will disappear (perhaps to re-appear again in another Utopian moment). It is important to know, to be able to theorize, the link between the Jamesonian ideological moment with its historical and political conditions of possibility, and other moments that changing historical and political conditions will make necessary. It is important to know, for those who will be on the battlefield, where "sectoral validity" is assigned in a somewhat different manner. To help us toward this knowledge, Jameson's properly ideological discourse must be completed by an "other" Marxist theory that recognizes the "sectoral validity" of "untranscendable horizons" on the battlefield of theory.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Louis Althusser, Essays in Self-Criticism (London: New Left Books, 1976), pp. 165-66.

<sup>2</sup>Indeed, a mark of this difference is that Marxism, unlike any other theory, could never become dominant -- at least not as a result of a theoretical debate alone.

<sup>3</sup>Again, I am speaking only of anti-Marxism, not non-Marxism.

<sup>4</sup>Of course, counterposing an "original" or another, version of "source" concepts can be a means for the critic to show that Jameson's versions did not achieve the intended effects, and it can also be a means for the critic to make sure that Jameson's version does not achieve the intended effect. "Intended" here is used in the sense of objective or discursive intentionality.

<sup>5</sup>The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 11

<sup>6</sup>I would remark, too, that my reading of the Althusserian position precisely takes the force of registering the "something else" (Stalinism) at stake; registering that, it seems to me, renders insufficiently historicized and politicized the polemic that continues attacking the Althusserian position for errors concerning the "Hegel" or "Lukacs" just identified as beside the point. If Althusserianism is not attacking Hegel but Stalin, then what do we have to say about that. One can certainly argue that displacing onto Hegel the attack on Stalin costs too much for Marxist ideology, but such an argument does nothing to subsume and further politicize the (presumably important) effect of the attack on Stalinism itself.

<sup>7</sup>I would contend, though, that Jameson constructs a weak Althusserianism appropriate for his purposes, especially in the way he represents the Althusserian critique of "historicism" and "expressive causality." The question asked of Althusser's critique of Hegel can also be asked of Jameson's critique of Althusser: What is at stake politically in Jameson's specific construction of an "Althusserianism" to be attacked? The answer is not so clear?

<sup>8</sup>Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, Reading Capital (London: New Left Books, 1970), pp. 26-7. In its original context, this quote actually describes another kind of "space," but it helps to make my point here.

<sup>9</sup>Jameson's avoidance of this issue may symptomatize the (correct) ideological assumption that few in his audience take this distinction seriously.

<sup>10</sup>Pierre Macherey and Etienne Balibar, "Literature as an Ideological Form: Some Marxist Hypotheses," Praxis 5 (1980), p. 57.

<sup>11</sup>"Interview," Diacritics, Fall, 1982, pp. 72-3. On page 88 of the same interview, Jameson again alludes to this distinction between graduate and undergraduate teaching when making the point that the problems of cultural theory are no less complex than those of bio-chemistry.

<sup>12</sup>See my "Marxism's Althusser: Toward a Politics of Literary Theory," Diacritics, Spring, 1982.

<sup>13</sup>To be sure, we are fortunate to work in an academic social space in which reason and argument count (can we understand this socially without thinking about "science?") and anti-Marxism is relatively silent in the literary academy because, as an ideology, it does not have anything very effective (i.e., persuasive) to say that would staunchly oppose the Jamesonian meta-ideology -- a discourse that has, in a sense, "stolen its voice." But under changed social and political conditions, this social space for the relative autonomy of reason will disappear, meta-ideology that "lived" in that space will count for little, and anti-Marxism will find something to say, will find a voice, persuasive or not.

THE POLITICAL UNCONSCIOUS OF JAMESON'S  
THE POLITICAL UNCONSCIOUS

James Iffland

Awaiting with patience the publication of Fredric Jameson's The Political Unconscious<sup>1</sup> was very difficult for me, as I am sure it was for all those who had felt the exhilarating impact of his earlier work. While more than a year after its appearance I can readily say that it fulfilled many of my expectations, I must admit that it also proved highly disconcerting -- for reasons that will be explained in the critique that follows. The latter, it should be stressed, has been carried out in a spirit basically sympathetic to what Jameson has tried to do in The Political Unconscious. In fact, I hope to make use of several of its aspects in a project of my own currently under way. Thus, in a certain sense this critique also represents an effort to remain faithful to a key precept of dialectical thinking as Jameson has described it in Marxism and Form: the need to scrutinize and question the very conceptual instruments one uses in studying any given historical phenomenon.<sup>2</sup>

Turning now to this task, what ultimately proves so troubling about Jameson's book is precisely that which will be most attractive about it for many of its readers. As Hayden White states on the dust cover: "No one else encompasses as many positions within a disciplined critical practice." While there can be little doubt about the first part of the statement, the second needs a closer look. Indeed, the principal question I wish to raise here regards the degree of success achieved in Jameson's attempt to fuse or amalgamate an enormous range of analytical tools, critical methodologies, and interpretive approaches -- all with roots deep within a wide array of ideological matrixes -- under the roof of what might be described (somewhat polemically) as a smiling, all-embracing, rather paternalistic Marxism. Or put another way, what I would like to look at is Jameson's "comic" approach to an entire host of currents both within and outside Marxist thought, always managing to "redeem" or "salvage" their "positive" dimensions, always managing to overcome their contradictions and limitations, by dint of dialectical prowess.

Please note that I am not suggesting in a spirit of dogmatic "purism" that Marxist criticism cannot use components from non-Marxist approaches, or -- for that matter -- that different strains within Marxism cannot be successfully reconciled. Rather, what I wish to ask is whether all of the diverse theoretical perspectives in evidence have in fact been made to "fit together" in Jameson's latest work. To express it more bluntly, I wish to ask whether the latter has not ended up being, in large measure, a confusing *mélange*, full of communicational "noise" which has as its consequence the weakening of the book as a Marxist project.

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## I

Before examining Jameson's practice and its ramifications in some detail, let us turn to a series of passages in which the theoretical underpinnings come into view. A principle enunciated in the Preface to the work serves, in effect, to justify virtually all that ensues: "In the spirit of a more authentic dialectical tradition, Marxism is here conceived as that 'untranscendable horizon' that subsumes such apparently antagonistic or incommensurable critical operations, assigning them an undoubted sectoral validity within itself, and thus at once cancelling and preserving them" (p. 10). The "critical operations" he refers to here are "the ethical, the psychoanalytic, the myth-critical, the semiotic, the structural, and the theological" -- those interpretive methods or approaches with which Marxism must contend in the cultural arena of the late twentieth century. Refusing to consign these rivals to what he calls the "ashcan of history" because of "their faithful consonance with this or that local law of a fragmented social life, this or that subsystem of a complex and mushrooming cultural superstructure" (ibid.), Jameson prefers to follow the more positive path by asserting that Marxism is fully able to absorb them within itself, retaining their valid elements while simultaneously discarding what we might call their "ideological chaff."

As one would expect from Jameson, this "enveloping strategy" is not carried out with blithe naïveté; to the contrary, he is fully aware of the tremendous pitfalls that must be avoided in executing it. Let us look, for example, at this passage from the chapter which comprises the book's theoretical introduction:

One of the essential themes of this book will be the contention that Marxism subsumes other interpretive modes or systems; or, to put it in methodological terms, that the limits of the latter can always be overcome, and their more positive findings retained, by a radical historicizing of their mental operations, such that not only the content of the analysis, but the very method itself, along with the analyst, then comes to be reckoned into the "text" or phenomenon to be explained. (p. 47)

"Always historicize" has been identified by Jameson as the "moral of the Political Unconscious" (p. 9). Here it is the key to success in the "comic" resolution of the problems inherent in the appropriation by Marxism of non-Marxist perspectives. Once these have been thoroughly historicized, their solid contributions can then be utilized without further difficulty.

It should be noted that the historicizing operation does, of course, involve a negative function: Jameson is very adroit at baring the ideological limitations, at pointing out the theoretical

blind spots, of those analytical methodologies or hermeneutic systems he wishes to annex. The characteristic gesture that follows is that in which Jameson attempts to "one-up" the latter, arguing that Marxism is always capable of overarching them:

It projects a rival hermeneutic to those already enumerated; but it does so...not so much by repudiating their findings as by arguing its ultimate philosophical and methodological priority over much more specialized interpretive codes whose insights are strategically limited as much by their own situational origins as by the narrow or local ways in which they construe or construct their objects of study. (p. 20)

These other hermeneutical systems are not only ceded their dose of "sectoral validity" within Marxism, as we saw earlier, but actually gain by the association. In a passage apropos of Frye and Propp we find this typical comment: "The dialectical critique of these methods is...not a merely negative and destructive one; it leads, as we shall see, to their fulfillment and completion, albeit in a very different spirit from the one they initially propose" (p. 110).

All of this will undoubtedly produce sighs of relief among non-Marxist scholars and critics who find that their life's work is not being summarily repudiated as so much bourgeois mystification. No less favorably will it be greeted by Marxists bent on stamping out the last embarrassing vestiges of "vulgar" or "dogmatic" Marxism in the field of cultural studies. But when one proceeds beyond this set of undeniably attractive theoretical principles to see what they give license to, it begins to take on a somewhat different light.

## II

This is clearly not the context in which to indulge in an exhaustive documentation of the charges made in my initial remarks; instead, I will restrict myself to pointing out what I see as the major fault lines in the project, those areas most symptomatic of its peculiar problematic.

The first of these in need of close scrutiny is the three-tiered hermeneutical system outlined in the chapter entitled "On Interpretation: Literature as a Socially Symbolic Act." Having first asserted that "Marxist critical insights will...here be defended as something like an ultimate semantic precondition for the intelligibility of literary and cultural texts," Jameson goes on to propose that

...such semantic enrichment and enlargement of the inert givens and materials of a particular text must take place within three concentric frameworks, which marks a widening

out of the sense of the social ground of a text through the notions, first, of political history, in the narrow sense of punctual event and a chroniclelike sequence of happenings in time; then of society, in the now already less diachronic and time-bound sense of constitutive tension and struggle between social classes; and, ultimately, of history now conceived in its vastest sense of the sequence of modes of production and the succession and destiny of the various social formations, from pre-historic life to whatever far future history has in store for us. (p. 75)

The "phases" (or "horizons") of the interpretive process which correspond to these three "concentric frameworks" all have their particular mode of conceiving or reconstructing the text. At the first level the "individual work is grasped essentially as a symbolic act"; at the second, as an "individual parole or utterance" within the "great collective and class discourses," the object of study being the "ideologeme, that is, the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes"; and finally, within the "ultimate horizon of human history as a whole," "both the individual text and its ideologemes know a final transformation, and must be read in terms of what I call the ideology of form, that is, the symbolic messages transmitted to us by the coexistence of various sign systems which are themselves traces or anticipations of modes of production" (p. 76)

Each of these modes of viewing the text is certainly suggestive in its own right. Where misgivings begin to arise is with regard to the whole matter of the articulation of the three levels, the way in which they might be seen as dovetailing in an intelligible fashion. It is, moreover, a question of articulation between the concrete methodologies prescribed for dealing with the text conceived as a different object of study. For here we begin to witness the accumulation of diverse approaches alluded to earlier.

At the first level the anthropological structuralism of Lévi-Strauss is the key analytical tool (though he also comes very close to Pierre Macherey in many respects) in that "the individual narrative, or the individual narrative structure, is to be grasped as the imaginary resolution of a real contradiction" (p. 77). When we move to the next, we find the Saussurean distinction between langue and parole transferred to the domain of class discourse, but the real theoretical protagonist at this level is Mikhail Bakhtin (who was thoroughly opposed, by the way, to Saussurean linguistics).<sup>3</sup> Jameson adopts the Russian critic's notion of the dialogical nature of all discourse, pushing it further when he suggests that the voices that (conflictively) resound within a given work are those of antagonistic classes. Though there is an attempt to relate the

status of the text as a symbolic act and as a parole in polemical class discourse (see p. 85), loose ends still remain--perhaps particularly as regards the role of ideologemes. Since the latter are conceived as the "ultimate raw material" (p. 87) of the literary work (and are basically narrative in nature), presumably they should be worked into the discussion of the first level (that of the "imaginary resolution"). (Does the author construct his symbolic act out of ideologemes?)<sup>4</sup> Whereas in the realization of the symbolic act there would seem to be a certain autonomy involved, at this second level the process of literary production would seem to consist of the simple elaboration (if not reproduction) of pre-existing ideologemes--to the point where the analyst's job is largely that of merely identifying them (see pp. 87-88). The notion of a class langue would also appear to need to be considered in a definition of the first level, insofar as it would function as a kind of governing structure within which the symbolic act would be effected. (And what is class discourse ultimately? Simply an agglomeration of ideologemes? Would we not have to introduce the notion of a "syntax" into it?)

The tendency to leap from level to level, from method to method, rather than meshing them together is seen most strikingly, perhaps, on taking up the third "horizon." For now the text, rather than an "imaginary resolution" or an elaboration of ideologemes, is "re-structured as a field of force in which the dynamics of sign systems of several distinct modes of production can be registered and apprehended" (p. 98); the prime focus, as indicated above, is now "the ideology of form, that is, the determinate contradiction of the specific messages emitted by the varied sign systems which coexist in a given artistic process as well as its general social formation" (ibid.). Once again, the ideas Jameson is developing here are highly attractive; the problem arises when we try to reconcile this new object of study with the others.<sup>5</sup> How do we fit together this overlapping of sign systems belonging to different modes of production with the notion of the work as a single parole in a class langue? Agreed, if we accept Jameson's contention that any given historical moment is typified by a conjunction of several modes of production, that there is an ongoing process of "cultural revolution" (as he calls it, now borrowing vocabulary from Mao) at work at even the most outwardly calm historical conjunctures, then any given work is likely to bear its traces. But what is the precise relation between this clash of "macro sign-systems" (my term) and that going on between the "macro sign-systems" of class discourse as posited earlier?<sup>6</sup>

Note that I do not wish to suggest that the text cannot be all three of these differently formulated objects of study. Rather my question is how is it all three? How do we avoid applying what would seem to be three quasi-autonomous approaches (as formulated here)

when dealing with a single work, potentially ending up with three relatively unrelated results?<sup>7</sup>

Needless to say, the chapters focusing on specific works could have been the format in which these problems of articulation could have been worked out more palpably. A single text might have been studied from all three perspectives, showing how the different methodologies and conceptual frames can be linked in practice. After his initial theoretical postulation Jameson does state that the

...general movement through these three progressively wider horizons will largely coincide with the shifts in focus of the final chapters, and will be felt, although not narrowly and programmatically underscored, in the methodological transformations determined by the historical transformations of their textual objects, from Balzac to Gissing to Conrad. (p. 76, emphasis mine)

From what we might call the pedagogical point of view, it would have been much better had Jameson "narrowly and programmatically underscored" the movement through the three horizons in his actual analysis, thus helping the reader toward a better grasp of the difficult theoretical scaffolding on which it depends. The fact that he focuses on a predominantly different horizon in his treatment of each of the authors makes one wonder whether he himself would find it difficult to apply all three to one.

### III

But even if we assume for the time being that this three-tiered system is not a house of cards, that the couplings between horizons and methodologies, though vague, do actually exist, we would still have to confront the bewildering array of disparate theoretical elements Jameson tries to splice in not only in this introductory chapter, but the later ones as well. As noted above, this is not done without modifying and discarding, without pointing out the limitations of that which is to be appropriated. Nonetheless, one asks oneself whether these "divergent and unequal bodies of work" (as Jameson himself calls just some of them, see p. 13) can really be accommodated within any cohesive perspective, let alone a Marxist one; whether the unwanted ideological "baggage" can really be left at the door when a particular theoretical facet is allowed into his hermeneutical system.

Again, a detailed documentation of what I am referring to would require many more pages than I can allow myself in this context. A simple list of the names that crop up in the text would perhaps be the best way of starting this partial effort: Northrop Frye, Derrida, Deleuze, Guattari, Macherey, Bakhtin, Saussure, Lévi-Strauss,

Althusser, Greimas, Lyotard, Freud, the Church Fathers, Ernst Bloch, Lacan, Poulantzas, Weber, Hjelmslev, Propp, Kenneth Burke, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Husserl, Wittgenstein, Lukács, Brecht, Hegel, Todorov, Sartre, Horkheimer, Adorno, Habermas, Norman Holland, Ricoeur, Durkheim.<sup>8</sup>

The macaronic effect that the juxtaposition of these names produces is, no doubt, unfair in a certain respect. The careful reader will surely identify the "family resemblances" between many of these figures, the codes many of them share, the common points of departure, etc. For example, the connections between Derrida and Nietzsche, between Althusser, Macherey, and Poulantzas, between Freud and Althusser, Freud and Lacan, between Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, Propp, Greimas and Todorov, between Hegel and Lukács, Sartre and Heidegger, etc., etc. Insofar as we seem to have a "museum of modern thought" represented here, it might be said that they are all related in varied, albeit subterranean, ways.

It must be conceded, nonetheless, that many of the theoretical perspectives present here make fairly strange bedfellows.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, much of Jameson's energy throughout the work is invested in trying to reconcile these different theoretical stances, showing how they are not ultimately incompatible (and not only with Marxism, but simply with each other). Thus, for example, in wanting to adopt aspects of contemporary thought within an anti-hermeneutical vein which runs contrary to the thrust of his own project -- e.g., post-structuralism, Deleuze and Guattari--Jameson argues that it is possible to construct a "new and more adequate, immanent or antitranscendent hermeneutic" (p. 23), or that in his interpretive chapters he has "found it possible without any great inconsistency to respect both the methodological imperative in the concept of totality or totalization [Hegel, Lukács], and the quite different attention of a 'symptomal' analysis of discontinuities, rifts, actions at distance, within a merely apparently unified cultural text [Macherey, Derrida, etc.]" (pp. 56-57, emphasis mine).

The whole second chapter is dedicated to reconciling the methods of Frye and Propp, one "semantically" oriented, the other "syntactically"; one focusing on what the text means (in the older hermeneutical sense) and the other on how it works (in the anti-hermeneutical sense of Deleuze) (see p. 108). We find him "solving" the problems synchronic approaches to history (e.g., Foucault) pose for those involved in concrete political practice (see pp. 90-91); or, "at one stroke," those of the "synchronic system" and the "typological temptation" characteristic of "stagist" approaches (classifying Milton as "pre-capitalist," for example) (see p. 95). The notion of cultural revolution turns out to be "beyond the opposition between synchrony and diachrony" (p. 97), and now we have a "new use of concepts of periodization and in particular that

older schema of the 'linear' stages which is here preserved and cancelled all at once" (ibid.).

Weber's and Marx's seemingly contrary ideas regarding value are shown to be basically consistent with each other (see pp. 248-50). Though Lacan's work is "still genetic" and "couched in terms of the individual subject, [it] is not incompatible with a broader historical framework" (p. 153). In one of the final propositions of the work Jameson argues "that a Marxist negative hermeneutic, a Marxist practice of ideological analysis proper, must in the practical work of reading and interpretation be exercised simultaneously with a Marxist positive hermeneutic, or a decipherment of the Utopian impulses of these same still ideological cultural texts" (p. 296).

Within these operations of reconciliation, adaptation, and appropriation a very large amount of very sophisticated footwork goes on (as one would expect). Though Jameson is eager to employ post-structuralist concepts, he must point out that this does not imply at all a "wholesale endorsement of post-structuralism, the anti-Marxist character of which is increasingly evident in France today" (p. 60). As for the Freudian hermeneutic which is of such great use, he must admit that "terms and secondary mechanisms drawn from it are to be found strewn at great distance from their original source, pressed into the service of quite unrelated systems, and not least in the following pages (p. 62). Before using Frye's archetypal criticism ("a virtual contemporary reinvention of the four-fold hermeneutic associated with the theological tradition," p. 69), Jameson is forced to admit that "ideology leaves its mark on myth criticism insofar as the latter proposes an unbroken continuity between the social relations and narrative forms of primitive society and the cultural objects of our own" (pp. 68-69). Lest we be surprised at his willingness to adopt--if only partially--certain theoretical constructs adopted from religious sources, he says (apropos of some comments taken from Ricoeur) that "any comparison of Marxism with religion is a two-way street, in which the former is not necessarily discredited by its association with the latter" (p. 285). As for his extension of what he concedes is a Durkheimian theory of religion to cultural production in general, he is quick to point out that "serious reservations about the 'adaptation' of what is essentially a bourgeois and conservative social philosophy must be raised both from a Marxist position and also, as we shall see shortly, from a post-structuralist one" (p. 292). After showing us that the Durkheimian framework approaches the "rather Hegelian conception of the Asiatic mode of production" (p. 295) in the mature Marx, Jameson suggests that we can accept it "under erasure" (p. 294).

Surely this celerity in qualifying, in self-critiquing, in pointing out the limits of his borrowing, is a sign of trueness to the imperatives of dialectical thinking on Jameson's part (as well as of

simple intellectual honesty). Moreover, there can be no doubt that he is oftentimes successful, by means of dialectical brilliance, in these "raids" on non-Marxist domains (or on conflicting domains within Marxism). Nevertheless, it is very hard to do away with the strong impression of Jameson as a kind of "bricoleur," as someone who simply "grabs whatever comes in handy" in any given moment of his analysis. At one point it may be Lacan's notion of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, at another it may be a Greimasian semantic rectangle; at one moment it may be Kenneth Burke's concepts of "dream," "prayer," and "chart," at another Barthe's notion of "écriture blanche," or Brechtian "estrangement" or Heidegger's "worldness of the world" or Sartre's doctrine of "bad faith" and "authenticity." In sum, there does not seem to be any intellectual system from which a part cannot be lopped off when the need arises.<sup>10</sup>

## IV

Commenting in Marxism and Form on the often-made assertion that Sartre's Critique of Dialectical Reason is an attempt at reconciling existentialism and Marxism, Jameson has said that it

...has always seemed to me to betray a fundamental naïveté about the relationship of thought in general, and political thought in particular, to our being as a whole, to that total human reality of which it is an expression. Intellectual systems are not here opinions which can be tinkered with, adjusted, manipulated until we somehow manage to fit them together properly... It seems to me, indeed, that the situation is quite the reverse of what is implied above: the very project of such a 'reconciliation' is the sign that it already has been effected in lived reality, that somehow a lived synthesis of the two systems exists already, preceding, motivating, and founding the purely intellectual working out of the synthesis in the domain of thought. (pp. 206-7)

Surely Jameson would respond in more or less the same way to the bulk of the preceding remarks. In The Political Unconscious he is not indulging in mere "bricolage," fiddling with parts of incommensurable systems until they mesh together. A "lived synthesis" was already achieved before the project even began.

While anyone familiar with the work would agree that it is the fruit of a profound meditation on the questions involved, it would be a mistake to assume that the mere attempt to reconcile such diverse matter is a sign that a synthesis has already been effected--in objective terms, that is to say.<sup>11</sup>

It is at this juncture that I would like to turn back to one of Jameson's own analytical concepts and suggest that it might be productively used not only on his own critical project as a whole, but on all critical endeavors of whatever orientation. The concept I am referring to is that of narrative as a symbolic act, as an "imaginary resolution" of real contradictions. Could this concept (and the analytical tools that go with it) not be applied to criticism itself? Cannot it too be, in essence, a "symbolic act"? Is fiction the only realm where imaginary resolutions are effectuated through feats of (ideological) prestidigitation? Cannot "symptomal" analysis be applied to an entire host of intellectual practices?

If such be the case (and I think it is),<sup>12</sup> the question arises as to what "imaginary solution" is Jameson (or his text, he might say) trying to bring about. As the reader will probably surmise from the brunt of my earlier commentary, the "imaginary resolution" Jameson strives after, the tension that he would want to make melt away, is that between Marxism and all the philosophical systems, critical methodologies, etc. he brings to bear in *The Political Unconscious*.<sup>13</sup> Throwing the text into "eloquent disarray" (to use Macherey's term) is precisely the attempt to show that Marxism is capable of expanding infinitely, of absorbing into its breast the "positive" or "valid" aspects of virtually any intellectual system (once, of course, the "magic wand" of historicization has been passed over them). Or looked at from a slightly different angle, the thesis the book seems to put forward is one found, again, in Jameson's observations on Sartre: "...one of the most striking characteristics of Marxism as a philosophy is underscored in Sartre's experience, which is not an atypical one: that Marxism as such, for whatever reason, does not seem to exclude the adherence to some other kind of philosophy; that one can be both a Marxist and an existentialist, phenomenologist, Hegelian, realist, empiricist, or whatever" (*Marxism*, p. 207). Despite the fact that all of the latter would be considered ideologies (with their concomitant roots in class positions) by most forms of Marxism, Jameson suggests that there can be no contradiction between them and Marxism because they have to do with "two wholly different types of reality, which each mode of thought properly governs" and which "miss each other in mid-air, as it were, fail to intersect at any point" (*ibid.*, p. 208). To the contrary, Marxism does tend to hit the others in mid-air, usually with devastating effect; to make them appear to miss each other requires, if I may say so, doctored radar screens.

In speculating about the impulse behind this ideological project (again using Macherey's terminology), one might first be led to observe that it gives the impression that Jameson, despite his adherence to a Marxist perspective on literature, feels ineluctably attracted to a series of critical approaches and intellectual currents outside its general perimeters. The richness and variety of contemporary criticism -- from Frye to Derrida -- being what it is,

its temptations prove too overwhelming to withstand. Though the project will probably be praised as an effort at "enriching" Marxist criticism, it alternatively might be described as a case of "wanting one's cake and eating it too."

If we again take one of Jameson's dictates and apply it to Jameson himself, we might arrive at a somewhat different, though complementary, conclusion. Both in *Marxism and Form* and *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson is constantly stressing the importance of taking into account the "situational nature of all thought" (*Marxism*, p. 340), that a "work is precisely not complete in itself but is handed down to us as a kind of gesture or verbal thrust incomprehensible unless we are able to understand the situation in which the gesture was first made, and the interlocutors to whom it was a reply" (*ibid.*, p. 377).

"Ruthlessly historicizing" Jameson himself involves recognition of the fact that the "interlocutor" towards whom his "verbal thrusts" or "gestures" are immediately directed is essentially the American academy--up until now either disdainfully indifferent or, more often, openly hostile toward Marxism in any form. Barely concealed beneath the surface of *The Political Unconscious* is the (perfectly understandable) desire to come to terms with that specific, rather forbidding, audience, with the "word of the other" (in Bakhtin's terms). The form it takes is the rather common one (within capitalist societies) of trying to give Marxism a "human face," that is, trying to show that it is not so "scary" or "alien," that it shares common ground with an assortment of disciplines within liberal academe, that it is capable of transcending the crude and grimly mechanistic models of its "vulgar" past. The blows that most concepts of Marxism would have to signify for the average liberal scholar are (strategically) softened here with the comforting appearance of Northrop Frye or the hermeneutic of the Church Fathers, with Sartre's concept of "authenticity" (by now thoroughly domesticated) or Kenneth Burke's "dream," "prayer," and "chart." Completely reassuring is the fact that here "the priority of a Marxian interpretive framework" is argued "in terms of semantic richness" (p. 10), or that the perspectives of Marxism will be defended "as something like an ultimate semantic precondition for the intelligibility of literary and cultural texts" or as "necessary preconditions for adequate literary comprehension" (p. 75).<sup>14</sup> The boggling complexities of Jameson's theory and practice are in themselves the real proof that Marxism deserves its place in the comforting confines of the graduate seminar, having left behind the environs of the 1930s night school (the dichotomy employed by Jameson himself in the Preface to *Marxism and Form*, see p. ix).

All of this is to some degree unavoidable, given that aforementioned context which any Marxist in American academia must confront



(and surely will be defended on "tactical" grounds -- a matter to which I will return). It is even more unavoidable when we take into account another paradoxical (and agonizing) facet of the Marxist's situation -- that of wanting to be rewarded by the same social system he or she (presumably) wishes to obliterate. The carrots offered have their price, and in the case of the Marxist, it usually consists of a "domestication" of his or her whole approach, a "sanding down" of its irritating edges, a highlighting of its connections with the entire "Western" or "humanistic" tradition. Although I make these remarks in speculating about certain qualities of The Political Unconscious, I do not by any means want to single out Jameson as a unique instance of this syndrome.<sup>15</sup>

We may examine this phenomenon in yet another way, and here we arrive at what I have referred to in my title as the "political unconscious" of The Political Unconscious. Jameson repeatedly insists that it is necessary to "force a given interpretive practice to stand and yield up its name, to blurt out its master code and thereby reveal its metaphysical and ideological underpinnings" (p. 58) -- in a word, to bring to the surface its repressed "political unconscious." While the various conjectures I have made so far all relate, in one manner or another, to the question of the "political unconscious" of Jameson's text, the one I will put forward now has to do with politics in the stricter sense. Tucked away in a footnote (symptomatically enough) is a comment by Jameson in which he makes clear his own theory about how the Left should face the political situation in the United States today:

In the United States...it is precisely the intensity of social fragmentation ... that has made it historically difficult to unify Left or "antisystemic" forces in any durable and effective organizational way. Ethnic groups, neighborhood movements, feminism, various "counter-cultural" or alternative life-style groups, rank-and-file labor dissidence, student movements, single-issue movements -- all have in the United States seemed to project demands and strategies which were theoretically incompatible with each other and impossible to coordinate on any practical political basis. The privileged form in which the American Left can develop must therefore be that of an alliance politics; and such a politics is the strict practical equivalent of the concept of totalization on the theoretical level. In practice, then, the attack on the concept of 'totality' in the American framework means the undermining and the repudiation of the only realistic perspective in which a genuine Left could come into being in this country. (p. 54)

Clearly this is not the format in which to discuss the merits of what we might call a "Popular Front" strategy for the American Left.

Rather would I wish to limit myself to suggesting that this passage does a great deal in yielding up the "coded political resonance" (ibid.) of Jameson's criticism, that it forms a crevice through which we might peer into its "political unconscious."

For what we have in The Political Unconscious would seem to be an "alliance politics" approach to Marxist criticism. Just as in the American political domain Jameson would endeavor to unite all the oppositional political forces of whatever ilk, redeeming their progressive or proto-progressive facets through fruitful association with the Left, so in the realm of criticism does he strive to bring together all the approaches which display "progressive potential," all the methodologies which with a little shaving here and a little bending there might be brought into the Marxist camp. While I may in fact be guilty of trying to establish homologies here between different and incommensurable spheres (a practice Jameson rightfully castigates), my principal concern is that of showing that a single impulse would appear to unite Jameson's critical practice and what he advocates in terms of concrete political action.<sup>16</sup> On demonstrating how all the diverse varieties of modern criticism and hermeneutic systems may be reconciled with (and enhanced through) Marxism, he would seem to be doing more or less what he presumably would say that the Left should be doing here in the United States -- showing all the groups of an oppositional nature that capitalism is, in the last analysis, at the root of all the evils they wish to abolish and that therefore there is a natural basis for unity among them.

Jameson would probably argue that this is precisely what is called for within the specific context he and other Marxists within American education face. What needs to be done is to extend a friendly hand to all potential allies, building bridges by showing them that what they do can be fruitfully pursued within a Marxist context (with certain modifications, of course). This perhaps helps to explain why he wants to ease back from a "showdown" with advocates of other approaches, to avoid drawing lines, as when he says in the Preface that this book is not conceived as a methodological handbook for ideological analysis, since such a handbook "would necessarily settle its accounts with rival 'methods' in a far more polemic spirit" (p. 12); or when at one point in his theoretical chapter he says:

At this point it might seem appropriate to juxtapose a Marxist method of literary and cultural interpretation with those just outlined, and to document its claims to greater adequacy and validity. For better or for worse, however, as I warned in the Preface, this obvious next step is not the strategy projected by the present book, which rather seeks to argue the perspectives of Marxism as necessary preconditions for adequate literary comprehension. (pp. 74-75)

Such an "obvious next step" would also no doubt tend to alienate those he wishes to attract.

## V

These speculations lead us perforce into the entire matter of what the proper role of Marxist cultural studies should be. Jameson would be the first to argue against the mere consecration of Marxist criticism as just another "approach" within the marketplace of contemporary academia. Indeed, in the last sentence of The Political Unconscious he underlines the fundamental truth that "political praxis...remains, of course, what Marxism is all about" (p. 299).

It is on this terrain, precisely, that I would like to raise my most fundamental (and final) objection to Jameson's latest critical effort, for there are real implications in the domain of political education and praxis which proceed out of its implicit (perhaps unconscious) premises. Putting it in the bluntest (most "vulgar," some would say) terms possible, Marxist criticism, besides arming its readers with a certain kind of knowledge, also should move them (subjectively) toward concrete political action. In other words, in its highest form it should achieve the status of agitation. This is not to assume, rather naively, that the workers in the auto industry, for example, are likely (within our present social formation) to pick up copies of Marxist literary criticism and that the latter should be aimed toward them. No, its audience will continue to be for some time the mostly middle-class college student (and his or her professors, needless to say); for better or worse, it is toward them that the agitational force of Marxist cultural studies must be aimed, hopefully turning at least some of them into what we might call "class traitors" (or putting it positively, into "organic intellectuals" of the working class).<sup>17</sup>

Once more, this is not the moment for a full inquiry into what form Marxist cultural study might take so as to perform this agitational role I have projected for it. What I will say, however, is that the course followed by Jameson in The Political Unconscious is not, in my opinion, the most propitious. Though the rapprochement with other methodologies may help to lure in an unwary liberal or two, so many concessions have been made, so much "acclimatizing" has come about, that the book has lost any truly agitational spark it might have had. The interpretive chapters (on which he asks us to judge the theoretical part, see p. 13) are often indistinguishable from what one could find in the work of a non-Marxist critic, and what is in a more recognizably Marxist vein has been markedly weakened by everything with which it has been interfused.

Part of the problem can be explained through recourse to his own use of the idea of sedimentation (borrowed, yes, from Husserl); that is, even after he has thoroughly historicized the various and sundry philosophical or critical concepts he takes from non-Marxist sources, the latter continue to emit their own ideological signals which are often at odds with their new context (or at least help to blur it).<sup>18</sup> His technique of "metacommentary" (as defined on pp. 9-10 and 208-9), for that matter, can prove to be counterproductive in this sense, for one is often taking as a point of departure an approach tied in one way or another to bourgeois aesthetics. As the British critic Tony Bennett has pointed out, one of the fundamental problems of Marxist criticism is its tendency to enter into competition with the latter rather than severing with its typical concerns altogether.<sup>19</sup> Metacommentary would seem to tie you, if only indirectly, to the problematic of what you are "metacommenting" on.

In concluding, I will say that much more worrying than any conceptual faultiness in his "alliance approach" are its ramifications at the political level, for it would seem to me that he has ended up doing exactly what he wants to avoid--the turning of Marxist criticism into "just another approach," into an "academically respectable" alternative to the varieties of warmed-over New Criticism usually acceptable to dissertation committees (and editorial boards). The Political Unconscious, as a Marxist project, verges--in brief-- on the politically unconscious.<sup>20</sup>

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981).

<sup>2</sup>Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 372-73 (among many others).

<sup>3</sup>I will assume, as does Jameson, that V.N. Voloshinov's works were actually by Bakhtin (or at least were strongly influenced by him). See his critique of what he calls Saussure's "abstract objectivism" in Marxism and the Philosophy of Language, trans. L. Matejka and I.R. Titunik (New York: Seminar Press, 1973), pp. 58-61 and 65-82.

<sup>4</sup>Our confusion only grows with regard to this matter when later on the ideologeme itself is described first as a "symbolic" and then as an "imaginary resolution" of "objective contradictions" (pp. 117-18).

<sup>5</sup>We might, however, be left wondering how these sign systems would be specified in actual practice (unless he is using the term in a very loose sense).

<sup>6</sup>See pp. 88-89 for Jameson's attempt to clarify this question, one which would seem to require further (or more precise) elaboration. (He gives the example of the seventeenth-century English revolution in which the warring classes carried out their ideological battles "through the shared medium of a religious master code" -- which in turn plugs into a mode of production.)

<sup>7</sup>Pointing out that contradiction is central to all three horizons (see p. 94) does not in any way "solve" the latent ambiguities in Jameson's system.

<sup>8</sup>It should be noted that actual concepts, theoretical apparatus, critical terms, etc. have been appropriated in one way or another by Jameson from each member of this list (the number of authors cited being much larger, as seen in the index).

<sup>9</sup>Frye and Derrida? Freud and Deleuze-Guattari? Lukács and Althusser? The Church Fathers and Nietzsche?

<sup>10</sup>This paper was completed and submitted before the appearance of the issue of Diacritics (fall, 1982) dedicated entirely to The Political Unconscious. I was gratified to see that the image of Jameson as bricoleur had also occurred to Terry Eagleton: see p. 17 of his excellent critique entitled "Fredric Jameson: The Politics of Style." His comments on what he calls Jameson's "Hegelian devotion to the practice of Aufhebung" (p. 19) are also consonant with the thrust of my own.

<sup>11</sup>It is very indicative that the language used here -- "lived reality," "lived synthesis" -- is highly similar to that Althusser uses in defining ideology, the latter being the realm of the human being's imaginary relation to his or her real condition. (See, for example, "Marxism and Humanism" in For Marx, trans. B. Brewster [London: Verso, 1979], pp. 233-34.) Jameson might also reply the way he has to anticipated criticism in the Prologue to Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, the Modernist as Fascist (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979):

The present study takes as its object what I have elsewhere called the 'political unconscious' in Lewis' works, thus necessarily obliging us to make connections between the findings of narrative analysis, psychoanalysis, and traditional as well as modern approaches to ideology. The methodological eclecticism with which such a project can be reproached is unavoidable, since the discontinuities projected by these various disciplines or methods themselves correspond to objective discontinuities in their object (and beyond that, to the very fragmentation and compartmentalization of social reality in modern times). It is therefore less important to justify a disparate range of theoretical references than it is to take some initial inventory of the objective gaps and disjunctions within the texts themselves. (p. 6)

"Modern times" receive the blame for the discontinuities of contemporary cultural objects (thus projecting a mythical wholeness onto earlier periods), these discontinuities (simply announced a priori) in turn somehow justifying the application of a host of disparate methods -- a rather odd way of arguing the solidity of his approach, it would seem.

<sup>12</sup>We already have, of course, Althusser's "symptomatic" reading of Marx, based, in turn, on the latter's "symptomatic" reading of the classics of capitalist political economy (see Reading "Capital").

<sup>13</sup>Also, I should add, between somewhat incompatible brands of Marxism. (This hypothesis intersects with remarks made by Jerry Aline Flieger in "The Prison-House of Ideology: Critic as Inmate," another piece which appeared in the aforementioned issue of *Diacritics* [note 10], bottom of p. 49. As the reader will see, however, Flieger's general approach to this question differs considerably from that found here.)

<sup>14</sup>What we might call the "subversive," "outer fringe" will be appeased by Derrida and Nietzsche, while those who have "made it" past New Criticism into structuralism will be pleased to encounter Todorov, Greimas, etc.

<sup>15</sup>Obliquely related to this whole problematic may be Jameson's assertion that there should be a wide variety of Marxisms, each fitted to its own special circumstances:

For it is perfectly consistent with the spirit of Marxism--with the principle that thought reflects its concrete social situation--that there should exist several different Marxisms in the world today, each answering the specific needs and problems of its own socio-economic system: thus, one corresponds to the post-revolutionary industrial countries of the socialist bloc, another--a kind of peasant Marxism-- to China and Cuba and the countries of the Third World, while yet another tries to deal theoretically with the unique questions raised by monopoly capitalism in the West. It is in the context of this last, I am tempted to call it postindustrial, Marxism that the great themes of Hegel's philosophy ... are once again the order of the day. (*Marxism*, pp. xviii-xix)

Bringing it down to an even more specific level, we might be tempted to say that there should be a special brand of Marxism within this "postindustrial" type that suits the particular needs of the graduate school seminar within the American university.

<sup>16</sup>That he himself recognizes the possible link-up is seen in his last comments cited above where he suggests that "alliance politics" is the equivalent on the level of praxis of the theoretical notion of totalization, and that an attack on the latter is an attack on the former.

<sup>17</sup>I by no means wish to "write off" students from proletarian backgrounds; rather, I am simply recognizing that within our society they constitute a minority in higher education.

<sup>18</sup>What, for example, is really achieved by using Heidegger's concept of the "worldness of the world"? Why should we "keep faith" (a symptomatic term!) with any aspect of the patristic hermeneutic (see p. 74)?

<sup>19</sup>Tony Bennett, *Formalism and Marxism* (New York: Methuen, 1979), pp. 12-17 and 170 (among others). (Bennett is actually following through on objections raised by Pierre Macherey and Etienne Balibar, as well as by Raymond Williams.)

<sup>20</sup>Since it would be unfair of me to escape without giving at least some idea of what I would suggest as a more productive path (something I would like to do more fully at a later date), I will say that some attempt should be made to recuperate the rhetorical power (in the good sense) of some of the earlier Marxist writers on culture, particularly--and perhaps symptomatically--those who were also more revolutionaries than literary critics. I am thinking of Lenin, Trotsky, Gramsci, Lunacharsky, perhaps even Mao. I am not speaking necessarily about their analytical techniques (perhaps "crude" by "modern standards"), but rather of the fact that they never lost sight of the political mission of their critical writings, of the fact that their criticism was a political act designed to move people. Pursuing this end may mean a return to the night school (or analogous environments), but maybe we are ultimately better off there than safely ensconced in the seminar room.



## THE MARXISM DECONSTRUCTION DEBATE

Michael Ryan

I will argue that the debate between marxists and deconstructionists is in part a false one, at least from a marxist perspective. The work of at least certain deconstructive critics like Paul De Man is relevant to a marxist critique of ideology; and deconstruction theorists like Christopher Norris are wrong to claim that deconstruction is antithetical to marxism. Similarly, the marxist critics of deconstruction frequently misread basic deconstruction concepts like "textuality" (which they take to mean a kind of literariness, when in fact it describes a spatialization and a relationality that is in many ways congruent with such marxist notions as practice and mediation), and they mistake an anti-idealist and anti-positivist affirmation of the irreducibility of the practical mechanics of rhetoric to pre-marxian concepts of ideal thematics or unmediated objectivity as nihilistic, when in fact it is in keeping with a marxist interest in the way practice mediates both ideality and materiality. I will first review the debate between marxists and deconstructionists; then, I will say why I think a deconstructionist like De Man can be useful to marxists.

Marxists have criticized deconstruction for ignoring the historical and social dimension of texts while pursuing a neo-New Critical formalism that autonomizes literature and deifies rhetoric. To the deconstructionists, on the other hand, marxists are dogmatic totalizers or naive referentialists who regulate the liberal freedom of reference by pinning it down to one meaning or one referent in the extra-textual world. But conservative or anti-marxist deconstructionists cannot justify within their own framework the fact that their rejection of marxist socio-historical referentialism is itself a symptom of a socio-historical referent--the liberal philosophic tradition of freedom from external constraint or determination (in this case, freedom from reference). For the marxists, the deconstructionists are guilty of an irrationalist mystification that demolishes the rational basis necessary for a criticism of capitalism and for the construction of a rational society. Too frequently, however, the literary critical marxists, back-to-basics appeal is indistinguishable from contemporary cultural conservatism in its attack on modernity. In addition, marxist moralism can breed intolerance. As Terry Eagleton points out, marxists too easily reach for their totality whenever they hear a word like "undecidability," which suggests that reality might not be totalizable; that is, subsumable to a knowledge that would be absolute and without remainder. (But then, "totality" is a debatably marxist category to begin with; at least, it appears

nowhere in Marx, and Marx's texts, in that they advocate a post-speculative practice that rewrites Hegel's model of ideal totalization in terms of material historical conflict and change, promote, if anything, a sense of non-closure, historical differentiation, and the radically agonistic and discontinuous nature of social reality.) I will now review the debate between marxist and deconstruction critics, concentrating on Norris, Eagleton and Jameson.

Christopher Norris in his Deconstruction: Theory and Practice (London: Methuen, 1982) reduces all deconstruction to an assertion of the rights of language or rhetoric over Reason. He is wrong to do so because Derrida's work is not formalist in the Yale School sense. As Eagleton points out, Derrida's recent assertion in an interview that he does not deny a role to intention, meaning, and so on, will prove embarrassing to certain of his anglo-american proselytes. More importantly, Norris, in a gesture symptomatic of the Yale approach, ignores the fact that the concept of textuality in Derrida does not refer to literary texts. It names an irrepressibility of reference that undoes the opposition between text and world, and therefore it is one term in Derrida's larger project of undoing such binary oppositions as life and death, theory and practice, mind and body, nature and culture, and so on. Like Marx, Derrida believes that the order of knowledge and the process of the world are stitched into each other; there is no realm of pure ideas. Norris and the Yale School deflect this quasi-materialist and historicist insight into an assertion of the autonomy of rhetoric.

This distinction is necessary because marxist literary critics argue that deconstruction antinomies in texts must be read as expressing or reflecting social contradictions. Because there always is a strong relationship between how knowledge is conceived and practiced in a society and the way social institutions are arranged, the marxist argument has some validity, although it would be necessary to reserve some relative autonomy for problems of knowledge and communication, as I shall argue in a moment. Every time a text deconstructs, it does not, unfortunately, reflect or express a crisis of capitalism. Nevertheless some version of the marxist argument is necessary as a response to the apolitical reification and desocialization of rhetoric operated by the Yale School. The marxist argument is much weaker in regard to Derrida because, to a limited extent, he already is interested in the relationship between textual and social contradictions. In "Limited Inc.," he relates the work of the language police, that is, scientific analytic philosophers, to capital's containment of crisis. In Grammatology, he writes of the way proper names are instituted "within a system of linguistico-social differences." It is indicative of Norris's allegiance to the Yale approach that he

ignores the word "social" when he comments on this passage in his book. And not surprisingly, those texts in French where Derrida does deal with institutional questions remain untranslated,<sup>1</sup> no doubt because they are too historically specific to make the cross-cultural leap.

Having reduced Derrida to a rhetorical idealist, it is easy for Norris to claim that "deconstruction is inimical to Marxist thought at the point where it questions the validity of any science or method set up in rigid separation from the play of textual meaning" (p. 83). Now, "Marxist thought" is a broad category that includes many discourses besides literary criticism, discourses that share certain lines of attack with derridean deconstruction. I think immediately of Antonio Negri, the political theorist of the Italian Autonomy Movement, whose *Marx Beyond Marx*, a reading of the *Grundrisse*,<sup>2</sup> finds a thematic of scission, difference, and open-endedness in Marx that would not be incompatible with some deconstruction conclusions. Derrida, himself, in the preface to *Dissemination*, notices in Marx "a space, at once general and infinitely differentiated." "Thus is sketched out the dissymmetrical space of a postscript to the Great Logic . . . No doubt as apparently and derivative as a postscript can be, it is nonetheless a force of historical non-return, resistant to any circular comprehension within the anamnestic domesticity (*Erinnerung*) of Logos, which would recover and proclaim truth in the fullness of its speech." Norris, significantly, never discusses Marx. His suggestion that "it was Nietzsche who first brought such a sceptical critique to bear on the systematic edifice of Hegelian philosophy" seems to indicate a lack of knowledge of the early Marx. And his contention that "once criticism enters the labyrinth of deconstruction, it is committed to a sceptical epistemology that leads back to Nietzsche, rather than Marx, as the endpoint of its quest for method" would appear to be questioned both by Derrida's dissociation of deconstruction from scepticism and by his own positive and better informed remarks concerning Marx's method in the preface to *Dissemination*: "While Marx recognizes . . . [that] the fact that 'every beginning is difficult, holds in all sciences' (*Preface to the first edition of Capital*, 1867), he has an entirely different relation to the writing of his introductions. What he seeks to avoid is formal anticipation. So does Hegel, of course. But here, the expected 'result,' which must precede and condition the introduction, is not a pure determination of the concept, much less a 'ground.'"

By "Marxist thought," Norris means only post-structuralist literary criticism, especially the work of Terry Eagleton. His critique of althusserian science (as practiced by Eagleton in *Criticism and Ideology*) is accurate, and this is confirmed by Eagleton's renunciation of his earlier althusserian position in his recent book on Benjamin. But there is also much in common between the marxist

and the deconstruction critiques of idealism, and Norris fails to pursue this possible articulation in large part because he defines deconstruction too narrowly as the affirmation of "an open-ended free play of rhetorical transcoding -- with the ideal of an infinitely 'plural' text" that is "resistant to the purposes of Marxist criticism" (p. 79). What he fails to point out is that dissemination and textuality (the over-running of all semantic and categorical boundaries by a referential displacement that never can be absorbed into a final ground that does not itself exist in a web of reference) bring out the non-natural, non-self-evident character of all institutional, disciplinary, methodological, categorical, logical, and semantic frames. As Derrida suggests in *Deconstruction and Criticism* (p. 84): "A text . . . is henceforth no longer a finished corpus of writing, some content enclosed in a book of its margins, but a differential network, a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces. Thus the text overruns all the limits assigned to it so far . . . -- all the limits, everything that was to be set up in opposition to writing (speech, life, the world, the real, history, and what not, every field of reference -- to body or mind, conscious or unconscious, politics, economics, and so forth)." Derrida's argument is in fact against the sort of Yale School autonomization of language that Norris promotes. One cannot distinguish between text and world. To say the world is text is to say equally or undecidably that the text is world. What this means is that Derrida's critique of categorical frames in philosophy articulates with the critique of ideology in the social world. Such frames keep things in their proper place, and that, essentially, is the task of ideology.

If deconstructionists like Norris feel obliged to define deconstruction in antimarxist terms, marxists seem no less moved to safeguard marxism (at least in its althusserian-rationalist and hegelian-universalist varieties) from the threat of anarchy deconstruction seems to pose. As with deconstruction, however, it is necessary to make a preliminary distinction between varieties of marxism. Literary critical marxists like Eagleton and Jameson either argue with great verbal violence against deconstruction or feel a need to absorb it into a benevolent and paternal totality that ignores its accurate critique of totalization. Social scientists like Dennis Crow and John Yrchik, because their fundamental disciplinary principles are not threatened by a strong deconstruction school in either political science or sociology, can use it positively as a critical standpoint without antagonism or neutralizing cooptation. Crow uses it to criticize the ideology of public administration, and Yrchik argues deconstructively that business strategies of self-management for workers constitute inclusions that actually exclude workers.<sup>3</sup>

Still, literary critical marxists do contend with deconstruction more successfully than the Yale Schoolers deal with marxism. If capitalism is not destroyed by a successful marxist demystification of a literary text, neither is marxism destroyed by a successful deconstruction of the notion of history, or referential realism or whatever, in a literary text. Indeed, if one defines marxism as a discontinuous series of historical movements for social change on multiple fronts (rather than as Norris, in a disciplinarily blind way, does; that is, as a school of literary criticism), then it becomes evident that there is something ludicrous and pathetic about the whole endeavor. Literary critical marxists, on the other hand, seem to deal with deconstruction all too facilely, often without fully appreciating its critical content. Adoption or absorption are the results, but each runs the risk of neutralizing a deconstruction critique of rationalist idealism and positivism that could disrupt certain literary critical marxist monuments like totality and science (defined as rationalist absolutism), concepts that do indeed merit critical deconstruction.

Eagleton and Jameson deal with deconstruction in different ways; Eagleton adopts it, while Jameson absorbs it. More than Jameson, Eagleton is disposed to contend with deconstruction on its own terms and to change his own positions as a result of his confrontation with it. He successfully uses deconstruction methods in the excellent chapter on the ideology of literary form in Criticism and Ideology. In his book, Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism, Eagleton both criticizes deconstruction and suggests that it can be a radical force. He sounds positively derridean in the last section of the book, a discussion of the political potential of irony and parody, when he asserts that "there is always something that escapes comic emplotment, a pure residue of difference that is non-dialectizable."

In The Political Unconscious, Jameson also accepts certain deconstruction arguments, but he rejects its ultimate radicality and absorbs it into a totalizing criticism. Nevertheless, he argues that marxists should learn from deconstruction by creating new anti-transcendental hermeneutic models; and by defining ideology as strategies of containment, Jameson suggests (without developing the idea) a way in which the deconstruction of categorical frames and the marxist critique of ideology might work together.

Eagleton and Jameson are nonetheless too hasty in their sublations of deconstruction. Eagleton uses parts of it very successfully in a critique of ideology, but in order to do so he must deny it all specificity and claim that it is only significant inasmuch as the textual aporias it locates must be referred to social contradictions. Jameson fails to distinguish the Yale School from Derrida, and therefore, he claims that dissemination (the derridean term

that names the way any intended meaning can go astray, be misinterpreted, or give rise to unintended effects) is merely a reflex of the irrationalism of the capitalist marketplace where commodities shuttle about without any apparent rational control. Both critics fail to historicize deconstruction, and as a result, they miss the opportunity of seeing how and why it is in itself a radical questioning of the philosophical underpinning of capitalism.

Rather than say, as Eagleton does, that deconstructive antinomies must be referred to social contradictions which they express, it might be more accurate to say that the problem which rhetoricity and undecidability pose for the efficiency-oriented positivism and the domination-oriented idealism of bourgeois philosophy has a specificity and a political implication for society that is sufficiently important in itself without being referred to other areas of contradiction in capitalism. To say that linguistic and philosophic problems are not in themselves social or at least socially important in terms of structures of domination is not ultimately to be very marxist. The interruption of the idealist and positivist desires for either a purely thematic or a purely objective and unmediated referent by rhetoricity and undecidability is related to the interruption of capitalist positivist efficiency and idealistically legitimated bourgeois domination by the intractability and irreducibility of the practical dimension of capitalist society -- the proletariat (which includes not only workers but anyone excluded from capitalist property and power). This relation is not merely analogical. The domain of knowledge (that includes literature and criticism) is itself a terrain of political struggle, and this struggle is not merely theoretical. It has to do with the practical philosophic and academic institutions that reproduce domination. The marxist project entails determining what forms of knowledge and what uses of knowledge can be enlisted in the struggle against the hegemony of those forms and uses of knowledge that maintain and further capitalist efficiency and capitalist domination (positivism and idealism as they are currently used, for example, which is not to say they do not also have socialist uses). This struggle is connected by institutional relay to the political and economic institutions of capitalism, from the academy to the law office, the think tank, the corporation, the government agency, and so on. The struggle therefore has a regional and tactical specificity that need not be "referred" to "social contradictions" if it is to be politically relevant. It is in itself a social contradiction inasmuch as the word "social" includes a human attribute like knowledge. Nevertheless, it is true that the notions of rhetoricity and undecidability need to be given a political description that flushes out their radical political import as interruptions of the sorts of knowledge appropriate to capitalist efficiency and domination. Only in this way will the implications for the rest of the capitalist system of the social and political problem that re-

sides in the specific region of knowledge called "criticism" become clear.

Jameson mistakenly characterizes dissemination as an irrationalist category that reflects the chaos of the capitalist marketplace. To begin with, that chaos is only apparent and only apparently irrational; consumer culture is in fact structured in a highly determined and "rational" way by strictly enforced laws of efficiency and profitability. It is not in the least disseminatory, not even in the non-derridean sense of free play. In addition, dissemination is a concept that undermines the rationalist ideology that justifies consumer market culture. That ideology claims the market is a matter of rational choices that balance themselves in a rational proportion of supply and demand. The rational choice ideology assumes a harmony of conscious intention and effect, and the concept of dissemination describes why such harmony is never fully possible. But to understand why dissemination might be ideology-critical in this instance, one must first realize that it is not an irrationalist concept, and, in addition, one must understand how consumer culture, rather than being irrationalist, is in fact rationalist to an extreme.

Finally, both Eagleton and Jameson fail to historicize deconstruction. There is a tendency to see deconstruction erroneously as a non-historical critique of all rational procedures. I have been using the word "rationalist" in discussing consumer ideology because the kind of non-ethical scientific Reason that underwrites that ideology arose at a determinable point in time -- the 17th century -- and its transformation into both technocratic rationalism and market ideology value free objectivism can be plotted historically. Thomas Spragens calls this tradition "liberal Reason." Although Derrida does criticize classical philosophy, I believe his critique, within its immediate historical context, is essentially a radical response to liberal Reason that promotes a more socialized, historical, and ethical way of thinking. And as an aside, let me say that his critique is not French specific. The free market ideology of the United States may seem more decentered and open in comparison to French state centralist bureaucracy, but both derive their ideological legitimation from liberal Reason: one from its technocratic side, the other from its value free objectivist side.

Derrida's work might thus be relevant to the marxist project of criticizing the rationalist conceptual basis of bourgeois social institutions and of constructing the post-liberal-rationalist conceptual infrastructure for socialist democratic institutions. But can the Yale School also generate results that benefit that project? Although I suggested that Derrida and the Yale School must be distinguished, it is not true that their work has nothing to do with his. The difference is primarily due to two operations: they focus and limit his philosophy to the professional and insti-

tutional requisites of literary criticism, and they ignore his political leftism in favor of the diluted intellectual liberalism that is the dominant ideology of the American academy. Nevertheless, I will argue that their work also has something to offer marxist political criticism.

By political criticism, I mean a criticism that directly relates critical reading to social problems. Such criticism is interdisciplinary in character, and it operates in a pragmatic or performative, rather than in a purely constative, register. Marxist literary criticism becomes political criticism via the deconstruction (textualization) of institutional frames and boundaries that separate literary criticism from social criticism and literature from politics, law, sociology, and so on. What deconstruction means for marxist literary criticism is that the critique of ideology and culture must also address political, economic, and social issues. The deconstruction notion of textuality can help clarify why this is necessarily so; it implies that the text does not stop at the limits of the text; it is actively implicated in a world that is itself "textual," that is, constituted as an open-ended, discontinuous circulation of relations to something "other," which is itself caught in a web of "other"-relations. To put this in a more sociological vocabulary, what seems self-identical or foundational in the world -- freedom to choose, for example -- is, like a word or a meaning in a literary text, merely one effect of multiple determining strands whose operations are irreducible to any form of identity, unicity or foundation. If politics and economics are "texts" from this point of view, it is not because they are presumed to be fictive; rather, it is because they are operated by the same discursive and categorical tensions between identity and difference, structure and play, order and disorder, that one finds in literary texts and that supposedly define "literature" as of a different order than the "real world." Literary structures and world structures blend in a way that resists absolute categorical division, and that makes the question of whether texts refer to the world or not inconsequential. Just as there is no outside of the text to refer to, so also there is no outside of the socio-historical world from which reference could come. The web of differential relations in a text are stitched into the differential relations of the world, relations that we mistakenly take to be isolatable things, persons, events, literary artifacts, etc. For example, the liberal concepts of the individual and of property dissolve into a series of differential social relations and forces and lose their self-identical and foundational character from this perspective. Deconstruction reveals differentiality where liberal capitalist ideology declares self-identity.

Derrida's deconstructive philosophical critique of liberal Reason is important to marxist political criticism because it under-



mines the ideological and discursive underpinning of liberal capitalism. The Yale School, because it derives from Derrida's work, can, I would argue, also aid in the critique of liberal Reason in a way that opens an interdisciplinary connection with a political economic problem of late liberal capitalism.

Ironically enough, perhaps, it is the purest of the Yale School deconstructionists who flushes out most successfully what Roberto Mangabeira Unger in his book *Knowledge and Politics* calls the antinomies of liberalism. Paul de Man, in his deconstructive reading of Rousseau's *Social Contract*, one of the great statements of liberal theory, makes no pretensions to political criticism. Yet what he is essentially doing is providing a rhetorical description of the deconstructive antinomies between individual and society and between cognition and volition in liberal social theory. In what amounts to a critique of ideology, de Man demonstrates how deconstruction in Rousseau's text reveals differences that undermine the metaphoric totalization that creates the illusion of identity in words like man, self, property, and state. More politically pertinent is de Man's contention that a single entity, like a piece of property, belongs to two divergent and incompatible systems of meaning in Rousseau's text; thus, there can be no stable identity of property. The only rhetorical and political recourse for Rousseau is to create a giver of laws whose imperative-performative utterances resolve these antinomies through an exercise of authority. Without seeming to intend it, de Man has provided a rhetorical analysis of what underlies a very real problem in contemporary liberal capitalism -- its inability to resolve its internal antinomies between self and society, private and public, cognition and volition, rights and responsibilities, in any other way than through the recourse to a metaphoric and political instance of authority. When liberalism deconstructs due to irresolvable antinomies, the fascists reach for their total State (the technocratic side of liberal Reason) or for their totally free, though heavily policed, market (the value-free objectivist side of liberal Reason).

To pursue this one step further, one could say that the notion of rhetoricity might have radical potential for political criticism. De Man's rhetorical analysis implies that texts of nonfictional prose in the liberal tradition from Hobbes to Milton Friedman can be read as interpretations rather than explanations, as rhetorical as much as descriptive statements. Inasmuch as it reveals the rhetorical or discursive character of texts that pretend to be sciences of society, rhetoricity becomes a lever for deconstructing ideology.

To conclude, Jameson and Eagleton are in part right to say that textual aporias must be referred to social contradictions, but

it seems to be equally true that social ideology has a rhetorical dimension the revelation of which can be directly useful to marxists. The displacement of the text-world opposition has led to an idealist autonomization of rhetoric, but that displacement can also lead to an examination of the textuality of the world: for example, the antinomic undecidability of terms crucial to liberal capitalism such as authority and freedom. I would suggest, then, that, while including deconstruction, as Jameson and Eagleton do, in a broader socially-oriented criticism, we might also want to push literary critical deconstruction beyond its current, rather obvious, limits, exploiting the rhetorical analysis it offers in order to expand its ideology-critical potential. Zillah Eisenstein suggests in her book, *The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism*, that liberal feminists, when they pursue the logic of their arguments far enough, are obliged to reach radical conclusions. The same might be said of deconstructive literary criticism. Pursued far enough, the arguments of liberal deconstruction lead, I would contend, to a radical future.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>"Ou commence et ou finit un corps enseignant," in D. Grisoni, *Politiques de la philosophie* (Paris: Grasset, 1976), as well as his texts in the Greph volume, *Qui a peur de la philosophie?* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977).

<sup>2</sup>Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, tr. H. Cleaver, M. Ryan, M. Viano (forthcoming from Bergin Publishers).

<sup>3</sup>Each is writing a doctoral dissertation, Crow at the University of Texas, Austin, and Yrchik at SUNY, Binghamton.



## JAMESON AND THE DIALECTICAL USE OF GENRE CRITICISM

June Howard

In the chapter of *The Political Unconscious* from which I take my title, Fredric Jameson asserts that genre criticism is "thoroughly discredited by modern literary theory and practice," but also that it has "always entertained a privileged relationship with historical materialism."<sup>1</sup> This dramatic polarization sets the stage for Jameson's own effort to reconstruct and rehabilitate genre criticism on the basis that -- in his compressed formulation -- the notion of a genre "allows the coordination of immanent formal analysis of the individual text with the twin diachronic perspective of the history of forms and evolution of social life" (p. 105). I would agree that the assumptions of genre criticism as generally practiced have been powerfully challenged, and that one finds among contemporary critics a widespread suspicion of and even wider disinterest in generic approaches. Perhaps responses to this paper will prove me mistaken -- but I will assume nevertheless that to a good part of my audience genre is only a minor concern. I hope, then, that you will find it informative to see Jameson's version of genre criticism placed in the context of issues in genre theory, and to see his work analyzed and critiqued with particular reference to its consequences for genre theory. I would argue, as you might suppose, that genre is anything but a minor concern to Jameson himself: genre, and the closely related topic of literary history, are crucial to Jameson's thought, not only in the essay I have already referred to -- "Magical Narratives: On the Dialectical Use of Genre Criticism" -- but throughout his work.

The suggestion that genre criticism is discredited should not be taken to mean that it is not widely practiced. Even among advocates of genre criticism it is common, if not uncontroversial, to admit the disrepute of the approach and the difficulty of articulating a coherent genre theory; yet literary criticism seems unable to do without the concept of genre. As an editor writing in the journal *Genre* put it recently, "certitude about genre has now all but vanished, and we are left with a concept which, like Henry James' description of the novel *as a genre*, is a baggy monster. We, like James, know that the genre monster is out there, but we can never seem to describe it adequately or confine it."<sup>2</sup> Virtually all works of literary criticism make generic ascriptions at some point, even if merely by referring to "poems" or "novels".

And one can easily find a multitude of articles and books which take some group of works and argue for a meaningful continuity among them, explicitly or implicitly constituting them as a genre

(or mode, or type -- it is the operation of classification and not the vocabulary which is in question here). Often, when one begins to examine the assumptions informing such analyses, one finds not only that they contradict the other genre criticism which is, however, not confronted as incompatible, but that they frequently mobilize different ideas about what constitutes a genre at different moments in the same discussion. There is no lack, however, of wider classificatory schemes -- one can choose among a dizzying variety of taxonomies, each incommensurable with the others. One can choose, for that matter, among different schemes genre theorists have proposed for classifying generic systems into their kinds. The theoretical confusion that characterizes so much genre criticism is, in many ways, enabled by the disrepute of genre criticism and genre theory -- an atmosphere which discourages examination of categories which nevertheless continue, unexamined, in use.

A strategic text with which to open an investigation of these issues is Tzvetan Todorov's *The Fantastic*, which is, as its subtitle indicates, *A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Todorov's generic model (in my rather unsystematic observation) has been in recent years more influential than any other critic's except Northrop Frye's. Todorov in fact begins his own discussion of genre by summarizing and critiquing Frye, in the process touching on a wide range of problems. He finds Frye's sets of classifications "not logically coherent, either among themselves or individually" (p. 12). Separately, he argues, they are incoherent and unjustifiable because the categories on which they are based are "arbitrary"; typically, Todorov states directly and simply what is perhaps the most basic objection to a systematic generic typology: "why are these categories and not others useful in describing a literary text?" (p. 16). I suspect that when confronted by (especially one of the more elaborate) generic systems many of us have shared his skepticism-- why should this particular order somehow inhere in the tremendous diversity of actually-existing literary works? Todorov finds Frye's categories particularly unacceptable because they are not literary categories; they are, he accuses, "all borrowed from philosophy, from psychology, or from a social ethic" (p. 16). Todorov's own proposed generic model draws its categories from linguistics -- which, given his structuralist frame of reference, seems to him more legitimate, but which we will want to acknowledge as another loan. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine any defense of an ideal classification system that would not rely on non-literary justifications. Pace Todorov, that does not necessarily invalidate such systems. We will find some justifications, those which draw on the explanatory systems which we prefer, more persuasive than others. But surely no argument can demonstrate conclusively that literary kinds must derive from a particular cause; the ontological status

of an ideal generic typology must always remain questionable, must always to some degree rely on our acceptance of arbitrary, a priori categories.

Todorov argues that Frye's sets of classifications are not coherent as a group because they are not logically coordinated and because "many possible combinations are missing from Frye's enumeration" (p. 13). I would suggest, however, that one of the attractive features of Frye's system is that it offers multiple descriptive categories, and thus accommodates our intuitive sense that generic expectations and recognitions are extremely complicated and, in fact, function in a rather untidy and unsymmetrical fashion. But the systematizing impulse of genre criticism seems persistently to do away with such multiplicity. Todorov attempts to legitimate Frye's incomplete combinatoire by proposing a distinction between "historical" and "theoretical" genres, between genres "resulting from an observation of literary reality" and those resulting from "a deduction of a theoretical order" (pp. 13-14); thus the missing terms are theoretical possibilities Frye omits because they have not come into actual, historical existence. But he subsumes historical genres into his abstract system by construing them as "a part of the complex theoretical genres" (p. 15). Thus they animate preexisting possibilities established by the abstract potential of language, and thus multiple methods and levels of generality once again disappear into an ideal order that is unified if perhaps not fully describable.

The task of genre criticism, then, is to describe what it can of the system of literature, articulating the criteria for accurate classification in a structure in which "a genre is always defined in relation of the genres adjacent to it" (p. 27). Thus *The Fantastic* would seem to equip us to decide whether or not a given work properly "belongs" to the genre. Such claims, so characteristic of genre criticism, open Todorov's theory to a host of serious theoretical questions. If generic order is immanent in literature, does that not mean that a genre is immanent in the works that constitute it, exists somehow "in" the literary text? And if the work belongs to a genre, is it not in turn contained by it, and must not its very feature be generically bound?<sup>3</sup> How can such homogenous belonging exist in a system defined by difference?<sup>4</sup> Once we have classified a work, have we somehow "accounted for" and explained it, or is this a purely tautological operation since the traits that placed the text in a given class are by definition those that characterize the class? Are particular interpretive procedures prescribed and others proscribed by a classification -- is it necessary, is it legitimate, to limit a work's meaning to what is evoked by the procedures specified for a particular genre? Does the value of a work depend on its con-

formity to norms established for the genre?<sup>5</sup>

Todorov attempts to avoid at least the prescriptive implications of a taxonomic approach, asserting that the significance of the concept of a genre or species in literary criticism differs decisively from its significance in, for example, botany and zoology because in literature "every work modifies the sum of possible works" (p. 6); "a text is not only the product of a pre-existing combinatorial system (constituted by all that is literature in posse); it is also a transformation of that system" (p. 7). Yet such statements make it all that more apparent that Todorov views literature as an ideal system, deployed in orderly fashion in some mysterious, closed realm and able to shift instantaneously to accommodate new contributions. This model depends on an image of static structure and an image of literature that are scarcely viable any longer. Todorov himself, in work later than *The Fantastic*, acknowledges that the effort to define what is specifically and uniquely literary in literature seems, more and more, doomed to failure. We are perhaps most familiar with the challenge to the absolute distinction between literature and other uses of language in the current blurring, or even denial, of the boundary between literature and literary criticism. Not only structuralist poetics, but poetics itself -- which assumes an object of study defined by "literariness" -- is put in question by the challenge to the privilege of literature. As Gustavo Perez Firmat points out, poetics can be redefined as the study of discourse as a whole, but there is no reason to believe that such study "would organize itself by reference to works" (284). From such a perspective genre criticism as classification looks very much like a dead end.

Given these difficulties, it is not surprising that critics tend to retreat to more empirical and historical approaches to genre. Many studies which fail to specify their theoretical assumptions seem to rely simply on impressionistic description of similarities between works, sometimes prompting one to ask whether all similarities are necessarily significant. As Perez Firmat points out, rigorously speaking one cannot define a genre without identifying features "common to all members of the class and only to them" (271). These empirical analyses are particularly vulnerable, too, to the accusation that they have explained nothing about works, but merely reported what is immediately observable about them. Yet such studies also often go beyond noting similarities to discuss a genre as an entity, as a creature which waxes and wanes; grows, mutates and declines; or otherwise manifests a concrete, transhistorical existence. Apparently purely descriptive analyses and taxonomies implicitly appeal, with some regularity, to a priori if rather unsystematic typologies.

Perez Firmat himself, as we might expect, argues a more resolutely historicist position. The final, irreducible credentials

of genre criticism are constituted by the evidence that writers and readers do in actual practice make use of generic categories. There is certainly a place for a criticism that codifies the knowledge of contemporary writers and readers about the literary kinds of a given period. From this perspective genre is not immanent in literature or in literary works but itself constitutes a kind of text; it is, as Perez Firmat puts it, "a verbal message" available "in treatises on poetics, interspersed in works of literature, scattered about in prefaces, letters, anthologies, and other assorted documents."<sup>7</sup> Genre is thus constructed in critical discourse rather than existing independently in literature.

It is scarcely disputable that some such body of knowledge forms an indispensable part of the reader's equipment for encountering texts, and that generic ascriptions and classificatory operations accomplish much toward making texts intelligible (and thus, as contemporary critics have made us well aware, toward circumscribing and naturalizing them). The comparisons between works which characterize genre criticism also enable a rich intertextuality which is an important context for interpretation. Recognition of this activity of the critic in generic operations is appealing and widespread; one can find it, for example, even in the work of that ardent typologizer Frye, who writes at one point in *Anatomy of Criticism* that the "purpose of criticism by genres is not so much to classify as to clarify such traditions and affinities, thereby bringing out a large number of literary relationships that would not be noticed as long as there were no context established for them."<sup>8</sup> But, of course, unless one believes that such relationships have an objective existence, that generic observations have validity of some sort, one will scarcely trouble to make them -- so that the question of the source of genres has here been neatly sidestepped. In fact most genre criticism proceeds by some similarly elusive movement between implicit claims for "theoretical" genres and evidence for "historical" genres.

Genre is, certainly, a "text" in the sense that Perez Firmat describes. But to confine oneself simply to collecting and summarizing contemporary views of genre, remaining agnostic about the validity of the similarities and differences that are described, is to consign such original articulations of generic affinities and systems to the theoretically naive and the daring. Taken to its logical end, such an approach legislates itself out of existence, since it cannot defend the creation of the very genre formulations it takes as its object. And such a genre criticism seems a rather uninteresting and antiquarian enterprise -- a project of collation rather than analysis.

We lose too much by so thoroughly yielding up the concept of genre to the case against classification. We can, without claiming to intuit a vast priori system of theoretical possibilities,

suggest that languages and literary forms actually exist in social practices and have a weight, an objective reality of their own. They offer a slow, stubborn resistance to the innovator: genres, like history, are made by people -- but not simply as they wish. Genre criticism necessarily intervenes in this process, but it also attempts to penetrate its complexities analytically. Jameson offers a more deeply historical account of genre as a new basis for that analysis.

In "Magical Narratives" Jameson takes a very commonsense view of genre as his point of departure: "Genres are essentially literary institutions, or social contracts between a writer and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact" (106). Genre here is certainly neither a priori nor immanent in literature. It is a kind of text, but, crucially, a text constituted in determinate historical conditions. Jameson goes on immediately to show that those conditions can change: as literature is increasingly cut loose from concrete situations of performance, it becomes more difficult to "enforce a given generic rule on their readers. No small part of the art of writing, indeed, is absorbed by this (impossible) attempt to devise a foolproof mechanism for the automatic exclusion of undesirable responses to a given literary utterance" (pp. 106-107). And increasingly, as art itself becomes commodified, traditional genres come to be seen as "a brand-name system against which any authentic artistic expression must necessarily struggle" (p. 107). Not just the configuration of genres, not just the content of the generic text, but the very nature of generic operations is historically specific. We begin already to see how the "social institution" of genre can for Jameson mediate between individual works and literary and social history. Here already too we encounter Jameson's characteristic, dialectical intellectual strategy: rather than advocating a position within a debate, he reveals the very terms of the discussion as symptomatic. Thus the present problematizing of genre in literary practice and in literary theory is itself to be understood historically.

Jameson reads the literary criticism of Georg Lukacs as similarly diagnostic rather than prescriptive, and in the process introduces us to a far more interesting and sympathetic thinker than one generally meets these days under that name. Viewing Jameson's work from the perspective of genre brings out sharply its continuity with Lukacs', a body of work, Jameson writes, "dominated by concepts of genre from beginning to end" (p. 105). We might compare Jameson's assertion in Marxism and Form that "Lukacs' work may be seen as a continuous and lifelong meditation on narrative,"<sup>9</sup> and his description of his own project in The Political Unconscious: "to restructure the problematics of ideology, of the unconscious and of desire, of representation, of history, and of cultural production, around the all-informing process of narrative, which I

take to be . . . the central function or instance of the human mind" (p. 13).

It is in Lukacs' genre criticism that we first see projected the possibility of a literary history which has the kind of penetration and broad significance envisioned in The Political Unconscious. Jameson's work taken as a whole begins to construct a literary history conceived (as he might put it) in the vastest sense. In a recent lecture, for example, he takes on the topic of "language and modes of production," correlating the stages of capitalism and what he calls the cultural and aesthetic dominants of those periods, defined primarily in terms of literary forms. In this paper I will not have much to say about the widest horizons and most exciting ideas of The Political Unconscious (about, say, the dialectic of ideology and utopia). But the mission of that work, Jameson tells us, is to restore the traces of the "single great collective story" (p. 19) of human history -- and both the grounds on which he bases the "new hermeneutic" (p. 21) that enables us to read that text, and the materials that figure in his partial retelling of that narrative, are inextricably bound up with concepts of genre.

Essential to Jameson's treatment of genre is the recognition he finds in Lukacs that "what is . . . important is the influence of a given social raw material, not only on the content, but on the very form of the works themselves" (Marxism and Form, p. 165). His provocative phrase "the ideology of form" embodies the habitual method of Jameson's genre criticism: to rupture the division between form and content and produce insight out of a constant movement between the two categories. The new classification of classification systems Jameson offers begins with that division: "When we look at the practice of contemporary genre criticism, we find two seemingly incompatible tendencies at work, which we will term the semantic and the syntactic or structural . . ." Semantic approaches, apprehending a genre as what Jameson calls a "mode," "aim to describe the essence or meaning of a given genre by way of the reconstruction of an imaginary entity . . . which is something like the generalized existential experience behind the individual texts" (pp. 107-108); Jameson takes Northrop Frye as the exemplary practitioner of this approach. The syntactic approach, for which Vladimir Propp's Morphology of the Folk Tale serves as the exemplary case, apprehends genre in terms of "fixed form"; it "proposes rather to analyze the mechanisms and structure of a genre such as comedy, and to determine its laws and its limits. Analyses of this kind . . . aim less at discovering the meaning of the generic mechanism than at constructing its model" (p. 108).

In his characteristic manner, Jameson will not choose between these approaches, but treat them as symptomatic. Each is shown to

"repress its own historicity" (p. 110) in claiming to provide a comprehensive account of genre, concealing a crucial absence -- for Frye, what Jameson names the "ideologeme," for Propp, the problem of the subject. As "Magical Narratives" proceeds, descriptions of romance as a genre, genre theory, philosophical issues, literary texts and interpretations of texts are recounted, analyzed, read symptomatically, opened to history and to confrontation with each other in an intricate and even dazzling play of references and perspectives. As Jameson tells us at the beginning of *The Political Unconscious*, he follows "the path of the subject," focusing on the act of interpretation: "texts come before us as the always-already-read; we apprehend them through sedimented layers of previous interpretations" (p. 9). The particular path by which "romance" is unravelled through layer upon layer of interpretation does not demonstrate a generalizable method, for the process of historicizing each generic category will necessarily be specific. I will therefore not work on their direction and significance.

Jameson demonstrates that Frye's notion of romance depends on an opposition between good and evil which can be reconstituted as an "ideologeme," that is, "the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes" (p. 76). This crucial concept, which constitutes the object of study at the second horizon of Jameson's interpretive scheme, provides a perspective from which narrative can be seen as a socially symbolic act -- it is to be understood as "a form of social praxis, that is, as a symbolic resolution to a concrete historical situation" (p. 117). Thus Frye's ethical antinomy is reconstructed as a social and historical contradiction. One encounters ideologemes both, to put it simply, as stories (that is, as form) and as concepts (that is, as content); as Jameson puts it, an ideologeme is "a historically determinate conceptual or semic complex which can project itself variously in the form of a 'value system' or 'philosophical concept,' or in the form of a protonarrative, a private or collective narrative fantasy" (p. 115). It remains to be seen whether this formulation will prove a workable one in the long run for Jameson and other analysts; it may go the way of most of the neologisms of contemporary critical theory, or it may offer a productive framework for exploring the artifacts of what Terry Eagleton calls "general ideology," and the relationship between that complex web of beliefs and practices and literary form.

The invention of the "ideologeme," at any rate, leads Jameson directly to a relatively simple concept which I consider his most important and potentially influential contribution to genre criticism: the notion of generic discontinuity.<sup>10</sup> Ideologemes necessarily carry in their very forms "socio-symbolic messages," and when they are deployed in a new context, these messages persist; thus any text constructs its apparent unity of such structurally heterogeneous elements. The older ideologeme is, as Jameson puts

it, "sedimented into" (p. 141) the new form. We may find this geological metaphor (like, for that matter, the notion of the ideologeme) somewhat too static; the older messages are, after all, repeatedly refashioned as they are appropriated. But the metaphor is vivid, evocative of the weight, the massive resistance I have suggested characterize literary form. It seems to me potentially capable of fruitful combination with the insights of "production theory" work and with work deriving from that perspective on, for example, the relation between gender and genre.

The notion of generic discontinuity is, in the context of this paper, vital because it is so clearly and utterly incompatible with genre criticism as classification. It follows from Jameson's argument that, as he puts it, "properly used, genre theory must always in one way or another project a model of the coexistence or tension between several generic modes of strands." And -- as he continues -- "with this methodological axiom the typologizing abuses of traditional genre criticism are definitely laid to rest" (p. 141). As Jameson insists more than once, his concern is not with ideal aesthetic or mythic continuities but with historical specificity, his purpose and the project of genre criticism is to stimulate the perception not of identity but of difference.

Jameson's analysis of the structural approach to genre, on the other hand, leads him to discuss how texts are constrained by "the semantic raw materials of social life and language" (p. 147) and thus to the point that the historical situation must not be seen as causal, but as a "limiting situation" which may "block off or shut down a certain number of formal possibilities available before, and to open up determinate new ones" (p. 148). This too is an important and useful formulation, bearing on the whole question of how one goes about the necessary task of rupturing the apparent autonomy of the literary text. But the connection between "fixed form" and this argument seems to me less consequent than that between the mode and the ideologeme. Jameson strives to produce a symmetrical analysis, in which each generic approach is revealed as completed by an analytic concept from the complementary category; and I want to suggest some reservations about his genre theory which bear, precisely, on the question of this symmetry.

Jameson suggests, at the beginning of his discussion of the semantic and syntactic approaches to genre, that they derive from antinomies inherent in language itself (p. 108). In the original version of "Magical Narratives" he suggested that the dual nature of genre meant that a genre (implicitly -- a true genre) was necessarily susceptible of analysis either in terms of a mode or a fixed form (a strategy, we might note, which recurs in his definition of the ideologeme). In the essay's revised form in *The Political Unconscious* Jameson justly recognizes this as a "disappointing

hypothesis" (p. 109), and merely allows the two approaches to set him on "the path of the subject." At the end of the chapter, however, he returns to linguistics to suggest that the relations of form and content conform to "Hjemslev's four-part mapping of the expression and the content of what he sees as the twin dimensions of the form and the substance of speech" (p. 147). Perhaps today Jameson can discuss this model and explain more fully the benefits of adapting it to genre theory; the schema seems to me a reversion to the assumption that an abstract structure necessarily constitutes "a genre." If texts can all be related to generic concepts, but never belong to a genre, what purpose does it serve to outline a model for the complete description of a genre? I do not dispute the existence of two tendencies in genre criticism, nor even of two tendencies in language study (p. 108n); I do question their legitimacy as sources for a model of genre. I much prefer Jameson's other concluding methodological axiom, that "all generic categories, even the most time-hallowed and traditional, are ultimately to be understood (or 'estranged') as mere ad hoc, experimental constructs, devised for a specific textual occasion and abandoned like so much scaffolding when the analysis has done its work" (p. 145). I would like to ask Fred Jameson whether he feels, as I do, a tension between these imperatives.

I wonder, too, whether Propp and Frye would be willing to agree that Jameson's theory is the "fulfillment and completion" of theirs even if it is acknowledged that this completion is "in a very different spirit from the one they initially propose" (p. 110). Jameson's impulse to tidy up his generic categories seems at one with his impulse to claim that all the theories he has examined are subsumed and transcended within his own. The attraction of such symmetry is undeniable, but I am less confident than he that all the local arguments he has faced can be so contained, as I am less confident that generic traits can be assembled into a unified generic model, or that the great collective narrative of history contains the local stories of individual men and women. I suspect that it is here, in Jameson's struggle to contain all the intellectual energies released by his analyses in a stable, unified Marxism, that its own "political unconscious" is revealed.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 105; quotations not otherwise identified are from this book.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Con Davis, "Book Reviews: Introduction," Genre, 14 (1981), 269.

<sup>3</sup>See Gustavo Perez Firmat, "The Novel as Genres," Genre, 12 (1979), 278-279.

<sup>4</sup>See Derrida, "The Law of Genre."

<sup>5</sup>See John Reichert, "More Than Kin and Less Than Kind: The Limits of Genre Theory," Yearbook of Comparative Criticism 8 (1978), 57-79.

<sup>6</sup>In "The Novel as Genres" Perez Firmat argues strongly for this view, 283-284.

<sup>7</sup>Gustavo Perez Firmat, "Genre as Text," Comparative Literature Studies, 17 (1980), 17.

<sup>8</sup>Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 247-248.

<sup>9</sup>Marxism and Form, p. 163. The essay on Lukacs from which this is quoted is a crucial document in Jameson's genre criticism.

<sup>10</sup>For an early version of Jameson's theory of generic discontinuity see his "Generic Discontinuities in SF: Brian Aldiss' Starship," Science-Fiction Studies, 1 (1973), 57-68.



## IMAGINING THE REAL: JAMESON'S USE OF LACAN

Michael Clark

At several points in *The Political Unconscious: Narratives as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Fredric Jameson cites the work of Jacques Lacan as an important influence on his own effort to establish the object of study claimed by his title, a "political unconscious."<sup>1</sup> He situates this object at the intersection of two distinct propositions: that the political is unconscious, and that the unconscious is political. The first of these propositions derives from Jameson's association of Lacan's use of the "Real" with Althusser's definition of history as an "absent cause" and from the relation of both of these ideas to the Freudian connection between language and the operation of the unconscious. Following Lacan's argument that the Real is inaccessible except through the traces of its effects upon the Symbolic, Jameson claims that History, too, can never be perceived or experienced except through its effects upon the various devices by which we mask its ultimate priority -- most notably, the narratives that encapsulate and dramatize the various ideological fantasies operating at any particular period. Like the Freudian unconscious, which Jameson claims is "exemplary" of the political unconscious (PU 282-3), History is a "repressed and buried reality" that lies beneath the surface of these narratives, and Jameson claims that the doctrine of the political unconscious "finds its function and its necessity" in the detection and restoration of that repressed reality (see PU 20).

The second proposition, that the unconscious is political, departs significantly from the Freudian model because it extends the idea of an "unconscious" beyond the boundaries of the individual, to which Freud restricted it. This rejection of the category of the individual is, of course, typical of much post-structuralist thought and has its Marxist precedent in Althusser's attack on Marxist humanism. Jameson again follows Althusser here by citing Lacan's critique of the Freudian ego and, most importantly, his deflection of questions regarding the unconscious processes of the individual psyche to an interrogation of the mechanisms by which the role of the subject is constituted as the individual confronts the systematic, trans-individual forces of language or, more broadly, what Althusser calls the "Law of Culture" (see PU 153).<sup>2</sup> Although Lacan still characterizes this confrontation in relation to the biological individual as it passes into human culture, Jameson claims that Lacan's transposing the ground of consciousness from what Freud calls the "other scene" of the unconscious to the mechanisms of symbolic structures opens the unconscious to the determination of history as it functions at the material and social levels on which those structures exist for Marxism.

Jameson thus uses Lacan to complement the more traditionally Marxian aspects of his theoretical paradigm at two points: (1) Lacan's use of the Real enables Jameson to orient his analysis of the political function of narrative toward the fundamental ground of History without claiming some direct access to the "real world," an epistemologically untenable premise that undermines many Marxisms with a naive materialism; and (2) Lacan's description of the passage from the Imaginary experience of the autonomous ego to the constitution of the individual as subject within the law of the Symbolic offers a way of studying the threshold between individual and trans-individual experience instead of simply embracing one and rejecting the other, the alternatives presented by simpler forms of the debate between humanist and anti-humanist Marxisms.

The first of these points has a direct and explicit bearing on the central methodological innovation of Jameson's book, the three-level system of interpretation by which Jameson aims to situate narrative as a socially symbolic act. Jameson's association of History with the Real, which Lacan says "resists symbolization absolutely" but nevertheless serves as a "term limit" of the Symbolic, informs his assertion that History "is inaccessible to us except in textual form . . . our approach to it and to the Real itself necessarily passes through its prior textualization, its narrativization in the political unconscious" (PU 35). So Jameson sets out to "restructure the problematics of ideology, of the unconscious and of desire, of representation, of history, and of cultural production, around the all-informing process of narrative" (PU 13), and to read the literary text as "a symbolic meditation on the destiny of community" (PU 70).

To do that, Jameson must situate the literary work within three concentric interpretive contexts which discover the three "semantic horizons" of the text. The first is the "political," at which the individual text is read as a "symbolic act" that enacts an "imaginary resolution of a real contradiction" (PU 77). The second phase, which Jameson calls the "social horizon" of the text, strives to reconstruct the dialogical structure of narrative discourse by situating the narrative -- with its characterological types, its antinomies -- within the antagonistic relation to contradictory ideologies that mark its participation within the particular form of class struggle that characterizes the historical period and culture in which the narrative was produced (see PU 84).

Ultimately, these first two semantic horizons -- the political, where the narrative is studied as a symbolic act; and the social, where the text is read within its dialogic context in the class struggle, with its antagonistic discourses -- are subsumed by a third, History. At this phase the text is read as the intersection of several different modes of production, whose contradic-



tions yield the proper object of study for this phase of interpretation, "cultural revolution, that moment in which the coexistence of various modes of production becomes visibly antagonistic, their contradictions moving to the very center of political, social, and historical life" (PU 95).

The pressure of History at each horizon is manifest in the effect of "contradiction," which Jameson claims is central to all Marxist analysis and separates it from other forms of sociological analysis (PU 85). At the first horizon, contradiction functions as a set of problems that the narrative tries to resolve and appears as antinomies in the narrative itself. At the second level the apparent autonomy of that resolution in the text takes its place within the antagonistic struggle between classes within which the narrative is only one gesture or strategy (PU 94). And at the third level contradiction appears in its broadest form as the conflict among modes of production as their relative prominence and importance shift through time.

Used in this way, i.e. as the measure of the effect of History on its "narrativization," contradiction functions for Jameson the way desire functions for Lacan: as an "anchoring point" that orients the Symbolic toward the Real.<sup>3</sup> For Lacan, the individual takes her or his place in the signifying chain that constitutes the Symbolic or, more generally, social relations, only through a "primal repression" -- the experience of castration in the Oedipal struggle -- in which the signified is occluded by the signifier and permanently banished from signification. This in turn generates the metonymic and metaphoric functions of language as complementary efforts to overcome this primordial lack; efforts which must fail, necessarily, since the barrier between signifier and signified is insurmountable. Nevertheless, this originary relation to the signified persists as the informing characteristic of each function, and the relation is experienced as the desire that was "named and renounced" through the castration by which the individual gives up the illusory autonomy of the Imaginary and passes into the Symbolic and the network of social relations that constitute human culture. This is why Lacan claims that his analysis of metonymy can account for the "enigmas which desire seems to pose for a 'natural philosophy'" (IL 127): the metonymic connection of signifier to signifier is the means by which the signifier "inserts the lack of being into the object relation . . . [and] invest[s] it with the desire aimed at the very lack it supports" (IL 123). So, Lacan says, the otherwise endless glissement or sliding of the signifier over the signified comes to a stop at those points where desire crosses the signifying chain and one notices that something "arranged in a certain manner operates in a more satisfactory way, has a positive result, but still leaves out what one does not understand: the Real."<sup>4</sup>

This implied parallel between the function of contradiction and that of desire is reinforced by Jameson's own identification of the Lacanian relation between desire and the Real with the Marxian relation between desire and History. At one point Jameson says "History is what hurts, it is what refuses desire" (PU 102), and at another he claims that History rises up against fantasy as "that on which desire must come to grief" (PU 183). But he immediately rephrases this second comment in Lacanian terms: "the Real is thus . . . that which resists desire, that bedrock against which the desiring subject knows the breakup of hope and can finally measure everything that refuses its fulfillment. Yet it also follows that this Real . . . can be disclosed only by Desire itself, whose wish-fulfilling mechanisms are the instruments through which this resistant surface must be scanned" (PU 183-4).

Jameson makes this comment at the end of his chapter on Balzac, and it is in this chapter that the true importance of this association of contradiction with desire becomes apparent. For Lacan, desire is born in that Imaginary relation between the self and other that constitutes the illusion of the autonomous ego, and it is the catalytic factor in the Oedipal drama by which the individual is constituted as a subject within the Law of the Symbolic at the same time that the signifier is cut off from the signified and the Real banished from signification. So in addition to marking the effect of the Real on the Symbolic, desire also marks the threshold between the individual and the social, a connection that suggests an extension of desire beyond the individual subject -- the very task that Jameson says must be achieved if the Freudian model of the unconscious is to function within a Marxian perspective (PU 68).

Rewriting Lacanian desire as "contradiction" allows Jameson to make this move. Defending his use of biographical information in his analysis of *La vieille fille* and *La rabouilleuse*, Jameson claims that the facts of Balzac's life constitute "the traces and symptoms of a fundamental family situation which is at one and the same time a fantasy master narrative" (PU 180). This "unconscious master narrative" is an "unstable or contradictory structure" which can be read as "the mediation of class relationships in society at large" and so demands the same "imaginary resolutions" of all "real political and social contradictions" (PU 80) by which any cultural artifact or individual work functions as a "symbolic act" within the first horizon of interpretation (see PU 76). The simplest level of resolution, of course, is that of the daydream, pure wish-fulfillment, but Jameson claims that even such simple fantasies involve mechanisms "whose inspection may have something further to tell us about the otherwise inconceivable link between wish-fulfillment and realism, between desire and history" (PU 182). That "something" is the peculiarly reflexive character of such fantasies that

implies "something like a reality principle or censorship" that requires the dream to confront the obstacles of the Real, and the reality principle in turns explains the necessity for an ideology that can establish "those conceptual conditions of possibility or narrative presuppositions which one must 'believe,' those empirical preconditions which have been secured, in order for the subject successfully to tell itself this particular daydream" (PU 182). Ideology thus arises in the opposition between desire and the Real and serves as what Althusser calls "the imaginary representation of the subject's relationship to his or her real conditions of existence" (LP 162, quoted in PU 181).

The narrative representation of these Imaginary resolutions requires a more complex operation which situates desire in relation to the social as well as the Real. Within these "stronger" solutions, which Jameson calls "Symbolic texts" (PU 183), the subject sets out "to satisfy the objections of the nascent 'reality principle' of capitalist society and of the bourgeois superego or censorship" (PU 183), and it is at this level that the necessarily collective nature of ideological narratives becomes apparent. These "narrative unities of a socially symbolic type" (PU 185), which Jameson calls "ideologemes," constitute the object of study at the social horizon of the text and transcend the individual text, which is thereby reconstituted "in the form of the great collective and class discourses" in which the ideologue is only the smallest unity "of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes" (PU 76). So just as desire establishes the relation among the Real, the Imaginary, and the symbolic for Lacan, the idea of contradiction marks the individual's experience of the Real, his or her personal fantasies, and finally the narrative forms available for the representation of that fantasy as a symbolic act within the norms of society. The ideology by which those contradictions are "resolved" -- Lacan might say "named" -- therefore serves much the same need that castration or primal repression does for Lacan, as is suggested by Jameson's own definition of the role of ideology in his earlier essay on Lacan:

Ideology conceived in this sense is therefore the place of the insertion of the subject in those realms or orders -- the Symbolic (or in other words the synchronic network of society itself, with its kinship-type system of places and roles), and the Real (or in other words the diachronic evolution of History itself, the realm of time and death) both of which radically transcend individual experience in their very structure . . . . the ideological representation must rather be seen as that indispensable mapping fantasy or narrative by which the individual subject invents a "lived" relationship with collective systems which otherwise by definition exclude him insofar as he or she is born into a pre-existent social form and its pre-existent language.<sup>5</sup>

This account of the place and function of ideology in the subject's relation to the real contradictions of his experience and to the collective systems by which society establishes its unity against an "outside" or antagonistic group is entirely consonant with the traditional concept of ideology as mystification and the corollary instrumental notion of culture as a superstructure designed and used to further the ends of that unity. It also closely resembles A. de Waelhens' definition of the role of primal repression in Lacan's work: it is

the act whereby the subject -- or, to be more precise, he who will by this act constitute himself as "subject" -- withdraws from the immediacy of a lived experience by giving it a substitute which it is not, no more than the subject is the lived experience, and which will constitute the real as the real, the symbolic as autonomous and the subject as subjectivity. (Lemaire, 85)

But Jameson insists that this mystifying function of ideology, its power to "resolve" contradictions by obscuring forces beyond its control, is only one half of the symbolic function of cultural objects. It is accompanied by a more positive, productive power that Jameson calls the "Utopian vision" of the text after Ernst Bloch's use of that term (see PU 287). At its simplest level, this utopian character of the text serves as a "compensatory exchange" in which "the henceforth manipulated viewer is offered specific gratifications in return for his or her consent to passivity" or, in Lacan's terms, the individual's "subjection" to and within the Symbolic (PU 287). Jameson rejects this simplistic separation of gratification and manipulation into means and end, however, and insists on "the profound identity" (PU 288) of these two dimensions of the text, an identity that radically questions the parallel between ideology and repression that is suggested by the broader similarities between the psychoanalytic concept of the unconscious and Jameson's political unconscious.

The identity between the ideological and utopian dimensions of the text is most apparent at the second level of interpretation. There, the autonomy of the individual text is undermined and the ideological closure that informed the narrative situated in opposition to competing ideologemes and the social unities they represent as those opposing discourses "fight it out within the general unity of a shared code" (PU 84):

since by definition the cultural monuments and masterworks that have survived tend necessarily to perpetuate only a single voice in this class dialogue, the voice of a hegemonic class, they cannot be properly assigned their relational place in a dialogical system without the restoration

or artificial reconstruction of the voice to which they were initially opposed, a voice for the most part stifled and reduced to silence, marginalized, its own utterances scattered to the winds, or reappropriated in their turn by the hegemonic culture. (PU 85)

The ideological dimension of this phase is, of course, the means by which the opposing voice is silenced and the place of the subject constituted strictly within the hegemonic discourse. But as Jameson points out, this resolution has a Utopian character as well, since it absorbs the individualistic experience of the first level into the collective class system of the second as the discourse of the ruling class finds its voice and coherence in its victory over resistant forces. This is why Jameson claims that "all class consciousness -- or in other words, all ideology in the strongest sense, including the most exclusive forms of ruling-class consciousness just as much as that of oppositional or oppressed classes -- is in its very nature Utopian . . . insofar as it expresses the unity of a collective" (PU 289, 291). Even the instrumental function of ruling class culture -- i.e. the means by which the contradictions of antagonistic classes are resolved or silenced -- can be considered utopian, and the dialectical fusion of ideology and utopia insured through the interpretive practice Jameson describes.

Jameson is careful to point out, however, that the collective nature of class consciousness is not utopian in itself but only an anticipation or "figure" "for the ultimate concrete collective life of an achieved Utopian or classless society" (PU 291). This allegorical character becomes evident at the third horizon of the text, History, which discovers the inevitable reversal of the domination by which the hegemonic class of a particular period establishes its unity through the exclusion of antagonistic positions. The utopian character of Marxian interpretation therefore re-enacts at the level of class struggle the violent decentering of the ego that occurs for Lacan when the individual passes into human society and comes under the power of the Law. Just as the Imaginary autonomy of the ego is constituted in an antagonistic relation of self to other that disintegrates under the pressure of the symbolic, the illusory independence of the hegemonic class that gives it its utopian appearance disappears under the pressure of History as that class is forced to recognize its self in the violence of its exclusion and domination of another class to which it is opposed. So it is entirely appropriate that Jameson concludes The Political Unconscious with a return to Benjamin's identification of culture and barbarism and a reminder that the restoration of the political unconscious to a work of art can never constitute a "cure" in the sense of demystification and the recovery of Truth, but must instead force the return of "class realities and the painful recollection of the dark underside of even the most seemingly innocent

and 'life-enhancing' masterpieces of the canon" (PU 299).

The value of Jameson's claim about the Utopian character of cultural artifacts is not to be measured against a Lacanian touchstone, of course, and Jameson does not make the association between the allegorical nature of the utopian property of class consciousness and the conflictual structure of the Lacanian Imaginary that I have suggested. But in his earlier essay on Lacan it was just such an "insertion of the Imaginary into the model of a Symbolic system" that Jameson recommended as a way of understanding better the power and place of ideology within Marxian thought (YFS 381), and I believe that the dialectic of ideology and utopia proposed in The Political Unconscious offers a way of thinking the relation between what Lacan calls the Imaginary and Symbolic registers of experience at the level of class and history rather than the genetic development of the individual psyche. If so, Jameson's latest book will make a significant advance over prior efforts to adapt Lacan to Marxism, most of which proceed by simply substituting class terms for the Oedipal positions of father, child, and so on. For what Jameson's dialectic of ideology and utopia suggests is that the antagonistic opposition of self and other that Lacan characterizes as the Imaginary is actually a reflection of the role of the Symbolic or social forms in History, and the violence that marks the threshold between the Imaginary and the Symbolic in Lacan is not produced in the confrontation of Law and desire in the history of the individual but is instead integral to the very coherence of the Symbolic as it is forged in the exclusionary gestures of dominance and mastery. From this perspective, the Oedipal drama that Lacan claimed governed the individual's access to the Symbolic appears rather as the extension of the struggle for power which gives birth to the solidarity of the Symbolic into the earliest and most intimate moments of what we usually consider our private existence, and the metaphor of class consciousness turns inside out: instead of social unity being described in terms of an integrated psyche, even the fundamental properties of the emerging ego are identified within the strategic maneuvers of class struggle, and the individual rewritten as History.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981. Abbreviated below as PU.

<sup>2</sup>See Louis Althusser, "Freud and Lacan," in Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays, tr. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 195-219. Abbreviated below as LP.

<sup>3</sup>For a discussion of these "anchoring points" see Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," in Ecrits, tr. Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton and Co., Inc., 1977), esp. pp. 303-04.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted from a conversation with Anika Lemaire in Lemaire's Jacques Lacan, tr. David Macey (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977), p. 116. Lacan's remarks about desire are from his "The In-sistence of the Letter in the Unconscious," tr. Jan Miel, Structuralism, ed. Jacques Ehrmann (New York: Anchor Books, 1970), abbreviated as IL.

<sup>5</sup>"Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan: Marxism, Psychoanalytic Criticism, and the Problem of the Subject," Yale French Studies, nos. 55/56 (1977), p. 394. Abbreviated below as YFS.



## JAMESON'S UTOPIAS

Larysa Mykyta

Given the increasingly unstable position of the humanities in the present economic and political situation an attempt to make literary criticism part of an effective political praxis seems more than timely. Thus, the pertinence and importance of Jameson's efforts to delimit the relation of cultural objects to their social, political and historical ground, that is, his efforts to have the past "begin to come before us as a radically different life form which rises up to call our own form of life into question and to pass judgment on us and through us on the social formation in which we live,"<sup>1</sup> cannot be denied. However, according to Jameson only a Marxist criticism can accomplish this task whose goal is "to restore at least methodologically, the lost unity of social life and demonstrate that widely distant elements of the social totality are ultimately part of the same global historical process."<sup>2</sup> In other words, Jameson wishes to claim that only Marxism can make the cultural past meaningful for us by treating it as part of a "single great collective story," a "single vast unfinished plot," sharing in a "single fundamental theme" which, for Marxism, is that of the class struggle for freedom from necessity and for a classless society (pp. 19-20).

It is from such a perspective that in The Political Unconscious Jameson makes his most audacious claims - that "Marxist critical insights serve as an ultimate semantic precondition for the intelligibility of literary and cultural texts" (p. 75) and that Marxism functions as the "untranscendable horizon" that subsumes even the most disparate of critical methods "assigning them an undoubted sectoral validity within itself, and thus at once cancelling and preserving them" (P. 10).

In the construction of his methodological and theoretical framework, as well as in the presentation of concrete analyses, Jameson fashions a work that is both fascinating and frustrating in its eclectic "intertextuality" and its all-embracing catholicism.<sup>3</sup> It is a work that often proceeds by way of provocative and exciting digressions and detours that offer tantalizing suggestions for future analysis. In this movement it seems to demonstrate a desire to saturate the field of literary inquiry, thus supplementing the totalizing will brought to bear on other critical methods in order to appropriate them to the Marxist enterprise in a manner structurally resembling what Jameson describes as the expanding force of the capitalist market system which incorporates into itself the last uncharted vestiges of the world and of the self. Moreover it is a work that has an aura of beauty and grandeur at least par-

tially due to the prophetic quality of many of Jameson's pronouncements and to a certain dogmatic relentlessness with which he insists on the necessity of his perspective. The quasi-religious overtones are not, however, surprising since Jameson explicitly acknowledges and accepts Marxism's affinities to religion (p. 285) and valorizes Christian hermeneutics as a critical model (pp. 30-31, 286).

Indeed, the innovative aspect of his methodology receives its ultimate authority from Christian hermeneutic techniques. This methodology, which bears the burden of fulfilling all the awesome claims that Jameson makes for a properly Marxist criticism is characterized in the following terms: "that a Marxist be exercised simultaneously with a Marxist positive hermeneutic or a decipherment of the Utopian impulses of the same still-ideological texts" (p. 296). If the notion of the Utopian impulse originates in the work of Ernst Bloch, its specific value derives from its capacity to function as did the Christian hermeneutic: it allows for the reading of individual narratives as the signs and representations of the destiny of the human race which, in the Marxist framework, is that of a post-individualistic collectivity, a classless society (pp. 285-286).

The addition of the positive hermeneutic to a Marxist analytic method undoubtedly presents an advantage over previous methods in that it allows Jameson to resolve problems that have long plagued Marxist literary criticism. Thus, since texts where such an impulse has been deciphered can be seen to "resonate a universal value inconsistent with the narrower limits of class privilege" (p. 288), and therefore can be seen as rebelling against the particular oppressive ideology that they embody or perpetuate, such a perspective on literary texts helps redeem and recuperate modern literature from its condemnation by Lukacs. Moreover, it also appears to avoid the pitfalls of historical relativism and idealist totalization by perceiving the past neither as a reflection of the present, nor as an instrument serving the political needs of the present, but as the projection of a possible but vague future.<sup>5</sup>

However, even if one brackets the fact that Jameson sometimes ultimately resorts to an essentially theological line of reasoning which presumes an a priori acceptance of assertions made as articles of faith, rather than on the basis of evidence, there remain, nonetheless, objections that can be directed at Jameson's analytic method. The most serious of these could be reduced to two major accusations: First, Jameson's Marxist criticism remains an inherently mechanistic or instrumental conception of culture; and secondly, that he has not found a resolution to the problem of the subject in Marxism or, to put it in a different way, that he has failed to provide an alternative to the so-called nihilism of

post-structuralist criticism, while at the same time not falling back into a facile humanism that valorizes an autonomous subject.

Jameson, of course, anticipates and addresses himself to these difficulties throughout The Political Unconscious, and in particular, in the concluding chapter. But to anticipate objections is not always necessarily to reply to them. Thus I would suggest that in following the circuitous movement of Jameson's arguments in reference to the subject and the instrumental nature of Marxist criticism, it will become evident that as a result of a series of slippages and conflations, this argument ultimately attains a Mobius-strip-like configuration that has unexpected consequences for the nature of his project and allows us to perceive it from a radically different perspective.

Jameson begins the concluding chapter of The Political Unconscious by an apparent confrontation with a theory that attempts to demonstrate that the very structure of Marxist philosophy renders Marxist criticism inevitably instrumental in its approach to culture (pp. 291-292). A few pages later, he concludes that his "Utopian perspective on culture transcends and annuls" (p. 292) the problem of a functional or instrumental conception of culture; he thereby implies that his dual approach to literary texts, his enlargement of the Marxist perspective to include the Utopian, in some way neutralizes the dilemma of functionality. But instead of demonstrating, as one would expect, how it does so, he turns to a consideration of the possibly problematic nature of the origins of his positive hermeneutic, since this hermeneutic is an extension of Durkheim's theory of religion as a symbolic affirmation of the unity of a social formation, generalized to include culture in its entirety and translated into the framework of a Marxist telos (p. 292). In the subsequent elaboration of the viability of such a step, Jameson concedes that what he calls a Marxist negative hermeneutic is instrumental in its approach to culture. He goes on to assert that to demonstrate the instrumental function of cultural production, that is, to reveal how any cultural object is determined by relations of production, how it is the unwitting or witting "instrument of class domination, legitimation and social mystification" (p. 282), and how it generates specific forms of false consciousness (ideology) (p. 291), is simultaneously to demonstrate that "that function is in and of itself the affirmation of collective solidarity . . . the symbolic affirmation of a specific historical and class form of collective unity" (p. 291). Consequently, all class-consciousness, whether that of the oppressor or the oppressed becomes "in its very nature Utopian"; that is, it allegorically expresses "the unity of a collectivity . . . insofar as all such collectivities are themselves figures for the ultimate concrete collective life of an achieved Utopian classless society" (p. 291). When Jameson does again approach the question of an instrumental

approach to culture, it is to suggest that although Durkheim's theory is perhaps instrumental in that within it culture seems to maintain the viability of the existing social formation (p. 292), such an approach is perhaps inevitable considering that, with few exceptions, all aesthetic systems view art as socially functional. What is never made explicit is that in the process of the discussion, the terms instrumental - functional - ideological (which Jameson uses interchangeably) have slipped into a different register; something has been added to and something subtracted from their sphere of reference. It becomes clear that when Jameson suggests that Durkheim's theory is instrumental, he means both that Durkheim posed a hypothesis about the social functionality of art and that this proposal concealed its own ideological mission, its own social mystification. In other words, an approach to culture can be designated as ideological or instrumental either because it unmasks the ideology of cultural production, and/or because it perpetrates an ideology - generates its own ideological bias. What has dropped out is the consideration or emphasis on the instrumental as a demystification of culture in terms of relations or production.

Such slippage in terminological usage allows Jameson to resolve several difficulties with relative economy, since it allows him both to imply that Durkheim's theory is no different from any other and to avoid reconsidering whether his own dialectical criticism is not, in spite of everything, instrumental. For it is obvious that his simultaneously ideological and Utopian approach does not permit literature to be viewed as a mere instrument of social mystification, and equally obvious that his method does not perpetrate an ideological bias. However, it is less clear how the method as a whole (since Jameson insists that its efficacy is grounded in its simultaneity) escapes being instrumental in the sense that through it cultural objects are perceived as determined by relations of production. For example, it is difficult to imagine how a functional approach can be avoided if the historical and methodological progression from realism to naturalism to modernism is analyzed in terms of the "ideology of form," in terms of the "symbolic messages transmitted to us by the co-existence of various sign systems, which are themselves traces or anticipations of modes of production" (p. 76). And indeed, it seems to make little difference that this analysis is not classifying or typologizing, that texts are "criss-crossed and intersected by a variety of impulses from contradictory modes of production all at once" (p. 95), if this nonetheless results in the effacement of the heterogeneity of specific periods or texts. A case in point is Jameson's analysis of modernism as an ideological expression of the reification of daily life as well as an incompletely successful Utopian compensation for all that reification brings with it (p. 236). More specifically, modernism is characterized by its "aesthetisizing strategy." This "strategy" seeks to recode or rewrite the world

and its own data in terms of perception as a semi-autonomous activity" (p. 230) in order to "derealize" any representations of the material world, thereby making them easier to ignore and creating at least an imaginative space where an outside to reification can be experienced. This strategy, however, invariably also fails with the realization that the aesthetic has been co-opted by the capitalist commodity system. If this analysis itself is fascinating, it is nonetheless disconcerting to find such widely divergent work as that of Conrad, Wyndham Lewis and even Hemingway subsumed to a hegemonic view of modernist aesthetics.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, it soon becomes apparent that when Jameson does finally conclude that the problem of the instrumental is "transcended and annulled" in his Utopian perspective, he is not offering to demonstrate how his "positive hermeneutic" would cancel the problem, but is in fact, radically displacing the issue to a space in time where the problem would no longer be operative:

In a classless society . . . our own view of culture as the expression of a properly Utopian or collective impulse [as well as those of Durkheim and Rousseau] are no longer basely functional or instrumental . . . This is to say . . . that Durkheim's view of religion (which we have expanded to include cultural activity generally) along with Heidegger's conception of the work of art are in this society false and ideological but they will know their truth and come into their own at the end of what Marx calls pre-history. At that moment then the problem of the opposition of the ideological to the Utopian or the functional-instrumental to the collective, will have become a false one. (p. 293)

Thus, instead of finally substantiating the claim he is making for dialectical criticism, Jameson describes the site where its problems would be resolved. But he does much more than that. For by playing on the ambiguity of the phrase, "in the Utopian perspective that is ours here" (which in reference to what preceded it has to refer to his "positive hermeneutic," and in reference to what follows implies that his perspective is from within the future) he substitutes description for demonstration. He thereby suggests that the methodology which deciphers Utopian impulses in texts already somehow stands in the space of a realized Utopia and achieves what it was to reveal a desire for, through the revelation of this desire. In short, the decoding of the presence of a Utopian desire for a classless society is translated into or confused with the gratification of this desire, and this conflation is presented in place of proof for the effectiveness and validity of the critical method as one which transcends the problem of instrumentality. The argument is circular but with a twist that disturbs the place and the function of Utopia in Jameson's work.

To comprehend the consequences of this disturbance it is necessary to examine how it affects the way in which Jameson's dialectical method can be said to fulfill the vocation that he assigns it, that is, could be said to "anticipate a logic of collectivity which has not yet come into being." This can only be done within the context of Jameson's approach to the problem of the status of the subject within Marxism and Marxist literary criticism.

The basic framework within which the autonomous subject (and on the level of narrative, the character) become problematic categories for Marxism is delineated by Jameson in an essay, published several years earlier than *The Political Unconscious*, which deals with the problem of the subject within both Marxism and Lacanian Psychoanalysis.<sup>7</sup> In that work, Jameson indicates that Marxism has difficulty with the subject because it cannot seem to find a viable way to mediate between the social and the private; it cannot seem to provide an alternative, on the one hand, to a repression of the subject by the social (represented in its extreme form by Stalinism) and, on the other, to a valorization of the subject's autonomy at the expense of the social within the bourgeois ideology of individualism. Jameson then suggests that Lacan's "doctrine of the decentered subject" could perhaps serve as a model that would comprehend the relations between the two realms - the private and the social - in a radically different way.

At the risk of being reductive, for present purposes it can be said that Lacan's doctrine posits a subject that is always alienated from itself, that is, a subject that is non-autonomous since it is defined, constituted and determined by its relations to three orders - those of the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real. It is because the last two orders can be seen to represent the structural systems of society and language and the movement of History, respectively, both of which "radically transcend individual experience," (p. 394 YFS) that Lacan's doctrine could provide a potential means for solving the dilemma that is posed by the status of the subject for Marxism.<sup>8</sup> It is particularly attractive as a solution because making the subject aware of its "decentered" status does not entail repression, but rather is meant to facilitate the gratification of desire insofar as that is possible.

However, it should not be forgotten that for Jameson even an historicized Lacanian model is only a means to an end; it would allow for the "elaboration of a properly Marxist ideology" (p. 393 YFS). It would thus seem that *The Political Unconscious*, which is an elaboration, development and illustration of the project of Utopian thinking within the frame of what Jameson calls his "positive hermeneutic," would provide (both in its theoretical expositions and its practical analyses) the "creative speculation" called for in Jameson's earlier work. In other words, in *The Political*

*Unconscious*, one would expect to find, as an integral part of a methodology capable of dealing with the problem of the subject, a properly Marxian adaptation of the Lacanian model. In addition it would also appear that a critique of the autonomous subject would provide a point of interaction and exchange between Marxism and post-structuralism.

However, the correlations between Jameson's specific interpretive techniques and Lacanian psychoanalysis are never explicitly worked out in *The Political Unconscious*, nor are Lacanian models used to approach concrete textual problems. Moreover, Jameson trenchantly differentiates a Marxist perspective on the "decentered subject" from the "essentially psychoanalytic" post-structuralist theories concerning it, thereby at least on some level rejecting the value of Lacanian doctrines as models.

Post-structuralist theories are accepted for their descriptive value only, and upon the condition that what they describe - the dissolution, whether lived or theorized of the subject - be read as a sign of the "dissolution of an essentially bourgeois ideology . . . of psychic unity and identity" (p. 125). However, a Marxist perspective cannot agree with the "schizophrenic ideal" that Jameson claims the post-structuralist critique of the subject has "tended to project" (p. 125), nor can it stop at that gesture of disapproval.<sup>9</sup> Thus, Jameson presents the Marxist alternative to that ideal:

Only the reinvention of the collective and the associative, can concretely achieve the 'decentering' of the individual subject called for by such diagnoses, only a new and original form of collective social life can overcome the isolation and the monadic economy of the older bourgeois subjects in such a way that individual consciousness can be lived - and not merely theorized - as an 'effect of structure' (Lacan) p. 125).

But just how does Jameson's "positive hermeneutic" provide the "creative speculation" on the properly Marxist alternative; how does it anticipate the "reinvention of the collective" in such a way that "individual consciousness can be lived and not theorized as an effect of structure"? As Jameson is fully aware, his adoption of Durkheim's theory is particularly problematic within this context since Durkheim simply generalizes the consciousness of the individual in his analysis of the "dynamics of groups." In response to this difficulty Jameson asserts that in the absence of the conceptual categories needed for a logic of collective dynamics it is acceptable to use a Lukacsian or Durkheimian vocabulary "under erasure", that is, to use it to refer not to the concepts it designates "but to the as yet untheorized object - the collective - to which they make imperfect allusion" (p. 294). Jameson's use for the term "under



erasure" reveals the equivocal nature of his solution. For on the one hand, his use of the term (adopted by Derrida from Heidegger) is clearly considerably removed from that of the French philosopher: when Derrida puts concepts "under erasure" it is not due to any conceptual deficiency but as part of a strategy "to hold open a special place within his words in such a way that his terminology cannot settle back down into the illusory order of nouns and substances,"<sup>10</sup> that is, as part of a strategy to keep elaborating that which continues to be inevitably betrayed by conceptualization. On the other hand, since the objections of Durkheim's notion of the subject would primarily be post-structuralist in nature, the use of a post-structuralist expression would tend to give the impression that the reply being made is somehow consonant with its perspectives; that the problem is resolved on some level.

It is precisely another point of intersection between post-structuralism (this time in the guise of Lacanian psychoanalysis) and Marxism that allows us to see most clearly the nature and the value of a certain, perhaps inevitable blindness functioning in Jameson's arguments. Its dynamics are set in motion at the moment when Jameson translates the achievement of the "decentering" of the subject into a Marxist context. Since the theory of the decentered subject is already a description of "experience", achieving it could only refer to the subject's conscious assumption of this state. Jameson is aware that this "cure," for the "diagnosis" of "decentering," with few exceptions, is considered by post-structuralists to be as illusory as the belief in an autonomous subject. Furthermore he is aware that the illusory nature of the cure can refer to Marxist issues as well: "But the cure in that sense is a myth, as is the equivalent mirage within a Marxist ideological analysis: namely the vision of a moment in which the individual subject would be somehow fully conscious of his or her determination by class . . ." (p. 283). However, in a gesture that repeats his resolution of the problem of an instrumental approach to culture, Jameson provides the site for a "cure": "But in the Marxian system, only a collective unity - whether that of a particular class, the proletariat, or of its 'organ of consciousness', the revolutionary party - can achieve this transparency; the individual subject is always positioned within the social totality" (p. 283). However, this solution is problematical for it presumes that the problem of the positioning of the subject within a totality has been resolved when in fact, as has been shown, it has been postponed until the advent of a properly Marxist collectivity, an event that can itself pose difficulties. For the vision of the moment in which a Marxist Utopia would be achieved, the moment of the classless society, can itself be suspected of being a mirage. Allusions to this possibility emerge with Jameson's references to "the paradox of the end of the revolutionary process, which like analysis, must surely be considered 'interminable' rather than

'terminable'" (p. 396 YFS) and to the "ultimate Marxian presupposition" which states "that socialist revolution can only be a total and worldwide process" (p. 102) implying, in other words; that until capitalism has run its course on a global scale all local and partial revolutions must inevitably fail and consequently defer the advent of a post-individualistic classless society.

At this juncture, it becomes evident that what is operative in Jameson's arguments is a reluctance to see the difference between desire and the fulfillment of this desire. Given that for Jameson Marxism is "the anticipatory expression of a future society, or the partisan commitment to that future society or Utopian mode of production which seeks to emerge from the hegemonic mode of production of our own present", this confusion between desire and its realization, this blindness to their difference, is perhaps an inevitable strategic move: What is desired is posited as achieved in an effort to speed up the advent of its actual gratification. Thus on one level Jameson's insistence on inevitability of a post-individualistic collective society, an insistence on the existence of desire for it, is evidence of his commitment to the realization of such a society. On a more concrete level this insistence is related to Jameson's desire to create a literary criticism that has a political effect and to his conviction that the reinvention of historical totalization is the only viable theoretical analog to the structure necessary for the existence of an effective political activity of the Left in the United States (p. 54n).

But what consequences does this blindness in fact have for Jameson's discourse? Or, in what sense do a desire for and a commitment to a particular future constitute its anticipation? Since, as an analytic method, Jameson's criticism does not, in the last analysis, convincingly substantiate its claims; that is, it apparently fails to overcome the objections leveled against it, and thus remains locked within the problems that it claims to have solved, it would seem that it could anticipate "the logic of a collectivity that has not yet come into being" only in the sense of waiting and expecting it to materialize or presenting it before its time rather than in the more active sense of creating the necessary conditions for its advent.

Nonetheless, it would be wrong to conclude that Jameson's project is in any sense a failure or that it does not work to create the necessary conditions for such a future; it simply does so in a way that Jameson did not and perhaps could not anticipate. For by seeming to fail in the space where he attempts to succeed, that is, in the space of a triumphantly flawless and politically effective literary criticism, he does succeed from the space of what Maurice Blanchot calls 'l'expérience artistique', the space which reminds us and calls us back to the task, which for Blanchot is



also a revolutionary one, of progressing towards a radically other affirmation.<sup>12</sup> The site for this success appears when the twists of Jameson's arguments allow for a displacement in the function of the Utopian in his work, allow this Utopian impulse to migrate.

For in trying to demonstrate that the decoding of Utopian impulses in texts somehow creates conditions conducive to the realization of a properly Marxist Utopia, it becomes clear that the Utopian desire decoded in literary texts has from the beginning been the operative force of Jameson's own work. At that moment the untheorized essentially empty Utopias that he posits as solutions to the problems besetting his analytic method take on a radically different function. For if, as Jameson says in relation to Wyndham Lewis' work, "the truth of the Utopian imagination indeed may be said to lie not in the representations it achieves, but rather ultimately in its failure to imagine its object" and if "the greatest Utopias are those which dramatize the limits and the impoverishment of the reading mind in the asphyxiating imminence of its here-and-now"<sup>13</sup> then Jameson's work is without a doubt one of those "greatest Utopias" and a very powerful and effective literary work of art.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Fredric Jameson, "Marxism and Historicism," New Literary History II (Autumn, 1979), p. 70.

<sup>2</sup>Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 226. All other citations referring to the work will be noted in the body of the text within parenthesis and with the page number indicated.

<sup>3</sup>When speaking of "intertextuality" and catholicism, I refer to Jameson's use of such widely disparate critical codes as Greimas' structural paradigms, Levi-Strauss' reading of myth and primitive art, Christian hermeneutics, Northrop Frye's anatomy of literature, Lukacs' theory of the novel and neo-Freudian psychoanalytic models to further his arguments.

<sup>4</sup>See also Fredric Jameson, Marxism and Form (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 116-117.

<sup>5</sup>Grateful acknowledgement is made here to Mike Sprinker for making available prior to publication his essay, "The Part and the Whole" (forthcoming in Diacritics) where Jameson's relation to Lukacs and to the problems of historicism is developed and evaluated in a much wider context.

<sup>6</sup>See, The Political Unconscious, chapter 5; Fredric Jameson, Fables of Aggression: Wyndham Lewis, The Modernist as Fascist (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979) and Fredric Jameson, Marxism and Form (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 409-413.

<sup>7</sup>See, Fredric Jameson, "The Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan: Marxism, Psychoanalytic Literature, and the Problem of the Subject," Yale French Studies, 55/56 (1977). All other references to this essay will be noted in the body of the text with the page number and YFS in parenthesis.

<sup>8</sup>As Jameson has noted - pp. 393-394, in the YFS article - Althusser has already done preliminary work in this field, but work which Jameson judges to be as yet insufficiently developed.

<sup>9</sup>It is perhaps not entirely fair to reduce the post-structuralist "ideal" to that of schizophrenia, that is, to the work of Deleuze and Guattari.

<sup>10</sup> Fredric Jameson, The Prison House of Language. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 174.

<sup>11</sup> Jameson, "Marxism and Historicism," p. 71.

<sup>12</sup> Maurice Blanchot, "Sur une approche du communisme" in L'Amitié (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), pp. 109-114.

<sup>13</sup> Jameson, Fables of Aggression, pp. 152-153.



Nicolas Poussin. "Et in Arcadia ego."

THE DIALECTIC OF UTOPIA AND IDEOLOGY  
IN SPANISH GOLDEN AGE POETRY

John Beverley

In the concluding chapter of The Political Unconscious, titled "The Dialectic of Utopia and Ideology," Fred Jameson recalls as an epigram for his own labor of dialectical analysis of literary texts Walter Benjamin's remark that "There has never been a document of culture which was not at one and the same time a document of barbarism." This leads him to restage a question which has been at the heart of Marxist aesthetic theory (its original form may be found in Marx's aside on "the eternal charm of Greek art" in A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy). "How is it possible," Jameson asks, "for a cultural text which fulfills a demonstrably ideological function, as a hegemonic work whose formal categories as well as its content secure the legitimation of this or that form of class domination -- how is it possible for such a text to embody a properly Utopian impulse, or to resonate a universal value inconsistent with the narrower limits of class privilege which inform its more immediate ideological vocation?" A properly Marxist criticism, Jameson goes on, must deny itself one familiar solution to this question: the suggestion "that the greatness of a given writer may be separated from his deplorable opinions, and is achieved in spite of them or even against them." For, "such a separation is possible only for a world-view -- liberalism -- in which the political and the ideological are mere secondary or 'public' adjuncts to the content of a real 'private' life, which alone is authentic and genuine." The only consequent answer must lie therefore in the proposition that

...all class consciousness -- or in other words, all ideology in the strongest sense, including the most exclusive forms of ruling-class consciousness just as much as that of oppositional or oppressed classes -- is in its very nature Utopian. This proposition rests on a specific analysis of the dynamics of class consciousness ...whose informing idea grasps the emergence of class consciousness as such (what in Hegelian language is sometimes called the emergence of a class-for-itself, as opposed to the merely potential class-in-itself of the positioning of a social group within the economic structure) as a result of the struggle between groups or classes.... On such a view, those who must work and produce surplus value for others will necessarily grasp their own solidarity -- initially, in the unarticulated form of rage, helplessness, victimization, oppression by a common enemy -- before the dominant or ruling class has any particular incentive for doing so. Indeed, it is the

glimpse of such sullen resistance, and the sense of the nascent political dangers of such potential unification of the laboring population, which generates the mirror image of class solidarity among the ruling groups (or the possessors of the means of production). This suggests, to use another Hegelian formula, that the truth of ruling-class consciousness (that is, of hegemonic ideology and cultural production) is to be found in working-class consciousness... [If] all class consciousness of whatever type is Utopian insofar as it expresses the unity of a collectivity, [it] is Utopian not in itself, but only insofar as all such collectivities are themselves figures for the ultimate concrete collective life of an achieved Utopia or classless society.<sup>1</sup>

Working on the terrain of my own field, Spanish and Latin American literature, I would like to take this opportunity to elaborate on this line of thought, which seems to me to embody much of what is most interesting in recent Marxist theory. I am not sure that in what follows I will always be true to Jameson's insight or to his own method of analysis, but that is a matter for further discussion among friends and comrades. What I propose to look at here is something that has been traditionally considered one of the most formally "pure" moments of Spanish literature: the extraordinary poetic production of the period that is known in Spanish as the Siglo de Oro, in English as the Spanish Golden Age, which stretches from the end of the 15th century to the middle, more or less, of the 17th.

Before going ahead with this, however, I would like to first make a brief detour into the ideological/pedagogic problems of Hispanism, a field that will be unfamiliar to some readers. We all have reason to feel some bad faith about the books and literary movements we teach and write about: that is after all the truth of Benjamin's remark. The object of this bad faith is often in particular the canon, that sedimentation of the tastes, prejudices and pedagogical practices of previous ruling class cultures. The questions we encounter here are familiar: Why do we continue to teach the canon? Aren't we simply serving to maintain its alienated and alienating power, excluding the cultural alternatives it has marginalized or repressed? Isn't the canon the dead hand of the past weighing on the living and on that which deserves to live in the past? In particular, doesn't a Marxist account of the canon end up inadvertently constituting a monument to the powers of domination in human history? To show the efficacy of the ruses of power is also to hypostasize them.

Spanish, like the other literatures, is a discipline formed by

the rise of the modern nation state in the early stages of capitalist development. As such it reflects the process of cultural repression and homogenization which accompanies the rise of the modern state. Moreover, it is something we practice in the main within an institutional framework -- the school system -- which is at the very heart of the reproduction of capitalist (and racist and sexist) culture. But Hispanists also have a special problem. The dependent status of Spain and Latin America in the modern capitalist world system means that our field, until recently, remained firmly lodged at the bottom of the foreign languages pile, which in turn was the bottom of the Humanities pile in the American academy. We can aggravate our distaste even further by reminding ourselves how Hispanism was constituted as a field of study in the first place. The idea of Hispanism was constituted positively by the reactionary Spanish anti-philosophes of the 18th century, and negatively by the Black legend, that is, by the account of "spanishness" produced by the scholars and ideologues of the emerging bourgeoisie (and Protestant) European republics. Literary Hispanism, in particular, arose as a consequence of the 18th century debate between the partisans of French Neoclassicism, who attacked the Catholic Baroque as a decadent style, and clerical traditionalists like Jose Calviño y Fajardo who defended it as the expression of a Spanish "national genius" in what amounts to a sort of feudal cultural populism. This debate, moved via a dialectically tortuous route through Sturm und Drang, Hegel's aesthetics and philosophy of history, the French Revolution, Napoleon and the Spanish anti-Napoleonic guerrillas, Fichte and anti-Jacobinism, into Romanticism and in particular the Schlegel brothers' concept of Romantic drama and art, which they saw embodied in paradigmatic form in the Baroque comedias of Calderon. From the Schlegels' literary nationalism to the positivism of academic foreign language departments dedicated to atomizing the peculiarities of national literatures is just a hop, skip and jump which need not concern us here. Suffice it to say that Hispanism emerges onto the scene of the European academy and intellectual life in the 19th century with a strong reactionary charge attached to it. In a word, Spain was romantic because it was not capitalist (yet). Hispanism was a place where a Liberal middle class could explore the charms and terrors of cultural infantilism, as in Hegel's (or Marx's) account of Latin America's anachronism.

It should not be surprising then that Hispanism has been a field much worked by Catholic intelligentsia, for if Spain itself has an asynchronic relation to the emergence of the capitalist world system, so does the Catholic church. But, as the Cubans are fond of saying, when the gusano (worm) returns to Cuba it becomes a mariposa (butterfly -- gusano was revolutionary slang for the Cubans who emigrated to Miami after the Revolution). Hispanism's origin in the most reactionary backwaters of the European imagi-

nation -- something that explains the low or marginal position it has occupied in the American academy -- also contains the seeds of its radical potential as a discipline today, as in the related cases of Liberation Theology or of the novels of Gabriel Garcia Marquez. How to germinate these seeds is something I want to suggest in the analysis that follows. But first I have to come back to the question of the canon.

In their historical and social moment of origin, the texts that form the canon of any literature (and Golden Age poetry is certainly one of the key moments of the Spanish canon) belong to a definable class and function as cultural artefacts, what Jameson means by the "ideology" side of his dialectic. Part of the task of a radical Hispanism is surely to reveal the implication of literature in history. But outside of this moment of origin -- i.e. as part of a transhistorical signifying structure called the canon -- these texts may function as ideological signifiers rather than signifieds. As such they are susceptible to being articulated politically by different and even antagonistic class projects.

The sense of ideologemes I allude to here has been developed by Ernesto Laclau in a seminal study titled Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory. Like Jameson in The Political Unconscious, Laclau makes much use of contemporary semiotics and of Althusser's use of semiotics in his essay on "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in Lenin and Philosophy. Briefly, Laclau argues that the sum of ideological signifiers present at a given moment of political or cultural struggle cannot simply be reduced to (or returned to) some moment of essential class belonging or genesis, however much they may have originated in the practices of a given class at a given historical conjuncture. Ideological interpellations -- and these would include the texts of the various literary canons -- have no necessary class belonging according to Laclau. Laclau asks, for example, whether nationalism per se is a feudal, bourgeois or socialist ideological signifier. He answers that

considered in itself, it has no class connotation. The latter only derives from its specific articulation with other ideological elements. A feudal class, for example, can link nationalism to the maintenance of a hierarchical-authoritarian system of the traditional type... A bourgeois class may link nationalism to the development of a centralised nation-state in fighting against feudal particularism, and at the same time appeal to national unity as a means of neutralising class conflicts... Finally, a communist movement can denounce the betrayal by capitalist classes of a nationalist cause and articulate nationalism and socialism in a single ideological discourse... One could say that we understand by national-

ism something distinct in the three cases. This is true, but our aim is precisely to determine where this difference lies. Is it the case that nationalism refers to such diverse contents that it is not possible to find a common element of meaning in them all? Or rather is it that certain common nuclei of meaning are connotatively linked to diverse ideological-articulatory domains? If the first solution were accepted, we would have to conclude the ideological struggle as such is impossible, since classes can only compete at the ideological level if there exists a common framework of meaning shared by all forces in the struggle. It is precisely this background of shared meanings that enables antagonistic discourses to establish their difference. The political discourses of various classes, for example, will consist of antagonistic efforts of articulation in which each class presents itself as the authentic representative of 'the people', of the 'national interest', etc. If, therefore, the second solution -- which we consider to be the correct one -- is accepted, it is necessary to conclude that classes exist at the ideological and political level in a process of articulation and not of reduction.<sup>2</sup>

Let me indicate at least a couple of ways in which this dovetails with Jameson's dialectic of utopia and ideology in The Political Unconscious. Most of the work undertaken under the rubric of Marxism in literary criticism has been mainly in what I will call a critical-scientific mode. This is understandable; we were simply taking up the challenge to show the "social determination of form" that the dominant formalist school posed us.<sup>3</sup> But the dissolution of the specificity of a phenomenon -- in this case the phenomenon of literature -- always signals an idealism, and in combatting one idealism -- literary Formalism -- we came close often to falling into another reductionism, or what Laclau aptly terms "class essentialism." The specificity of any text in or out of the canon has at least two distinct moments -- one is the period of its immediate production, circulation and reception, which is the one Marxist criticism has concentrated on. The second is the moment constituted by the text's entry into the canon, which is quite different from its moment of origin because it involves the problem of how a given text "interpellates the subject" -- ourselves, our students, the literary profession -- today, in the epoch of late capitalism.

Another way of putting this is to say that our work as Hispanists or professors of any literature involves not only a critical function, but also an ideological one. Political struggle takes place in ideology rather than between ideology and "science." Like all intellectuals, we are fundamentally producers of ideology,

ideologues. Our raw material is at least in part the literary canon. The problem therefore is not whether to junk the canon in favor of some counter-cultural method, but rather how to articulate it (using Laclau's term) with other significations to produce an anti-capitalist, anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-statist sensibility. And this means connecting our work not only with knowledge -- in either the Liberal humanist or the Althusserian senses -- but also with desire, "desiring machines" to use the currently fashionable term. And this entails what Barthes called in a post-political way "le plaisir du texte."

What, for example, Yale deconstruction does is articulate a certain ideology of the text, textuality, and reading with varieties of post-Nietzschean ethics and epistemology. Deconstruction mobilizes the experience of literature in a novel and sophisticated way -- which takes into account the crises of sensibility in late capitalist society -- at the service of continued bourgeois cultural hegemony. There is a lesson here for Marxist and feminist critics: Always coopt. It is one that Jameson has learned and deployed to great political effect in his work.

But the time has come to begin my consideration of Spanish Golden Age poetry. Golden Age Spain as a social-ideological world is a part of that larger drama Marxist historiography titles the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Feudalism is said to be in this account a "natural" economy based on the production, appropriation and consumption of use values, in which market exchange and money as a universal equivalent of value play only a marginal or secondary role. In particular, the two key factors of production in a feudal economy -- land and agricultural labor -- are not subsumed or determined by market exchange and the principles of commodity equivalency it entails.<sup>4</sup> Capitalism, on the other hand, is, to borrow Piero Sraffa's expression, a system for "the production of commodities by commodities." It is centered in its very essence on production for the market, and thus on the production and appropriation of exchange values, exchange value being the proportion in quantity (or the monetary expression of this) in which use values of one sort are exchanged for those of another. Its very mode of exploitation demands the conversion of human labor itself into a commodity subject to market exchange like any other.

Use value is what Marx and the classical bourgeois economists called "the substance of wealth," since it involves the actual quality and desirability of a consumption good. As capital, however, use values are simply the "material depositories" of exchange value. "The exchange of commodities is evidently an act characterized by a total abstraction from use value," Marx argued. "As use values, commodities are, above all, of different qualities, but as exchange values they are merely different quantities, and consequently do not

contain an atom of use value."<sup>5</sup> The history of capitalism -- so argued the Peruvian Marxist Mariategui -- begins with the renunciation of the scholastic "theory" of gold -- alchemy, the idea of gold as a "noble" metal and of the transmutation of the base into the sublime -- in favor of the possession of gold as a physical quantity, a repository of exchange value. Mariategui added: "That is why the discovery of America is so intimately and essentially linked to this history and why Canada and California are two great way stations on its further itinerary."<sup>6</sup>

It follows that the transition between feudalism and capitalism, wherever and whenever it occurs, carries in its train an ideological problematic about the nature of value. In Golden Age Spain, as Pierre Vilar has shown in a now classic article,<sup>7</sup> this problematic expressed itself in the conflict between two schools of political economy -- the bullonistas and the cuantitativistas --, each seeking to influence the direction of the economic policy of Hapsburg absolutism. The bullonistas held the mercantilist principle that the wealth of a Republic resided in the quantity of precious metals it was able to accumulate. The cuantitativistas, as their name suggests, foreshadowed the doctrine more familiarly associated with the 18th century Physiocrats that value derived from nature and from agriculture exclusively, that gold and silver were merely tokens of value rather than value itself, and that therefore the accumulation of wealth in money form as quantities of gold and silver was an illegitimate, ignoble and above all unproductive activity.

It would be nice to see a simple dichotomy here where bullonismo = capitalism and cuantitativismo = feudalism. But things are a bit more complicated than that. Both schools are implicated in an aristocratic structure of power Vilar himself aptly calls "imperialism, the highest stage of feudalism," which is nevertheless at the same time a crucial moment in what Marx called "the primitive accumulation of capital." The American gold ruins the actual Spanish bourgeoisie, at the same time that it encourages the emerging capitalist franchise in Northern Europe. Classical bourgeois political economy will reject mercantilism and make its own the distinction between productive and unproductive labor developed in some of the cuantitativistas. And soon. What is more important about the cuantitativista/bullonista debate for our purposes here is that it is symptomatic of a conflict and confusion within the mentality of the ruling aristocracy itself about the new economic order that had been initiated by the revival of trade in the Renaissance and by Spain's colonization of America in the 16th century. It shows that at least certain fractions of this class saw the changes as subversive of a traditional social-moral order. Inevitably, this preoccupation found its way into their poetry. Let me note a couple of examples.

There are two sections of Jorge Manrique's Coplas (mid-15th century) on the death of his father dedicated to the reign of Henry IV, a rival of the Manrique clan. Henry was one of the forgers of that strong Castillian state that subsequently was to launch the project of colonizing America. Manrique speaks of Henry's ostentation of wealth and power, of his "edificios reales/lleos de oro" and "los enriques y reales / del tesoro" (his royal buildings / Full of gold; the wealth (coins)/of his treasury). Of these he asks, echoing the ubi sunt motif of the poem as a whole, "que fueron sino rocios / de los prados," -- "what were these but the dew on the fields." Jose Monelon has noted of this image in a recent study of the Coplas:

The reign of Henry IV suffered from a chronic inflation... The king created a new coin, the enrique, with less value than the traditional currency, without, however, solving the problem. The importance of money in the new Castillian economy of the 15th century was evident in its consequences, but the function and regulation of money was not yet understood at the highest levels, above all by an oligarchy of titled landowners disconcerted by the speed with which money was displacing land as a symbol of wealth. For the Manrique clan, the treasury -- money -- pertained to the order of the intrinsically mutable rather than the transcendent and eternal. It was a symbol of a social order to which they no longer belonged... Manrique enumerates the pleasures of Henry's court, the signs of his kingly worth, and compares them to the dew, to the luminous, to the bright glimmer of something that evaporates quickly. But the fields -- the prados -- will survive: the function of land is not to produce splendor, or in other words, the wealth of the land is not its splendor.<sup>8</sup>

My second example occurs roughly a hundred and fifty years later, after the colonization of America and the effects of the American treasure on Spanish society. It is Quevedo's satirical letrilla, "Poderoso caballero es don Dinero." The estribillo or refrain which gives the poem its title is evidently an oxymoron, reinforced by the phonetic consonance of caballero and dinero. To be a caballero, to use the title don, is to possess an intrinsic quality or value determined by title: i.e., by blood lineage. This is something money does not and cannot (in principle) have. Quevedo was alluding to and attacking the purchase of titles of nobility by rich capitalists, what Lawrence Stone called in the context of British absolutism "the inflation of honor." Money seems all powerful, Quevedo is saying; but it can purchase only the form and not the essence of nobility. Under the surface appearance of a society dominated by money and market transactions, the foundations of a true

(that is, a feudal) determination of value remain intact. History has "already" happened.

Quevedo's image touches a deeper nerve. Flooded with gold and silver bullion from the colonies, Golden Age Spain is a society subject to both a generalized commodities market and constant price inflation. Rent in kind or labor service is replaced by money rent, producing over time the economic collapse of large sections of the peasantry and lesser gentry. In the interstices of the continuing feudal monopoly of land, a type of capitalist farmer emerges, the ricos labradores who people so many episodes of Don Quijote. Money buys entry and influence. The Empire entails an enormous expansion of the state and ecclesiastical bureaucracy, opening opportunities for bourgeois and converso upward mobility. In this situation the nominal nobility of the functionaries of Spanish absolutism -- the letrados or men of letters -- becomes increasingly ambiguous. Class and caste status is subject to a double, and for many hidalgos, a contradictory determination. By law, feudal caste restrictions continue in force, as in the proof of purity of blood required for the higher categories of state jobs. On the other hand, as the impoverished knight in Lazarillo de Tormes or Don Quijote himself illustrate, a title by itself means little in a society where money and market relations rule, where one's hereditary estate can be mortgaged, where too much money was chasing too few goods, where even the meanest oficio in local government required not only a title but also a specialized university degree.

This problem of a double determination of class attributes has a special urgency in Golden Age literature. The command of literacy was still assumed to be a sign of an innate aristocratic talent and sophistication. Yet it escaped nobody's attention that the production of literature was already a highly developed form of commodity production in which the talented bourgeois letrado, like Fernando de Rojas, had as much or more chance of success than the effete court esthete. After all, writing, printing and merchandizing books had become moneymaking activities. The printing press that permitted the serial mechanical reproduction of commodities, and the very emergence of the novel as a literary form implied, irrespective of its content, a society in which market exchange of commodities was, or was beginning to be, a dominant form of human interrelationship. This was something that Cervantes had occasion to ponder more than once, as we know. In his last adventure, Don Quijote visits a factory in Barcelona where books like Don Quijote are composed, printed and bound. That for all practical purposes is the end of Don Quijote, the novel and the hero, as if the very medium which made Quijote's anachronistic idealism possible -- the novel -- ultimately defeats it.<sup>9</sup>

During his lifetime, Gongora, like Garcilaso before him, refused to allow his poems to be published commercially. This stems



from his concept of poetry as an essentially aristocratic vocation, akin to the arts of war and government. It is part and parcel of his aesthetics that his poems circulate privately, in hand copied manuscripts, that they evade the status of a commodity available to anyone with money to buy, that they be "no para los muchos." Indeed, I have argued elsewhere<sup>10</sup> that Gongora's poetics of difficulty-culteranismo -- involve the aristocratic fetish of a highly wrought form seen as noble or sublime because it eludes the comprehension of the vulgo or mob and is situated outside the arena of the market and of money as means of appropriation and determinants of status and power. The hyper-aestheticism of the Soledades betrays the same compulsion Adorno identified in the high art of 20th century bourgeois Modernism: the need to "estrangear" the literary text or art object from the possibility of commodified reception and gratification threatened by the emergence of a commercial mass culture which cut across traditional class lines. But Gongora, like many hidalgos of the Golden Age, was a semi-pauper for large stretches of his career, and his letters evidence a whining and pleading about money matters which stands in sharp contrast to the intellectual arrogance of his poetry.

The question of Gongora and Gongorism permits us to move from political economy as a theme in Golden Age poetry to indicate some of the ways it may be implicated in what the Formalists would call the "literariness" of a discourse: i.e. its status as an aesthetic object. I would like to refer briefly here to Marc Shell's recent study, The Economy of Literature. Shell is concerned with tracing the history from the Greeks to Marx and Ruskin of a homology between the principles of equivalent exchange and the money form and the principles which regulate aesthetic discourse -- its dispositio, for short. His starting point is Nietzsche's remark in The Genealogy of Morals that "the mind of early man was preoccupied to such an extent with price-making...that in a certain sense this may be said to have constituted his thinking." Among other cases, Shell recovers Aristotle's application to poetics of the distinction in Greek political economy between chrematistike and oikonomike. Chrematistics is defined by Aristotle as activity directed to the possession of wealth -- i.e., money -- per se; oikonomike (or household economics), on the other hand, is concerned with the means of life, that is, use values. Shell elaborates:

In the Politics Aristotle makes a crucial distinction between nature and convention, or between good and bad production, on which his esthetics depend. He distinguishes between a supposedly natural economics (whose end is just distribution of dike) and a supposedly unnatural chrematistics (whose end is profit or kerdos)... The poet (poietes) is a maker. Aristotelean poetics considers...whether a poem is the voice of the shuttle [that is an "economical" treat-

ment of a subject] or the golden fleece, [that is, of poetic vanity]... Chrematistics, unlike oikonomike, supports the unnatural illusion that "wealth consists of a quantity of money" that can purchase and so seems to be homogenous with anything in the market. To men such as Midas, gold becomes everything, just as to some poets metaphor appears to be all.<sup>11</sup>

In other words, Shell is suggesting that there is in Aristotle a sense of the distinction between natural and unnatural -- that is, unbeautiful -- aesthetic production which is isomorphic with the distinction between production oriented to human use -- oikonomike -- and production oriented to profit making. The latter has no limit in respect of its end, since its end is the acquisition of money or property for their own sake. It is thus condemned like capital to a perpetual dissatisfaction and restlessness which break down the ethical and esthetic norms of the golden mean.

Many of you will recognize here themes in Fray Luis de Leon and other 16th century poets.<sup>12</sup> Like Fray Luis, the cuantitativistas were also Salamancans; in fact the name Vicens Vives gives them in his history of Spanish economic thought is the School of Salamanca. Some of you will also recognize the grounds of Quevedo's attacks on Gongorism. Like "don dinero" or the progressively devalued coinage of Hapsburg Spain, Gongorism was for Quevedo an inflationary phenomenon; counterfeit, ugly, unnatural, devoid of value. This is where the allegations that Gongora was a converso, or in the words of Francisco Cascales, "Mahoma de la poesia espanola," come from, since the semitic or the merely foreign -- erudicion peregrina -- are seen as synonymous with the spirit of capitalism by the intellectual cadre of the Counter Reformation.

The great debate in Renaissance and Baroque poetics concerns the problem of discourse referentiality; in particular the question of the proper relation between literary signifiers -- genre, style, syntax, etc. -- and signifieds, or to use the neo-aristotelean term, the decorum of a discourse, the way its manner of imitation corresponds with its subject of imitation. Gongora defends the mannerism of his poetry by claiming to be writing a "lenguaje heroico" -- because orthodox neo-aristotelean poetics permitted epic or quasi-epic discourse a hyper-complication of image, syntax and form in order to express the supposed elevation and universality of its subject: aristocratic imperialism. But his poetry was to all appearances strictly bucolic, in the words of one of his antagonists, "concurso de pastores, bodas, epithalamios, fuegos," a medley of shepherds, weddings, epithalamia, fireworks. So his mannerism was held by people like Quevedo to fail not only because it was seen as nugatory or formalistic but because at best it worked towards an idealization of "cosas humildes," ordinary things. This

sense of what was termed a "desgarron afectivo," a cleavage between poetic signifier and signified, was to become the major premise of the anti-gongorist current in Spanish literary criticism, from Quevedo to Antonio Machado. Quevedo's jokes about Gongorism turning everything into gold, pearls, precious gems, coral, etc. through metaphorical transmutation are thus very much to the point: they seek to indicate that Gongora is a literary chrematist, condemned to produce only Babels by the heretical vanity of his ambition.

We approach here a territory where issues proper to the ethical, economic and esthetic have collapsed into each other. Alban Forcione has shown the existence of a tension in Cervantes' practice as a writer of two conceptions of literary language.<sup>13</sup> One is the classical or neo-aristotelean conception which posits a sufficient and necessary relation between *res* and *verba*, a harmonious transparency of representation. But Cervantes' own experience is of language as *parole* or speech act: multiform, protean, chaotic, demotic, democratic. He has thus a sense of the diabolical power of language, its capacity to *ensorcelle*, enchant or ensnare. If Golden Age Spain betokens a new economics -- not quite the brave new world of full-fledged market capitalism but no longer the smiling Castile of the *Libro de buen amor* either -- it also encompasses the production of a new linguistics. Both Gongora and Cervantes are pupils of Huarte de San Juan's *Examen de ingenios*, the founding text of what Noam Chomsky calls Cartesian linguistics. And the main tenet of Cartesian linguistics (paraphrasing Chomsky) is the observation that human language is free from the control of independently identifiable external stimuli or internal states, that language provides finite means but infinite possibilities of expression constrained only by rules of concept and sentence formation.<sup>14</sup> Both Gongora and Cervantes shatter the old canons of generic decorum. Their "wager" -- to use the Mallarmean term -- is with the signification potential in language and literary form. Passed beyond in the labyrinthine architecture of the *Quijote* or the *Soledades* is the idea of literary representation reading out passively a content established and guaranteed by Nature or divine providence -- the *signatura rerum* of Renaissance gnosticism. Rather, these are works invested with the power of a new productive technology to harness and organize the "nature" of language itself into the service of human need and desire. But such an enterprise -- both men are after all still *hidalgos* and *cristianos viejos* -- runs the danger of an excess or transgression, the disintegration of discourse into vulgar or demotic speech, a crisis of the signifier, the Fall of Babel. That is why the sites of the devil contract -- the cave, the dream, the scholar's study -- haunt their work.

Taking these issues one step beyond simple homology, we may posit that the literary text itself is a site where, so to speak, a kind of economics is happening. I am thinking here of the idea of a "reality effect" or "pseudo-real" developed in post-Althusserian literary criticism, in particular by Balibar, Machery and Terry Eagleton. Their point, briefly, is that literature, rather than reflecting reality in some determinate sense, as in Lukacsian epistemology, produces rather something like an ideological hallucination -- or to use the Lacanian term, an imaginary -- of the real. "Literature actively produces the fictional as a social space".<sup>15</sup> We can illustrate this concept by invoking Jean Franco's remarks on the trope of authorship in the contemporary Latin American novel. She writes:

In the novels of the boom, authorship is doubled, for there is not only the authoring of a text; the text itself becomes a model in which the Utopian project of founding a new society is projected... The author is the originator or founder of a new state which produces its own discourse... [Garcia Marquez'] Macondo is a society posited on the negation of the capitalist work ethic and on the encouragement of the free play of human faculties outside the realm of alienated labor and the instrumentality of market society. The separation of play from work corresponds to the separation of the reality and the pleasure principles, and of the real from the imaginary. Because Macondo is a utopia of play, it cannot aspire to be the apotheosis of history which, in any case, is written elsewhere; therefore its lives must go unrecorded except in the coded text that is outside the system of exchange value and performance principle... Anachronism is thus made to function positively and to generate the utopia in which the originality of a non or pre capitalist America can be displayed.<sup>16</sup>

This sense of the text as an imaginary social space may permit us some access to what is the founding convention of Renaissance and Baroque pastoral poetry: the *negotium/otium* distinction. The *locus amoenus* -- that is, the text of the poem or fiction as an organized space of discourse homologous with the physical space it enacts -- may be instituted only with the suspension of mundane activity: *negotium*. *Negotium* designates war, government, business affairs, work -- anything that involves a prolonged or painful exertion. The poem counterposes silence, leisure (*ocio*), recreation, the *soledad* or state of nature. It is a *tregua* or temporary truce, a moment of liberation from necessity, Poggioli's "pastoral oasis," the utopian island, the *albergue* provisionally hidden from war. Its figure of time is *en tanto*



(while) -- the space of rest demanded from the reader. As Claudio Guillen has suggested, the pastoral is "history-framed", and the history which frames it is precisely the history of mercantile imperialism, of, in a word, gold.<sup>17</sup> In opposition to gold as a commodity, the *locus amoenus* signals the return of the Golden Age which is always/already present in human time but obscured by the *mundanal ruido* -- the "noise" of actually experienced life, the daily pattern of duty and routine. Aesthetic practice annuls the noise, reinstating the beautiful, the harmonious, the good. But the Golden Age is not only the experience of aesthetic bliss; it is also a social fiction: the myth of Arcadia. Arcadia is in turn the nostalgic imaginary of some previous state of wholeness and grace in which there existed a spontaneous equality and reciprocity between all human beings, in which use values were appropriated directly from nature without coerced and thus alienated labor, in which there was generosity and abundance without luxury, in which the alienations of the law and the state did not exist. The pastoral is an aesthetic space precisely to the extent that the boundary between work and play, between the pleasurable and the necessary, has collapsed within it. It is thus also a magical space, capable of healing the self or society damaged by the alienation suffered in the realm of *negotium*, the perpetual present of the age of Iron. As Don Quijote likes to say, he was born in this age of Iron to bring back the age of Gold. And the age of Gold is for him clearly co-extensive with the age of chivalry, that is, with the imaginary or "pseudo real" of the feudal mode of production.

Seen in these terms, the *negotium/otium* distinction is analogous to the formalist distinction of prose and poetic language. But it is at the same time an enactment of the clash between feudal and proto-capitalist senses of value and their corresponding forms of social praxis. The deployment of the pastoral represents a contradiction which exists on the inside of the culture and psyche of the Spanish ruling class in the age of Marx's "primitive accumulation of capital." The realm of war, government, power, gold -- this is the dimension of aristocratic *esplendor*, of pomp, of epic furor. But it is a realm which, although attractive and in any case obligatory, also appears as unnatural to the Renaissance courtier, which is incapable of satisfying his deepest longings for authenticity, love and community. After all, what is being accumulated is not honor but capital in its primitive form. *Negotium* is *negocio*, "business." The *siglo de oro* is not an *edad de oro*; just the opposite. It is the Iron age of harsh necessity which has to be suspended in the poem. The aristocrat is not a bourgeois: he is Catholic, *cortes*. So he is compelled to invent or express his own subjectivity in the figure and the language of that "other" whose unacknowledged exploitation his own life style is built on: the *pastor*, that is, the peasant.

The pastoral is thus for the literary sensibility of the Spanish golden age the imaginary -- again in the Lacanian sense of a projection of desire which "misrecognizes" the real -- of the feudal mode of production, recalled not as it is or was for the poet but rather as a communism.

An odd communism this, which can only sustain itself, like More's *Utopia*, within the fictive space of the literary text and which is meant to be enjoyed not by the peasant or artisan but by the leisured *hidalgo*, recuperating from the stress and strain of domination. But a communism nevertheless; perhaps close to what Marx and Engels meant by the category of "Feudal Socialism" in the *Manifesto*.<sup>18</sup> To historicize the pastoral, to contaminate its generic decorum, as Gongora and Cervantes do, is to admit that the age of gold can be recovered and relived in the imagination, but only as a moment that must be passed beyond -- *desenganado* -- by the reader/pilgrim making his way through the *diachrony* of the text. For the Baroque, the harmony and unity of a classical past represented by the literature of the high Renaissance is not ultimately recoverable. It has been shattered by the commodity form; all that remains are fragments out of which new types of literary representation can be assembled. But these are inevitably creations which are felt by their own authors to be aesthetically dubious or degraded, which sustain themselves only in the mode of what Lukacs called, in *The Theory of the Novel*, romantic irony.<sup>19</sup> The dynamics of Baroque form are the way a precapitalist sensibility stages the conditions of its own negation. Sarduy correctly defines the Baroque as "the structural reflex of a desire that cannot attain its object."<sup>20</sup> But he neglects to add that this is due to the fact that the movement of Baroque representation -- that continuous displacement of the signifier which constitutes its peculiar difficulty and pleasure -- embodies a class consciousness which has become contradictory and perverse. The use of the period of a day as a figure of time, the cycle of the agricultural year and its allegorical coincidence with the four ages of man, the meditation on the rise and fall of empire depicted in the myth of the ages of metal, the taste for assembling together the extremely distant and the near, the archaic and the modern, the mythic and the real, the natural and the urbane, the moment of origin and of apotheosis or death: all these are staples of Baroque form and mark it as an essentially historicist form of representation. History is the process which produces the apotheosis of the Empire and the court city, civilization as monument, as centralized accumulation and power. But in the imagination of the Baroque the possibility of such a sublimation cannot be kept separate from an anguished awareness of mortality and imperfection, creating thus a perpetual oscillation between monumentalization and entropy. The "vuelo atrevido" of literary novelty ends up, like Icarus, in a "desvanecimiento," or undoing. The cornu-

copia of signs reveals the skeleton constituted by its very structure of linguistic elaboration; the completed image or unit of representation is a "tomb", from which the poet and reader must endeavor to resurrect themselves again and again. The deepest esthetic affinity is not with the palace but rather with the mediated beauty of the ruin, where nature has "unmade" a human illusion of power and permanence.

That is why the dialectics of Baroque art are ultimately a paralyzed dialectics, a form of mourning, as Walter Benjamin suggested in his idea of the Baroque as *Trauerspiel* -- a play of sadness.<sup>21</sup> Like Don Quijote's final disillusion, they involve the recognition that the attainment of wholeness, the return of the golden age, the transfer between art and life, is not possible in the present, that it requires other actors, other forms, other beginnings.

I'd like to conclude by drawing out of this inner problematic of Spanish Golden Age poetry two antithetical ideological outcomes. On the one hand, given that the *locus amoenus* remains "imaginary" -- that is in the mystic poets, for example, driven inwards, eroticized, without nevertheless losing its correspondence with political economy. In San Juan de la Cruz, the site of the mystic union -- "nuestro lecho florido" (our flowery bed) -- is "de mil escudos de oro coronado" -- *escudo* obviously means shield here, but the word also designated a type of Hapsburg coin. The body of the beloved -- the poem itself -- is a magical proliferation of properties and sensations -- "mil gracias derramando," "mil gracias refiriendo" -- all produced, offered and received freely. The mystic union is the return of the repressed age of gold; it institutes an economy of undreamt of plenitude, a liberation from unsatisfied need or desire, a transcendence of mundane calculation of profit and loss.<sup>22</sup>

The *Cantico espiritual* is thus one of the closest things we have in literature to an intimation of that "kingdom of freedom" Marx anticipated with the advent of pure communism when the tyranny of economic determination would be lifted from human life.

The other hand might be represented by something like Bernardo de Balbuena's *Grandeza mexicana*, a characteristic text of the poetry of Spanish colonialism. The *Grandeza* (1604) is built on the Baroque topic of the cornucopia and is itself as an art object the literary simulacrum of a cornucopia, offering to the metropolitan reader all manner of Mexican things in a sort of festival of commodity fetishism. The sights, sounds, flora, fauna, food, buildings, trinkets etc. which what Balbuena calls "la primavera mexicana" -- the Mexican Spring -- offers the colonizer are, as in the myth of the Golden Age, "regalos," gifts. Consequently,

the actual source of much of this wealth -- "el feo indio" -- is relegated to the margins of the poem as one more item of touristic voyeurism. In this sort of esthetification -- which has its affinities with at least what Quevedo thought Gongorism represented -- wealth appears as if an automatic reflex of divine and natural providence, not as a product of human elaboration carried out under exploitative and genocidal relations of productions. This is poetic *bullonismo*, if you will. Metaphorical decor becomes in the *Grandeza* as later in colonial Gongorism a sort of theory of magic accumulation which masks and mystifies the real primitive accumulation of capital, harmonizing it in appearance with the religious and aristocratic -- that is, feudal, assumptions of Spanish imperialism.<sup>23</sup>

In this sort of discourse, the colonial landowner and the metropolitan grandee, the *bullonista* and the *cuantitativista*, can have their cake and eat it too. Through a deployment of pastoral convention and metaphors, the colonial Baroque constructs the colony as a social space which is in principle harmonious and utopian, and in which therefore any element of rebellion or dis-sidence automatically appears as an emanation of forces of evil -- an ugliness -- which threaten to deconstruct its order or *dispositio*.

The esthetification of domination, exploitation and genocide to hold together the uneasy conscience of a social class that was preparing its own demise by carrying out the primitive accumulation of capital; that is one side of the political economy of Golden Age poetry. But there is also the other side, the side Cesar Vallejo indicated when apropos of the Commune of the Asturian miners in 1934, he called Quevedo "el abuelo instantaneo de los dinamiteros" -- "the instant grandfather of the dynamiters" (the miners used sticks of dynamite to try to hold off the advance of Franco's troops against their Commune). Another way of thinking about this -- and here I end by alluding to that difficult struggle to achieve a "concrete Utopia" which is going on in Central America -- is to imagine that both Quevedo and Gongora, despite their differences, would be Sandinistas in Nicaragua today. The anachronistic returns in the form of the revolutionary; if capitalism is the negation of feudalism, communism is "the negation of the negation."

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), pp. 288-91.

<sup>2</sup> Ernesto Laclau, Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory (London: New Left Books, 1977), pp. 160-61. Cf. Jameson on Bakhtin's notion of the dialogical: "...the dialogue of class struggle is one in which two opposing discourses fight it out within the general unity of a shared code." Political Unconscious, p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> "Only if the social determination of forms could be shown conclusively could the question be raised whether social attitudes cannot become 'constitutive' and enter a work of art as effective parts of its artistic value." Austin Warren and Rene Wellek, Theory of Literature, 3rd edition (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1956), p. 109.

<sup>4</sup> Since the question of what constitutes a feudal mode of production is a much contested one, let me refer to the definition given in Witold Kula's An Economic Theory of the Feudal System (English translation: London: New Left Books, 1976); to my mind the definitive marxist monograph on this subject:

Suffice it to say that the term 'feudalism' refers here to a socio-economic system which is predominantly agrarian and characterized by a low level of productive forces and of commercialization ('commercialization' is used here in the technical sense of 'production for market' -- Trans. note); at the same time it refers to a corporate system in which the basic unit of production is a large landed estate surrounded by the small plots of peasants who are dependent on the former both economically and juridically, and who have to furnish various services to the lord and submit to his authority. (p. 9)

<sup>5</sup> Marx, Capital, Vol. I, chapter 1. It might be useful to recall here part of Marx's account of the fetishism of commodities in this same chapter, since it touches on some issues raised later in the paper:

A commodity appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. So far as it is a value in use, there is nothing mysterious about it, whether we consider it from the point of view

that by its properties it is capable of satisfying human wants, or from the point that these properties are the product of human labor... Whence, then, arises the enigmatical character of the product of labor, so soon as it assumes the form of commodities? Clearly from this form itself... A commodity is... a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labor appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labor is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labor... To find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands.

<sup>6</sup> Jose Carlos Mariategui, "Esquema de una explicacion de Chaplin" (1928), in El alma matinal (various editions). My translation. The essay deals with Chaplin's film The Gold Rush.

<sup>7</sup> "Los primitivos espanoles del pensamiento economico: Cuantitativismo y bulionismo," originally published in Bulletin hispanique (1962), edited in Vilar's Crecimiento y desarrollo: reflexiones sobre el caso espanol (Barcelona: Ariel, 1964). See also J. Antonio Maravall, "Reformismo social-agrario en la crisis del siglo XVII," Bulletin hispanique, Vol. LXXII (1970).

<sup>8</sup> Jose Monleon, "Las coplas de Manrique: Reflejo historico y discurso politico." My translation from the author's ms. Forthcoming in Ideologies and Literature.

<sup>9</sup> Don Quijote in part II has to confront himself in the form of the commodity fetish constituted by the best-seller novel of his adventures in Part I. People tell him, "Oh, you're the fellow we read about." Seeking to take advantage of the commercial success of Part I, another novelist, Andres de Avellaneda, had written a spurious continuation of the story which now Cervantes' Don Quijote has to 'disprove'. To avoid further such infringements on his copyright, Cervantes notes in his prologue to Part II that he is going to kill his hero off, "For however good things are, an abundance brings down the price, and scarcity, even in bad things, confers a certain value." Cohen translation (London: Penguin, 1978), p. 470.

<sup>10</sup>John Beverley, "The Production of Solitude: Gongora, Gongorism and the State," Ideologies and Literature 13 (1980).

<sup>11</sup>Marc Shell, The Economy of Literature (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 91-92.

<sup>12</sup>E.g. the common appeal made against the corruption of court life in favor of the beatus ille of the countryside, which in Spanish Golden Age thematics is known as the menosprecio de corte, alabanza de aldea from a famous essay of the same title. The Horatian bucolic in the 16th century almost always carries the anxiety, and pathos of a class, the petty gentry, which feels itself displaced by the new accumulation of political and economic power in the absolutist center, dominated by the monarchy and the upper nobility. Later, in the Puritan posts or in the Enlightenment eclogue, the theme reappears in inversion as an index of bourgeois liberality and natural reason against the corruption and artificiality of the ancien regime.

<sup>13</sup>See his recently published Cervantes and the Humanist Vision: A Study of Four Exemplary Novels (Princeton University Press, 1982).

<sup>14</sup>Noam Chomsky, Cartesian Linguistics (New York: Harper, 1966), p. 29. On 16th century linguistic theory, see also chapters 2 and 3 of Michel Foucault's Les mots et les choses; Claude-Gilbert Dubois, Mythe et langage au seizieme siecle (Bordeaux: Ducros, 1970); and my own "Soledad primera, lines 1-61," Modern Language Notes 88 (1973).

<sup>15</sup>A slogan I have heard attributed to Terry Eagleton. See Pierre Macherey and Etienne Balibar, "Literature as an Ideological Form: Some Marxist Propositions," translated by Jim Kavanagh in Praxis 5 (1981), in particular section 2.2 on "Fiction and realism: the mechanism of identification in literature," pp. 51-54.

<sup>16</sup>Jean Franco, "Narrador/Autor/Superestrella: la narrativa latinoamericana en la epoca de cultura de masas," in H. Achugar, J. Beverley, A. Roggiano (eds.) Ideologia y critica literaria. Revista Iberoamericana 114-115 (1981), pp. 131, 134. My translation.

<sup>17</sup>Claudio Guillen, Literature as System (Princeton University Press: 1971), pp. 110-17.

<sup>18</sup>The note on feudal socialism occurs, significantly, in part III of the Manifiesto on "Socialist and Communist Literature":

Owing to their historical position, it became the vocation of the aristocracies of France and England to write pamphlets against modern bourgeois society... A literary battle alone remained possible. But even in the domain of literature the old cries of the Restoration period had become impossible... In this way arose feudal socialism: half lamentation, half lampoon; half echo of the past, half menace of the future; at times, by its bitter, witty, and incisive criticism, striking the bourgeoisie to the very heart...

[But] in pointing out that their mode of exploitation was different from that of the bourgeoisie, the feudalists forget that they exploited under circumstances and conditions... that are now antiquated. In showing that, under their rule, the modern proletariat never existed, they forget that the modern bourgeoisie is the necessary offspring of their own form of society.

It should be evident that one of the things I'm attempting in this paper is to displace the problematic of feudal socialism back to the 16th and 17th centuries and to recover some of its ideological force, over and above the historicist dismissal Marx and Engels subject it to in the Manifiesto.

<sup>19</sup>"The irony of the novel is the self-correction of the world's fragility: inadequate relations can transform themselves into a fanciful yet well-ordered round of misunderstandings and cross-purposes...within which things appear as isolated and yet connected, as full of value and yet totally devoid of it." (Italics mine) The Theory of the Novel, trs. Anna Bostock (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971), p. 75.

<sup>20</sup>Severo Sarduy, Barroco (Buenos Aires, 1974), p. 99. Sarduy is the main standard-bearer of Barthian criticism in Latin America.

<sup>21</sup>Walter Benjamin, The Origins of German Tragic Drama, trs. John Osborne (London: New Left Books, 1977). E.g. "...in allegory the observer is confronted with the facies hippocratica of history as a petrified, primordial landscape... This is the heart of the allegorical way of seeing, of the baroque, secular explanation of history as the Passion of the world; its importance resides solely in the stations of its decline. The greater the significance, the greater the subjection to death..." (p. 166).

<sup>22</sup>E.g. "Mi alma se ha empleado, / y todo mi caudal, en su servicio; / ya no guardo ganado, / ni ya tengo otro oficio, / que ya solo en amar es mi ejercicio" (San Juan de Cruz, Cantico espiritual, stanza 19); which Elias Rivers translates as follows: My soul and all my possessions have been used in his service; / I no longer herd sheep or have any other job, for my only occupation now is love. Renaissance and Baroque Poetry of Spain (New York: Dell, 1966), p. 134.

<sup>23</sup>For an understanding of the service Baroque allegory lent the Spanish colonization of the American Indians, I find suggestive these remarks by my friend Michael Taussig:

The Christian Fathers in the Andes had the supremely difficult task of supplanting pagan views of nature with Church-derived doctrines. They had to effect a revolution in the moral basis of cognition itself... A new semiotic had to be written, as large and as all-encompassing as the universe itself... The Christian Fathers sought to demonstrate to the Indians that phenomena could not be gods (huacas), because of their regularity. The sun, for instance, could not stop its motion when and as it wished. It was therefore natural and subservient to the supernatural... A conception of a self-organized system of mutually supportive things was transformed into a conception of a different sort of organic unity that was dominated and orchestrated by a single leader, God -- the celestial engineer, the unmoved mover. Christianity sought to supplant the system of mutually conditioning parts with one that wrote the master-slave relationship into nature... Such a substitution called for a radically new logic, a different notion of relationships, and a different notion of the relation between part and whole.

The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), p. 175.

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