

Explorations of the Political/Ideological Unconscious: Fredric Jameson and Juan Carlos Rodríguez

Malcom Read

While the notion of the unconscious perforce remained embryonic in Marx, who was, after all, writing in a pre-Freudian age, it received an original treatment at the hands of Althusser, for whom ideology was eminently unconscious in its functioning. Fredric Jameson and Juan Carlos Rodríguez both took the French philosopher as their point of departure to theorize respectively the "political unconscious" and the "ideological unconscious." Superficially, they appear to have much in common: Jameson begins *The Political Unconscious* (1981) with the command to "always historicize," whereas Rodríguez protests at the outset of *Theory and History of Ideological Production* (1975) that "literature has not always existed." In other respects, however, their works are radically divergent: Jameson's re-inscribes Althusser within the framework of a Hegelian Marxism based upon the subject/object opposition, whereas Rodríguez's foregrounds the notion of the social formation structured on the basis of a mode of production. The consequences for their literary analyses are far-reaching: Jameson confines his attention to the (post)modern culture of "late capitalism", whereas Rodríguez traces the transition from feudalism to early capitalism.¹

We will be exploring below the definition and determination of two theoretical concepts, namely the "*ideological unconscious*" and the "*political unconscious*," both rooted in Althusser's understanding of Marx and his relation to Hegel but developed along very different, even contrasting lines in, respectively, the work of Juan Carlos Rodríguez and that of Fredric Jameson. Before entering into detail, let us broadly locate the relevant texts and their authors in their social and intellectual contexts.

While Jameson's *The Political Unconscious* appears in 1981, some six years after the publication of Rodríguez's *Theory and History of Ideological Production*, it has its origins in an earlier period — by his own reckoning, Jameson was a product of the late 1950s, otherwise the age of McCarthyism, and of an academy lacking not only any sense of affinity with the Soviet Union but also anything resembling the tradition of Western Marxism.² To have matured intellectually during that decade meant for many on the

Left, including Jameson, to have imbibed the existential philosophy of Sartre, together with its Hegelian brand of Marxism; and while certainly the latter was conspicuous by its absence from the American's early research, it was perhaps inevitable that, following in the wake of Sartre, his theorization of the unconscious, when eventually undertaken, should take a distinctively "political form," inflected along the lines of an Hegelianized Marxism. Such political allegiances notwithstanding, Jameson would look to rest his political unconscious upon a reading of the resolutely anti-Hegelian work of Althusser. Other key ingredients would be provided by Lacanian psychoanalysis. The final result, although undoubtedly provocative, was destined to enjoy a wide currency and to be widely debated.³

Even at this introductory stage, it is impossible not to pose the obvious question: how does Jameson manage to reconcile such contradictory attachments? The answer, as we will see, is that the matrix effect of a social formation, as theorized by Althusser, will be systematically reworked so as to eliminate its internal structural levels and thereby to bring it into line with the Hegelian notion of Absolute Spirit. Eliminated also is the alleged "break" between the early and late Marx, upon which Althusser otherwise insists, and the consequent displacement of focus from subject to structure. In sum, with the Althusserian threat attenuated if not entirely removed, the Hegelian can freely continue to prioritize the subject/object opposition fundamental to bourgeois ideology – which doubtless helps explain Jameson's widespread appeal in the US academy and elsewhere – and, correspondingly, to prioritize a subjective *consciousness*. To the latter, the Jamesonian "political unconscious" will always remain mortgaged.

The "ideological unconscious" is systematically theorized for the first time by Rodríguez in his *Theory and History of Ideological Production*, wherein it is envisaged as consisting of an ideological matrix or nucleus, the effects of which are felt throughout the entire social formation. This matrix further takes the form of certain binary pairings, the master/slave, in the case of slavery; the lord/serf, in the case of feudalism; and the Subject/subject in the case of capitalism. While Rodríguez will continue to deploy the key Althusserian concepts of "social formation," "mode of production," economic, political and ideological "instances," etc., his "ideological unconscious" will require some significant reconfigurations of the Althusserian legacy. For example, ideology will not necessarily exist through and for the "subject" – the dominant ideology of feudalism, it will transpire from the Spaniard's work, knows no such category – and to assume otherwise, whether from a bourgeois or Marxist standpoint, is, arguably, to think ahistorically. Nor, contrary to what Althusser sometimes implies (when he regresses unconsciously to bourgeois orthodoxy), does the subject pre-exist its social formation or, to use Althusser's own terminology, its social "interpellation," other than as a bundle of genes. The existence of a libidinal unconscious is recognized but does not enter into the Spaniard's theoretical equations.

How is one to account for such radical innovations? Undoubtedly, much was owed to

the direct influence of Althusser at the *Rue d'Ulm* where Rodríguez studied in the mid 1970s. But other circumstantial factors must have been relevant, beginning with the Spaniard's prior and equally direct exposure to fascism. Strange to say, the exposure came with its advantages. What better starting point could anyone have had, when it came to theorizing the ideological unconscious, than the personal experience of being smothered by layers of feudal ideology in a Francoist guise? Perhaps more importantly, Spain's belated incorporation into capitalism – the indispensable condition for the rise of fascism – meant that Rodríguez was able to observe liberal ideology objectively, from *without*, or at least from its margins.⁴ Such benefits, it should be said, came at a price, namely professional isolation on the outer circuits of the global academy: symptomatically, Rodríguez's work has been the subject of only one monograph.⁵ But while such factors undoubtedly explain in part the contrast with Jameson's fortunes, the root cause of the peculiar "silence" that has dogged the Spaniard's work must undoubtedly be found elsewhere, namely in the nature of its object, a social formation structured on the basis of a mode of production, and its seeming incompatibility with the subject/object paradigm prioritized by the dominant ideology, or so at least we will be arguing.

Our first task, by way of assessing the contributions of both scholars, must be to return to Marx and Althusser and to consider those aspects of these predecessors' work that are relevant to the notion of the unconscious, both ideological and political.

From Marx to Althusser

Even as he redefined the original, Enlightenment concept of ideology, so that it ceased to refer to an individual's distorted ideas and came instead to correspond to supra-individual systems of beliefs, the young Marx continued to think within the horizons of a problematic centred on the subject and, by the same token, to detach ideology from the base and locate it as a differentiated block of consciously held, although false, ideas within the superstructure. The shift, it follows, from "Man" to the "economic law of motion," in evidence in the mature Marx, is undeniably qualitative and far from being the private fantasy of Althusser, as it is sometimes portrayed. The text of *Capital* is perfectly explicit: "individuals are dealt with here only in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, the bearers [*Träger*] of particular class-relations and interests."⁶ It is undoubtedly significant that, more or less contemporaneously, we glimpse the first intimations of ideological processes operative at the infrastructural level, as when, in the *Grundrisse*, for example, Marx describes in suggestive terms how a specific kind of production can predominate over the rest: "It is a general illumination which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity. It is a particular ether which determines the specific gravity of every being which has materialized within it."⁷ Even so, powerful factors militated against any theoretical advancement: to begin with, the concept of the unconscious necessarily remained embryonic in what was, after all, a pre-Freudian age; moreover,

within the limited context of Marxism, it was never a question of simply inverting Hegel – after all, even within the context of *Capital*, economic activity necessarily retained an ideational component. In other words, much remained to be done if the unconsciousness of ideology was to be detached conceptually from “consciousness” and developed to its full potential. At which point, enter Althusser.

Whether or not the mature Marx himself subscribed to the criticism of humanism that Althusser attributed to him need not concern us here. There is no gainsaying the fact of the philosopher’s own point of departure, namely the “ever-pre-givenness of a structured complex unity,” nor of its consequences for his view of ideology: human societies allegedly “secrete ideology as the very element and atmosphere indispensable to their historical respiration and life,” in the form of structures, of images, myths, ideas and concepts, impersonally imposed upon their subjects.⁸ The latter, we should know, “live” their ideologies “*not at all as a form of consciousness, but as an object of their ‘world’ – as their ‘world’ itself*”; and that lived relation, between individuals and their world, “only appears as ‘conscious’ on condition that it is *unconscious*, in the same way that [it] only seems to be simple on condition that it is complex.”⁹ In essence, therefore, we are talking about an *imaginary* relation. Even the bourgeoisie, Althusser concludes, *believes* in its ideology, namely that of freedom, for the simple reason that its ideology is secreted “originally” and unconsciously in the relations of production, “before” it is consciously formulated at the level of the superstructure.¹⁰

Given such emphasis upon the unconsciousness of ideology, one is bound to ask what prevented Althusser from arriving at the notion of an ideological unconscious. The answer, seemingly, was that he found the “unconscious” inescapably rooted in psychology.¹¹ Symptomatically, in a private letter, the philosopher will take to task his psychoanalyst, René Diatkine, for sparing psychology in his theoretical critique of empiricism:

In my telling you that, you will see that I too *interpret* what one might be tempted to call your ideologico-theoretical *unconscious*. I would have many reservations to make on those *terms*, since I believe that [it] is not possible to speak of an ideological unconscious. In the event, that “unconscious” (which I would call by a different name, but never mind) exists, and it *should not be confused with the psychoanalytic unconscious*.¹²

The ideological unconscious, then, remained a concept to be explored, as did Althusser’s complex web of transitive and intransitive causalities. But there was one question that, even at this early stage, clamoured for consideration, namely the displacement of the subject and its relevance to the science/ideology relation.

Science and Ideology

Bourgeois ideology, to remind ourselves, in any of its variants, takes the same subject/

object paradigm for granted. In the words of Althusser: “The subject and object, which are given and hence pre-date the process of knowledge, already define a certain fundamental theoretical field.”¹³ The French philosopher’s solution, after Marx, was to transfer the whole debate onto a different terrain by accepting from the outset, as basic theses, the priority of the real over thought about the real, and the specificity of thought and the thought process. In other words, he does not answer the philosophical question of the validity of knowledge; rather he bypasses it.

Matters came to a head in *Reading Capital* during the course of a commentary upon a famous passage of the *Grundrisse* in which Marx expatiates on the contrast between, on the one hand, traditional attempts to depart from the concrete in order to reach the abstract and, on the other, the (in his view) scientifically correct method that begins with abstract definitions and, by way of them, “rises” to the concrete during the course of reasoning.¹⁴ Althusser, for his part, is emphatic as to how the section is to be read and, more importantly, how it is *not* to be read. Marx, we are informed, is not concerned with the “problem of knowledge,” as traditionally understood, which is to say with the relation between thought and reality; from which it follows that, “he is not for one second falling into an idealism of consciousness, mind or thought.”¹⁵ Marx, then, is concerned with how the scientist comes to have a theory, the point being that “theoretical practice constitutes a process that takes place *entirely in thought*”; from which it follows that, contrary to what empiricism claims, knowledge never confronts a *real object*, only ever an “object of knowledge,” which is not to say, by any means, that we *produce* the reality we contemplate.¹⁶

The case is convincingly argued: the underlying tenor of Marx’s work is undoubtedly one of both epistemological and ontological realism. But while he otherwise interprets the same passage of the *Grundrisse* along the same lines as Althusser, David Hillel Ruben acknowledges that the methodological and epistemological considerations cannot ultimately be separated.¹⁷ In focusing on the specificity of thought, one is bound to wonder whether Althusser is not letting slip the primacy he otherwise accords to the real. The immediate signs are not encouraging: he leaves unexamined the specific modes – experimentation in the hard sciences and abstraction in the human sciences – through which science appropriates the real world; new knowledge, we learn, simply “concerns” the real object, without necessarily corresponding with it.¹⁸ The effect is to drain ontology into epistemology, such that while knowledge itself is progressively “deepened,” vertically, and “extended,” horizontally or, to use Althusser’s own term, geographically, as new continents are revealed, the “*labour of theoretical transformation... necessarily affects the object of knowledge, since it is only applied to the latter.*”¹⁹ What is missing is any sense of a correspondingly deep ontology.

Once set in motion, the weakening or, more strictly, flattening out of ontology rolls inexorably onwards, to the extent that we find Marx himself castigated for failing to situate the opposition between *essence* and *appearance* where it properly belongs,

in the “inner site of its concept.”²⁰ But with unfortunate consequences: Althusser opens himself up to the charge that he undertheorizes the intransitive dimension of knowledge production and, specifically, that, in his hands, the theoretical constructs of science serve simply “to ease our mental labour.”²¹

Fredric Jameson: The Seeds of a Political Unconscious

Like so many of his Leftist contemporaries in literary studies, Jameson’s focus in the research he conducted in the 1950s was upon the work of Sartre, the defining features of which were a radical splitting of the world into two parts, subject and object, and, in a characteristically Hegelian manner, the collapsing of the latter into the former. Thus, in Jameson’s own words: “The reflection of subjectivity on the thing, the manner in which a subjectivity betrays its secrets through an apparently objective perceiving of a thing outside it, is possible because this facticity can never be directly apprehended, because it must be *assumed* by consciousness and thus immediately compromises the viewer and reflects him back.”²² The priority thereby accorded to consciousness will prove to be a lasting legacy: in an afterword, written some twenty years later, his youthful first book still strikes Jameson as “plausible,” requiring nothing more than some terminological tinkering.²³ Nor, carefully considered, would the Hegelian dialectic he proceeded to enthusiastically embrace require any “break,” of the kind that distinguished the work of Althusser, insofar as the Spirit that allegedly unfolds during the course of human history is nothing less than a Subject.

The continuity in Jameson’s thought is in evidence from the early *Marxism and Form*, which continues to foreground subjectivity. Dialectics, as a result, emerges primarily not as a dialectics of nature, of the real world, with its suffering, exploitation, and violence, but of *thought*, which is to say, “nothing more or less than the elaboration of dialectical sentences,” an argument that would be pressed to the extreme through a detailed appraisal of the work of Adorno.²⁴ And even as he sets rather more store than Adorno by the revolutionary potential of the working class, Georg Lukács, who also figured prominently in Jameson’s pantheon, was never going to offset the centrality attached to consciousness. Indeed, he, more than anyone, notoriously envisioned social structures as reducible ultimately to consciousness. As he wrote: “... the act of consciousness overthrows the objective form of its object.”²⁵

It is difficult to imagine, at first, how, in such circumstances, anything like an *unconscious*, and a political one to boot, could possibly emerge from such divagations. Unsurprisingly, Jameson’s *Marxism and Form* continues to take its cue from a brand of Lukácsian Marxism that emphasized consciousness. That said, the concept of a class consciousness spontaneously generates its opposite, a class-conditioned *unconsciousness*, and, as even Althusser was the first to admit, the Hegelian tradition adds one crucial ingredient to any Marxism worthy of the name, and certainly to any Marxist formulation of an unconscious, namely the concept of a “process without a subject.” Jameson elaborates: “The former subject no longer thinks, he ‘is

thought,' and his conscious experience, which used to correspond to the concept of *reason* in middle-class philosophy, becomes little more than a matter of registering signals from zones outside itself, either those that come from within and 'below', as in the drives and bodily and psychic automatisms, or from the outer circles of interlocking social institutions of all kinds."²⁶ All of which would be very encouraging, from a Marxist standpoint, were it not for the fact that, the references to "social institutions" notwithstanding, the emphasis remains firmly fixed upon the world of thought: what happens is that "the mind is able, momentarily, to glimpse a concrete totality."²⁷ It is not that the material world is absent: dialectics is emphatically *about* the empirical world; simply that the *aboutness* constantly slips from view. The result is a *de-ontologization* that deprives the world of any material depth.²⁸

Althusser Reconfigured: from Kant to Hegel

Given his formation within the womb of Hegelian thought, it might well be wondered how Jameson, notwithstanding his capacity to accommodate all-comers, is going to find room for a thinker as resolutely *anti*-Hegelian as Althusser, who consistently argued against "an idealism of consciousness," and emphatically asserted the primacy of the real over thought about the real. That said, as we also conceded, the importance the French philosopher attached to the specificity of thought was conducive to a correspondingly flat ontology, and Jameson will quickly seize upon the opportunity that such an ambiguity offered. Thus, in *The Prison House of Language* he set out systematically to (mis)construe the relevant texts along Kantian lines. Althusser's originality, we learn, was to have "reversed the terms of the old materialistic epistemology, for which reality is 'outside the mind.'"²⁹ Willy-nilly, the philosopher is re-located within the familiar epistemological scenario of the subject/object opposition, where a theory of theoretical practice is reconfigured as a *psychology* and thence transposed into a theory of knowledge. "For Althusser, in a sense, we never really get outside our own minds," which is to say that "theoretical praxis" runs its course "in the sealed chamber of the mind."³⁰ Given such premises, "the basic terms of the problem have now become recognizable: it is essentially a replay of the Kantian dilemma of the unknowability of the thing-in-itself."³¹

Still, if Althusser was always vulnerable to an epistemological, as opposed to methodological, reading of his notion of theoretical production, he might have seemed well equipped to resist attempts to draw him into the field of Hegelian Marxism. For the French philosopher, we recall, a world of difference separated the Marxist whole – a complex structure in dominance – from the Hegelian view of society as pervaded expressively by a single spirit. The letter of his texts, however, will offer Althusser little protection against Jameson's homogenizing enthusiasms. Nor will it deter the American critic from taking full advantage of Althusser's failure to coherently thematize ontology.

Thus, things begin rather ominously in Jameson's next work, *The Political*

Unconscious: economic determination “in the last instance” – the scare quotes deployed unambiguously signal an Althusserian provenance – is replaced with its political equivalent, to arrive at the view that “everything is ‘in the last instance’ political.”³² And even before we have been able to assess the full import of this manoeuvre, the American critic is already busily dismantling the Althusserian “structure in dominance,” on the alleged basis that, for its originator, “the more narrowly economic... is, however privileged, not identical with the mode of production as a whole, which assigns to this narrowly ‘economic’ level its particular function and efficiency as it does all the others.”³³ Conveniently but, from the Althusserian standpoint, deceptively elided are the causal complexities of the social process and, specifically, of the intransitive effectivity exercised by the economy through the matrix effect of the whole. The elision proves crucial: through it, Jameson ensures that we are left with only one structure, that of the mode of production, which simply awaits correlation with the Hegelian Spirit. “Such momentary reunification would remain purely symbolic, a mere methodological fiction, were it not understood that social life is in its fundamental reality one and indivisible, a seamless web, a single inconceivable and transindividual process, in which there is no need to invent ways of linking language events and social upheavals or economic contradictions because on that level they were never separate from one another.”³⁴

Althusser, the arch-anti-Hegelian, drawn within the horizon of Hegelian Marxism! One has to marvel at Jameson’s audacity and what is tantamount to a conjuring trick. In effect, Althusser has been re-written in terms of the very “expressive causality” that it was his prime concern to critique. Gone are the contradictions internal to each instance; gone those between the various instances of the social formation; gone also, the action of the social formation on each practice and each contradiction; gone, in sum, the irreducible presence of multiple levels, the structure of structures, to be displaced by a concept of continuity across a homogeneous theoretical space.³⁵ The Hegelian process without a subject, it follows, is less the explanation of a process than the transitory expression of a process. None of which augurs well for the ensuing theorization of a political unconscious.

The Political Unconscious

In the discussion of Conrad’s *Lord Jim*, in the concluding chapter of *The Political Unconscious*, entitled “Romance and Reification,” Jameson takes time to consider the role of the sea in Conrad’s fiction, as a non-space of life and work that “is also the space of the degraded language of romance and daydream, of narrative commodity and the sheer distraction of ‘light literature.’”³⁶ A long quote follows, by way of illustration, in which Conrad draws a contrast between the passengers, otherwise the “mass of sleepers,” and the workers labouring in the engine-room, both contained within the bounds of the same steamer, as it ploughs its way through the ocean. Jameson himself

then picks up the refrain, rehearsing the contrast between these “sleepers” and the workers in existential terms, before proceeding to explore the deeper level of the consumable commodity, at which realities are transformed into style.³⁷ Next comes a reference to Berkleyan idealism, followed in turn by a long quotation from Marx and Engels’ *The German Ideology*, which Jameson expands along the following lines:

So this ground base of material production continues underneath the new formal structures of the modernist text, as indeed it could not but continue to do, yet conveniently muffled and intermittent, easy to ignore (or to rewrite in terms of the aesthetic, of sense perception, as here of the sounds and sonorous inscription of a reality you prefer not to conceptualize), its permanencies ultimately detectable only to the elaborate hermeneutic geiger counters of the political unconscious and the ideology of form.³⁸

At first blush, one scarcely knows what to make of it all: at one moment we confront a text that teeters upon paraphrase; at the next, an active and autonomous critique whose aim, seemingly, is to formulate the concepts or laws of the text’s production. An intriguing ambivalence, to be sure, but deployed to what effect? To disguise theoretical practice, one ventures to suggest, in the case of a critic who is struggling to *theorize* within the confines of an academic culture deeply suspicious, if not antagonistic, to abstraction. Alternatively, to remain attached to an object that, true to his instincts, the Hegelian theoretician is reluctant to relinquish. These, certainly, are part of the truth, but not the whole truth. The always insightful Terry Eagleton, discerns, more precisely, the operations of a dialectical criticism that “both evokes and displaces its object” by drawing this object onto its own critical terrain; and that, furthermore, eradicates the object’s existence “as a mere fiction of the subject’s power and desire.”³⁹ Such, we recall from above, are the dynamics of Hegelianism: subject and object pass into one another, to the advantage of the former, insofar as the object must itself be a creation of the subject. A creation or, possibly, as Jameson himself seems to be implying, a *re-creation*, through which the aesthetic strips the commodified object of its reified crust and so returns it to something like its pristine form.

Our suspicions are confirmed in what follows: for all his references to the world, society, and so on, Jameson is committed to extending the bounds of epistemology at the expense of ontology, through a process whereby thinking is transformed into an independent subject (the idea), as the demiurge of an empirical world. Thrown into relief by the same token is a rather curious paradox: a body of work rooted in the command “always to historicize” finds real history pressed beyond conceptualization, relegated to the status of an “absent cause” that is inaccessible other than in a textual form.⁴⁰ The consequences are severe: with all outlets to the Real blocked, the critic is left little option but to seek compensation in a style of writing that can leave even

his more sympathetic readers “engulfed by the threatened onset of an ideational congestion, a cerebral meltdown or synaptic overload, a sense of argumentative threads and suggestions, themes and variations, multiplying beyond any hope of keeping track of them.”⁴¹ If this is the example of the political unconscious at work, one is bound to conclude, the concept is ill-defined, except upon the basis of a most radical re-definition of the term “political.”

So beguiling is Jameson’s style that one crucial aspect of his criticism easily passes unnoticed, namely that it selects its texts very carefully. Typically, in the present instance, he focuses upon Conrad’s brand of “schizophrenic” writing. To blend with its object, the subject prefers a text deeply rooted in a Romantic “sensibility,” that positively cries out for readerly communion, as, to some degree, does any text that is inscribed within the bourgeois ideological horizon: “literature,” by definition, is the medium through which an author “expresses” his or her inner-truth to a similarly sensitized reader – hence the need for any “scientific” conceptualization to be smuggled into the critical commentary *obliquely*. Jameson’s treatment of the *chanson de geste*, by way of contrast, is brief and starkly objective: here, any intimacy between the bard and his audience is precluded from the outset, even as a convenient slippage from the Lacanian Real to “reality” enables the modern critic to discourse at relative length upon the social circumstances of the late Carolingian period, and even upon the niceties of the agon between good and evil. What precisely is the obstacle to the lovers’ tryst? The answer is surprising: nothing less than History itself, in the form of the radical alterity of the bard, who, in his capacity as a servant of his lord/Lord, as opposed to an interiorized subject of modernity, must remain austere aloof.

The End of Ideology

The Political Unconscious carries through several important theoretical displacements. The first we have already had occasion to consider, namely that from economics in the last instance – a concept of classically Althusserian extraction – to that of politics in the last instance. But, in the present context, it is a second displacement that is of more interest, namely that from ideology to politics. Interestingly, in this case, Jameson feels called upon to “explain himself.” Many of the findings of *The Political Unconscious*, he confesses, could well have been expressed more forcefully in a Marxist “manual,” that “would have as its object *ideological analysis*” and that would thereby require that he “settle its accounts with rival methods in a far more polemic spirit.”⁴² Such a prospect clearly does not appeal to Jameson in the slightest, notwithstanding his artful appeal to Althusser’s lemma of “class struggle within theory.”⁴³

The more cynically minded might argue that the substitution of an etiolated “politics” for the marked category of “ideology” could only have served one purpose: to avoid a term whose use, within the precincts of a conservative academy, could only have signalled a damaging allegiance to Marxism.⁴⁴ Even so, as the political tide began to turn decisively against the Left in the 1980s, Jameson was forced to

make a further reformist concession by actively disowning “ideology” altogether. The latter, we are informed, in *Postmodernism* (1991), no longer provides the key social function it formerly exercised; indeed, it may now be legitimate to speak of the “end of ideology,” understood in the sense of “conscious ideologies and political opinions,” which is to say, more strictly, understood as constitutive of “thought systems” or official philosophical ideologies. Jameson elaborates: “... the whole realm of *conscious* argument, and the very appearance of persuasion itself (or reasoned dissent)... has ceased to be functional in perpetuating and reproducing the system.”⁴⁵

The convenience of limiting ideology to *consciously held ideas* should be obvious: such reductionism leaves a space open, that of the unconscious, to be occupied by a less provocative concept: no longer politics but “culture,” sometimes to be celebrated in its postmodern guise, sometimes to be critiqued, but which, in either instance, now permeates the entire social fabric in the familiar guise of a Hegelian Spirit. Ideology, to be sure, will make an occasional appearance as an unconscious force, as when, in *The Seeds of Time*, in its postmodern guise, it is portrayed as a “symptom of the deeper structural changes in our society,” rooted in the mode of production.⁴⁶ But for the most part, it remains an eminently conscious phenomenon and therefore surplus to explanatory requirements, replaced by a culture that, among other things, serves as a convenient bridge over which to pass from Hegel to Marx, insofar as readily identifiable with the forces of commodification. In *A Singular Modernity*, these forces “colonize” the libidinal unconscious not through ideological and political activity but through commercialized practices and habits.⁴⁷ The reference, note, is to the distinctively *libidinal* unconscious: once the complex intervening layers of the Althusserian structure in dominance have been stripped away, little remains but for the Hegelian Moving Spirit to impregnate this unconscious directly, through the operations of an expressive causality.

The psychical effects of commodification are, it must be conceded, only too real and their pertinence to any Americanized culture undeniable, except that, as Terry Eagleton observed apropos Jameson’s work, the focus upon reification redirects attention away from class conflict and the material realities of the process of production towards consumption, notably of literary texts, and the quality of *lived experience* under capitalism.⁴⁸ This emphasis upon “lived experience”, it will transpire, is the key to Jameson’s notion of the unconscious. With the Real pressed, in Lacanian terms, beyond the bounds of language, confined within the realm of the unknowable, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to pass from the study of commodified forms to infrastructural dynamics.⁴⁹ The conclusion is then unavoidable: cut off from the material base, notably from the relations of production, Marxism, as a science dedicated to the analysis of class conflict, is a dead letter.

A hasty reading of Jameson’s more recent texts might lead one to conclude that the critic has finally relieved himself of the burden of the Marxist hermeneutic. But not so: theirs is a conceptual framework equipped for all weathers, and when, following

the global crisis of 2008, the wind began to blow from a different quarter, Jameson was quick to respond with *Representing Capital*, a work that significantly qualifies some of his earlier claims. While capitalism, in its complexity, continues to be *unrepresentable*, theoretically speaking, it was never Jameson's intention, or so he now assures us, to imply that it was *ineffable*, like some kind of mystery located beyond language and thought. And unsurprisingly, after having consistently dismissed Althusserianism as "now somewhat outmoded," with its "now extinguished" canon, Jameson now wishes to emphasize "what is still stimulating, suggestive, and even urgent about this unfinished theoretical business"; and so, quite soon, is discovering, after a close reading of *Capital*, that Marx's text "seems retroactively to confirm Althusser's insistence on system rather than subject."⁵⁰ The effect of such vacillations and contradictions, habitual throughout Jameson's texts, is to prohibit conclusions of any kind: no tidal waters can be found to compare to these shifting sands.

Theorizing the Ideological Unconscious

Petty-bourgeois intellectuals, Althusser himself insisted, "have to carry out a radical revolution in their ideas" if they are to think from a Marxist standpoint.⁵¹ Juan Carlos Rodríguez would agree, except with one important qualification: it is not with their *consciousness* that these intellectuals must break, as the philosopher implies, but with their ideological *unconscious* and, specifically, with their attachment to the subject/object dichotomy. Symptomatically, the Spaniard will announce his own particular revolution by literally casting all his previous intellectual endeavours through the window and into the street! Or so at least he informs us in the preface to *Theory and History of Ideological Production*.⁵²

And that was only the beginning of Rodríguez's own version of the epistemological "break." His first task was to do something that Althusser, for all his emphasis upon the forms of existence of historical individuality, never dared to do, namely to historicize the notion of the "subject." Hence, the calculated shock of his point of departure: "literature" has not always existed, at least in the traditional sense of the term, namely as "a series of discourses that are above all the *works* of a single *author*."⁵³ Defined thus, its existence coincides with the beginnings, in the fifteenth century, of bourgeois ideology itself, one of whose unquestioned assumptions will be that, while the "subject" may not be *unique* to literary discourse – it is shared by its equivalents in science, politics, etc. – literary discourse certainly *expresses* better than any other the *inner truth* of the subject or, in Rodríguez's own words, "the true intimacy of the 'subject/author of a work.'"⁵⁴

Ominously, Rodríguez's project is barely underway. "Author," "work," "subject," "expression" – these will be supplemented by others: the "free individual," "autonomy," "inwardness," "intimacy," "mind," "reason," "judgement," "tastes," "values," etc., in other words, the very conceptual tools that the bourgeois critic *thinks with*. These, in combination, will make up what the Spaniard calls "the productive logic of the

text,” which constitutes a whole system of concepts, structured around the notion of the subject.⁵⁵ This logic, furthermore, “is secreted from the bourgeois ideological matrix” consisting of the Subject/subject opposition and functional to a mode of production whose class articulation requires that “its” individuals think of themselves as “subjects,” each possessed of their own interior truth and, more fundamentally, possessed of their own labour power, which they are “free” to sell to a Subject, otherwise the owner of the means of production.⁵⁶ Without individuals who imagine themselves to be free, the capitalist system quite simply cannot function, or so at least Rodríguez wishes to argue.

While doubtless the above constitutes a thoughtful elaboration of Althusser’s work, it does not depart fundamentally therefrom. That is about to change as Rodríguez advances into uncharted territory.

For Althusser, it will be recalled, ideology was the discourse of the subject; for Rodríguez, the discourse of the subject was the product of a distinctively bourgeois ideology, the historically limited nature of which is clear if we compare its ideological matrix with that of the preceding mode, namely the lord (Lord)/serf (servant) matrix characteristic of feudalism, and similarly functional to the re-production of feudal relations.⁵⁷ Under feudalism, the last thing that the serf imagined him/herself to be was “free,” other than (in special cases) free to serve this as opposed to that lord, to whom they were otherwise “bonded.” But a word of warning: it is wrong to think of a dominating class “consciously” exploiting a dominated. In reality, people are collectively convinced of the truth, as it appears to them, of the human condition, are caught up in social relations that, however “imaginary,” are objectively “secreted”; even the lord *really* believes he is a lord, just as the free subject *really* believes s/he is a free subject. The contrast with, and the threat to, critical orthodoxy could not be clearer. Gone is the truth of nature, displaced by an ideological secretion, to be formalized as a distinctively *ideological unconscious*:

The notion of the subject (and the whole problematic within which it is inscribed) is radically historical because... it derives directly (and exclusively) from the very matrix of the bourgeois ideological unconscious: the “serf” can never be a “subject,” etc. But for that very reason also the theoretical perspectives originating in the same bourgeois ideology will never be able to accept that their own unconscious is at root an ideological (that is to say, historical) issue, but will always believe that the elements and logic peculiar to such an “unconscious” constitute the truth about the human condition, in all its clarity.⁵⁸

To drive home this extension of Althusserian thought, Rodríguez has to rethink the functioning of the social formation and the role of ideology within it. Althusser, to recall, tied ideology to the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), conceding only parenthetically

the fact that ideology was “originally” secreted in the social infrastructure. The Spaniard, by way of contrast, aims to locate ideology unambiguously in the relations of production: “... the dialectic inscribed in the literary texts (that which produces them as such, their internal logic) is what shapes an ideological unconscious. The latter is ‘born’ not in the School, but in the interior of the social relations themselves, and derives directly from these relations.”⁵⁹ In effect, Althusser’s original model has been turned on its head: ideology is now firmly rooted not in the superstructural State Apparatus but in the base component, whence it is circulated through the social formation: “... it seems clear that the functionality of literary discourse and its real meaning for our societies are issues that need to be sought more in the interior of the ideological level proper than in the apparatuses that materialize and reproduce them.”⁶⁰

In his second seminal work, *State, Stage, Language*, Rodríguez provided more of an overview of the ideological dialectic, which allegedly takes the form of a double articulation: the elements secreted by the ideological unconscious are reproduced within the ISA, where they are formalized, thematized, theorized, etc. by philosophers, critics, writers, “situated within the horizon of a class”; once processed, ideology is then fed back into a generalized unconscious that pervades the whole of society and is accepted by everyone as “the very truth of nature, as being as natural as their own skin” or, alternatively, in the form of a “humus.”⁶¹ Certain details call for clarification. Firstly, while it registers the fact that the base determines the superstructure asymmetrically (“in the last instance”), Rodríguez’s schema specifically allows for the reciprocal effectivity of the superstructure upon the base; this is important, given the lurking presence of versions of vulgar Marxism. Secondly, it is strictly misleading to talk in terms of a causal *sequence*, involving a “before” and an “after,” as opposed to a circular process that is “always already” in action. Thirdly, while the “humus” metaphor effectively captures the matrix effect of the social whole, it is not without its dangers, as Rodríguez was the first to realize. Crucially, unless qualified, it overloads the notion of continuity across a homogeneous theoretical space, after the fashion of a Hegelian spirit. What needs to be asserted, by way of a counter-balance, is the restless dialectical interplay within and between structures and, above all, the essentially conflictual nature of class relations, even within the relatively autonomous, class-dominated realm of the literary norm:

because it is *unconscious* and therefore *latent*, ideology never coincides exactly with itself; and also, because it is *objective*, this same ideology has cracks and crevices everywhere (which need to be filled in endlessly, which is what gives rise to the norm). Literature, then, because it is conscious/unconscious, and because it takes an objective form, as a productive process, can be at odds with its growing medium and its own intentions. I speak, in short, of writing qua ideological struggle, as it is

conducted inside the hegemonic ideology proper.⁶²

To illustrate how the ideological unconscious works in practice, let us consider the thematic of “tears” and its treatment in a number of historically disparate works. To contain our discussion within workable limits, we will concentrate upon specific historical junctures, encapsulated in key texts, beginning with the twelfth-century epic, *Poema de Mio Cid* (*Poem of the Cid*).

Feudal Tears: “From his eyes so strongly crying”

“De los sos ojos tan fuerte mientras lorando” (From his eyes so strongly crying), we read of the Cid as he sadly departs into exile.⁶³ Modern readers may well protest that such a typically feminine expression of grief ill becomes a warrior knight. But that, of course, is precisely the point that Rodríguez will go on to make: the habits of modern readers are rooted in the prevailing ideological unconscious, which dictate that the Cid’s tears be construed along petty-bourgeois lines, as the expression of a privatized “sensibility.” A reading attentive to the historicity of ideological artefacts will interpret the tears alternatively, along *organicist* lines, which is to say, as the “substantial,” “exteriorized” display of a “public” grief. As Rodríguez explains: “Strictly speaking, for feudal organicism the *interior/exterior* relation is never posed as a problem.”⁶⁴ The Cid must therefore cry because it is important that his sadness be raised above the level of the constituent ambiguity of *this world* and seen, as God might see it, in all its purity.

And that of course is only the beginning. What must be further understood is that the absence of an interior, therefore, private sphere is dependent upon the substantial nature of feudal signs or, to be more exact – for here it is vitally important to make the necessary distinctions – of *signatures*, understood as traced by the voice of the Lord: “... within the feudal horizon everyone ‘knew’ who was a noble and who was not, who was a serf and who was not.”⁶⁵ But it is not simply a question of semantics: at the syntactic level as well, the *Poema*’s halting, spasmodic, pro- and retrogressive paratactic structures provides a similar God’s-eye view of events, in stark contrast to the perspectival norms of the “Renaissance.”⁶⁶

Pulling back even further, what the epic’s syntax betrays is the dominance of the “figural” historicity characteristic of feudal organicism, for which the future is already written, in the sense of pre-ordained, along the lines of the biblical model: the Old Testament as a “prefiguration” of the New, as a half-truth that will only be fully realized later. Thereby legitimized is an ideological unconscious that further conceives human life as articulated *dualistically*, through the opposition between *this* life and the *next*: “... the passage of Man on this earth (his earthly life) and the need to “find salvation” after death.”⁶⁷ With one important qualification in the case of the *Cid*: transcendence is displaced along secular lines, towards the opposition between the servant and his lord, in *this world*, in accordance with relevant feudal hierarchies.

That said, the key dualism is repeated in the relation between the secular lord and “his” Lord in the *next*: “In the *Poem of the Cid*, the duality is perfect: what Rodrigo does during the time of his ‘exile’ is exactly the ‘prefiguration,’ the transparency of what will later be his ‘plenitude’: recognition by ‘his’ Lord.”⁶⁸ The allegorized narrative that is the vehicle of this dualism will be progressively corroded by the one-dimensional chronology of its bourgeois counterpart.

The Garcilasan Sonnet: From Ice to Tears

The dominant seigneurial ideology was contested from the fifteenth century onwards by bourgeois ideology in its first, emergent form, otherwise *animism*, as reformulated and theorized by Rodríguez. Symptomatically, the ideological role of “tears” is radically transformed, as is immediately apparent from the famous Garcilasan eighth sonnet.

A Dafne ya los brazos le crecían
y en luengos ramos vueltos se mostraban;
en verdes hojas vi que se tornaban
los cabellos qu’el oro escurecían;
de áspera corteza se cubrían
los tiernos miembros que aun bullendo ’staban;
los blancos pies en tierra se hincaban
y en torcidas raíces se volvían.

Aquel que fe la causa de tal daño
a fuerza de llorar, crecer hacía
este árbol, que con lágrimas regaba.

¡Oh miserable estado, oh mal tamaño
que con llorarla crezca cada día
la causa y la razón por que lloraba!⁶⁹

Daphne’s arms were already growing
and turning into long branches;
in green leaves I saw was being transformed
the hair that outshone gold;

in rough bark were becoming covered
the soft members that were still moving;
the white feet in the earth were taking root
and becoming twisted roots.

He who was the cause of such harm,
by dint of crying, caused to grow
this tree, that he watered with his tears.

Oh, miserable state! How great the misfortune
that the tears spilt on its account each day should compound

the cause of and reason for the crying.

To move from the epic text to the Garcilasan sonnet is, perforce, to move from one ideology, through which the serf/servant, qua commentator, is called upon to decipher the allegorical signatures of the World, to another in which the proto-subject, otherwise the beautiful soul, views the literal object from *his*, that is to say, Apollo's perspective ("I saw"), in a chronological present ("were still moving"), caught up in the process of the moment. Gone is the static hierarchy of lineages and "blood" – rungs in a vertical Chain of Being that accords to each object its natural niche in the Creation – in favour of a new ideology, that of *animism*, which arrives to grease the workings of an emergent capitalist mercantilism, against the backdrop of a new, heliocentric cosmology, in which, all things are bound together by the all-pervasive spiritual force of the Sun's rays.

The key to the workings of animism is the "dialectic of tears," enacted in the soul's failed attempt to unite with the loved object; tears that, in radical contrast to their substantial, organicist counterpart, are constructed "as pure, direct secretions of the inner spirit."⁷⁰ Here, it is particularly important to proceed with critical caution, for the simple reason that the apparent familiarity of the scenario positively invites misrecognition. Let it be emphasized: these are not the tears of the petty-bourgeois subject, of Romantic extraction, but of the animist sensible soul, through whose transparency the Soul of the World finds expression. Together with "sighs," tears so configured externalize the frustration of the soul, whose love finds no exit from a newly created but still embryonic interior realm.⁷¹ Such is the frustration of Apollo, before whom the interiorized spirit that is Daphne is transformed into a "vegetable spirit."

We now begin to grasp *in practice* the importance of the theoretical concepts constitutive of the Althusserian problematic. For as Rodríguez had argued at length, even before entering upon the detailed analysis of the Petrarchan lyric, it was the conflict between the feudal and capitalist modes that explains the *dominance* of the political level during the transition and, just as importantly, its *autonomy*, materialized in the absolutist state and *determined* in the last instance by the economy: "In both cases, the constitution of the political level as autonomous and dominant is symptomatic of the tendency, within social relations, for bourgeois relations to dominate feudal ones."⁷² The existence of a *public* space, the Spaniard goes on to argue, implies, as a corollary, that of its *private* equivalent, otherwise the interiorized realm of the beautiful soul. At which point, distinctions become of the greatest importance: the claim is not that social transformations of a generalized kind *directly* caused the birth of lyric poetry; still less that there are no connections between the general and the particular; Rodríguez is rather arguing for the existence of *structural mediations* between the political instance and the otherwise remote realm of lyric poetry, even

as he recognizes the relative autonomy of the respective levels. Thus: "... although it 'believes' absolutely in the division between private and public, animism presupposes, through its own internal logic, the existence of a special transparency between the 'inside' and 'outside' of signs only in those cases in which the soul is able truly to express itself in each thing."⁷³

The Sentimental Novel: Jorge Isaacs' 'María'

Animist ideology was driven underground in the seventeenth century, only to re-emerge subsequently in a petty-bourgeois guise in the following, in which form it functioned, and would continue to function, as the underside to the classic forms of bourgeois ideology. Let us consider a passage from Jorge Isaacs' *María* in which the protagonist, Efraín, agonises over his love for his beloved.

I went to bed when it struck two in the same clothes I was wearing. María's handkerchief, still fragrant with the perfume that she always used, crumpled and wet with her tears, received on the pillow the tears that rolled from my eyes as from a fountain that would never run dry.

If those that I still spill, on recalling the days that preceded my journey, serve to moisten this pen that records them; if it were possible once more, even for a single moment, for my mind to discover in my heart the extent of my secret pain, so as to reveal it, the lines that I am going to trace would be beautiful for those who have cried, but perhaps terrible for me.⁷⁴

The plot of the novel is summary in the extreme. Efraín, the son of a rich, learned landowner, also a poet, and María, cousin of Efraín, live an intensely idealized, chaste relationship in the midst of an idyllic setting in Colombia. That is until María, of Jewish extraction, is stricken with a fatal, inherited illness and dies before Efraín is able to return from his studies in Europe. All of this in the setting of a social order consisting of a variety of levels, each disposed in their allotted place, the whole pervaded by the paternalism of Efraín's family and redolent of a regime that is at the same time neo-colonial, neo-feudal, and pre-capitalist. Efraín, according to Rodríguez and Álvaro Salvador, "treats María with all the clichés typical of an aristocratic, gallant culture, typical of the 'animism' that begins with Petrarch, at the same time that the text itself intensifies the purely abstract, ideological values of the idolatry of which his beloved is the object."⁷⁵

We are talking here about an ideology made up of elements drawn from a residual organicism and animism; more importantly, about an animism that, to reiterate, is re-emerging after a period of forced hibernation and, at the same time, mutating into a distinctively petty-bourgeois ideology. Subserving to the dominant ideology of the

classic bourgeoisie, namely empiricism, this new ideology, which numbers among its most prominent exponents Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel, masquerades under the guise of “sensitivity,” condensed in the image of tears as these pour forth in the new genre of the “sentimental novel.” Rodríguez and Salvador explain: “The tears are transformed into an archetypal value in the context of a petty-bourgeois mentality, an archetypal value that manifests itself even in daily life.”⁷⁶

Like any ideological unconscious, this petty-bourgeois variation performs a crucial function in the reproduction of the prevailing social relations. Specifically it acts as a conveyor belt “between the values of the dominant classes and the unconscious of the dominated classes,” along which are conveyed goodness, idealized love, fraternity, filial love, beauty, religious sentiment and other such emotions, and human qualities that serve to bind the social classes together in perfect harmony.⁷⁷ In the process, the subdivisions of these classes, notably proletarians, peasants, indigenous elements, marginal groups, etc. are moulded into the category of “the people.” As the same authors elaborate:

The dominating classes have a vested interest in speaking of the “people” because this term shrouds them in a curtain of equality, but they do so indirectly, so as to make the curtain appear more credible, through the mediation of the petty-bourgeois ideologues. The latter do sincerely believe in the existence of the “people,” precisely through being where they are, namely perched between one class and another; perched insofar as not identifying fully with either class but with both simultaneously.⁷⁸

Two Marxisms

Through the figures of Jameson and Rodríguez, we have been able to compare and contrast two cognate concepts: the political unconscious and the ideological unconscious, both mediated through the work of Althusser but otherwise framed by two very different problematics, namely those of Hegelian Marxism and its structural counterpart. The difference between both Marxisms cannot be sufficiently emphasized: the Hegelian variant takes as its point of departure the subject/object or agency/structure binary; its structural variant, the social formation structured on the basis of a mode of production.

The major problem that confronted Jameson, in his effort to theorize a *political* unconscious, was the centrality accorded to *consciousness* within his Hegelian paradigm. This centrality, predictably enough, encouraged him to gravitate towards the early Marx and the notion of alienation, in other words, towards “Man,” as explored in various major figures of Western Marxism, in an attempt to assimilate to Marxist critical theory the fundamental Hegelian category of a reified culture. At

the same time, the American registered the strong sense in Marx of how structures of social relations shape human consciousness, which found him having constantly to negotiate the gulf that separated Marxism from Hegelianism. His first task was to strip the Althusserian social formation of its structural complexity, so as to leave in place only an Absolute Spirit, masquerading as the spirit of capitalism. Once this was achieved, it was then feasible to imagine how the individual unconscious, of libidinal extraction, might be injected directly with a consumerist reflex. What might have seemed like a reductive concentration on the fetishism of commodities in fact proved to be experientially amenable to the American academy and doubtless explains the continuing appeal of what is otherwise a dense and difficult body of work.

Rodríguez, by way of contrast, took the unconscious as his point of departure, understood as the secretion of an ideological matrix itself determined in the last instance by the economy, which is to say mediated through the matrix effect of the social formation functioning as a whole. This encouraged him, predictably, to gravitate towards the late Marx and, specifically, towards *Capital*, which the Spaniard, like Althusser, insisted on viewing as the authentic Marx. Of course, the author of *Theory and History of Ideological Production* accepted the possibility that an individual might achieve *conscious* awareness of his or her ideological entrapment and thereby take informed decisions in practice, in the light of existence of social contradictions. That said, such decisions needed to be based on a theoretical understanding. If Rodríguez did not begin with Man, it was in order to break with the mystificatory force that this concept exercises ideologically. Like Althusser and, allegedly, Marx, he preferred to start instead with the structural cause that maintains the illusion of the centrality of Man. For this displacement of the free subject from its position of eminence, the Spaniard was to pay a heavy price, namely the non-reception of his work within the academy and elsewhere; at which point his ideological unconscious finally connects with its libidinal equivalent: in both cases there are things that people just do not want to know.

Notes

1. This article first appeared in translation in *Pensar Desde Abajo* 5 (2016): 193-224.
2. Ian Buchanan, *Fredric Jameson: Live Theory* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006) 120-121.
3. For example, Adam Roberts, *Fredric Jameson* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000); Steven Helmling, *The Success and Failure of Fredric Jameson: Writing the Sublime, and the Dialectic of Critique* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); Buchanan, *Fredric Jameson: Live Theory*.
4. Rodríguez's doctoral thesis, based on research conducted in the late 1960s and early-70s, has recently been published in an updated form as *Para una teoría de la literatura 40 años de Historia*, (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2015). In it, the Althusserian ranges over the totality of Western "theory."
5. See Juan Manuel Caamaño, *The Literary Theory of Juan Carlos Rodríguez: Contemporary Spanish Cultural Critic* (Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008).
6. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes, (Harmondsworth and London: Penguin Books and New Left Review, 1976) 92.
7. Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Harmondsworth and London: Penguin and New Left Review, 1973) 107.
8. Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London and New York: Verso, 1990) 199, 232.
9. Althusser, *For Marx* 233, italics in original.
10. *For Marx* 234-235.
11. For a detailed discussion, see Malcolm K. Read, "Juan Carlos Rodríguez and Slavoj Žižek: the Ideological versus Libidinal Unconscious" (forthcoming).
12. Althusser, *Writings on Psychoanalysis: Freud and Lacan*, ed. Olivier Corpet and François Matheron, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996) 52, italics in original.
13. Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London: NLB, 1970) 35.
14. Marx, *Grundrisse* 101.
15. Althusser and Balibar, *Reading Capital* 41.
16. *Reading Capital* 42; for a discussion of the subtle terminological developments in Althusser from *For Marx* to *Reading Capital*, see Norman Geras, *Literature of Revolution: Essays on Marxism* (London: Verso, 1986) 102. The details of Althusser's argument have not saved him from being charged, along with Derrida and Habermas and other such philosophers, with underplaying ontology. Bhaskar explains: "What happens in the case of these authors is that they implicitly inherit an implicit ontology, which is the positivist ontology, the epistemology of which they reject, so that you get a super-idealism." See Roy Bhaskar, *From Science to Emancipation: Alienation and the Actuality of Enlightenment* (New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, London: Sage Publications, 2002) 63.
17. David-Hillel Ruben *Marxism and Materialism: A Study in Marxist Theory of Knowledge* (Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1977) 153.
18. *Reading Capital* 156.
19. *Reading Capital* 156.
20. *Reading Capital* 189.
21. Andrew Collier, *Critical Realism: An Introduction to Roy Bhaskar's Philosophy* (London and New York: Verso, 1994) 68.
22. Jameson, *Sartre: The Origins of a Style* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984) 87.

23. Jameson, *Sartre* 205.
24. Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971) xii.
25. Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1973) 18.
26. Jameson, *Marxism and Form* 28.
27. *Marxism and Form* 41.
28. For this emphasis upon de-ontologization in Jameson, I am indebted to Alan Norrie, "Who is 'the Prince'? Hegel and Marx in Jameson and Bhaskar," *Historical Materialism* 20.2 (2012) 75-104.
29. Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972) 106.
30. Jameson, *The Prison-House of Language* 106.
31. *The Prison-House of Language* 108-09.
32. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981) 20.
33. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* 36.
34. *The Political Unconscious* 40.
35. As even some of Jameson's more sympathetic commentators have felt obliged to conclude, this simply will not do, and fully justifies the complaint that such Hegelian synthesizing "threatens to homogenize the antitheses [Jameson] brings together." See Helmling, *The Success and Failure of Fredric Jameson* 143. His Marxist critics have been correspondingly more severe, taking the position that Jameson is in fact not terribly interested in Althusser's work in itself but more concerned to resolve problems internal to his brand of Hegelian Marxism. Callinicos, for example, argues that Jameson's attempt to enlist the support of Althusser in his Hegelian project, if successful, would have been a "remarkable feat," since Lukács' analysis of reification was a prime example of the kind of expressive totality that the French philosopher was most concerned to critique. See Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989) 131. Eagleton similarly argues that Jameson never seriously took on board the Althusserian critique of Marxist historicism. See Terry Eagleton, *Against the Grain: Selected Essays* (London: Verso 1986) 73.
36. Jameson *The Political Unconscious* 213.
37. *The Political Unconscious* 214.
38. *The Political Unconscious* 215.
39. Eagleton, *Against the Grain* 70, 76.
40. *The Political Unconscious* 35.
41. *The Success and Failure of Fredric Jameson* 122.
42. *The Political Unconscious* 12.
43. *The Political Unconscious* 12.
44. An early review of *The Political Unconscious* by Jerry Aline Flieger, "The Prison-House of Ideology: Critic as Inmate," *Diacritics* 12.3 (1982) 47-56, symptomatically carries the title "The Prison-House of Ideology." The implication, surely, is that Jameson has misnamed his work.
45. Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991) 398, emphasis

added.

46. Jameson, *The Seeds of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) xii.
47. Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London and New York: Verso, 2002) 12.
48. Eagleton, *Against the Grain* 63.
49. Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2009) 334.
50. Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* 345; *The Seeds of Time* 167; *Valences of the Dialectic* 337; *Representing Capital: A Commentary of Volume One* (London and New York: Verso, 2011) 40.
51. Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971) 12.
52. In what follows I reprise some of the conclusions arrived at in Read, "What We Talk About When We Talk About Marxism: Juan Carlos Rodríguez, Althusser, And The Ideological Unconscious," *Mediations* 29.1 (2015) 69-100.
53. Juan Carlos Rodríguez, *Theory and History of Ideological Production: The First Bourgeois Literatures (the 16th Century)*, trans. Malcolm K. Read (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2002) 17, italics in original.
54. Rodríguez, *Theory and History of Ideological Production* 17.
55. *Theory and History of Ideological Production* 18.
56. *Theory and History of Ideological Production* 19, translation amended.
57. To be fair, Althusser confesses in *On the Reproduction*, in his replay of his discussion of secular mirroring, "that, in capitalist societies, religious ideolog... no longer plays the same role that it did in social formations based on 'serfdom.'" Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, trans. G. M. Goshgarian (London and New York: Verso, 2014) 198.
58. *Theory and History of Ideological Production* 21.
59. *Theory and History of Ideological Production* 23.
60. *Theory and History of Ideological Production* 24.
61. Rodríguez, *State, Stage, Language: The Production of the Subject* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008) 11.
62. Rodríguez, *State, Stage, Language* 22.
63. *Poema de Mio Cid*. ed. Colin Smith (Madrid: Cátedra, 1972) 1. Translation by author and subsequently.
64. *Theory and History of Ideological Production* 159.
65. *Theory and History of Ideological Production* 159.
66. See Read, *The Birth and Death of Language: Spanish Literature and Linguistics: 1300-1700* (Madrid: José Porrúa Turanzas, 1983) 10-11 for further detail. However, Read's text also exhibits an unconscious allegiance to the notion of a transhistorical subject that, for whatever reasons, fails to express its interiority fully under feudalism. For a self-criticism, see Read *Educating the Educators: Hispanism and its Institutions* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003) 76-78.
67. Rodríguez, *La literatura del pobre* (Granada: De Guante Blanco / Comares, 1994) 138-39.
68. Rodríguez, *La literatura del pobre* 140.
69. Garcilaso de la Vega, *Poesías completas*, Ángel L. Prieto de Paula. (Madrid: Castalia, 1989) 58-59.
70. *Theory and History of Ideological Production* 148.

71. *Theory and History of Ideological Production* 196.
72. *Theory and History of Ideological Production* 36.
73. *Theory and History of Ideological Production* 161.
74. Jorge Isaacs, *María* (México: Rei, 1988) 284.
75. Rodríguez and Álvaro Salvador, *Introducción al estudio de la literature hispanamericana: Las literaturas criollas de la independencia a la revolución* (Madrid: Akal, 1987) 146.
76. Rodríguez and Salvador, *Introducción al estudio de la literature hispanamericana* 133.
77. *Introducción al estudio de la literature hispanamericana* 136.
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The Political Unconscious. Fredric Jameson. The Political Unconscious. Narrative as a socially symbolic act. u"{{Lf<Â Yet the unavoidably Hegelian tone of the retrospective framework of The Political Unconscious should not be taken to imply that such polemic interÂ ventions are not of the highest priority for Marxist cultural criticism. On the contrary, the latter must necessarily also be what Althusser has demanded of the practice of Marxist philosophy proper, namely "class struggle within theory. " Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981), p. 280: "Nostromo is thus ultimately, if you like, no longer a political or historical novel, no longer a realistic representation of history; yet in the very movement in which it represses such content and seeks to demonstrate the impossibility of such representationÂ This article explores psychoanalytic attitudes to homosexuality and uses the concept of social unconscious as an aid. Group-analytic silences around the subject are explored and clinical material presented to show a more affirmative stance. Read more. The Political Unconscious integrates and refines a vast body of theoretical work, demonstrating a superb mastery of the field of contemporary criticism. The result is a compelling, forceful argument in favor of the primacy of Marxism over contending strategies of interpretation." â€• Nineteenth-Century Fiction.Â "Fredric Jameson is the best Marxist critic writing today, possibly the best social-historically oriented critic of our time. It seems impossible for him to write anything that is not illuminating in an original way. There is no cant, no clichÃ©, no jargon in his work, only sustained dialectical reflection, His thesis concerning the political content of 'the unconscious' is provocative but theoretically grounded and demonstrated by close readings of texts worthy of the best formalists. The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act is a 1981 book by the Marxist literary theorist Fredric Jameson. Often cited as a powerful overview and methodological guide, it is the work with which Jameson made his greatest impact. The book has been the subject of a commentary, Jameson, Althusser, Marx (1984), by William C. Dowling, who believes that its main idea had been previously outlined by Terry Eagleton and notes that it is influenced by such thinkers as A. J. Greimas