Stroupe

**The Success and Failure of Fredrick Jameson**

[T]his study’s chief focus [is] the motivations animating the notorious difficulty of Jameson’s writing. Every commentator on Jameson acknowledges this salient quality of his prose, though only Terry Eagleton, so far as I know, has considered it at length, and that in a fashion interesting (and interested) enough that I have written about it elsewhere. It is my premise here that Jameson’s importance as a culture-critic is less in his (supposed) conclusions or arguments than in the subtle and complicated mediations of his writing itself. Jameson’s prose is masterful in its encyclopedic command of dauntingly complex materials, yet its effect is less of mastery than of being mastered, as if the predicaments of our historical moment are transmitting their force to every sentence he writers—and this, in my view, is Jameson’s peculiar “success,” what makes his writing potent and compelling even for many who do not share his Marxist commitment.

That the *writing* must be the condition of this success, Jameson himself prescribes. He projects critique as an “impossible task,” and insists that it be written in “dialectical sentences” that not merely analyze or expound, but enact, perform—indeed, *suffer*⎯the contradictions of their subject matters, the predicaments of society and culture in general, and the “inevitable failure” of the socialist tradition in particular. Such a “dialectical” project labors under a kind of failure imperative: in can succeed only by failing, and my failing only in especially and appropriately demanding and difficult ways. It must evoke the difficulties it aspires to solve…. (3-4)

Helmling, Steven. *The Success and Failure of Fredric Jameson Writing, the Sublime, and the Dialectic of Critique*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001. *Print.*