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Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the "National Allegory"

AIJAZ AHMAD

In assembling the following notes on Fredric Jameson's "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capital,"* I find myself in an awkward position. If I were to name the *one* literary critic/theorist writing in the US today whose work I generally hold in the highest regard, it would surely be Fredric Jameson. The plea that generates most of the passion in his text—that the teaching of literature in the US academy be informed by a sense not only of "western" literature but of "world literature"; that the so-called literary canon be based not upon the exclusionary pleasures of dominant taste but upon an inclusive and opulent sense of heterogeneity—is of course entirely salutary. And, I wholly admire the knowledge, the range of sympathies, he brings to the reading of texts produced in distant lands.

Yet this plea for syllabus reform—even his marvelously erudite reading of Lu Xun and Ousmane—is conflated with, indeed superseded by, a much more ambitious undertaking which pervades the entire text but which is explicitly announced only in the last sentence of the last footnote: the construction of "a theory of the cognitive aesthetics of third-world literature." This "cognitive aesthetics" rests, in turn, upon a suppression of the multiplicity of significant difference among and within both the advanced capitalist countries and the imperialised formations. We have, instead, a binary opposition of what Jameson calls the "first" and the "third" worlds. It is in this passage from a plea for syllabus reform to the enunciation of a "cognitive aesthetics" that most of the text's troubles lie. These troubles are, I might add, quite numerous.

There is doubtless a personal, somewhat existential side to my encounter with this text, which is best clarified at the outset. I have been reading Jameson's work now for roughly fifteen years, and at least some of what I know about the literatures and cultures of Western Europe and the US comes from him; and because I am a marxist, I had always thought of us, Jameson and myself, as birds of the same feather even though we never quite flocked together. But, then, when I was on the fifth page of this text (specifically, on the sentence starting with "All third-world texts are necessarily. . ." etc.), I realized that what was being theorised was, among many other things,

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myself. Now, I was born in India and I am a Pakistani citizen; I write poetry in Urdu, a language not commonly understood among US intellectuals. So, I said to myself: “All? . . . necessarily?” It felt odd. Matters got much more curious, however. For, the farther I read the more I realized, with no little chagrin, that the man whom I had for so long, so affectionately, even though from a physical distance, taken as a comrade was, in his own opinion, my civilizational Other. It was not a good feeling.

I

I too think that there *are* plenty of very good books written by African, Asian and Latin American writers which are available in English and which must be taught as an antidote against the general ethnocentricity and cultural myopia of the humanities as they are presently constituted in these United States. If some label is needed for this activity, one may call it “third-world literature.” Conversely, however, I also hold that this phrase, “the third world,” is, even in its most telling deployments, a polemical one, with no theoretical status whatsoever. Polemic surely has a prominent place in all human discourses, especially in the discourse of politics, so the use of this phrase in loose, polemical contexts is altogether permissible. But to lift the phrase from the register of polemics and claim it as a basis for producing theoretical knowledge, which presumes a certain rigor in constructing the objects of one’s knowledge, is to misconstrue not only the phrase itself but even the world to which it refers. I shall argue, therefore, that there is no such thing as a “third-world literature” which can be constructed as an internally coherent object of theoretical knowledge. There are fundamental issues—of periodisation, social and linguistic formations, political and ideological struggles within the field of literary production, and so on—which simply cannot be resolved at this level of generality without an altogether positivist reductionism.

The mere fact, for example, that languages of the metropolitan countries have not been adopted by the vast majority of the producers of literature in Asia and Africa means that the vast majority of literary texts from those continents are unavailable in the metropolises, so that a literary theorist who sets out to formulate “a theory of the cognitive aesthetics of third-world literature” shall be constructing ideal-types, in the Weberian manner, duplicating all the basic procedures which orientalist scholars have historically deployed in presenting their own readings of a certain tradition of “high” textuality as *the* knowledge of a supposedly unitary object which they call “the Islamic civilization.” I might add that literary relations between the metropolitan countries and the imperialised formations are constructed very differently than they are among the metropolitan countries themselves. Rare would be a literary theorist in Europe or the US who does not command a couple of European languages other than his/her own; and the frequency of translation, back and forth, among

European languages creates very fulsome circuits for the circulation of texts, so that even a US scholar who does not command much beyond English can be quite well grounded in the various metropolitan traditions.

Linguistic and literary relations between the metropolitan countries and the countries of Asia and Africa, on the other hand, offer three sharp contrasts to this system. Rare would be a modern intellectual in Asia or Africa who does not know at least one European language; equally rare would be, on the other side, a major literary theorist in Europe or the United States who has ever bothered with an Asian or African language; and the enormous industry of translation which circulates texts among the advanced capitalist countries comes to the most erratic and slowest possible grind when it comes to translation from Asian or African languages. The upshot is that major literary traditions—such as those of Bengali, Hindi, Tamil, Telegu and half a dozen others from India alone—remain, beyond a few texts here and there, virtually unknown to the American literary theorist. Consequently, the few writers who happen to write in English are valorized beyond measure. Witness, for example, the characterization of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* in the *New York Times* as "a Continent finding its voice"—as if one has no voice if one does not speak in English. Or, Richard Poirier's praise for Edward Said in *Raritan Quarterly* which now adorns the back cover of his latest book: "It is Said's great accomplishment that thanks to his book, Palestinians will never be lost to history." This is the upside-down world of the *camera obscura*: not that Said's vision is itself framed by the Palestinian experience but that Palestine would have no place in history without Said's book! The retribution visited upon the head of an Asian, an African, an Arab intellectual who is of any consequence and who writes in English is that he/she is immediately elevated to the lonely splendour of a "representative"—of a race, a continent, a civilization, even the "third world." It is in this general context that a "cognitive theory of third-world literature" based upon what is currently available in languages of the metropolitan countries becomes, to my mind, an alarming undertaking.

I shall return to some of these points presently, especially to the point about the epistemological impossibility of a "third-world literature." Since, however, Jameson's own text is so centrally grounded in a binary opposition between a first and a third world, it is impossible to proceed with an examination of his particular propositions regarding the respective literary traditions without first asking whether or not this characterization of the world is itself theoretically tenable, and whether, therefore, an accurate conception of *literature* can be mapped out on the basis of this binary opposition. I shall argue later that since Jameson defines the so-called third world in terms of its "experience of colonialism and imperialism," the political category that necessarily follows from this exclusive emphasis is that of "the nation," with nationalism as the peculiarly valorized ideology; and, because of this privileging of the nationalist ideology, it is then theoretically posited that "all third-world texts are

necessarily . . . to be read as . . . national allegories.” The theory of the “national allegory” as the metatext is thus inseparable from the larger Three Worlds Theory which permeates the whole of Jameson’s own text. We too have to begin, then, with some comments on “the third world” as a theoretical category and on “nationalism” as the necessary, exclusively desirable ideology.

II

Jameson seems aware of the difficulties in conceptualising the global dispersion of powers and populations in terms of his particular variant of the Three Worlds Theory (“I take the point of criticism,” he says). And, after reiterating the basic premise of that theory (“the capitalist first world”; “the socialist bloc of the second world”; and “countries that have suffered colonialism and imperialism”), he does clarify that he does not uphold the specifically Maoist theory of “convergence” between the United States and the Soviet Union. The rest of the difficulty in holding this view of the world is elided, however, with three assertions: that he cannot find a “comparable expression”; that he is deploying these terms in “an essentially descriptive way”; and that the criticisms are at any rate not “relevant.” The problem of “comparable expression” is a minor matter, which we shall ignore; “relevance,” on the other hand, is the central issue and I shall deal with it presently. First, however, I want to comment briefly on the matter of “description.”

More than most critics writing in the US today, Jameson should know that when it comes to a knowledge of the world, there is no such thing as a category of the “essentially descriptive”; that “description” is never ideologically or cognitively neutral; that to “describe” is to specify a locus of meaning, to construct an object of knowledge, and to produce a knowledge that shall be bound by that act of descriptive construction. “Description” has been central, for example, in the colonial discourse. It was by assembling a monstrous machinery of descriptions—of our bodies, our speech-acts, our habitats, our conflicts and desires, our politics, our socialities and sexualities—in fields as various as ethnology, fiction, photography, linguistics, political science—that the colonial discourse was able to classify and ideologically master the colonial subject, enabling itself to transform the descriptively verifiable multiplicity and difference into the ideologically felt hierarchy of value. To say, in short, that what one is presenting is “essentially descriptive” is to assert a level of facticity which conceals its own ideology and to prepare a ground from which judgments of classification, generalisation and value can be made.

As we get to the substance of what Jameson “describes,” I find it significant that first and second worlds are defined in terms of their production systems (capitalism and socialism, respectively), whereas the third category—the third world—is defined purely in terms of an “experience” of externally inserted phenomena. That which is

constitutive of human history itself is present in the first two cases, absent in the third one. Ideologically, this classification divides the world between those who make history and those who are mere objects of it; elsewhere in the text, Jameson would significantly re-invoke Hegel's famous description of the master/slave relation to encapsulate the first/third world opposition. But analytically, this classification leaves the so-called third world in a limbo; if only the first world is capitalist and the second world socialist, how does one understand the third world? Is it pre-capitalist? Transitional? Transitional between what and what?

But then there is also the issue of the location of particular countries within the various "worlds." Take, for example, India. Its colonial past is nostalgically rehashed on US television screens in copious series every few months, but the India of today has all the characteristics of a capitalist country: generalised commodity production, vigorous and escalating exchanges not only between agriculture and industry but also between Departments I and II of industry itself, technical personnel more numerous than that of France and Germany combined, and a gross industrial product twice as large as that of Britain. It is a very miserable kind of capitalism, and the conditions of life for over half of the Indian population (roughly 400 million people) are considerably worse than what Engels described in *Conditions of the Working Class in England*. But India's steel industry did celebrate its hundredth anniversary a few years ago, and the top eight of her multinational corporations are among the fastest growing in the world, active as they are in numerous countries, from Vietnam to Nigeria. This economic base is combined, then, with unbroken parliamentary rule of the bourgeoisie since independence in 1947, a record quite comparable to the length of Italy's modern record of unbroken bourgeois-democratic governance, and superior to the fate of bourgeois democracy in Spain and Portugal, two of the oldest colonising countries. This parliamentary republic of the bourgeoisie in India has not been without its own lawlessnesses and violences, of a kind and degree now not normal in Japan or Western Europe, but a bourgeois political subjectivity *has* been created for the populace at large. The corollary on the left is that the two communist parties (CPI and CPM) have longer and more extensive experience of regional government, within the republic of the bourgeoisie, than all the eurocommunist parties combined, and the electorate that votes ritually for these two parties is probably larger than the communist electorates in all the rest of the capitalist world.

So, does India belong in the first world or the third? Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, South Africa? And . . .? But we *know* that countries of the Pacific rim, from South Korea to Singapore, constitute the fastest growing region within global capitalism. The list could be much longer, but the point is that the binary opposition which Jameson constructs between a capitalist first world and a presumably pre- or non-capitalist third world is empirically ungrounded.

III

I have said already that if one believes in the Three Worlds Theory, hence in a “third world” defined exclusively in terms of “the experience of colonialism and imperialism,” then the primary ideological formation available to a leftwing intellectual shall be that of nationalism; it will then be possible to assert, surely with very considerable exaggeration but nonetheless, that “all third-world texts are necessarily . . . *national allegories*” (emphases in the original). This exclusive emphasis on the nationalist ideology is there even in the opening paragraph of Jameson’s text where the only choice for the “third world” is said to be between its “nationalisms” and a “global American postmodernist culture.” Is there no other choice? Could not one join the “second world,” for example? There used to be, in the marxist discourse, a thing called socialist and/or communist culture which was neither nationalist nor postmodernist. Has that vanished from our discourse altogether, even as the name of a desire?

Jameson’s haste in totalising historical phenomena in terms of binary oppositions (nationalism/postmodernism, in this case) leaves little room for the fact, for instance, that the only nationalisms in the so-called third world which have been able to resist US cultural pressure and have actually produced any alternatives are the ones which are already articulated to and assimilated within the much larger field of socialist political practice. Virtually all others have had no difficulty in reconciling themselves with what Jameson calls “global American postmodernist culture”; in the singular and sizeable case of Iran (which Jameson forbids us to mention on the grounds that it is “predictable” that we shall do so), the anti-communism of the Islamic nationalists has produced not social regeneration but clerical fascism. Nor does the absolutism of that opposition (postmodernism/nationalism) permit any space for the simple idea that nationalism itself is not some unitary thing with some pre-determined essence and value. There are hundreds of nationalisms in Asia and Africa today; some are progressive, others are not. Whether or not a nationalism will produce a progressive cultural practice depends, to put it in Gramscian terms, upon the political character of the power bloc which takes hold of it and utilises it, as a material force, in the process of constituting its own hegemony. There is neither theoretical ground nor empirical evidence to support the notion that bourgeois nationalisms of the so-called third world will have any difficulty with postmodernism; they *want* it.

Yet, there *is* a very tight fit between the Three Worlds Theory, the over-valorization of the nationalist ideology, and the assertion that “national allegory” is the primary, even exclusive, form of narrativity in the so-called third world. If this “third world” is *constituted* by the singular “experience of colonialism and imperialism,” and if the only possible response is a nationalist one, then what else is there that is

more urgent to narrate than this "experience"; in fact, there is *nothing else* to narrate. For, if societies here are defined not by relations of production but by relations of intra-national domination; if they are forever suspended outside the sphere of conflict between capitalism (first world) and socialism (second world); if the motivating force for history here is neither class formation and class struggle nor the multiplicities of intersecting conflicts based upon class, gender, nation, race, region and so on, but the unitary "experience" of national oppression (if one is merely the *object* of history, the Hegelian slave) then what else *can* one narrate but that national oppression? Politically, we are Calibans, all. Formally, we are fated to be in the poststructuralist world of repetition with difference; the same allegory, the nationalist one, re-written, over and over again, until the end of time: "all third-world texts are necessarily. . ."

IV

But one could start with a radically different premise, namely the proposition that we live not in three worlds but in one; that this world includes the experience of colonialism and imperialism on both sides of Jameson's global divide (the "experience" of imperialism is a central fact of all aspects of life inside the US from ideological formation to the utilisation of the social surplus in military-industrial complexes); that societies in formations of backward capitalism are as much constituted by the division of classes as are societies in the advanced capitalist countries; that socialism is not restricted to something called the second world but is simply the name of a resistance that saturates the globe today, as capitalism itself does; that the different parts of the capitalist system are to be known not in terms of a binary opposition but as a contradictory unity, with differences, yes, but also with profound overlaps. One immediate consequence for literary theory would be that the unitary search for "a theory of cognitive aesthetics for third-world literature" would be rendered impossible, and one would have to forego the idea of a meta-narrative that encompasses all the fecundity of real narratives in the so-called third world. Conversely, many of the questions that one would ask about, let us say, Urdu or Bengali traditions of literature may turn out to be rather similar to the questions one has asked previously about English/American literatures. By the same token, a *real* knowledge of those other traditions may force US literary theorists to ask questions about their own tradition which they have heretofore not asked.

Jameson claims that one cannot proceed from the premise of a real unity of the world "without falling back into some general liberal and humanistic universalism." That is a curious idea, coming from a marxist. One should have thought that the world was united not by liberalist ideology—that the world was not at all constituted in the realm of an Idea, be it Hegelian or humanist—but by the global operation of a

single mode of production, namely the capitalist one, and the global resistance to this mode, a resistance which is itself unevenly developed in different parts of the globe. Socialism, one should have thought, was not by any means limited to the so-called second world (the socialist countries) but a global phenomenon, reaching into the farthest rural communities in Asia, Africa and Latin America, not to speak of individuals and groups within the United States. What gives the world its unity, then, is not a humanist ideology but the ferocious struggle of capital and labor which is now strictly and fundamentally global in character. The prospect of a socialist revolution has receded so much from the practical horizon of so much of the metropolitan left that the temptation for the US left intelligentsia is to forget the ferocity of that basic struggle which in our time transcends all others. The advantage of coming from Pakistan, in my own case, is that the country is saturated with capitalist commodities, bristles with US weaponry, borders on China, the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, suffers from a proliferation of competing nationalisms, and is currently witnessing the first stage in the consolidation of the communist movement. It is difficult, coming from there, to forget that primary motion of history which gives to our globe its contradictory unity: a notion that has nothing to do with liberal humanism.

As for the specificity of cultural difference, Jameson's theoretical conception tends, I believe, in the opposite direction, namely, that of homogenisation. Difference between the first world and the third is absolutised as an Otherness, but the enormous cultural heterogeneity of social formations within the so-called third world is submerged within a singular identity of "experience." Now, countries of Western Europe and North America have been deeply tied together over roughly the last two hundred years; capitalism itself is so much older in these countries; the cultural logic of late capitalism is so strongly operative in these metropolitan formations; the circulation of cultural products among them is so immediate, so extensive, so brisk that one could sensibly speak of a certain cultural homogeneity among them. But Asia, Africa, and Latin America? Historically, these countries were never so closely tied together; Peru and India simply do not have a common history of the sort that Germany and France, or Britain and the United States, have; not even the singular "experience of colonialism and imperialism" has been in specific ways same or similar in, say, India and Namibia. These various countries, from the three continents, have been assimilated into the global structure of capitalism not as a single cultural ensemble but highly differentially, each establishing its own circuits of (unequal) exchange with the metropolis, each acquiring its own very distinct class formations. Circuits of exchange among them are rudimentary at best; an average Nigerian who is literate about his own country would know infinitely more about England and the United States than about any country of Asia or Latin America or indeed about most countries of Africa. The kind of circuits that bind the cultural complexes of the advanced capitalist

countries simply do not exist among countries of backward capitalism, and capitalism itself, which is dominant but not altogether universalised, does not yet have the same power of homogenisation in its cultural logic in most of these countries, except among the urban bourgeoisie.

Of course, great cultural similarities also exist among countries that occupy analogous positions in the global capitalist system, and there are similarities in many cases that have been bequeathed by the similarities of socio-economic structures in the pre-capitalist past. The point is not to construct a typology that is simply the obverse of Jameson's, but rather to define the material basis for a fair degree of cultural homogenisation among the advanced capitalist countries and the lack of that kind of homogenisation in the rest of the capitalist world. In context, therefore, one is doubly surprised at Jameson's absolute insistence upon difference and the relation of otherness between the first world and the third, and his equally insistent idea that the "experience" of the "third world" could be contained and communicated within a single narrative form.

By locating capitalism in the first world and socialism in the second, Jameson's theory freezes and de-historicises the global space within which struggles between these great motivating forces actually take place. And, by assimilating the enormous heterogeneities and productivities of our life into a single Hegelian metaphor of the master/slave relation, this theory reduces us to an ideal-type and demands from us that we narrate ourselves through a form commensurate with that ideal-type. To say that all third-world texts are necessarily this or that is to say, in effect, that any text originating within that social space which is *not* this or that is not a "true" narrative. It is in this sense above all, that the category of "third-world literature" which is the site of this operation, with the "national allegory" as its metatext as well as the mark of its constitution and difference, is, to my mind, epistemologically an impossible category.

V

Part of the difficulty in engaging Jameson's text is that there is a constant slip-page, a recurrent inflation, in the way he handles the categories of his analysis. The specificity of the first world, for example, seems at times to be predicated upon the postmodernist moment, which is doubtless of recent origin, but at other times it appears to be a matter of the capitalist mode of production, which is a much larger, much older thing; and, in yet another range of formulations, this first world is said to be coterminous with "western civilization" itself, obviously a rather primordial way of being, dating back to antiquity ("Graeco-Judaic," in Jameson's phrase) and anterior to any structuration of productions and classes as we know them today. *When* did this first world become first, in the pre-Christian centuries, or after World War II?

And, at what point in history does a text produced in countries with “experience of colonialism and imperialism” become a *third-world text*? In one kind of reading, only texts produced *after* the advent of colonialism could be so designated, since it is colonialism/imperialism which constitutes the third world as such. But, in speaking constantly of “the west’s other”; in referring to the tribal/tributary and the Asiatic modes as the theoretical basis for his selection of Lu Xun (Asian) and Sembene (African) respectively; in characterising Freud’s theory as a “western or first-world reading” as contrasted with ten centuries of specifically Chinese distributions of the libidinal energy which are said to frame Lu Xun’s texts—in deploying these broad epochal and civilizational categories, Jameson suggests also that the difference between the first world and the third is itself primordial, rooted in things far older than capitalism as such. If, then, the first world is the same as “the west” and the “Graeco-Judaic,” one has an alarming feeling that the *Bhagvad Geeta*, the edicts of Manu, and the Quran itself are perhaps third-world texts (though the Judaic elements of the Quran are quite beyond doubt, and much of the ancient art in what is today Pakistan is itself Graeco-Indic).

But there is also the question of *space*. Do all texts produced in countries with “experience of colonialism and imperialism” become, by virtue of geographical origin, third-world texts? Jameson speaks so often of “*all*” third-world texts, insists so much on a singular form of narrativity for third-world literature, that not to take him literally is to violate the very terms of his discourse. Yet, one knows of so many texts from one’s own part of the world which do not fit the description of “national allegory” that one wonders why Jameson insists so much on the category “*all*.” Without this category, of course, he cannot produce *a* theory of third-world literature. But is it also the case that he means the opposite of what he actually says: not that “all third-world texts are to be read . . . as national allegories” but that *only* those texts which give us national allegories can be admitted as authentic texts of third-world literature, while the rest are excluded by definition? Hence, one is not quite sure whether one is dealing with a fallacy (“all third-world texts are” this or that) or with the Law of the Father (you must write *this* if you are to be admitted into my theory).

These shifts and hesitations in defining the objects of one’s knowledge are based, I believe, on several confusions, one of which I shall specify here. For, if one argues that the third world is constituted by the “experience of colonialism and imperialism,” one must also recognise the two-pronged action of the colonial/imperialist dynamic: the forced transfers of value *from* the colonialisised/imperialised formations, and the intensification of capitalist relations *within* those formations. And if capitalism is not merely an externality but also a shaping force within those formations, then one must conclude also that the separation between the public and the private, so characteristic of capitalism, has occurred there as well, at least in some

degree and especially among the urban intelligentsia which produces most of the written texts and which is itself caught in the world of capitalist commodities. With this bifurcation must have come, at least for some of the producers of texts, the individuation and personalisation of libidinal energies, the loss of access to "concrete" experience, and the consequent experience of self as isolated, alienated entity incapable of real, organic connection with any collectivity. There must be texts, perhaps numerous texts, that are grounded in this desolation, bereft of any capacity for the kind of allegorisation and organicity that Jameson demands of them. The logic of Jameson's own argument (i.e., that the third world is constituted by "experience of colonialism and imperialism") leads necessarily to the conclusion that at least some of the writers of the third world itself must be producing texts characteristic not of the so-called tribal and Asiatic modes but of the capitalist era as such, much in the manner of the so-called first world. But Jameson does not draw that conclusion.

He does not draw that conclusion at least partially because this so-called third world is to him suspended outside the modern systems of production (capitalism and socialism). He does not quite say that the third world is pre- or non-capitalist, but that is clearly the implication of the contrast he establishes, as for example in the following formulation:

. . . one of the determinants of capitalist culture, that is, the culture of the western realist and modernist novel, is a radical split between the private and the public, between the poetic and the political, between what we have come to think of as the domain of sexuality and the unconscious and that of the public world of classes, of the economic, and of secular political power: in other words, Freud versus Marx

I will argue that, although we may retain for convenience and for analysis such categories as the subjective and the public or political, the relations between them are wholly different in third-world culture.

It is noteworthy that "the radical split between the private and the public" is distinctly located in the capitalist mode here, but the *absence* of this split in so-called third-world culture is not located in any mode of production—in keeping with Jameson's very definition of the Three Worlds. But Jameson knows what he is talking about, and his statements have been less ambiguous in the past. Thus, we find the following in his relatively early essay on Lukács:

In the art works of a preindustrialized, agricultural or tribal society, the artist's raw material is on a human scale, it has an immediate meaning. . . . The story needs no background in time because the culture knows no history; each generation repeats the same experiences, reinvents the same basic human situations as though for the first time. . . . The works of art characteristic of such societies may be called concrete

in that their elements are all meaningful from the outset . . . in the language of Hegel, this raw material needs no *mediation*.

When we turn from such a work to the literature of the industrial era, everything changes . . . a kind of dissolution of the human sets in. . . . For the unquestioned ritualistic time of village life no longer exists; there is henceforth a separation between public and private . . . (*Marxism And Form*, pp. 165–67.)

Clearly, then, what was once theorised as a difference between the pre-industrial and the industrialized societies (the unity of the public and the private in one, the separation of the two in the other) is now transposed as a difference between the first and third worlds. The idea of the “concrete” is now rendered in only slightly different vocabulary: “third-world culture . . . must be situational and materialist despite itself.” And it is perhaps that other idea—namely that “preindustrialized . . . culture knows no history; each generation repeats the same experience”—which is at the root of now suspending the so-called third world outside the modern modes of production (capitalism and socialism), encapsulating the experience of this third world in the Hegelian metaphor of the master/slave relation, and postulating a unitary form of narrativity (the national allegory) in which the “experience” of this third world is to be told. In both texts, the theoretical authority that is invoked is, predictably, that of Hegel.

Likewise, Jameson insists over and over again that the *national* experience is central to the cognitive formation of the third-world intellectual and that the narrativity of that experience takes the form exclusively of a “national allegory,” but this emphatic insistence on the category “nation” itself keeps slipping into a much wider, far less demarcated vocabulary of “culture,” “society,” “collectivity” and so on. Are “nation” and “collectivity” the same thing? Take, for example, the two statements which seem to enclose the elaboration of the theory itself. In the beginning we are told:

All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*, even when, or perhaps I should say, particularly when their forms develop out of predominantly western machineries of representation, such as the novel.

But at the end we find the following:

. . . the telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately involve the whole laborious telling of the experience of the collectivity itself.

Are these two statements saying the same thing? The difficulty of this shift in vocabulary is that one may indeed connect one's personal experience to a "collectivity"—in terms of class, gender, caste, religious community, trade union, political party, village, prison—combining the private and the public, and in some sense "allegorizing" the individual experience, without involving the category of "the nation" or necessarily referring back to the "experience of colonialism and imperialism." The latter statement would then seem to apply to a much larger body of texts, with far greater accuracy. By the same token, however, this wider application of "collectivity" establishes much less radical difference between the so-called first and third worlds, since the whole history of realism in the European novel, in its many variants, has been associated with ideas of "typicality" and "the social," while the majority of the written narratives produced in the first world even today locate the individual story in a fundamental relation to some larger experience.

If we replace the idea of the nation with that larger, less restricting idea of collectivity, and if we start thinking of the process of allegorisation not in nationalistic terms but simply as a relation between private and public, personal and communal, then it also becomes possible to see that allegorisation is by no means specific to the so-called third world. While Jameson overstates the presence of "us," the "national allegory," in the narratives of the third world, he also, in the same sweep, understates the presence of analogous impulses in US cultural ensembles. For, what else are, let us say, Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* or Ellison's *The Invisible Man* but allegorisations of individual—and not so individual—experience? What else could Richard Wright and Adrienne Rich and Richard Howard mean when they give to their books titles like *Native Son* or *Your Native Land, Your Life* or *Alone With America*? It is not only the Asian or the African but also the American writer whose private imaginations must *necessarily* connect with experiences of the collectivity. One has only to look at black and feminist writing to find countless allegories even within these postmodernist United States.

VI

I also have some difficulty with Jameson's description of "third-world literature" as "non-canonical," for I am not quite sure what that *means*. Since the vast majority of literary texts produced in Asia, Africa and Latin America are simply not available in English, their exclusion from the US/British "canon" is self-evident. If, however, one considers the kind of texts Jameson seems to have in mind, one begins to wonder just what mechanisms of canonisation there *are* from which this body of work is so entirely excluded.

Neruda, Vallejo, Octavio Paz, Borges, Fuentes, Marquez *et al.* (i.e., quite a few

writers of Latin American origin) *are* considered by the American academy as major figures in modern literature. They, and even their translators, have received the most prestigious awards (the Nobel for Marquez, for instance, or the National Book Award for Eshleman's translation of Vallejo) and they get *taught* quite as routinely in literature courses as their German or Italian contemporaries might be, perhaps more regularly in fact. Soyinka was recently canonised through the Nobel Prize and Achebe's novels are consistently more easily available in the US book market than are, for example, Richard Wright's. Edward Said, a man of Palestinian origin, has had virtually every honor the US academy has to offer, with distinct constituencies of his own; *Orientalism*, at least, gets taught widely, across several disciplines—more widely, it seems, than the work of any other leftwing literary/cultural critic in this country. V.S. Naipaul is now fully established as a major English novelist, and he does come from the Caribbean; he *is*, like Borges, a “third-world writer.” Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* was awarded the most prestigious literary award in England and *Shame* was immediately reviewed as a major novel, almost always favorably, in virtually all the major newspapers and literary journals in Britain and the US. He is a major presence on the British cultural scene and a prized visitor to conferences and graduate departments on both sides of the Atlantic. The blurbs on the Vintage paperback edition of *Shame*—based partly on a quotation from the *New York Times*—compare him with Swift, Voltaire, Stern, Kafka, Grass, Kundera and Marquez. I am told that a PhD dissertation has been written about him at Columbia already. What else *is* canonisation, when it comes to modern, contemporary, and in some cases (Rushdie, for example) relatively young writers?

My argument is not that these reputations are not well-deserved (Naipaul is of course a different matter), nor that there should not be *more* such canonisations. But the representation of this body of work in Jameson's discourse as simply “non-canonical” (i.e., as something that has been altogether excluded from the contemporary practices of high textuality in the US academy) does appear to over-state the case considerably.

Jameson later speaks of “non-canonical forms of literature such as that of the third world,” compares this singularized *form* to “another non-canonical form” in which Dashiell Hammett is placed, and then goes on to say:

Nothing is to be gained by passing over in silence the radical difference of non-canonical texts. The third-world novel will not offer the satisfactions of Proust or Joyce; what is more damaging than that, perhaps, is its tendency to remind us of outmoded stages of our own first-world cultural development and to cause us to conclude that “they are still writing novels like Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson.”

Now, I am not sure that realism, which appears to be at the heart of Jameson's characterization of “third-world literature” in this passage, is quite as universal in

that literature or quite as definitively superseded in what Jameson calls "first-world cultural development." Some of the most highly regarded US fictionists of the present cultural moment, from Bellow and Malamud to Grace Paley and Robert Stone, seem to write not quite "like Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson" but surely within the realist mode. On the other hand, Césaire became so popular among the French surrealists because the terms of his discourse were contemporaneous with their own, and Neruda has been translated by some of the leading poets of the US because he is even formally not "outmoded." Novelists like Marquez or Rushdie have been so well received in the US/British literary circles precisely because they do not write like Dreiser or Sherwood Anderson; the satisfactions of their outrageous texts are not those of Proust or Joyce but are surely of an analogous kind, delightful to readers brought up on modernism and postmodernism. Césaire's *Return to the Native Land* is what it is because it combines what Jameson calls a "national allegory" with the formal methods of the Parisian avant-garde of his student days. Borges is of course not seen in the US any longer in terms of his Latin American origin; he now belongs to the august company of the significant moderns, much like Kafka.

To say that the canon simply does not admit any third-world writers is to misrepresent the way bourgeois culture works, i.e., through selective admission and selective canonisation. Just as modernism has now been fully canonised in the museum and the university, and as certain kinds of marxism have been incorporated and given respectability within the academy, certain writers from the "third world" are also now part and parcel of the literary discourse in the US. Instead of claiming straightforward exclusion, it is perhaps more useful to inquire as to how the principle of selective incorporation works in relation to texts produced outside the metropolitan countries.

VII

I want to offer some comments on the history of Urdu literature, not in the form of a cogent narrative, less still to formulate a short course in that history, but simply to illustrate the kind of impoverishment that is involved in the *a priori* declaration that "all third-world texts are necessarily . . . to be read as national allegories."

It is, for example, a matter of some considerable curiosity to me that the Urdu language, although one of the youngest linguistic formations in India, had nevertheless produced its first great poet, Khusrow, in the 13th century, so that a great tradition of poetry got going, but then it waited roughly six centuries before beginning to assemble the first sizeable body of prose narratives. Not that prose itself had not been there; the earliest prose texts in Urdu date back to the 8th century, but those were written for religious purposes and were often mere translations from Arabic or Farsi. Non-seminarian and non-theological narratives—the ones that had to do with

the pleasures of reading and the etiquettes of civility—began appearing much, much later, in the last decade of the 18th century. Then, over two dozen of them got published during the next ten years. What inhibited that development for so long, and why did it happen precisely at that time? Much of that has to do with complex social developments that had gradually led to the displacement of Farsi by Urdu as the language of educated, urban speech and of prose writing in certain regions of Northern India.

That history we shall ignore, but a certain material condition of that production can be specified: many, though by no means all, of those prose narratives of the 1810s got written and published for the simple reason that a certain Scotsman, John Gilchrist, had argued within his own circles that employees of the East India Company could not hope to administer their Indian possessions on the basis of Persian alone, and certainly not English, so that Fort William College was established in 1800 for the education of the British in Indian languages, mainly in Urdu of which Gilchrist was a scholar and exponent. He hired some of the most erudite men of his time and got them to write whatever they wanted, so long as they wrote in accessible prose. It was a stroke of genius, for what came out of that enterprise was the mobilisation of the whole range of vocabularies existing at that time—the *range* of vocabularies were in keeping with the pedagogical purpose—and the construction of narratives which either transcribed the great classics of oral literature or condensed the fictions that already existed in Arabic or Farsi and were therefore part of the cultural life of the North Indian upper classes. Thus, the most famous of these narratives, Meer Amman's *Bagh-o-Bahar*, was a condensation, in superbly colloquial Urdu, of the monumental *Qissa-e-Chahar Dervish*, which Faizi, the great scholar, had composed some centuries earlier in Farsi, for the amusement of Akbar, the Mughal king who was almost an exact contemporary of the British Queen, Elizabeth.

But that was not the only impulse and the publishing house of Fort William College was in any case closed within a decade. A similar development was occurring in Lucknow, outside the British domains, at exactly the same time; some of the Fort William writers had themselves come from Lucknow, looking for alternative employment. Rajab Ali Beg Saroor's *Fasana-e-A'jaib* is the great classic of this other tradition of Urdu narrativity (these were actually not two different traditions but parts of the same, some of which got formed in the British domains, some not). In 1848, eight years before it fell to British guns, the city of Lucknow had twelve printing presses, and the consolidation of the narrative tradition in Urdu was inseparable from the history of those presses. The remarkable thing about all the major Urdu prose narratives which were written during the half century in which the British completed their conquest of India is that there is nothing in their contents, in their way of seeing the world, which can be reasonably connected with the colonial onslaught or with any sense of resistance to it. By contrast, there is a large body of *letters* and even of

poetry which documents that colossal carnage. It is as if the establishment of printing presses and the growth of a reading public for prose narratives gave rise to a kind of writing whose only task was to preserve in books at least some of that Persianized culture and those traditions of orality which were fast disappearing. It is only in this negative sense that one could, by stretching the terms a great deal, declare this to be a literature of the "national allegory."

The man, Pandit Naval Kishore, who gave to the language its first great publishing house, came somewhat later, however. His grandfather had been employed, like many upper caste Hindus of the time, in the Mughal ministry of finance; his own father was a businessman, genteel and affluent but not rich. Naval Kishore himself had a passion for the written word; but like his father and grandfather, he also understood money. He started his career as a journalist, then went on to purchasing old hand-written manuscripts and publishing them for wider circulation. Over time, he expanded into all sorts of fields, all connected with publishing, and gave to Urdu its first great modern archive of published books. Urdu, in turn, showered him with money; at the time of his death in 1895, his fortune was estimated at one crore rupees (roughly a hundred million British pounds). He *had* to publish, I might add, more than national allegories, more than what came out of the experience of colonialism and imperialism, to make that kind of money.

But let me return to the issue of narration. It is a matter of some interest that the emergence of what one could plausibly call a novel came more than half a century *after* the appearance of those early registrations of the classics of the oral tradition and the re-writing of Arabic and Farsi stories. Sarshar's *Fasana-e-Azad*, the most opulent of those early novels, was serialised during the 1870s in something else that had begun emerging in the 1830s: regular Urdu newspapers for the emergent middle classes. Between the traditional tale and the modern novel, then, there were other things, such as newspapers and sizeable reading publics, much in the same way as one encounters them in a whole range of books on English literary history, from Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* to Lennard J. Davis' more recent *Factual Fictions*. And I have often wondered, as others have sometimes wondered about Dickens, if the structure of Sarshar's novel might not have been very different had it been written not for serialisation but for direct publication as a book.

Those other books, independent of newspapers, came too. One very prolific writer, whose name as it appears on the covers of his books is itself a curiosity, was Shams-ul-Ulema Deputy Nazir Ahmed (1831–1912). The name was actually Nazir Ahmed; "Shams-ul-Ulema" literally means a Sun among the scholars of Islam and indicates his distinguished scholarship in that area; "Deputy" simply refers to the fact that he had no independent income and had joined the Colonial Revenue Service. His training in Arabic was rigorous and immaculate; his knowledge of English was spotty, since he had had no formal training in it. He was a prolific translator, of

everything: the Indian Penal Code, the Indian Law of Evidence, the Quran, books of astronomy. He is known above all as a novelist, however, and he had one anxiety above all others: that girls should get modern education (in which he represented the emergent urban bourgeoisie) and that they nevertheless remain good, traditional housewives (a sentiment that was quite widespread, across all social boundaries). It was this anxiety that governed most of his fictions.

It is possible to argue, I think, that the formative phase of the Urdu novel and the narratives that arose alongside that novel, in the latter part of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th, had to do much less with the experience of colonialism and imperialism as such and much more with two other kinds of pressures and themes: (a) the emergence of a new kind of petty bourgeois who was violating all established social norms for his own pecuniary ends (Nazir Ahmed's own *Ibn-ul-Vaqt*—"Time-Server," in rough English approximation—is a classic of that genre); and (b) the status of women. Nazir Ahmed of course took conservative positions on both these themes and was prolific on the latter. But there were others as well. Rashid-ul-Khairi, for example, established a very successful publishing house, the Asmat Book Depot, which published hundreds of books for women and children, as well as the five journals that came into my family over two generations: *Asmat*, *Khatoon-e-Mashriq*, *Jauhar-e-Nisvan*, *Banat*, and *Nau-Nehal*. English approximations for the latter four titles are easier to provide: "Woman of the East," "Essence of Womanhood," "Girls" (or "Daughters"), and "Children." But the first of these titles, *Asmat*, is harder to render in English, for the Urdu usage of this word has many connotations, from virginity to honor to propriety, in a verbal condensation which expresses inter-related preoccupations. That these journals came regularly into my family for roughly forty years is itself significant, for mine was not, in metropolitan terms, an educated family; we lived in a small village, far from the big urban centers, and I was the first member of this family to finish high school or drive an automobile. That two generations of women and children in such a family would be part of the regular readership of such journals shows the social reach of this kind of publishing. Much literature, in short, revolved around the issues of femininity and propriety, in a very conservative sort of way.

But then there were other writers as well, such as Meer Hadi Hassan Rusva who challenged the dominant discourse and wrote his famous *Umrao Jan Ada* about those women for whom Urdu has many words, the most colorful of which can be rendered as "women of the upper chamber": women to whom men of property in certain social milieux used to go for instruction in erotic play, genteel manner, literary taste, and knowledge of music. The scandal of Rusva's early 20th-century text is its proposition that since such a woman depends upon no one man, and because many men depend on her, she is the only relatively free woman in our society. He obviously did not like Nazir Ahmed's work, but I must also emphasize that the ironic and incipient

"feminism" of this text is not a reflection of any westernisation. Rusva was a very traditional man and was simply tired of certain kinds of moral posturing. Meanwhile, the idea that familial repressions in our traditional society were so great that the only women who had any sort of freedom to make fundamental choices for themselves were the ones who had no "proper" place in that society—that subversive idea was to re-appear in all kinds of ways when the next major break came in the forms of Urdu narrativity, in the 1930s, under the banner not of nationalism but of the Progressive Writers Union which was a cultural front of the Communist Party of India and had come into being directly as a result of the united front policy of the comintern after 1935.

Critical realism became the fundamental form of narrativity thereafter, for roughly two decades. "Nation" was certainly a category used in this narrative, especially in the non-fictional narrative, and there was an explicit sense of sociality and collectivity, but the categories that one deployed for that sense of collectivity were complex and several, for what critical realism demanded was that a critique of others (anti-colonialism) be conducted in the perspective of an even more comprehensive, multi-faceted critique of ourselves: our class structures, our familial ideologies, our management of bodies and sexualities, our idealisms, our silences. I cannot think of a single novel in Urdu between 1935 and 1947, the crucial year leading up to de-colonisation, which is in any direct or exclusive way about "the experience of colonialism and imperialism." All the novels that I know from that period are predominantly about other things: the barbarity of feudal landowners, the rapes and murders in the houses of religious "mystics," the stranglehold of moneylenders upon the lives of peasants and the lower petty bourgeoisie, the social and sexual frustrations of school-going girls, and so on. The theme of anti-colonialism is woven into many of those novels but never in an exclusive or even dominant emphasis. In fact, I do not know of *any* fictional narrative in Urdu, in the last roughly two hundred years, which is of any significance and any length (I am making an exception for a few short stories here) and in which the issue of colonialism or the difficulty of a civilizational encounter between the English and the Indian has the same primacy as, for example, in Forster's *A Passage To India* or Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet*. The typical Urdu writer has had a peculiar vision, in which he/she has never been able to construct fixed boundaries between the criminalities of the colonialist and the brutalities of all those indigenous people who have had power in our own society. We have had our own hysterias here and there, far too many in fact, but there has never been a sustained, powerful myth of a primal innocence, when it comes to the colonial encounter.

The "nation" indeed became the primary ideological problematic in Urdu literature at the moment of independence, for our independence too was peculiar: it came together with the partition of our country, the biggest and possibly the most miserable migration in human history, the biggest bloodbath in the memory of the sub-

continent: the gigantic fratricide conducted by Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communalists. Our “nationalism” at this juncture was a nationalism of mourning, a form of valediction, for what we witnessed was not just the British policy of divide and rule, which surely was there, but our own willingness to break up our civilizational unity, to kill our neighbors, to forego that civic ethos, that moral bond with each other, without which human community is impossible. A critique of others (anti-colonial nationalism) receded even further into the background, entirely overtaken now by an even harsher critique of ourselves. The major fictions of the 50s and 60s—the shorter fictions of Manto, Bedi, Intezar Hussein; the novels of Qurrat ul Ain, Khadija Mastoor, Abdullah Hussein—came out of that refusal to forgive what we ourselves had done and were still doing, in one way or another, to our own polity. There was no quarter given to the colonialist; but there was none for ourselves either. One *could* speak, in a general sort of way, of “the nation” in this context, but not of “nationalism.” In Pakistan, of course, there was another, overriding doubt: were we a nation at all? Most of the leftwing, I am sure, said No.

VIII

Finally, I also have some difficulty with the way Jameson seems to understand the epistemological status of the dialectic. For, what seems to lie at the heart of all the analytic procedures in his text is a search for, the notion that there *is*, a unitary determination which can be identified, in its splendid isolation, as the source of all narrativity: the proposition that the “third world” is a *singular* formation, possessing its own unique, unitary force of determination in the sphere of ideology (nationalism) and cultural production (the national allegory).

Within a postmodernist intellectual milieu where texts are to be read as the utterly free, altogether hedonistic plays of the signifier, I can well empathise with a theoretical operation that seeks to locate the production of texts within a determinate, knowable field of power and signification. But the idea of a *unitary* determination is in its *origins* a pre-marxist idea. I hasten to add that this idea is surely present in a number of Marx’s own formulations as well as in a number of very honorable, highly productive theoretical formations that have followed, in one way or another, in Marx’s footsteps. It is to be seen in action, for example, even in so recent a debate as the one that followed the famous Dobb-Sweezy exchange and which came to be focused on the search for a “prime mover” (the issue of a unitary determination in the rise of the capitalist mode of production in Western Europe). So, when Jameson implicitly invokes this particular understanding of the dialectic, he is in distinguished company indeed.

But there is, I believe, a considerable space where one could take one’s stand between (a) the postmodernist cult of utter non-determinacy and (b) the idea of a

unitary determination which has lasted from Hegel up to some of the most modern of the marxist debates. For, the main thrust of the marxist dialectic, as I understand it, is comprised of a *tension* (a mutually transformative relation) between the problematic of a final determination (of the ideational content by the life-process of material labor, for example) and the utter historicity of multiple, interpenetrating determinations, so that, in Engels' words, the "outcome" of any particular history hardly ever corresponds to the "will" of *any* of those historical agents who struggle over that outcome. Thus, for example, I have said that what constitutes the unity of the world is the global operation of the capitalist mode of production and the resistance to that mode which is ultimately socialist in character. But this constitutive fact does not operate in the same way in all the countries of Asia and Africa. In Namibia, the imposition of the capitalist mode takes a directly colonial form, whereas the central fact in India is the existence of stable and widespread classes of capitalist society within a post-colonial bourgeois polity; in Vietnam, which has already entered a post-capitalist phase, albeit in a context of extreme devastation of the productive forces, the character of this constitutive dialectic is again entirely different. So, while the problematic of a "final determination" is surely active in each case it is constituted differently in different cases, and literary production must, on the whole, reflect that difference.

What further complicates this dialectic of the social and the literary is that most literary productions, whether of the "first world" or of the "third," are not always available for that kind of direct and unitary determination by any one factor, no matter how central that factor is in constituting the social formation as a whole. Literary texts are produced in highly differentiated, usually very over-determined contexts of competing ideological and cultural clusters, so that any particular text of any complexity shall always have to be placed within the cluster that gives it its energy and form, before it is totalised into a universal category. This fact of over-determination does not mean that individual texts merely float in the air, or that "totality" as such is an impossible cognitive category. But in any comprehension of totality, one would always have to specify and historicize the determinations which constitute any given field; with sufficient knowledge of the field, it *is* normally possible to specify the principal ideological formations and narrative forms. What is not possible is to operate with the few texts that become available in the metropolitan languages and then to posit a complete singularization and transparency in the process of determinacy, so that all ideological complexity is reduced to a single ideological formation and all narratives are read as local expressions of a metatext. If one does that, one shall produce not the knowledge of a totality, which I too take to be a fundamental cognitive category, but an idealization, either of the Hegelian or of the positivist kind.

What I mean by multiple determinations at work in any text of considerable

complexity can be specified, I believe, by looking briefly at the problem of the cultural location of Jameson's own text. This is, ostensibly, a first-world text; Jameson is a US intellectual and identifies himself as such. But he is a US intellectual of a certain kind; not everyone is able to juxtapose Ousmane and Deleuze so comfortably, so well; and he debunks the "global American culture of postmodernism" which he says is *the* culture of his country. His theoretical framework, moreover, is marxist, his political identification socialist—which would seem to place this text in the second world. But the particular energy of his text—its thematics, its relation with those other texts which give it its meaning, the very narrative upon which his "theory of cognitive aesthetics" rests—takes him deep into the third world, valorizing it, asserting it, filiating himself with it, as against the politically dominant and determinant of his own country. Where do I, who do not believe in the Three Worlds Theory, in which *world* should I place his text: the first world of his origin, the second world of his ideology and politics, or the third world of his filiation and sympathy? And, if "all third-world texts are necessarily" this or that, how is it that his own text escapes an exclusive location in the first world? I—being who I am—shall place it *primarily* in the global culture of socialism (Jameson's second world—my name for a global resistance) and I shall do so not by suppressing the rest (his US origins, his third world sympathies) but by identifying that which has been central to all his theoretical undertakings for many years.

These obviously are not the only determinations at work in Jameson's text. I shall mention only two others, both of which are indicated by his silences. His is, among other things, a *gendered* text. For, it is inconceivable to me that *this* text could have been written by a US *woman* without some considerable statement, probably a full-length discussion, of the fact that the bifurcation of the public and the private, and the necessity to re-constitute that relation where it has been broken, which is so central to Jameson's discussion of the opposition between first-world and third-world cultural practices, is indeed a major preoccupation of first-world women writers today, on both sides of the Atlantic. And, Jameson's text is determined also by a certain *racial* milieu. For, it is equally inconceivable to me that *this* text could have been written by a *black* writer in the US who would not also insist that black literature of this country possesses this unique third-world characteristic that it is replete with national allegories (more replete, I personally believe, than is Urdu literature).

I point out the above for three reasons. One is to strengthen my proposition that the ideological conditions of a text's production are never singular but always several. Second, even if I were to accept Jameson's division of the globe into three worlds, I would still have to insist, as my references not only to feminism and black literature but to Jameson's own location would indicate, that there is right here, within the belly of the first world's global postmodernism, a veritable third world, perhaps two or

three of them. Third, I want to insist that within the unity that has been bestowed upon our globe by the irreconcilable struggle of capital and labour, there are increasingly those texts which cannot be easily placed within this or that world. Jameson's is not a first-world text, mine is not a third-world text. We are not each other's civilizational Others.