

Mediations

Journal of the Marxist Literary Group



Volume 29, Number 1, Fall 2015 • **Marxism Refracted**

James Christie. "Jameson among the Contras: Third-World Culture, Neoliberal Globalization, and the Latin American Connection." *Mediations* 29.1 (Fall 2015) 43-67. www.mediationsjournal.org/articles/jameson-contras

Jameson Among the Contras: Third-World Culture, Neoliberal Globalization, and the Latin American Connection

James Christie

In the years since it emerged as a major theme of his work in the mid-1980s, Fredric Jameson's theoretical engagement with third-world cultural production has clearly been subject to a substantial and singularly convoluted critical reception. It is a long time since Aijaz Ahmad's postcolonialist critique of "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," based on the now well-known accusations of over-generalization, reductionism, and a generally complacent orientalism, began to look out-dated, and the period dominated by the distrust and strategic disapproval towards Jameson which it initiated to wane.¹ The exhaustion of this period was then confirmed by the emergence of a subsequent wave of criticism, marked by a number of fine essays mostly published in a flurry of revisionist readings in the early to mid-2000s which offered a dynamic reframing of Jameson's position. Interventions by critics including Imre Szeman, Neil Lazarus, Ian Buchanan, Julie McGonegal, and Marjorie Levinson collectively modernized the reading of Jameson's conception of third-world culture, moving beyond the Ahmad paradigm and thereby opening up a new range of interpretive dimensions and opportunities within it.²

A central theme introduced in these re-readings was the historicity of the receptive narrative produced around Jameson's essay. It is consistently asserted that earlier controversies can in retrospect be defined as an extended metacommentary, revealing as much about the situation of postcolonial criticism in that particular point in time as about the objective content of Jameson's thinking.³ Szeman and Buchanan in particular then extend this to its logical conclusion, claiming in a highly self-reflexive move that the contemporary requirement to resuscitate Jameson's argument similarly constitutes a statement upon their own historical moment. What they highlight is a particular appropriateness within the argument Jameson made in the mid-1980s to the later period dominated by the predominance of what Szeman calls "neoliberal globalization."⁴ What is identified is the extent to which Jameson's particular

construction of a universal and yet internally differential approach to non-Western writing prefigures a situation that (as Betty Joseph has recently argued) would only be completely fulfilled in the twenty-first century context of a high-neoliberal capitalism characterized by transnational patterns of corporate privatization, displacement, and economic integration.⁵

The contention made in this essay is that there is a feature of Jameson's engagement with the third world the significance of which is suggested by these assertions of its contemporaneity, but which has yet to receive wide or sufficiently substantial consideration. This is the extent to which Jameson's theses about third-world culture were themselves historically determined at the point of their origin, and his theoretical statements developed out of a particular historical and material context. Specifically this will focus on the claim that Jameson's theory is rooted within a crucial period in the historical development of American overseas power and imperial domination — what he himself refers to as "a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world."⁶

What this view emphasizes, therefore, is the fact that the years when Jameson was formulating a conceptual model that sought to redefine the aesthetic status of the third world and its epistemological relations to the first were also the years when American foreign policy was being rearticulated on the basis of the "Reagan Doctrine," which positioned the third world at the heart of political discourse in the US and abroad. They were the years of dirty wars and the attempted American "rollback" of Soviet-backed communism across Latin America, Africa, and Central Asia; actions which formalized the pattern of the suppression of Leftist governance in the third world that had been initiated during the 1970s (most notably through CIA interventions in Chile and Argentina). They were the years in which the US invaded post-revolutionary Grenada in order to curtail Cuban and Soviet influence, and backed Islamic guerrillas in Afghanistan. The historically determinate status of "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" can thus be illuminated by reconstructing the specific structure-of-feeling that was generated by this wider context and by viewing substantial elements of Jameson's position as part of a complex reaction forged within it.

The importance of this historicization is that it is able to shed significant light upon that affinity which Jameson's thought is held to possess with the forms that took shape under the framework broadly defined as neoliberal capitalism (regardless of how dated the terminology of first and third world might seem today). For according to those historians of neoliberalism who have sought to overturn the ideological and utopian narratives of its development, its arrival as a seamlessly globalized hegemon has origins in precisely this period of US power and the developments in the overseas domination in the third world which took place within it. David Harvey, for example, asserts this genealogy, claiming that the universalization of neoliberal economics originates in the suppression of alternative ideologies in the

third world during the 1970s and 1980s: “much of the non-communist world was opened up to US domination by tactics of this sort... The need to coerce oppositional or social democratic movements (such as Allende’s in Chile) associated the US with a long history of largely covert violence against popular movements throughout much of the developing world.”⁷ Naomi Klein assigns a similar significance to US intervention in the third world: “Reaganomics certainly held sway in Washington. But... it would be a Latin American country [Bolivia] that would be the testing ground for Friedman’s crisis theory.”⁸ Greg Grandin, in *Empire’s Workshop*, also provides a related account of the role played by Latin America in the re-establishment of US global power and the subsequent development of the “new” economic and military imperialism into the twenty-first century: “just as Latin America played a critical role in the reconstitution of the ideological, military, and political foundations of the American empire following the crisis of the 1970s, the region provided the main venue for the economic transformation that today underwrites that imperialism.”⁹

It should also be noted that a mandate for this way of approaching Jameson’s work is already established in regard to his theorization of the first-world cultural logic of postmodernism. It is a relatively familiar proposition that the portrait of an immanently depthless postmodern aesthetic, characterized by the disorientating spatialization of culture and the effacement of class history, can be defined in terms of its self-conscious location within the free-market fervor of Reaganite American life.¹⁰ The proposal argued here is that this reading be extended to the counterpart of Jameson’s model of first world postmodernism, and the existence established of a parallel relationship between his conception of the third world and contemporary US foreign policy. In this sense the antipodal yet mutually interconnected relationship between domestic politics and overseas domination which marked both the development of US global power in the 1970s and ‘80s and the subsequent formation of global neoliberalism can be mapped onto Jameson’s development of a theoretical model which asserts its single and universal character and yet also foregrounds this absolute internal fissure between the situations of first and third worlds.¹¹

This argument will address three areas of Jameson’s conception of third-world cultural production. The first is the explicitly political vocation that he ascribes to third-world culture. The second is the expression of that political vocation in terms of the nation-state, and the third is his construction of the highly self-conscious subject position from which he chooses to project his theoretical model. These points will be prefaced, though, by a claim for the priority of one particular geographical region of the third world in Jameson’s thinking during this crucial mid-1980s period of his writing.

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“Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” clearly presents a theoretical model that self-consciously operates at a high level of abstraction and

generality, producing a mode of analysis universal in its scope and ambition. It therefore, equally clearly, cannot be simply reduced to one narrow regional, geographical, or national manifestation of third-world existence. After all, the tri-part structure through which it develops its argument claims to apply to cultural landscapes across East Asia, West Africa, and Latin America, precluding the straightforward reduction to any one of these contexts. It is important to note, however, that Jameson's writings about the third world beyond the high theoretical framework of this most famous of his essays on the subject (and, indeed, at certain moments within it) are often marked by a very different sensibility; one which is highly concretized, theoretically modest, and closely attached to the particularities of immediate, biographical experience. From the perspective offered by supplementary publications in which this is documented, I would suggest that there is in fact something to be gained by viewing Jameson's theoretical machinations as originating, in however mediated a way, in the direct personal experience of specific geographical contexts.

There are several areas that suggest themselves as possible starting-points. Jameson's extensive contact with China is well-documented, and in "Periodizing the 60s" he reveals a close interest in the decolonization process as it unfolded across Africa.¹² However, in terms of the relation between Jameson's theory of third-world culture and contemporary US foreign policy, it is the unique position of Central America which must be foregrounded. It is clear from his numerous publications on the region's culture that Latin America in general has long been an important object of interest in Jameson's work, and has exercised a powerful influence in the formation of the Jamesonian imaginary.¹³ However the significance of his interaction with the Central American region can be most clearly established by referring to his own immediate experience there in the years preceding the publication of "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." This biographical involvement is primarily manifested in the trips Jameson made to two countries, each of which then produced a corresponding set of publications.

The first and most obviously influential of these experiences concerns Jameson's engagement with Cuba, and in particular with the cultural landscape which developed there following the 1959 revolution. Jameson's experience of Cuba is articulated in the brief foreword to *Caliban and Other Essays* by the Cuban intellectual Roberto Fernández Retamar.¹⁴ It also provides material which explicitly feeds into the theoretical model developed in "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," as well as playing a central role in "On Magic Realism in Film" and "Periodizing the 60s." The second is less explicitly present in his writing but if anything plays an even more suggestive function within it. It is the trip that Jameson took to Nicaragua in the mid-1980s, in which he conducted an interview with Tomás Borge, the leader of the Marxist Sandinista government. The text of this interview was published in the *New Left Review* in 1987 alongside an introductory piece penned by Jameson.¹⁵

It is clear from these writings that the revolutionary character of the third-world

nation as it was articulated in this Central American context had a singular and significant impact on Jameson's thinking. His attraction to Cuba and Nicaragua, both under revolutionary Marxist governance and experiencing identifiably socialistic forms of economic and social organization, is palpable. Cuba's status as the world's foremost revolutionary state in particular seems to perform a crucial structural role in Jameson's thinking, functioning as the key material realization of a genuine alternative to the otherwise universal logic of global capitalism. As he states in an interview, "the Cuban Revolution then proved to me that Marxism was alive and well as a collective movement and a culturally productive force."¹⁶ Cuba consequently comes to be employed in a paradigmatic manner throughout "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," where a specifically Cuban relationship between revolutionary political organization and its corresponding cultural sphere often seems to serve as the driving force behind Jameson's general construction of third-world national culture as such. One example among several is this reference to the contemporary Cuban situation:

[W]e must recover a sense of what "cultural revolution" means, in its strongest form, in the Marxist tradition.... The term, we are told, was Lenin's own, and in that form explicitly designated the literary campaign and the new problems of universal scholarly and education: something of which Cuba, again, remains the most stunning and successful example in recent history.¹⁷

In order to grasp the full significance of this formative involvement with Castro's Cuba and the Nicaragua of the Sandinistas, however, it must be seen within the context of Central America's pivotal geopolitical status during the period. US foreign relations in the Reagan era were defined in large part by the policy framework retrospectively termed the "Reagan Doctrine." Emerging from the late stages of the Cold War, the doctrine was based on the covert military and economic intervention in the governmental sovereignty of third-world nations. As Greg Grandin points out, this process was crucial not only in transforming the third world into the proxy battleground for the global struggle between American capitalism and Soviet communism, but also in providing a laboratory in which America's imperial identity as a military and economic power could be reformulated. The appreciation which Jameson displays in "Third-World Literature" for a politically engaged brand of third-world cultural nationalism thus constitutes a deliberately oppositional gesture toward the dominant narrative emerging from the political establishment at the time, and a reaction to the aggressive re-establishment of US hegemony according to which "a revitalized America could still make the world bend to its desires."¹⁸

Specifically it was the countries of Central America which became the central rhetorical and strategic focus of the anti-Marxist drive formulated under the Reagan

Doctrine. As Mayer and McManus state of the rhetoric around Reagan's second electoral victory in 1984:

[I]t was intentionally symbolic, in that first week after the inauguration, that Reagan spent much of his time working visibly on foreign initiatives.... It was also symbolic that Reagan's first public speech after the inauguration focused on a region that ranked high on his list of priorities: Central America.¹⁹

The admiring character of Jameson's response to Cuba and Nicaragua therefore signals the investment of his thinking in a wider and more complex reaction to a North American ideology based on the subversion of the indigenous Leftist impulses of Central American nations. To engage with the reality of Cuban and Nicaraguan life in the mid-1980s in the intimate and appreciative manner that Jameson did inevitably meant implicating oneself at the same time in a wider critique of America's overseas activity. It is in fact precisely this subversion which Jameson highlights when introducing the American reader to the situation in Nicaragua, the country subjected to the most sustained destruction and focused public denigration by the Reagan administration's Central American activities: "Contragate had not yet been disclosed; but clearly Nicaragua was living under the anxiety of invasion, and suffering daily from desperate economic conditions."²⁰

Indeed, this dual emphasis placed on Cuba and Nicaragua in Jameson's background is particularly significant in the sense that America's aggressive disruption of the Sandinista government marked the final stage in the thirty year project of re-establishing its domination of the area after the hugely symbolic and strategic blow it had received from the Cuban revolution and subsequent failure to reverse it. The violence delivered on the wider Central American region, and Nicaragua above all, was thus closely connected to the desire to reverse the spread of Cuban influence and the feared process of a wider "Cubanization." The two countries are therefore closely linked by the fact that together they signal the effective opening and reclosing of a discreet stage within the history of US power, the end of which marked the successful reassertion of America's global hegemony following several years of perceived weakness.²¹ In doing so of course it also made a crucial contribution to the establishment of the foundations for the later universalization of a US-dominated free-market capitalism.

In terms of the theoretical construction of "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," this context is most clearly manifested in the political imperative which forms the centerpiece of Jameson's conception of the third-world cultural sphere. What distinguishes the third world according to Jameson is the complete politicization of daily life — the production of an existence in which the life of the social collectivity, the social whole, is always immanently present in that

of the individuals assembled within it. The particular vocation of third-world culture then becomes the formal manifestation of this life-world in which the boundaries that preserve the depoliticized character of private or individually psychologized experience have been dissolved (boundaries which are still prominent in the first world, where they curtail the possibility of such collective or unified artistic expression). Hence “psychology, or more specifically, libidinal investment, is to be read in primarily political and social terms.... Here already then, in an ancient past, western antinomies — and most particularly that between the subjective and the public or political — are refused in advance.”²²

From the perspective of Jameson’s Marxist aesthetics, the idea of this opaque and unmediated relationship between cultural works and the whole material, economic, and political development of the society in which they exist contains a clear utopian strain. However, any temptation to present this cultural logic simply as a realized ideal is curtailed by the fact that the politicization of the third world is also portrayed as being inextricably bound up with the invasive penetration of external force. The formation of this singularly politicized culture thus also takes place under the pressure of a particular form of imperialism, forged by “the *embattled* situation of the public third-world culture and society,” that develops from the ravages of “the experience of colonialism and imperialism.”²³

In this sense the political vocation of the third world is defined by a violent disjuncture between two distinct forms of the political. While the first is a broadly home-grown and utopian collectivist impulse, the second is the subversion of that impulse by external power which occurs through the location of the third-world nation in a world-order inherently hostile to such social, political, economic, and cultural formations. As Jameson states in reference to Sembène’s *Xala*, “the space of a past and future utopia — a social world of collective cooperation — is dramatically inserted into the corrupt and westernized money economy.”²⁴ Something of this disjuncture, incidentally, is also discussed in Santiago Colás’s essay on Jameson of 1992.²⁵ In this second sense the political becomes an imposition upon the life of the third-world nation, which is given no choice but to be defined politically if it is to preserve its existence at all: a “third-world culture, which must be situational and materialist despite itself.”²⁶

The identification of allegory as the key mode of expression within this context indicates precisely this clash between these two meanings, and the consequent sense of the political as a disruptive, even destructive, presence which forcibly inserts itself into the continuum of third-world existence and denies the establishment of a more organic or unified political aesthetic. Thus Jameson argues that “the allegorical spirit is profoundly discontinuous, a matter of breaks and heterogeneities, of the multiple polysemy of the dream rather than the homogenous representation of the symbol.”²⁷ The turn to allegory is explicitly motivated by allegory’s ability to preserve the violent splits between such distinct and oppositional orders of meaning: “the capacity of

allegory to generate a range of distinct meanings or messages, simultaneously.”²⁸

Consequently, although Jameson produces a concept of third-world politicization which is suitable for generalized applicability, it can also fruitfully be seen as possessing substantial roots in the specific geographical and temporal context provided by his contact with Central America. For it was precisely this clash between an indigenous Leftist politics and a globalizing imperialist force that was embodied contemporaneously in Nicaragua and Cuba. It was embodied in both the Sandinista and Castro governments, which had explicitly come to power under the banner of socialism and had then endured years of violent subversion by the US government: through the CIA-sponsored Contra wars in the case of Nicaragua, and an economic embargo and sustained terrorist attacks in the case of Cuba. Whatever its interest in the classical origins of third-world cultural resistance in, for example, ancient China, in “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” that interest can be seen as animated by its self-conscious engagement with the particular geopolitical status of the third world during its own contemporary historical moment.

One area where this is demonstrated particularly clearly is Jameson’s development of this cultural logic in relation to the figure of the third-world intellectual. The vocation of the intellectual in the third world is defined explicitly in terms of this total and immanent politicization: “in the third-world situation the intellectual is always in one way or another a political intellectual.”²⁹ This is then identified in a historical sense with a figure like Lu Xun — a novelist and poet but also simultaneously a political activist and communist whose writing was directly bound up with the anti-imperialist opposition to “foreign devils who had nothing but modern science, gunboats, armies, technology, and power to their credit.”³⁰ This classical figuration is also given a specifically Latin American inflection by Jameson’s references to José Martí, the legendary Cuban figure who under Castro’s rhetoric became the central representation of the fusion between culture and political struggle.

But it is once again in his references to the present-day situation in Central America that the contemporaneity behind this construction of the third-world intellectual is revealed. Again this is partly expressed in relation to Jameson’s experience in Cuba:

[N]owhere has the strangeness of this vacant position been brought home to me more strongly than on a recent trip to Cuba, when I had occasion to visit a remarkable college-preparatory school on the outskirts of Havana... the semester’s work I found most challenging was one explicitly devoted to the study of the role of the intellectual as such.³¹

However if one looks for a particular individual who fulfills this paradigm of the immanently politicized third-world intellectual in the contemporary Central American context and Jameson’s own experience, then this is provided most closely and evocatively by Tomás Borge in Nicaragua.

For Borge was a practicing poet of considerable note at the time Jameson interviewed him (some of his most important poetry, incidentally, being written while he was in imprisoned under the US-backed Somaza dictatorship). Yet what emerges from the interview is the sense that for Borge the entirety of his intellectual life, including those cultural and aesthetic aspects, had come to be inescapably defined in terms of the sphere of public politics; something attested to by his vocation as political leader which had come to subsume that of poet. As Borge states in reference to the Sandinistas' domestic nation building project, "if you are making a table and someone is hitting you on the head from behind, naturally you are more preoccupied with the blows than with the table."³² Borge in this way emerges from Jameson's personal contact with him as a clear exemplar of the dissolution of any private or depoliticized cultural space which explicitly occurs under the violently disruptive realities of US intervention. It is his presence which can be framed as an animating force behind Jameson's construction of "the cultural intellectual who is also a political militant, the intellectual who produces both poetry and praxis."³³

Indeed, wider reference to the contemporary status of Nicaragua illustrates the extent to which Borge and the Nicaraguan context he articulated can be seen as an energizing presence in Jameson's theorization of third-world culture. The period when Jameson was developing that theoretical model, and when he interviewed Borge, was also the period in which Nicaragua was being positioned right at the heart of political discourse in the US. From Reagan's inauguration in 1981 onwards, the Sandinistas had increasingly been constructed as the world's foremost communist menace, bent on spreading a tyrannical Soviet influence beyond their own borders. By the time of the 1985 State of the Union address Nicaragua was being presented to the world virtually as the poster child for the policy of American intervention in the Central American third world:

the Sandinista dictatorship of Nicaragua, with full Cuban-Soviet bloc support, not only persecutes its people, the church, and denies a free press, but arms and provides bases for Communist terrorists attacking neighboring states. Support for freedom fighters is self-defense and totally consistent with the OAS and U.N. Charters. It is essential that the Congress continue all facets of our assistance to Central America.³⁴

It is Jameson's interaction with Borge which therefore signals the impulse of his thinking to situate itself in relation to that current foreign-policy climate. This can be seen in the precise inversion of this Reaganite rhetoric that Jameson puts forward; asserting both the progressive nature of the Sandinistas and the destructive reality of the contra rebellion and thus projecting a concerted opposition to the dominant position on Nicaragua which was exemplified in Reagan's speech. This is clear from his brief introduction to the interview which highlights the fact that "today the

Nicaraguans have an open prison system, of which they are justly proud, and like many other Latin American countries do not have the death penalty. This has never been mentioned in the US media.”³⁵

Jameson’s designation in the “Third-World Literature” essay of a culture that has become immanently politicized by the weight of US imperialism thus emerges as a reflection of this oppositional reaction towards the prevailing zeitgeist. That Nicaragua in particular was marked out by this intense and disruptive politicization of the fabric of daily life is confirmed, for instance, by historian Peter Kornbluh, who describes the activities of the US backed contras in terms of

vicious attacks on small villages, state-owned agricultural cooperatives, rural health clinics, economic infrastructure, and, finally, civilian noncombatants. Indeed, CIA training manuals explicitly advised the contras on how to “neutralize carefully selected and planned targets”—an intelligence euphemism for assassinating court judges, magistrates, police, and state security officials.³⁶

Or as Borge himself puts it in the course of the interview, “if we were to divide now imperialism would fall upon us with the same ease and ferocity as in Grenada... if we were divided the North Americans would immediately fall upon us and tear us to pieces.”³⁷

Jameson’s focus on a total politicization therefore also has a wider significance in the sense that it expresses particularly clearly the connection between his thinking and the forms adopted by a then still emergent logic of US global domination. For the key point about the Reagan Doctrine was that it formalized the ongoing transition of US policy away from the deployment of a clearly delineated external military force, such as the American army or navy. It thus signaled a crucial moment affirming the departure from those older forms of overt colonial intervention in the third world, which in a North American context had effectively been rendered politically unworkable since the end of the Vietnam War in the early 1970s. The Reagan era thus saw America’s position of economic and military dominance ultimately re-asserted through the replacement of such undisguised militarism with the covert infiltration of largely indigenous local groups such as the contras, using more surreptitious bodies such as the CIA and NSA.

In the earlier situation of the “foreign devils” of Lu Xun’s era, with their “gunboats, armies, technology and power,” the imperial aggressor could at least be clearly identified as such, and some scope for preserving a limited, if only oppositional, autonomy be maintained.³⁸ But it was the collapse of just this distinction which marked the displacement of this older paradigm. The opaque character of the later forms of US influence meant that it was able to manifest its presence vicariously throughout the internal fabric and culture of the third-world state itself. Any clear

distinction, for instance, between domestic and foreign opposition to the national government was suppressed by actions such as North America's entrance into silent partnership with the contras. The scope for national or institutional autonomy to be preserved with any independence was severely eroded when the demarcations were blurred in this way, and the US became able to ventriloquize right at the heart of another nation's internal processes; orchestrating coups (as it had succeeded in doing in Chile in 1973 and was attempting to do with the contras) or dictating the results of elections (as it tried in Nicaragua in 1984 and eventually accomplished in 1990). In this regard Jameson's construction of such an intensely politicized third-world cultural sphere can be seen in terms of the historical movement from the imperialistic logic of monopoly capitalism to some new form of multinational imperialism — echoing his broader designation of postmodernism as the shift from monopoly to multinational capitalism as such.³⁹

"Periodizing the 60s" confirms that this historical transition was in Jameson's thoughts at this time. For here he explicitly associates the demise of the utopian phase of the 1960s with this movement from a classical imperialism to an altogether more pervasive and omnipresent form of US-led global supremacy ("to rethink the failure in Vietnam in terms of a new global strategy for American and first world interests").⁴⁰ Hence "neocolonialism is characterized by the radically new technology... with which capitalism transforms its relationship to its colonies from an old-fashioned imperialist control to market penetration, destroying the older village communities and creating a whole new wage-labor pool and lumpen proletariat."⁴¹ He then asserts the existence of a continuous stage originating from this collapse in the early 1970s, stretching to his own present in the mid-1980s and onwards into the future: "it seems appropriate to mark the definitive end of the '60s' in the general area of 1972-1974.... For 1973-1974 is the moment of the onset of a worldwide economic crisis, whose dynamic is still with us today."⁴²

Viewed in this context, Jameson's comprehensively politicized third-world cultural sphere can be seen as a reflection of this transition. In particular his argument is self-consciously situated in the crucial formative stage it was going through in the first half of the 1980s, when the collapse of the Soviet alternative to US capitalism was imminent, the Cold War's late stages were being fought out in the third world, and the embedding of free-market orthodoxy across the globe consequently being established. This is clear from the description he provides of the characteristics of this stage:

[T]he emergence of a widely accepted new popular concept and term at this time, the notion of the "multinational corporation" is also another symptom, signifying... the moment in which private business finds itself obliged to emerge in public as a visible "subject of history" and a visible actor on the world stage — think of the role of ITT in Chile.⁴³

A statement like this substantially pre-empts something like David Harvey's retrospective assessment of neoliberalism made thirty years later:

[T]he result was the rise of distinctively neo-liberal forms of imperialism. Accumulation by dispossession re-emerged from the shadowy position it had held prior to 1970... The global economy of capitalism underwent radical reconfiguration in response to the overaccumulation crisis of 1973-5. Financial flows became the primary means of articulating the capitalist logic of power.⁴⁴

The implication of Jameson's theorization of third-world literature in the emergence of this historical stage is further evidenced by the fact that his description of the struggle to preserve an autonomous political identity is so closely focused upon the issue of nationhood. It is the contentious figure of the nation and of nationalism to which Jameson appeals, however provisionally and strategically, as the medium through which the immanently political vocation of third-world culture primarily expresses itself. It is the adherence to "a certain nationalism" and "an obsessive return of the national situation" which manifests the sense of a political imperative forged against the external pressure of a globalizing capitalist power.⁴⁵ At this point the aesthetic of national allegory emerges as a framework which is inherently defensive and oppositional in nature, developing from a material situation in which

none of these cultures can be conceived as anthropologically independent or autonomous, rather, they are all in various distinct ways locked in a life-or-death struggle with first-world cultural imperialism — a cultural struggle that is itself a reflection of the economic situation of such areas.⁴⁶

Whatever the pros and cons of this assertion of the nation as the primary medium of anti-imperialist struggle, it was certainly produced as a historical reality within the contemporary forms of US intervention in the third world.⁴⁷ For America's attempts to promote compliant Right-wing regimes and support the disruption and overthrow of independent Left-wing governments can broadly be correlated with the overarching desire to subsume the national borders and identities of the nations in question. In part this was done with the aim of disrupting the formation of the revolutionary relationship between national liberation struggle, class consciousness, and anti-imperialism which had proved in recent decades to be so powerful and so damaging to US interests — particularly in Latin America and most notably of course in the Cuban revolution of 1959 which "attempted to marry the instincts of Cuban nationalism with a commitment to building a Cuban socialism."⁴⁸ Jameson's emphasis on nationalism as the horizon of third-world allegory, where the nation becomes the mediating concept between individual and collective identities, thus functions in a very similar way to

the revolutionary motivation of cultural nationalism which characterized the political and economic basis of Cuba's revolution.

Hence Jameson again turns to Cuba in order to exemplify this position. Indeed what he highlights in the following passage of the "Third-World Literature" essay is the paradigmatic role of a specifically nationalist tradition of cultural resistance:

to receive independence is not the same as to take it, since it is in the revolutionary struggle itself that new social relationships and a new consciousness is developed. Here again the history of Cuba is instructive.... We now know the incalculable role played in the Cuban Revolution of 1959 by the protracted guerrilla struggles of the late 19th century (of which the figure of José Martí is the emblem); contemporary Cuba would not be the same without that laborious and subterranean, one wants to say Thompsonian, experience of the mole of History burrowing through a lengthy past and creating its specific traditions in the process.⁴⁹

As this suggests, the revolutionary significance of this tradition of cultural nationalism can only be understood with reference to a wider economic context, one largely defined in terms of nationalization. For the Cuban revolution had laid down a paradigm based upon the nationalization of all foreign-owned private interests, which largely meant re-appropriating industries and natural resources held by US multinational corporations: "the collectivization process was rapidly extended. Involved were all foreign-owned oil refineries, US-owned sugar mills, banks, telephone and electricity corporations, and all remaining US properties."⁵⁰ This was a disentanglement of the nation from US dependency which then similarly involved the cancellation of all of Cuba's national debt to the US. The struggle to preserve a sense of national cultural identity was thus a projection of its economic parallel in the imperative to preserve nationalized resources and the national economy against ingestion by US capital.

The direct consequence of this was that ever since the 1960s the country had been subject to a US trade embargo which drastically restricted the supply of crucial humanitarian items such as food and medicine, and a campaign of illegal terrorist attacks which were covertly backed by the CIA. Jameson himself in the foreword to Fernández Retamar's essay collection outlines this situation whereby "our other identity as the bankers, arbiters, exploiters, arms suppliers, and military policemen of Latin America then slowly again came to take precedence."⁵¹ Or as Philip Brenner stated in a 1988 article, "the United States's Cuba policy has failed to achieve any of its objectives. Not only has the Cuban regime weathered the US attacks on it, it may even have been strengthened by them, as the government has rallied the Cuban people around it under the banner of nationalism."⁵² The Cuban situation therefore gains greater significance in that it provided the model for all the later struggles between the de-nationalizing force of US capitalism and military resources and resistant Marxist

nationalism in the third world, a paradigm which would go on to define the nature of US intervention in the Central American region throughout subsequent decades.

A related aim of this attempt to dissolve autonomy at a national level, one that would go on to have increasing significance, was to permit the wealth of third-world nations to be extracted through the privatization of nationally held resources, and the opening up of their domestic economies to a US-dominated global market. This was the case, for instance, with many of Chile's major nationalized industries, such as the steel industry and the large sugar refining and electricity companies, which completed their sale to the private sector at artificially low prices during the mid-1980s. In the case of Nicaragua the same US hostility to socialist economic policy centered on the Sandinistas' nationalizations of banking and land ownership. Jameson's reference to the significance of the commodity which has continued to play the defining role in such US-led raids on the resources of third-world national economies up to the present day is particularly prophetic in this regard: "I am tempted to suggest, anachronistically, that this work, published in 1965, prophetically dramatizes the greatest misfortune that can happen to a third-world country in our time, namely the discovery of vast amounts of oil resources."⁵³

In addition to these more militaristic appropriations, this must also be seen as the era of the structural adjustment programs which plunged virtually all of Latin America into a debt crisis and economic depression. These programs were imposed upon individual nations by a transnational force in the form of the International Monetary Fund, although the policy was largely driven by American power and an emergent neoliberal ideology specifically American in origins. As Peter Kingstone notes,

by the mid-1980s, the shift to neoliberalism began to sweep through the region.... Over the 1980s, these 'austerity measures', coupled with poor rates of growth, declining real wages, and severe struggles with inflation and debt, led to the label "the lost decade" in Latin America.⁵⁴

Or as Harvey states more bluntly, "in some instances, for example in Latin America in the 1980s, whole economies were raided and their assets recovered by US finance capital."⁵⁵

The opposition between an imperialistic force seeking to establish its global hegemony by dissolving national borders and the attempt to preserve residual forms of national independence therefore possesses a clear historical grounding which can again be traced back to the forms of nationalist resistance displayed in Central America. Jameson in this sense reflects something close to what Noam Chomsky described several years later as "radical nationalism."⁵⁶ Writing in the context of the apotheosis of US global financial and military power at the turn of the century, Chomsky paraphrases this term from the language of the US State Department, where

it serves to reframe as an act of hostility any attempt by a particular third-world nation to resist the universal aspirations of American economic imperatives, or assert its own national interests against those of the US establishment: “unwillingness to submit to the will of the powerful.” According to Chomsky’s assessment, therefore, the high point of neoliberalism which coincides with that of America’s power is identified precisely with this form of struggle around the identity of the third-world nation-state.

This grounding of Jameson’s theory is then repeated on the inverse side of this imperialist dynamic, and his consistent assertion that the countervailing force to third-world nationalism can no longer simply be defined (as with older forms of imperialism) as the interests of another nation or set of nations distinguished merely by the fact that they are more powerful than the one being colonized. Rather Jameson frames the newly emergent imperial power in far more ubiquitous terms than this, seeing it as being at once tied to a North American origin but at the same time as having successfully extended itself beyond the limits of nationhood altogether. This is the seemingly paradoxical designation of “some global American postmodernist culture,” and “this whole global, yet American, postmodern culture.”⁵⁷ When Jameson turns his attention to this dynamic again in the period around the year 2000, he explicitly identifies this relationship as the source behind the historical development of globalization: “in speaking of the weakening of the nation-state, are we not actually describing the subordination of the other nation-states to American power, either through consent and collaboration, or by the use of brute force and economic threat?”⁵⁸

It is this sense of an international dominance which has transcended national restrictions while simultaneously retaining a US identity that has such strong antecedents in the foreign policy of the Reagan era. This is something which is again confirmed by reference to Nicaragua. Even more than previous US presidents, the fashioning of Reagan’s public image was distinguished by the appeal to a narrowly American form of cultural nationalism. By the mid-1980s Reagan’s persona and his public rhetoric could have been listed with apple pie or the stars and stripes in terms of metonymic representations of a homespun wholesomeness closely bound up with a particular tradition of American self-identification. As Reagan’s most substantial biographer Lou Cannon states: “as *Newsweek* put it, Reagan embodied ‘America as it imagined itself to be — the bearer of the traditional Main Street values of family and neighborhood, of thrift, industry and charity.’”⁵⁹ The systematic militaristic intervention in third-world nation-states thus became mutually inter-dependent with the appeal to this particular rhetoric of American patriotism linked to the dissemination of the apparently universal values of American-style freedom and democracy.⁶⁰

At precisely the same moment, however, that this nationalistic image was being cultivated at home, the Reagan administration’s activities overseas were achieving the

systematic transcendence of the restrictions and limitations of nationhood. This was the key point which gradually emerged in the years leading up to 1986, before being fully revealed in the form of the Iran-Contra scandal. And this extended beyond just the ability to dissolve the boundaries of third-world nationhood. For the nature of the administration's activities meant that presidential policy was able to be enacted almost entirely outside of the limits of American governmental structures; beyond the restrictions imposed by national institutions such as Congress and the Constitution. This was the significance of the use of the CIA and even more covertly the NSA, as these were able to operate in far greater secrecy and financial independence than the overtly military bodies deployed in Vietnam.

The collision course with America's domestic governance was openly reflected in the fact that Congress had passed a series of increasingly strict amendments in the first half of the 1980s which were explicitly designed to halt military support for the contras. The consequence of this refusal to sanction the violation of Nicaragua's officially recognized national sovereignty, however, was not the cessation of support but rather the increasing contortion of that support into ever more convoluted forms. It was this divergence between the legal constraints imposed by Congress and the White House's departure from those constraints which then produced much of the scandal when the continued support finally was made public in late 1986 (within weeks, incidentally, of the publication of "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism").

This pattern was clearly expressed in 1984 when the situation, and the coverage it received, was intensified by the CIA's bombing of three Nicaraguan harbors: "on April 6, *The Wall Street Journal* revealed that the CIA and not the contras had been responsible for the action, which had resulted in damage to several ships, including a Soviet oil tanker.... The reaction in Congress was wrathful."⁶¹ Following that incident the Sandinista government won a case against America over the bombings in the International Court of Justice, with the court confirming that "the mining of the harbors was an example of 'force against another state'... and US support of the contras 'amounts to an intervention of one state in the internal affairs of another.'"⁶² America immediately discounted the court's authority and used its veto on the council to avoid payment of any of the compensation awarded. In doing so it demonstrated its ongoing capacity to operate outside the restrictions of bodies such as the International Court of Justice designed to regulate politics at the level of the nation. In this sense, therefore, through its cultivation in the Nicaraguan context the Reagan Doctrine represented the emergence of precisely the contradictory scenario which Jameson identifies: that of a capitalist power which functions by being at once rhetorically allied with an American identity and yet also capable of dissolving virtually all forms of nationally mandated restriction at will.

The third area where this context can be seen at work is in the way that Jameson chooses to construct his global mapping project from such a highly self-conscious

subject position. Jameson repeatedly foregrounds the fact that the standpoint which frames “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” is not only first world in character, but is also specifically North American. The driving force behind the essay thus emerges as a subjectivity which exists explicitly mired within an experience belonging exclusively to “we Americans, we masters of the world.”⁶³ This is the kind of interpretive self-consciousness which Julie McGonegal, for instance, has described as Jameson’s metacritique or the “point of entry into rigorously self-aware analysis.”⁶⁴

It is this level of emphasis upon such an acutely Americanized point of view which also suggests a personal or biographical element behind Jameson’s account of the first-world intellectual’s confrontation with the third, with “the way people actually live in other parts of the world — a way of life that still has little in common with daily life in the American suburb.”⁶⁵ The Wallersteinian theorization of the penetration of peripheral spheres by a dominant capitalist core, “this primal displacement of the older forms of collective life from a land now seized and privatized,” is in this sense grounded in the uncomfortable experience of an American subjectivity being brought into abrupt proximity with the historical realities of America’s own imperialist interventions within the third world.⁶⁶ It is in this sense that it again invites historical identification with the Reagan-era project of cementing US power by suppressing the development of anti-capitalist social formations overseas.

This experiential encounter between the American subject and the violence through which America’s global hegemony was being imposed is then constituted in a more rigorously theoretical form through the way that Jameson chooses to construct his account around a representational system which is self-consciously flawed in nature, and then goes on to emphasize so insistently those epistemological limitations. Repeatedly there emerges a profound desire to expose the reductiveness which constitutes an inseparable element of the American intellectual’s contact with third-world reality. The focus is consistently placed upon the kind of theoretical hesitancy with which Jameson

moves into the terrain of the metacritical and inquires into how these differences are maintained and reproduced by a First World literary criticism that remains blithely unaware, for the most part, of the ways its own historical and social conditions impart various givens to the interpretive situation.⁶⁷

This is also incidentally the highly nuanced element of hesitancy which Ahmad’s critique almost entirely fails to account for.

Hence “I take the point of criticisms of this expression [third world], particularly those which stress the way in which it obliterates profound differences between a whole range of non-western countries and situations,” and “it is clear to me that *any*

articulation of radical difference... is susceptible to appropriation by that strategy of otherness which Edward Said, in the context of the Middle East, called 'orientalism.'"⁶⁸ As Marjorie Levinson points out, the "provisional" and "speculative" emphasis, in which "it would be *presumptuous* to offer some general theory of what is often called third-world literature" indicates something akin to a self-conscious feeling of embarrassment towards the inadequacy of the operative forms of systematic representation: "Jameson not only pre-empts Ahmad's attack on the schematism and reductiveness of the move, he trumps it."⁶⁹

The conditional character of Jameson's stance can consequently be seen as being motivated by a certain feeling of shame in regard to the situation of the American intellectual: a shame which emerges directly out of the material encounter with the site of America's particular incarnation of imperialism. This is the mood which he himself indicates when he states in reference to his experience in Cuba that "it is a matter of some shame for an American to witness the cultural curriculum in a socialist setting which also very much identifies itself with the third world."⁷⁰ The consequence of Jameson's recourse to this logic of metacritique is therefore that the aim of the theory becomes not to transcend that situation's epistemological and representational limitations but rather to incorporate those limitations into the foundation of the theoretical endeavor itself. At this point allegory — the deliberate truncation of the symbolic connection between signifier and object — becomes less an inherent quality of the third-world literary text itself and more an ethical imperative of the first world's interpretive scrutiny of it. It is in this way that it is incorporated as a mode of representation into the wider project of cognitive mapping ("mapping of the totality") which Jameson reveals to be the underpinning presence connecting both the third world and the postmodern in the final footnote of the third-world literature essay.⁷¹

This construction of the first-world subject, based in the turn to a self-reflexive form of allegory that is motivated by a historically determined sense of shame, consequently necessitates some reference to the significance of Walter Benjamin as a paradigm behind Jameson's conceptual model. Highlighting the Benjaminian presence is particularly important because it makes clear how Jameson's argument is able to motivate such ethicist and subjectivist moments within the cognitive mapping framework that ultimately sees them dialectically transcended into formations that are Marxist and objectivist in nature. This applies most notably to Benjamin's great thesis on the philosophy of history, according to which "there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism."⁷² Indeed Benjamin's dictum that "they are called cultural treasures, and a historical materialist views them with cautious detachment. For without exception the cultural treasures he surveys have an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror" is essentially quoted by Jameson in his description of the relationship between American postmodern culture and US imperialism (as well, of course, as providing the epigraph for the concluding chapter of *The Political Unconscious*): "this whole global, yet American, postmodern culture

is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and horror.”⁷³

By employing this Benjaminian sensibility Jameson thus asserts a decidedly unstable character on the part of postmodern culture which emerges directly from its historical relationship with the third world. The preservation of the seemingly ahistorical, classless superficiality of postmodernism in the first world is seen as being structurally dependent upon the imposition of its opposite — the brutal realities of realpolitik, exploitation, and class warfare — in the third. From the perspective of the first-world intellectual this renders the third world precisely “an origin which he cannot contemplate without horror.” This is, of course, what Jameson articulates in his deployment of the dialectic of the master and the slave, in which “only the slave can attain some true materialistic consciousness of his situation, since it is precisely to that that he is condemned. The Master, however, is condemned to idealism — to the luxury of a placeless freedom.”⁷⁴

Indeed, it is clear that forcing the transcendence of this structural divide, and confronting the first world subject with precisely this consciousness-raising form of discomfort at its own material origins, is a major concern, seeking as Jameson does to articulate “some deeper fear of the affluent about the way people actually live in other parts of the world — a way of life that still has little in common with daily life in the American suburb... an existence and a situation unfamiliar and therefore frightening — one that we do not know and prefer *not* to know.”⁷⁵ While ethical and subjective forms of experience thus are employed here they are not, as would be the case in the kind of liberalism from which Jameson must of course be carefully distinguished, the ultimate horizon of the allegorical schema. Rather the representative degeneration which occurs at the ethical level is used to outline the necessity of a transcendent move beyond it towards the ultimate horizon of global political transformation.

The significance of this apparently Benjaminian adaptation of a singular world-system constituted by two sides which are interdependent and mutually definitional, but at the same time oppositional and separated by an acute network of ideological prophylactics and hierarchies, though, does not just lie in its reflection of the then-contemporary discourse of postmodernism. It is again significant for the way its logic substantially parallels the emergent discourse of neoliberalism. For it is exactly this kind of structural relationship between violent conflict overseas and the instigation of seamless hegemony at home which has been consistently used to describe the historical embedding of the neoliberal agenda — its transition from marginal academic theory to dominant material reality — during the 1980s.

This is the narrative which is presented, in slightly different forms, by Naomi Klein in *The Shock Doctrine* and Greg Grandin in *Empire's Workshop*. The central thesis of Klein’s book is precisely that the establishment of neoliberal capitalism as the predominant global reality originated not in any consensus achieved in the democratic

European and North American nations where it was first conceived intellectually, but rather in a form of violent imposition which could only be achieved through the deployment by the US of a largely covert imperialist foreign-policy:

The coups, wars and slaughters to install and maintain pro-corporate regimes have never been treated as capitalist crimes but have instead been written off as the excesses of overzealous dictators, as hot fronts of the Cold War, and now of the War on Terror. If the most committed opponents of the corporatist economic model are systematically eliminated, whether in Argentina in the seventies or in Iraq today, that suppression is explained as part of the dirty fight against Communism or terrorism — almost never as the fight for the advancement of pure capitalism.⁷⁶

According to Klein's narrative it was the disorienting experience of collective catastrophe, (hence the terminology of "shock") which was systematically employed as the midwife of neoliberal globalization. However it needed to be exported into third-world nations and cultivated there before it could be effectively imposed at home.

For Grandin this process can then be explained by viewing the Reagan-era interventions in Latin America within the context of North America's long history of exploiting its Southern neighbors in order to redefine its own domestic identity. Latin America is seen in this sense as the crucible in which the American right was able to reunify and reassert US dominance in economic and military terms following the symbolic and material setback of Vietnam:

[I]t was Central America, and Latin America more broadly, where an insurgent New Right first coalesced, as conservative activists used the region to respond to the crisis of the 1970s, a crisis provoked not only by America's defeat in Vietnam but by a deep economic recession and a culture of skeptical antimilitarism and political dissent.⁷⁷

In this way an absolutely central function is ascribed to the process of exporting and subsequently re-importing radical free-market capitalism and authoritarian government, based in the exploitation of the epistemological and ontological schisms between first and third worlds, in the imposition of the single utopian narrative of global neoliberal progression and US authority.

It is something very close to this dynamic which is then echoed by Jameson's system, situated as it is within the precise historical moment that the development Klein describes was taking place. Jameson's model explicitly frames the third world as the originary source of the newly emergent and pseudo-utopian postmodern reality developing in the Americanized first world. The third world therefore becomes the site

at which the brutal material logic which underpins that reality can be identified and assessed. Places like Cuba, Nicaragua, and Chile become “mechanisms that necessarily entail a whole social and historical critique of our current first-world situation.”⁷⁸ Or as Harvey puts it, “not for the first time, a brutal experiment carried out in the periphery became a model for the formulation of policies in the center.”⁷⁹ This is the same critique of US political ideology, therefore, which Klein and Grandin similarly accomplish by examining developments in countries such as Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, and Nicaragua through the 1970s and ‘80s.⁸⁰

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Jameson’s work has repeatedly distinguished itself by the ability to anticipate issues whose significance would only enter into mainstream academic currency considerably later in time. This status as trailblazer certainly applies to his conceptual engagement with the third world, which can be seen in hindsight to have not only reflected but also anticipated in significant ways the subsequent development of neoliberal globalization as a historical discourse and academic concern (not least in his own writing) into the 2000s. At a time when that discourse has reached the point of apotheosis, produced a global economic crisis and entered a period of ongoing turmoil and acute decline, Jameson’s thinking is eminently contemporaneous in the way it also originated in a sense of catastrophe, in “blood, torture, [and] death.”⁸¹ But what made this theoretical forecasting possible were the continuities around the historical situation which conditioned Jameson’s conceptualization, a crucial moment in which the establishment of a global capitalist order along neoliberal lines was emergent but still in development, and where the challenges and alternatives it had later subdued were still operative.⁸²

Notes

1. Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory,'" *Social Text* 17 (1987): 3-25, and Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15 (1986): 65-88.
2. Imre Szeman, "Who's Afraid of National Allegory? Jameson, Literary Criticism, Globalization," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 100.3 (2001): 803-827; Neil Lazarus, "Fredric Jameson on 'Third-World Literature': A Qualified Defence," *Fredric Jameson: A Critical Reader*, eds. Douglas Kellner and Sean Homer (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004): 42-62; Ian Buchanan, "National Allegory Today: The Return to Jameson" *New Formations* 51.1 (2003): 66-79; Julie McGonegal, "Postcolonial Metacritique: Jameson, Allegory, and the Always-Already-Read Third World Text," *Interventions* 7.2 (2005): 251-265; Levinson, Marjorie. "News from Nowhere: The Discontents of Aijaz Ahmad," *Public Culture* 6.1 (1993): 97-131.
3. "In hindsight, it appears that almost without exception critics of Jameson's essay have wilfully misread it. Of course, such misreadings are to be expected. The reception given to this or that theory has as much to do with timing as with its putative content" (Szeman, "Who's Afraid?" 804).
4. "Who's Afraid" 820. In a more recent article, Caren Irr has presented a similar argument in regard to Jameson's conception of national allegory, claiming that "national allegory is, however, well suited to the new externalizing, post-post-industrial economy." Caren Irr, "Postmodernism in Reverse: American National Allegories and the 21st-Century Political Novel," *Twentieth Century Literature* 55.3-4 (2011) 536.
5. Betty Joseph, "Neoliberalism and Allegory," *Cultural Critique* 82 (2012): 68-94.
6. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review* 146 (1984) 57.
7. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005) 28.
8. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* (London: Penguin Books, 2007) 141.
9. Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, The United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2006) 163.
10. "All these [postmodernist] texts were written in the era of Reagan, whose Presidency they effectively span.... The domestic euphoria of these years forms the immediate backdrop for Jameson's diagnosis of the logic of postmodernism" (Perry Anderson, "Introduction," *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998*, ed. Perry Anderson [London: Verso, 1998] xii).
11. As Caren Irr puts it: "since the 1980s, the conceptual twin — or, better, dialectical counterpart — of literary postmodernism has been the national allegory" ("Reverse" 516).
12. On China, see Xudong Zhang, "Modernity as Cultural Politics: Jameson and China," *Fredric Jameson: A Critical Reader*. Fredric Jameson, "Periodizing the Sixties," *Social Text* 9/10 (1984): 178-209.
13. This applies most notably to "On Magic Realism in Film" of 1986, in which Latin America is explicitly framed as the key source behind the conceptualization of a third-world culture which "is to be grasped as a possible alternative to the narrative logic of contemporary postmodernism" (Fredric Jameson, "On Magic Realism in Film," *Critical Inquiry* 12.2 [1986] 302).
14. Federic Jameson, "Introduction," *Caliban and Other Essays* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1989): vii-xiv.

15. Fredric Jameson, "Tomás Borge on the Nicaraguan Revolution," *New Left Review* 164 (1987): 53-64, and Fredric Jameson, "Introduction to Borge," *New Left Review* 164 (1987): 51-52.
16. Fredric Jameson, "Interview with Srinivas Aravamudan and Ranjana Khanna," *Jameson on Jameson*, ed. Ian Buchanan (Durham: Duke UP, 2007) 204.
17. Jameson, "Third-World Literature" 76. See likewise the praise which is heaped in the Retamar foreword upon "the uniqueness of Cuba's cultural and political vocations.... The annual film festival, the selection of Cuba as the site for the new panamerican film school, the almost weekly conferences at Casa drawing artists, writers and intellectuals from all over the Americas, above all the prestigious prizes in a range of genres offered by the Casa de las Américas to Latin American and Caribbean writers" (*Caliban* ix).
18. Jane Mayer and Doyle McManus, *Landslide: The Unmaking of the President, 1984-1988* (London: William Collins Sons, 1988) 51.
19. Mayer and McManus, *Landslide* 47-48.
20. Jameson, "Introduction to Borge" 51.
21. "Indeed, 1959 inaugurated a historical period only ended by the electoral defeat of the Sandinistas 30 years later. After the Revolution, five key dates charted the progress of the left: 1959 itself; the murder of Che in Bolivia in 1967; Pinochet's coup against Allende's Unidad Popular (UP, Popular Unity) government in Chile in 1973; the revolutionary triumph of the Frente Sandinista Liberacion Nacional (FSLN, the Sandinista National Liberation Front) in 1979 and its departure from government following the 1990 elections in Nicaragua." Geraldine Lievesley, *The Cuban Revolution: Past, Present, and Future Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 16-17.
22. "Third-World Literature" 72.
23. "Third-World Literature" 69 (emphasis added), 67.
24. "Third-World Literature" 81.
25. Santiago Colás, "The Third World in Jameson's Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 258-270. Hence for Colás the third world in Jameson's thinking embodies a "paradoxical double function," representing both the final enclave of resistance to the global domination by the Americanized first world, and simultaneously the submission to that domination: "both the space whose final elimination by the inexorable logic of capitalist development consolidates the social moment — late capitalism... and the space that remains somehow untainted by and oppositional to those repressive social processes" (258).
26. "Third-World Literature" 85.
27. "Third-World Literature" 73.
28. "Third-World Literature" 74.
29. *ibid.*
30. *ibid.*
31. "Third-World Literature" 74-75.
32. Jameson, "Tomás Borge" 62.
33. "Third-World Literature" 75.
34. Ronald Reagan, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," February 6, 1985, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=38069>.
35. Jameson, "Introduction to Borge" 52.

36. Peter Kornbluh, "The U.S. Role in the Counterrevolution," *Revolution & Counterrevolution in Nicaragua*, ed. Thomas W. Walker (San Francisco: Westview Press, 1991) 326.
37. "Tomás Borge" 57.
38. "Third-World Literature" 74.
39. The paradigm which had of course dominated Marxism's understanding of imperialism since Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*.
40. Jameson, "Periodizing" 204.
41. "Periodizing" 206. This is a transition, incidentally, which Jameson explicitly identifies with US intervention in the development of revolutionary Latin American states: "as for the thing itself, for all practical purposes it comes to an end with the Chilean coup in 1973 and the fall of virtually all the Latin American countries to various forms of military dictatorship" (204).
42. "Periodizing" 205.
43. "Periodizing" 205.
44. David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2003) 184.
45. "Third-World Literature" 65.
46. "Third-World Literature" 68.
47. Szeman has usefully situated Jameson's deployment of the nation within the wider set of debates over its value for Leftist political struggle ("Who's Afraid?" 818).
48. Lievesley, *The Cuban Revolution* 6.
49. "Third-World Literature" 81.
50. Carmelo Mesa-Lago, "The Prerevolutionary Economy and an Overview of Policy," *The Cuba Reader: The Making of a Revolutionary Society*, eds. Philip Brenner, William M. Leogrande, Donna Rich, and Daniel Siegel (New York: Grove Press, 1989) 67.
51. *Caliban* viii.
52. Philip Brenner, "Change and Continuity in Cuban Foreign Policy," *The Cuba Reader* 328.
53. "Third-World Literature" 82.
54. Peter Kingstone, *The Political Economy of Latin America* (New York: Routledge, 2011) 44.
55. Harvey, *New Imperialism* 66.
56. Noam Chomsky, *Acts of Aggression: Policing "Rogue States"* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1999) 28.
57. "Third-World Literature" 65, and "Postmodernism" 57.
58. Fredric Jameson, "Globalization and Political Strategy," *New Left Review* 4 (2000) 50.
59. Lou Cannon, *President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1991) 494.
60. As Jameson would go on to claim in "Globalization and Political Strategy," "what we may think of as universal Western values, applicable everywhere... are not in fact rooted in some eternal human nature, but are, rather, culturally specific, the expression of one particular constellation of values — American ones — among many others" (59).
61. Theodore Draper, *A Very Thin Line: The Iran-Contra Affairs* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991) 20.
62. Cannon, *President Reagan* 380.
63. "Third-World Literature" 85.
64. McGonegal, "Metacritique" 260.
65. "Third-World Literature" 66.

66. "Third-World Literature" 84.
67. "Metacritique" 253.
68. "Third-World Literature" 67, 77 (emphasis original)
69. "Third-World Literature" 68, 72, and 68 (emphasis added), and Levinson, "News from Nowhere" 107.
70. "Third-World Literature" 74.
71. "Third-World Literature" 88.
72. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968) 256.
73. Benjamin, "Theses" 256, and "Postmodernism" 57.
74. "Third-World Literature" 85.
75. "Third-World Literature" 66 (emphasis original). Jameson's theoretical articulation of this situation is again, incidentally, reflected in more concrete terms in his interview with Tomás Borge. It is precisely the cultivation of this idealist delusion on the part of American subjectivity which Borge critiques at the interview's close: "I asked how it was possible for a serious person — which one supposes the US President to be — to say that we have burned down a Jewish synagogue, in a country where there are no synagogues. Or how can he accuse us of being drug traffickers when the US federal drugs agency says that this is not the case? How is it that there are so many lies, so many? It cannot be by chance. They issue from all the means of communication and the rectifications are obscured. The aim is to lay the conditions for an attack on Nicaragua and to convince the US people that we are criminals" (64).
76. Klein, *Shock* 20 (emphasis original)
77. Grandin, *Workshop* 5.
78. "Third-World Literature" 79
79. Harvey, *Brief History* 9.
80. Jameson's reference to welfare reduction, one of the most visible features of neoliberalism to have been reimported into the first world in this way, is one indication that this kind of dynamic had a meaningful presence in his thinking at the time of "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism": "in a modern economy, this sacred duty to the poor is transformed into a frenzied assault by free-loaders from all levels of society" (82).
81. "Postmodernism" 57.
82. Indeed at this point it is hard to see it as merely coincidence that not only was "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism" produced at the height of Reagan's foreign-policy endeavors, but that the focused re-emergence of positive critical interest in the essay took place in the early 2000s, and was thus precisely contemporaneous with the second Iraq War. In sense the essay's renaissance occurred within the very historical moment which (as Grandin so consistently points out) saw the ideology of the Reaganite 1980s so closely repeated and, indeed, by so many of the same political actors.

