

JAMESON'S STRATEGIES OF CONTAINMENT

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Committed to the humanistic tradition of the Enlightenment and its unfinished utopian project, Fredric Jameson's attempts to post-modernize Marxism have generated a great deal of excitement, without, however, effecting requisite passage out of nineteenth century history of philosophy. Enlightenment: this epithet of Marxism — perhaps one of the most fruitful 'discoveries' of post-structuralism — is only beginning to be appreciated and its implications explored. That the most recent defense of enlightenment humanism has come from Marxism, a political creed that has for more than a century been successfully vilified as its arch-enemy, is far more than irony; for with the belief in the immanence of reason and the adequacy of communication, Fredric Jameson continues the profession of faith in legitimating principles as a basis for historical intervention. That such faith has justified every revolution, counter-revolution, and coup d'état since 1789 passes unremarked in his writing.

Puzzling enough, in the face of the extensive and knowledgeable synthesis of poststructuralist elements in Jameson's writing, this faith is both the goal and the wreck of his mission: the desire to retain the enlightenment heritage of a totalizing philosophy of history, within which commitment to principle can be universalized, blinds him to the results of such a desire "to seize reality" as it instances itself in praxis. The pre-critical allegiance to what Lyotard calls "metanarratives of emancipation" obscures all paths leading out of the modern tradition in which these metanarratives take their pseudo-secular, bourgeois form; for the avoidance of epistemological questions — by postulating the retreat of the "effectivity" of metanarratives into the political unconscious — in favor of ethical

FREDRIC JAMESON

expression necessarily leaves the status quo, out of which any ethic arises, perfectly intact. As a result, Jameson's work stands as a fascinating instance of a late modernism: where it can no longer be avoided, it incorporates poststructuralist elements piecemeal and strategically, but it posits, finally, the same modernist philosophy of history with the same commitment to the totality of an enlightenment project. Jameson's work remains squarely within the modern, the millenarian, manifesting the desire to represent as whole that which we now realize can only be known in shards. This desire to represent the totality instantiates itself as terror in the moment in which its wholeness of form is made constitutive. This sleight of hand occults the socially determined status of the theories upon which the whole itself rests.

However desirable the passage of Marx's writings into the postmodern may be, it cannot be effected within an enlightenment philosophy of history or any other, for that matter, which refuses to acknowledge both principled limitations to its own authority and the givenness of equally authoritative alternate legends. When it will be possible to speak of Marxist *philosophies of histories* and be understood, that is without being accused of some liberal pluralism, Marxism will have emerged from hegemonic claims of enlightenment and offered itself anew as a vehicle for transforming — not reproducing — the given social order!

The Siren Call of *The Political Unconscious*

Despite Jameson's encyclopedic knowledge of the terms and techniques of poststructuralist analysis, a well-known modernist design motivates his work: the desire, in the face of the epistemological break defining postmodernism, to legitimate political involvement in mass movements. This desire is the unconscious of *The Political Unconscious* — unconscious, however, in the weak sense that it avoids offering itself up to critique; for the reader must go outside of *The Political Unconscious* to find its wellsprings. This work satisfies itself with laying the groundwork for legitimation: the (re-) establishment of the preconditions of a collective which can act as the political consciousness of a new (proletarian) class struggling against the monolithic hegemony of multinational capitalism. Such a desire is to be secured by a doctrine of the absolute horizon of history, which doubles as the guarantor of both interpretational and communicational adequacy. History becomes the referential bound of language and thus the essential guarantor of a potential consensus on aesthetic norms and ethical maxims.

This program of the "political," which, along with the notion of a philosophy of history, grounds Jameson in the tradition of moderns, forms the desire, the interest, behind *The Political Unconscious*; however, this interest scarcely figures in that text. It is rather in his foreword to Lyotard's

HAYNES HORNE

The Postmodern Condition that this desire materializes when Jameson writes:

The great master-narratives here are those that suggest that something beyond capitalism is possible, something radically different; and they also "legitimate" the praxis whereby political militants seek to bring that radically different future social order into being.¹

This motivation for which the "absent cause" of history is tended is only political in that modern sense which has dominated from the Convention of 1789 through the Popular Front to the communal alternatives of the 60s and which still finds loud support today around academic conference tables: the political as a totalized agglomeration of disparate fields of discourse: among them the ethical, aesthetic, economic, judicial, all circumscribed by an absolute horizon of history, a philosophy of history, providing a potential basis for legitimate revolutionary praxis. Such a work as Jameson undertakes in *The Political Unconscious* constitutes the founding of a new epic — or the revision of an old one: that epic of the community's struggle for bread, peace, and work. If this is the unstated desire of *The Political Unconscious*, to consider the text of Lyotard, which provokes its full statement in the preceding quotation, may prove instructive.

Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* describes the dissolution of, and argues against any reestablishment of foundational myths, or "metanarratives"; by positing postmodernity as a position from which such integral myths of modernity can be "re-cognized":

Simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives ... To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements — narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on. Conveyed within each cloud are pragmatic valences specific to its kind. Each of us lives at the intersection of many of these. However, we do not necessarily establish stable language combinations, and the properties of the ones we do establish are not necessarily communicable.

In condensed form this passage could be said to contain the bulk of the poststructuralist program Jameson argues against and hopes to contain. First and foremost, Jameson propounds the utopian ideal or promise, which provides his project with its telos, its meaning, and its justification. The path toward this utopia is linear and narrative, taking such forms as the history of productive forces, and the story of necessity and class struggle. Narrative is, indeed, the privileged form of knowledge since the scientific

FREDRIC JAMESON

field eschews any consideration of the ethical. Although Jameson does not acknowledge the fact, having once posited the contours of a history within which a single narrative of liberation arises, he simultaneously gets along with the narrative, its subject of elocution — the heroic revolutionary subject — which remains capable of “dangerous voyages” and heroic action. Lyotard, on the other hand, envisions the writing of these narratives out of the script of the “new” modernity we presently stand before. Indeed, the postmodern, for Lyotard, is exactly that moment of the continual renewal of modernity itself in which we are called to intervene, not with a new program, which would merely rewrite the terror inscribed on us by the last two centuries, but with a new toleration for the incommensurability of language games and their contestants. Such an endorsement of diversity could inscribe an entirely new modernity, one in which utopian visions, as well as final solutions, would be consigned to a now demythologized past, a modernity in which the fact of agonistics replaces the sentiment for consensus, a modernity in which the indefinite postponement of meaning allows for a proliferation of stories.

Jameson assumes that such radical programs of dissolution as Lyotard discusses with respect to metanarratives, can only be endorsed when these programs serve as a merely strategic component of a politically conscious telos operating within the movement of history. How such a position as Lyotard describes — aleatory and non-programmatic — could be itself of interpretive value and political utility cannot occur to him, for in the modernist sense of the term it cannot be recognized as political. Indeed Jameson seems to hold to the ‘with me or agin me’ idea, thinking that the only alternative to a markedly oppositional role is co-optation. This thought excludes the capacity of institutions to thrive on oppositional movements which remain trapped in an identity logic which can only reaffirm the status quo. This can be readily seen within the academy: if a professor publishes a particularly powerful critique of the system, he most often gets a pay increase for his labors; and the more powerful the critique, the larger the raise! This is the dilemma accounted for in the postmodernism of Lyotard, himself no stranger to political activism.

Jameson’s commitment, however, to a modernist totalizing program, one he thinks securely grounded in a history of philosophy, blinds him to the postmodern condition as Lyotard describes it. Yet Lyotard has mobilized a powerful and unexpected ally for his attack on totality in the Kant of the Third Critique, a text lying close not only to the surface of Lyotard’s work but to the conception of modernity as known in the West as “enlightenment.” Lyotard chooses his allies carefully, for what he shows us with Kant is that the critique of totality is by no means merely a postmodern fashion, as Jameson has a way of suggesting. Jameson writes as if he can construct a non-cognitive framework, i.e., “the absolute horizon of history,” within which a specific ethic, i.e., “the praxis whereby political militants seek to bring *that* radically different social order into being,” can

derive its legitimation. In other words "the great master narratives" — translate: the history of class struggle — which have, for the present at least, gone into hiding in the political unconscious can secure us an "is" from which, at our hour of need, an "ought" can be derived.

It is disturbing that such an argument as this for tending the master narratives is hardly present at all in *The Political Unconscious*, for we ought to expect rigor from modernist political theories; they should at least try to ground their fundamental narratives. Instead, as Sam Weber has pointed out, Jameson aims at a notoriously apolitical audience of professional academicians, and Weber has argued convincingly that Jameson's arguments for his methodology can be reduced in part to what amounts to an appeal for upholding the status quo of the institutional framework of intellectual life.² Before examining these points further in Jameson's texts, I would like to continue with his "misreading" of Lyotard and Kant, a misreading which causes him to rely on history as the "absent" referent that is nonetheless capable of anchoring the signification required for the revolutionary praxis prescribed by modernist millenarian versions of Marxist theory.

The following quotation is from an essay by Lyotard appended to *The Postmodern Condition*, "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism," which contains a striking denunciation of enlightenment humanism, whether of the Jameson or E.D. Hirsch flavors:

Finally, it must be clear that it is our business not to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented. And it is not to be expected that this task will effect the last reconciliation between language games (which, under the name of faculties, Kant knew to be separated by a chasm), and that only the transcendental illusion (that of Hegel) can hope to totalize them into a real unity. But Kant also knew that the price to pay for such an illusion is terror. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries have given us as much terror as we can take. We have paid a high enough price for the nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, of the transparent and the communicable experience. Under the general demand for slackening and for appeasement, we can hear the mutterings of the desire for a return of terror, for the realization of the fantasy to seize reality. The answer is: Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witness to the unpresentable; let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name.³

There is hardly room in such an account of "the postmodern condition" for a doctrine of a master narrative, wrapped in the guise of an "absent cause" or not, and it is unfortunate that Jameson does not address these remarks in his introduction. Jameson approaches this theme, which accuses totality *qua* totality of leading to terror, only very indirectly by referring to it as "instinctive" and somehow vaguely fashionable.⁴ This,

FREDRIC JAMESON

however, is a theme which is by no means confined to Lyotard's short essay quoted above. It is a realization fundamental to Lyotard's postmodernism that any theory or concept capable of justifying "the praxis whereby political militants seek to bring that radically different future social order into being" is equally capable of bringing a reign of terror — indeed, that the two may not even be objectively distinguishable; and Lyotard is insistent on reminding us of what has happened before in the name of reason. He recalls for us the Kantian distinction between knowledge, ethics, and aesthetics in order to support his argument against any totalizing system which lays claim to be the final adjudicator of conflicts between the faculties of the mind, or, as could be said, language games. Lyotard's interest in postmodernism is very close to the surface in this final statement; he sees in the fractured and fracturing activity of postmodernism — a reflection of the unbridgeable chasms between the faculties of the Kantian subject — a form of resistance to any totalizing system under which "the fantasy to seize reality" might become an instance of a maxim of practical action.

Jameson realizes that in the absence of such maxims, and in the absence of communities which make general agreement about them possible, there can be no class or class organ capable of legitimate revolutionary praxis. Nevertheless, this position takes into account only half of the problem of justifying political praxis, the empirical absence of a community of shared values — which in any case is and was almost certainly only a mythical community. Jameson ignores the problem to which the Kant of the third Critique points: the logical chasm which separates ethical maxims from knowledge. This omission must account for the modernist's single-minded drive to reestablish a binding connection between "is" and "ought."

Jameson ignores the possibility that revolutionary praxis is not necessarily weakened by the acknowledgement that its justification resides solely in the local actions of those who are moved to revolt in a certain place and time. Yet how much more successful might revolutionary praxis have shown itself to be if the banners under which its supporters marched had been more modest than to read FREEDOM, TRUTH, HUMANITY? To move incrementally toward such goals is, as Kant suggests, a requirement of the faculty of reason which he calls *streben*; but to act in the name of them, as if they were secured and contained within some set of principles written by some world-historical subject in a declaration, betrays the very "fantasy to seize reality" of which Lyotard warns.

While in the introduction to Lyotard's work discussed above this overt emphasis on a political program manifests itself openly, in *The Political Unconscious* the totalizing system Jameson describes is presented with little emphasis on this form of modernist politicism, which is only subtly present. Instead, Jameson's goal seems to be to convince his readers of the utility of such a comprehensive system for literary interpretation and for the communicational adequacy of the larger social body. His work, he says, "seeks to argue the perspectives of Marxism as necessary precondi-

tions for adequate literary comprehension. Marxist critical insights will therefore here be defended as something like an ultimate *semantic* precondition for the intelligibility of literary and cultural texts.⁵ Marxism, according to Jameson, offers the necessary perspective from which "the inert givens and materials of a particular text" can be semantically enriched, and this semantic enrichment of inert givens becomes the "adequate literary interpretation" provided by the Marxist perspective he offers.

Only the Marxian method can offer an "untranscendable horizon" because, says Jameson, the plethora of alternative critical approaches are merely "local" (should we read anarchic?) in their claims and are involved in rhetorical strategies which make them seem more comprehensive than they really are. In *The Political Unconscious* he proposes to demonstrate by comparison the absolute strength of the Marxist approach:

Their [the alternative approaches'] juxtaposition with a dialectical or totalizing, properly Marxist ideal of understanding will be used to demonstrate the structural limitations of the other interpretive codes, and in particular to show the 'local' ways in which they construct their objects of study and the 'strategies of containment' whereby they are able to project the illusion that their readings are somehow complete and self sufficient.⁶

As Weber has pointed out, Jameson, however, is quick to say that the "local" operations of the myth-critical or psychoanalytic interpretive methods, to cite two of his examples, do not warrant being discarded, and thus no threat is implied to their professors. Indeed the variety of methods current "in the 'pluralism' of the intellectual marketplace today" are of at least sociological interest, Jameson implies, even if their actual interpretive utility can be shown to be limited, for "the authority of such methods springs from their faithful consonance with this or that fragmented law of social life, this or that subsystem of a complex and mushrooming cultural superstructure."⁷

Thus these competing interpretive codes, Jameson argues, have a local utility and need not fear acknowledging the Master Narrative of Marxism since each will be assigned "an undoubted sectoral validity" within it, "thus at once cancelling and preserving them." Paradoxically then, Jameson argues for the adoption of Marxist interpretive methods as a kind of guarantor of the institutional status quo which can insulate the "local" operations of various critical schools from the cutthroat competition of the "intellectual marketplace today." It remains to be discussed, however, how Jameson argues for such an interpretive master narrative.

Jameson proposes what he calls a "social hermeneutic," a term which clearly displays the link between interpretive adequacy in the cultural sphere and the restoration of an organic character to the body politic. Repeating the gesture of an earlier phase of *Weltmüdigkeit*, Jameson fol-

FREDRIC JAMESON

lows the movement well-represented by T.S. Eliot when he takes the purported wholeness of a mythic medieval society as his model:

A social hermeneutic will . . . wish to keep faith with its medieval precursor . . . and must necessarily restore a perspective in which the imagery of libidinal revolution and of bodily transfiguration once again becomes a figure for the perfected community. The unity of the body must once again prefigure the renewed organic identity of associative or collective life . . . Only the community, indeed, can dramatize that self-sufficient intelligible unity (or "structure") of which the individual body, like the individual "subject" is a de-centered "effect," and to which the individual organism, caught in the ceaseless chain of the generations and the species, cannot, even in the most desperate Renaissance or Neoplatonic visions of hermaphroditism (or in their contemporary counterpart, the Deleuze-Guattari "bachelor machine"), lay claim.⁸

This statement is part of an acknowledgement of debt Jameson says he owes "to the great pioneers of narrative analysis."⁹ Indeed the medieval interpretive model and its political counterpart are intended by Jameson to parallel his own proposals, and in this acknowledgement of debt the continued reliance on the classical understanding of the individual's subjectivity is maintained and restored to the extent that the possibility of a perfected individual is rendered again as a function of the possibility of a "perfected" polis or Utopia.

In Jameson's striking renewal of the analogy of the social as the organic form of the body, the recollection of the price paid for such a harmonious "organic identity of associative or collective life," the inflexibility of the caste-like system of guilds, the ineluctable demand for conformity to custom, and the principled barbarism of the Inquisition which terrorized both the high and the low when the strains within the system could no longer be contained, go without mention. These are the terrors, even if quaint by the standards of our own experience, of which such thinkers as Lyotard warn in their resistance to closed systems, and Jameson misses an opportunity to address the issue which he himself brings to the surface of his argument.

Its problematic aspects left unmentioned, Jameson gains a great deal from the analogy, however. As God functioned for medieval theologians as the "untranscendable" but benign other, an horizon of biblical hermeneutics that guarantees the limits within which meaning can be collectively established, is construed so that now History acts in the same way as the untranscendable horizon which had previously served that same purpose. For a thinker whose slogan is "Always historicize!" this call for a social hermeneutic that promises a renewal of "organic identity of associative or collective life" remains strangely isolated from any resonance with its fascist

and fascistic analogues. Yet this analogue is exactly the one Lyotard would remind us of.

Having proposed this ideal of a “social hermeneutic,” Jameson continues with an overview of his method of literary interpretation which assumes:

three concentric frameworks, which mark 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 chronicle-like sequence of happenings in time; then of society, in the now already less diachronic and time-bound sense of a 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 human social formations, from prehistoric life to whatever far future history has in store for us.¹⁰

On this third level, we are invited to entertain the “sequence of the modes of production” and the “succession and destiny of social formations” moving purposefully toward that which the “far future history has in store for us” as the “absent cause”: History. Transcending the tendentious plurality of discourses, history only reveals itself to us as the “mystery” in a master narrative which becomes textualized in the *Homo sapiens*’ experience of necessity.¹¹ The phrases “the sequence of modes... and the succession and destiny” strikes a totalizing note, for this phrase excludes the possibility of multiple *sequences* of modes of production or the *successions* and *destinies* of the various human social formations. Beneath the surface of this apparent stylistic quibble lie four hundred years of Western nationalism and imperialism, resident now even in the discursive structures of theory. Jameson describes our contact with this mysterious master narrative not in terms which could be construed as themselves referentially elliptical, for example in terms of explanation, where ‘explicans’ and ‘explicandum’ do not occult their status as linguistic operations — marked by Jameson as “the prison house.” Rather, in keeping with his rhetoric of restoration, he tells us that by means of the adequacy of Marxist interpretation “this mystery can be reenacted [. . .].” Safely contained within such an absolute referential boundary in which all truth value returns to apparent simplicity on the model of an oral culture — indeed explicitly on the model of a cult practice — all interpretation can be grounded in sense by an interpretive process of “semantic enrichment.”

Apparently untroubled by the mythic resonance of his proposal, Jameson argues for the necessity of a conception of the movements within history “conceived in its vastest sense” to provide the “ultimate” boundary of interpretation which can act therefore as guarantor of the interpretive validity and communicational adequacy. The reader is not alone at fault if s/he hears the sound of a palliative offered to an age grown weary of the permanent indeterminacy of meaning. Jameson’s attempt to recuperate

FREDRIC JAMESON

ate meaning follows an ill-chosen path however, and its exploitation of the medieval as a model for the wholeness of the body politic aligns it directly the Southern Agrarians, for example, who ought to be very disagreeable bedpartners for him.¹²

Like the Agrarians Jameson hopes to secure the recognition of an outer limit of meaning, beyond which we may not pass, in order to establish communicational adequacy under the paradigm of literary interpretation. Unlike the Agrarians, and with a more liberal gesture, Jameson would reconstruct “the renewed organic identity of associative or collective life” within which individual schools of interpretation maintain their utility and their local autonomy without threatening the collective with a disruptive divergence of meanings or an unbounded agonistics which would threaten in the contours of the collective itself. These outer limits, furthermore, securely anchor the sense and reference of the texts themselves by establishing in them a symbolic reenactment of the movement of productive forces, a movement which then acts as a common fundament for the various interpretive schools. Without this common fundament, Jameson apparently fears the reign of anarchy over the interpretive community and thinks this must necessarily bring in train the further splintering of schools of interpretation into irreconcilable camps, making community in the sense of communicational adequacy impossible.

For the loss of this transparency of meaning which disrupts (re-) building a collective goes hand in hand with the loss of “the imagery of libidinal revolution.” This in turn entails the loss of a community which can be construed as a revolutionary subject of history, a problem Jameson points to in the foreword to *The Postmodern Condition* when he writes “More orthodox Marxists will agree with the most radical post- or anti-Marxist position in at least this, that Marxism as a coherent philosophy (or better still, a ‘unity of theory and praxis’) stands or falls with the matter of social class”.¹³ By stipulating the mythic history which is to serve *in potentia* as the bound of sense, Jameson is simultaneously stipulating the possibility of a subject of that history, one which remains theoretically capable of, and capable of justifying, revolutionary praxis. The effort to construct a socially organic whole within which communication can be, as Habermas has said, “noisefree,” finds here its own telos “within the unity of a single great collective story.”

Thus, while Jameson claims to be following the path of the subject and its modes of interpretation through his method of historicizing, this path turns out to be derivative and dependant on the establishment of a history capable of comprising the object.¹⁴ The fact that he locates the object in the political unconscious is a necessity of the current critical climate, and it is a climate which he argues forcefully to change. Yet the direction of the change must be viewed with skepticism; all the more so given the tenor of Jameson’s remarks and examples.

HAYNES HORNE

In the closing section of his introductory chapter, Jameson characterizes the “final horizon” of history in the same categorical terms he has been using up till now:

With this final horizon, then, we emerge into a space in which History itself becomes the ultimate ground as well as the untranscendable limit of our understanding in general and our textual interpretations in particular.¹⁵

While such a passage no longer arouses dismay, the juxtaposition of this Marxist absolutism with the very insights of postmodernist critique — though in the form of mere alternative absolutisms of Eco and Habermas — must give cause to wonder how Jameson manages to avoid the conclusions that could be drawn from his own juxtaposition. He is very well aware that some “practitioners of alternate or rival interpretive codes” — far from having been persuaded that History is an interpretive code that includes and transcends all others — will again assert ‘History’ as simply one more code among others, with no particularly privileged status.” The concept of “practitioners of alternate codes” is not really the issue; rather there is a less academic question Jameson utterly fails to ask, namely, “*Whose history?*” Africa’s or China’s? No, Euramerika’s! Black’s history or Oriental’s? No, Caucasian’s! Women’s History? No, Men’s! What Jameson reduces to ‘practitioners of alternate codes’ are more properly in his own terms ‘livers of alternate histories’. As such they have every reason to expect that their histories will be taken seriously by Jameson, which, however, will not be possible under the regime of a master narrative.

Dismissing such a possible avenue of interrogation as relativism, Jameson himself attempts to relativize the alternative models by citing examples which make the same absolutist claims as his own arguments. In such a way he seems to offer his readers a most reasonable choice: since “nothing is to be gained by opposing one reified theme — History — by another — Language — in a polemic debate as to the ultimate priority of the one over the other” why not choose this form of Marxist interpretation which, as I have shown you, is capable of leaving the institutional framework, the pluralism of the intellectual marketplace intact? Under the umbrella of History, all interpretive schools find their justifiable place (in my Father’s mansion?), and will be assigned a “sectoral validity” by the master narrative. This would be the most stable and convenient arrangement all around, wouldn’t it?

Jameson ignores the strongest argument against the adoption of History as absolute horizon by characterizing the decision as one to be made between various absolute systems. Thus he makes such a decision into a merely utilitarian one. The position which he ignores is one which all claims of absolutes are suspected, and one which, as Weber suggests, ought to recognize the frameworks of interpretation themselves as already the product of an interpretive process.¹⁶ Jameson is in no way prepared to

make such a recognition, and indeed he spends the first one hundred pages of *The Political Unconscious* arguing that it is unnecessary and impossible to subject the framework of history itself to interpretation.

History, he says, is beyond our critical powers; it is present to us only as Necessity, which we all experience as "the inexorable *form* of events."¹⁷ Thus History, finally, is present to us through the shared experience of necessity, and "can be apprehended only through its effects." "This is indeed the ultimate sense in which History as ground and untranscendable horizon needs no particular theoretical justification: we may be sure that its alienating necessities will not forget us, however much we might prefer to ignore them."¹⁸

Thus Jameson hypostatizes, in terms of the Kantian antinomies, the understanding, whose requirement of a first cause as necessary for the teleological movement of nature choreographs nature with man in a unity as only the Enlightenment could project it. Jameson forgets, however, the conflicting tendency of reason which cannot rest satisfied with any final cause, and whose power of analysis refuses to recognize boundaries of any sort. In his call for a return to a basically Enlightenment historiography, Jameson can be sure of finding a ready audience, one wearied of the uncertainties of its age and of the ceaseless movement of signification. The call tantalizes us with its project of building a community capable of acting as the revolutionary subject, a project Jameson invites us to join. Nevertheless, this call must finally be understood as the one Lyotard warns of, the call of "a nostalgia of the whole and the one, for the reconciliation of the concept and the sensible, of the transparent and the communicable experience."¹⁹ As such the call is that of the Sirens, luring us with "the fantasy to seize reality" behind which stands, as Lyotard points out, "the desire for a return of terror."

Dialectic as Inoculation

In "Postmodernism, or the Logic of Late Capitalism," Jameson develops an exposition of postmodernism which attempts to deflect criticism of his project as totalizing and marxizing.²⁰ The "Postmodernism" essay acknowledges and incorporates as many elements of post-structuralism as possible into a text which seems constantly to problematize its own quasi-postmarxist tenets. While this was indeed already the case with certain elements of *The Political Unconscious*, the "Postmodernism" essay (1984) is quite literally a montage of postmodernist themes. With this strategy, Jameson acknowledges the historical fact of the movement, and in the same essay he offers an initial sketch of its periodization. Yet despite his detailed attempts to come to terms with current critical and cultural tendencies, he betrays his blindness to their implications by his recurrent strategies for recuperating political praxis. A discussion of the method by which Jameson seeks to incorporate, or better yet, sublate, post-structuralist elements

into his overall attempt at theorizing such a political praxis follows below.

A significant motivation and source of legitimization for this strategy is the notion of the dialectic itself. Jameson tells us that “moralizing condemnations of postmodernism” must be rejected, even while he is giving us subtle grounds for such judgments. He writes, for example, about the cultural critic in “postmodern space,” who is “infected by its new cultural categories” (emphasis added).²¹ Furthermore, we read that in relation to “Utopian ‘high seriousness,’” postmodernism can rightly be faulted for its “triviality.” Most significantly, in terms of Jameson’s sympathy for collectives, we are given to understand that “for political groups which seek to intervene in history . . . there cannot but be much that is deplorable and reprehensible in a cultural form of image addiction which . . . effectively abolishes any practical sense of the future and of the collective project.”

This “collective project” is indeed what Jameson seeks to theorize and legitimate. One needn’t strain then to find Jameson’s own sympathies, and yet his dialectician’s sense gets the better of him when he writes: “Yet if postmodernism is a historical phenomenon, then the attempt to conceptualize it in terms of moral or moralizing judgments must be finally identified as a category-mistake.” Jameson, at times at least, is saved from his intuitions and his beliefs by the recognition of a transcendental obstruction in their logic. He draws back from legitimating a moralistic approach to the phenomenon of postmodernism because it is a historical fact not to be done away with. Instead, he embraces it in the terms of a dialectic whose model he finds in the *Manifesto*:

We are, somehow, to lift our minds to a point at which it is possible to understand that capitalism is at one and the same time the best thing that has ever happened to the human race, and the worst. The lapse into the more comfortable stance of the taking of moral positions is inveterate and all too human: still, the urgency of the subject demands that we make at least some effort to think the cultural evolution of late capitalism dialectically, as catastrophe and progress all together.²²

Clearly, despite his druthers, Jameson recognizes the categorical imperative of historical materialism requiring us to think of the postmodern dialectically; that is, both its good points and its bad must somehow be thought together. Despite his intuitive distaste for such a project, Jameson does a masterful job at attempting to do just that with the major drawback of the two positions being mutually exclusive. (The question might be raised, for example, with respect to Jameson and Eagleton. Could it be said that Eagleton does a better job at “letting go” from marxist structures — than Jameson? When they are trying the hardest to be current theorists, are they still Marxists, and conversely, when they are being Marxists, can they still be current theorists?) Having stated, if not entirely fulfilled, his obligation to refrain from moralizing, Jameson attempts to view the ex-

FREDRIC JAMESON

pansion of the notion of culture. He greatly needs this expanded notion of culture, for it's clearly trying for him to discuss Warhol's painting "Diamond Dust Shoes" in the same section as van Gogh's "Peasant Shoes." Jameson is able to do this, but not without a few nasty remarks about soup cans and tinsel.

Jameson titles this section "The Deconstruction of Expression," which he begins by warning us that if van Gogh's "often reproduced" image is not to "sink to the level of sheer decoration" he must perform something he calls in the *Political Unconscious* "semantic enrichment."²³ "Unless that situation — which has vanished into the past — is somehow mentally restored, the painting will remain an inert object." So it would appear that even works of high modernism face the fate of having their expression deconstructed, not just by the critical climate of the age, but merely by the passage of time itself. Jameson seeks to restore the "whole object world of agricultural misery," thus creating without acknowledging it, a text of the painting which is extended to the sociohistorical. Thus it regains its expression, which is one of "backbreaking peasant toil, a world reduced to its most brutal and menaced, primitive and marginalized state," a world Jameson fails to recognize as being itself textually based.

Claiming to have thus restored the expression of van Gogh's painting, Jameson turns to that of Warhol, of which he says in a moment doubtful of the dialectic imperative: "I am tempted to say that it [Diamond Dust Shoes] does not really speak to us at all." Nor does this painting seem to leave space for the viewer, he thinks, and its thematic level is one of mere fetish. Warhol's shoes are closer to the object world of nature than the depiction of a human artifact, and he likens them to shoes stacked outside an Auschwitz oven, so bereft are they of the life-world which filled them. Yet here we might wonder why the life-world of the Auschwitz shoes might not be semantically enriched following the same procedure he performs with "Peasant Shoes," and why Warhol's painting cannot likewise have some expressiveness restored. Jameson, however, can find no "lived context" in Warhol's paintings, nothing upon which to perform a hermeneutical operation. The reason for Jameson's impotence in the face of these shoes is not far to seek: "Warhol's work in fact turns centrally around commodification"; thus it has no expression — at least none outside of the reified realm of commodity fetishism. But if commodification destroys "expression" in cultural artifacts, then only those archaically produced under precapitalist modes of production can be considered of interest with the catastrophic result that *our* cultural sphere falls into the mute world of nature. Yet the production of commodities is still — perhaps even more so than in the past — *social* production which re-presents the *social* world out of which they derive.

The final condemnation of Warhol's work is expressed by Jameson, despite his methodological intentions, by the fact that these images somehow forego the potential expression they might have: "the great billboard

images of the Coca-cola bottle or the Campbell's Soup Can, which explicitly foreground the commodity fetishism of a transition to late capital, *ought* (Jameson's italics) to be powerful and critical political statements." Of course, the implication is that Warhol's work is simply another instance of what Jameson calls "image addiction."

It must be asked whether such a reading qualifies as "dialectical" under Jameson's own criteria of thinking the good with the bad in a single thought. He might have spoken, for instance, of the depthless surfaces of the image as a "statement" against the re-presentation of dimensionality as the tradition of oil painting knew it. Surely the technique of silk-screening itself can be read as an "expression." Instead Warhol's surfaces are "debased and contaminated in advance by their assimilation to glossy advertising images," and their explicit, highly reflected "dis-representation" robbed of significance. Thus, the sublation of poststructuralist notion of culture which expands the use of the term beyond the humanistically accepted genres, never succeeds in transforming the late modernism of Jameson's cultural prejudice. The notion of ideology as "false consciousness" is not overcome, as Jameson promises, by thinking the good with the bad. The analysis of culture given in "Postmodernism" remains intolerant of the expansion of the idea of culture under postmodernism.

Periodization as Theoretical Prophylaxis

In these late years of the Reagan decade, we find ourselves confronted with a startling, massive public education campaign promoting, of all things, "safe sex." Had we been told six years ago or even two, that a virtual parade of major figures in public health in our country would be publicly agitating for the use of condoms; a Reagan appointee himself arguing before Congress, against the resistance of the media executives, for condom ads on television; and colleges sponsoring a national condom-week during which condoms were given away free to the nation's best and brightest; who would not have been incredulous? As is so often the case, however, the unity in the ranks of the moral right and its claim to hegemony under the Reagan presidency is like veneer which has lost its glue: the veneer buckles, as if there were a bad leak in the roof, which of course there always is.

Perhaps even more surprising than the fragility of the Right's program for moral renewal, however, is the appearance in the writings of Jameson, of a figure equivalent to the *cordon sanitaire*, which is of course only the late, institutional offspring of the far more ancient and venerable condom. Thus prophylaxis is mobilized not only as a technical means for fighting the spread of AIDS — an increasingly essential aspect of public health policy — but in the openly ideological sphere of hermeneutics as well. Strategies in the public health sector and in what I suggest as a parallel for Jameson, the "ideological health sector," display a specific relatedness for which I

FREDRIC JAMESON

propose the following analogy: the condom campaign on the part of public health officials seeks to contain the spread of the AIDS virus in a way similar to the manner in which Jameson's strategy of periodizing seeks to contain the dissemination of post-structuralist theory, which in a solvent form endangers the project of reviving the revolutionary subject. Public health is endangered by AIDS analogously to Jameson's notion of community by deconstructive elements in the superstructure.

By "Periodizing the 60s," Fredric Jameson thinks he can isolate, categorize, and neutralize this epidemic, the "origin" of which he finds in the 60s. Theory in its post-structuralist form theorizes the principled shifting of signification, which undermines meaning and purpose; such attacks incapacitate the subject, delegitimating revolutionary praxis. By periodizing the 60s within the brackets of a time-table (appended conveniently to the end of the essay), Jameson constructs a *cordon sanitaire* around the decade which he thinks can contain it, thus restricting the temporal range of application of the theoretical movements which make their appearance there, and simultaneously restricting the period during which traditional Marxist theory, as he admits himself, was inapplicable.

Jameson writes as if he were the Surgeon General of Ideological Public Health seeking to avoid panic in a population faced with disaster: the situation, he says, while serious, needn't be as threatening as it seems given appropriate counter-measures, for post-structuralism is only an ephemeral Nachleben of the 60s. Recognized as such, it can be safely re-contained within the figure of periodization, which functions, like the condom, as a prophylactic. Once contained, these post-structuralist methods and insights become hygienic laboratory specimens, of interest for historical research:

There is of course no reason why specialized and elite phenomena . . . cannot reveal historical trends and tendencies as vividly as "real life" — or perhaps even more visibly, in their isolation and semiautonomy which approximates a laboratory situation²⁴.

Thus would Jameson achieve the aims of theoretical prophylaxis: the containment of non-traditional theory in a scheme of periodization, which needn't deny those theories nor ignore them, having put them safely in petri dishes in the refrigerator.

I do not want these remarks to leave the impression that I think Jameson's efforts are insincere or his problems illusory. Nor do I think Jameson is maneuvering solely in order to resuscitate his own creed — a creed he openly admits is in crisis. Much more is at stake — about this I am in agreement with him: the stakes are the very possibility of some legitimate form of revolutionary social praxis, and here we must be clear that we speak of the possibility of mass-movements which would be capable of transforming the status quo into an as yet unglimped utopia. These are no trifling matters, for today few remain unaware of the difficult question of

mass-movements and how they are to be theorized and legitimated. Yet these are matters that must be scrutinized without sentimental feelings for a world which has passed by, a world in which instrumental reason successfully dissimulated a self-knowledge by which it seemed to calculate its own future. This is not our time, and we seek to restore it only at the expense of unduly privileging the very categories we claim to examine: first and foremost a concept of meaning which can bridge the chasm between concept and sense, or in Jameson's terminology, between language and history.

In the first section of this essay, I argued that *The Political Unconscious* was an attempt to reconstitute meaning within the absolute boundaries of history, that such a historical totality was methodologically necessary for halting the shift of signification which renders meaning problematic, community impossible, and thus mass revolutionary praxis illegitimate. In "Periodizing the 60s," periodization is a substitute for totalization: it attempts the same goal, namely rendering transparent the lessons of the past, even though its scope is of a less cosmic scale than History writ large. In terms of the proportions of *The Political Unconscious*, "Periodizing the 60s" is an attempt at intervention at the level of micro-structures.

I wish to sketch the opening and closing punctuation of Jameson's periodization scheme, and then address the question of signification which he hopes to contain within it. In a brief introduction he offers an apologetics for his periodizing concept, admitting it to be "unfashionable," thereby forestalling any principled critique of his plan. He attempts to distance himself from earlier periodization schemes by seeking "breaks" (*coupure*: "this break is most often related to notions of the waning or extinction of the hundred year old modern movement"²⁵) which stand in some homological relationship to one another. By concentrating on these breaks he hopes to avoid what he himself criticizes as the "older organic history which sought "expressive" unification through analogies and homologies between widely distinct levels of social life."²⁶ Nevertheless, mustn't we ask whether the positing of relations between the "breaks" is any less expressive than the positing of relations between unities, as in the earlier model of periodization? It would seem that the homological relations between breaks, just as much as those between unities, are no less relationships of the logos under Jameson's description, that is, the relations he wishes to establish speak from a transcendental historical plane beyond quandaries raised by theory, for we recall from the *Political Unconscious* that history, the subject of Jameson's "Periodizing the 60s," is beyond theory — it reveals itself to us only as necessity.

Out of the internal relations of history's necessities which Jameson offers us, we may read lessons unobstructed by interpretational frameworks which cannot be theorized. Thus our text is of an unimpeachable veracity, our readings capable of verification.²⁷ There is a clear statement of the value of history in Jameson's essay "The Ideology of the Text," published in 1975:

FREDRIC JAMESON

Each moment of the past . . . has a very special sentence or judgment to pass on the uniquely reified world in which we ourselves live: and the privilege of artistic experience is to furnish something like an immediate channel through which we may experience such implicit judgments, and attain a fleeting glimpse of other modes of life.²⁸

The “moment of the past” passes judgments or sentences in what could only be a transcendental manner on the “reified” present; and by opening and closing a period of history, these judgments — untheorized and uninterpreted — provide the basis for evaluation, for meaning, and finally for revolutionary praxis.

Jameson opens the period of the 60s with the decolonization struggles in British and French Africa, specifically, on his time line, with the Battle of Algiers in 1957. The arbitrary character of this “origin” is only thinly masked by the following introductory sentence: “It does not seem particularly controversial to mark the beginnings of what will come to be called the 60s in the third world with the great movement of decolonization in British and French Africa.”²⁹ Yet this statement is not controversial only to the extent that it is utterly arbitrary, for to speak of the beginnings of decolonization without reference to Mahatma Gandhi, the 20th Century prophet of non-violence, or the Jeffersonian idealism of Ho Chi Minh, is to emaciate any historical understanding of the struggles in Africa; and the problem is only further exacerbated by the ellipsis in which Gandhi’s own experiences in Southern Africa as a young man contribute to the goals and strategies of his later efforts. Methodological objection must be taken against the suppression of this arbitrariness — which I submit is a principled arbitrariness. No one can really avoid, much less seriously object to periodizing as long as the procedure remains aware of its own arbitrariness. We may find, and have indeed found valuable readings of phenomena by organizing them in this way or that. Yet when the essential arbitrariness of historical delineation as such is not reflected, when it is not admitted that the selection of boundaries is in all cases itself already an interpretive act, suitable only for particular and always limited tasks, schemes of periodization guise themselves as transcendental parameters, which are beyond the need of reflection, and which do not admit of their social origin in an underlying act of interpretation.

Jameson closes the period of the 60s in an equally arbitrary way, this time, however, motivating his closure in the basis, not the superstructure, namely with the oil crisis of 1972-4. The title of this section is “Return of the ‘Ultimately Determining Instance’”(Engels, Althusser) and again suggests the transcendentality of the underlying structure. Here Jameson adopts a notion of the business cycles of thirty to fifty years, theorized by Ernest Mandel, and the end of the latest of these cycles falls around Jameson’s dates. Also associated with this cycle is what Mandel calls “generalized universal industrialization” which he opposes to the idea of a post-

industrial period. Jameson interprets Mandel's description of this latest transformation of the basis as follows:

Late capitalism in general (and the 60s in particular) constitute a process in which the last surviving internal and external zones of precapitalism — the last vestiges of noncommodified or traditional space within and outside the advanced world — are now ultimately penetrated and colonized in their turn. Late capitalism can therefore be described as the moment in which the last vestiges of nature which survived on into classical capitalism are at length eliminated: namely the third world and the unconscious. The 60s will then have been the momentous transformational period in which this systemic restructuring takes place on a global scale.³⁰

In addition to the power of his apocalyptic vision of world domination, Jameson heaps incident upon incident to prove that there is something significant enough about the years 1972-4 to warrant their selection to close the period the 60s: the founding of the Trilateral Commission, the fall of Allende, the Green Revolution, and Lionel Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity*. Despite the amassing of particular incidents and their apparent subsumption under powerful business cycles, the closure remains in principle arbitrary, as even Jameson's appended time-line reveals, for it continues until 1976 with the death of Mao, the Soweto rebellion, and the victory of *Parti Quebecois*.

The classical argument about base-superstructure relationships finds a fertile field in Jameson's essay, but his attempt to finesse this problem by means of homological relationships between breaks does not go far at all with solving what is, in the framework of his essay itself, the larger problem: granting that the oil crisis is somehow related to the founding of the Trilateral Commission, and that the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam hangs together with the role of I.T.T in Chile — all incidents cited by Jameson, why should these events in this time frame mark the end of the 60s and not some prior or subsequent set of events? In fact, I suggest it would not affect his argument in the least, for it is an argument which depends on closure alone, and it is largely irrelevant when the closure takes place: the collapse of the Paris barricades, the break-up of the SDS, or the election of Jimmy Carter, for that matter, would all serve Jameson equally well. I suspect that he would indeed be quite flexible about when the 60s ended, but I'm equally convinced that he would be vociferous about the fact that it did. The reasons for this should by now be clear.

I would like to discuss one of the principle elements Jameson wishes to contain, a topic which recurs in many of Jameson's recent works: the problem of signification. In section five of his essay on periodizing the 60s called "The Adventures of the Sign," Jameson speaks of the "reification" of the sign and the consequent mythification of the referent:

FREDRIC JAMESON

in a first moment, reification "liberated" the Sign from its referent, but this is not a force to be released with impunity. Now, in a second moment, it continues its work of dissolution, penetrating the interior of the Sign itself and liberating the Signifier from the Signified, or from meaning proper. This play, no longer of a realm of signs, but of pure or literal signifieds freed from the ballast of their signified, their former meanings, now generates a new kind of textuality in all the arts, and begins to project the mirage of some ultimate language of pure signifiers.³¹

This is one of the main effects of the 60s that Jameson is at such pains to locate and isolate — although something quite similar could be read in Benjamin's "Task of the Translator," dating from the 20s.³² Within a closed historical period — i.e., within the petri dish in the social laboratory — Jameson as *Literaturwissenschaftler*, can safely study the phenomena or contagion and thus lessons can be drawn. If it gets out of the laboratory, on the other hand, the "play of signification" must result in radical skepticism toward basic premises of culture by playing havoc with meaning. Such a threat to the ethical subject, in whom Jameson places his ultimate Humanistic faith, simply cannot be tolerated, for with the loss of meaning goes the possibility of community and thus any form of legitimated revolutionary praxis.

To show just how inimical Jameson is to the ellipsis semiotics describes language to contain, he links the inhuman power of the unfettered signifier to capital itself:

I will suggest that this process [of absolute self-referentiality], seemingly internal to the sign itself, requires a supplementary explanatory code, that of the more universal logic of capital itself.³³

In this way, the excesses of semiotics are linked with the excesses of capital, and the social control of both becomes the implicit proposal of Jameson's argument, a proposal which offers to halt the indeterminacy of meaning which paralyzes revolutionary praxis. This motivation lies very close to the surface of the concluding remarks to "Periodizing the 60s."

Jameson opens the concluding paragraph with a litany of the successes of the 60s: "an immense freeing or unbinding of social energies, a prodigious release of untheorized new forces, . . . the development of new and militant bearers of 'surplus consciousness,'" most of which, he continues, do not seem "to compute in the dichotomous class model of traditional Marxism."³⁴ Here Jameson seems to endorse, as he must, the factual accomplishments of the period, but immediately following this he undercuts this praise with an analogy which attempts to underscore its ephemeral nature:

The 60s were in that sense an immense and inflationary issuing of superstructural credit; a universal abandonment of the referential

HAYNES HORNE

gold standard; an extraordinary printing up of ever more devalued signifiers.

Fortunately, there is a rich, wise uncle who has apparently kept his gold in a sock in the mattress and avoided the crisis of Jameson's referential inflation. Now, in the 80s, when the completed form of multinational capital stands at the door waiting to dun us, we can call on him:

"Traditional" Marxism, if 'untrue' during the period of a proliferation of new subjects of history, must necessarily become true again when the dreary realities of exploitation, extraction of surplus value, proletarianization and the resistance to it in the form of class struggle, all slowly reassert themselves on a new and expanded world scale, as they seem currently in the process of doing.

Here is Jameson at his best, offering us, in the face of crisis, a tradition of interpretation which clarifies the messy problems once they have been liquidated by history. The trans-class feminist movement of the 60s has been quartered into a subcultural component, lesbianism, a middle class component in NOW, and its academic component in the university system. We are not expressly told what to do about the "inflationary" flight of signification; however, we have been shown — for Jameson, perhaps the less treacherous option: we can dismiss it as an epiphenomenon of a by-gone age, leaving our attention focused on the new configurations of the basis which can be traditionally theorized and which can therefore provide an object for analysis capable of a reorientation to a humanistic, utopian future.

Conclusion

The three texts of Jameson's I've discussed above all contain the methodological prerequisites for the (re)establishment of a Marxist Humanism. From the orthography in which Jameson regularly capitalizes history and utopia to the theoretical adroitness with which he maneuvers the totalizing perspective of a modernist philosophy of history into "postmodern space," these texts promise purpose, meaning, and program. The repudiation of such promises must jar right reason and offend all sensibility for the injustices of the present out of which the utopian takes its power. Yet the incestuous relations between reason and utopia have themselves no claim to innocence, for the instrumental form in which reason presently resides leaves none of its consorts unblemished. The postmodern pathology of communication would be debarred from utopia and only wordless signals, freed of indeterminacy and reflexively instantiating disembodied reason could take its place. This is the utopia reason has shown us already: in speechless monasticisms and in the compulsion of transsubjective feeling of the beautiful in Kant. I suggest neither instance recommends itself. Rather than laying the foundation for a millennial kingdom in which rea-

FREDRIC JAMESON

son banishes force, the present moment offers us as the rare prospect of revealing force as itself as but one of a myriad of reason's own guises. We do not know what lines of escape the pathology of our present discursive practices may reveal; even so the reactive path which claims to (re)construct meaning and (re)establish community is all too well-known. After the experience of the 20th Century the unrepresentable cannot hold more terror for us than the known; the unrepresentable has become the salvational.

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Notes

1. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, University of Minnesota, 1984, "Foreword", p. xix.
2. Samuel Weber, "Capitalizing History: Notes on *The Political Unconscious*," in his *Institution and Criticism*, Theory and History of Literature, Vol. 31, (University of Minnesota, 1987).
3. *The Postmodern Condition*, p. 80.
4. Ibid., p. xix.
5. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 75.
6. Ibid., p. 10.
7. Ibid., p. 10.
8. Ibid., p. 74.
9. Ibid., p. 12.
10. Ibid., p. 75.
11. Ibid., p. 19.
12. See Alexander Karanikas' *Tillers of a Myth*, (University of Chicago, 1968), especially Chapter V.
13. Fredric Jameson, "Foreword," *The Postmodern Condition*, p. xv.
14. *The Political Unconscious*, p. 9.
15. Ibid., p. 100.
16. "Capitalizing History," p. 24.
17. *The Political Unconscious*, p. 102.
18. Ibid., p. 102.
19. Ibid., p. 82.
20. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *The New Left Review*, 146, July-August 1984.
21. Ibid., p. 85.

HAYNES HORNE

22. "Postmodernism," p. 86.
23. Ibid., p. 58.
24. Fredric Jameson, "Periodizing the 60s," in *The 60s Without Apology*, p. 179.
25. "Postmodernism," p. 53.
26. "Periodizing the 60s," p. 179.
27. Ibid., p. 179.
28. Fredric Jameson, "Ideology of the Text," in *Salagamundi*, No. 31/32, 1975-6, p. 235.
29. "Periodizing the 60s," p. 180.
30. Ibid., p. 207.
31. Ibid., p. 200.
32. In Benjamin's essay, there seems to be something like a "reine Sprache" toward which all empirical languages move. This inference is justified by his assumption that all languages desire to express the thing.
33. Ibid., p. 197.
34. Ibid., p. 208.