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**Parts Related to Wholes and the
Nature of Subaltern Opposition**

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Parts Related to Wholes and the Nature of Subaltern Opposition

The cultural critic is not happy with civilization, to which alone he owes his discontent¹ - Theodor W. Adorno

The premise of this essay is that what we can call "a crisis in representation" in literary studies since the late 1960s has altered the way in which literary historians can do "cultural criticism." A major symptom of that crisis is the breakdown of an organic historicist model in which certain great texts were granted the capacity synecdochally to represent the complexity of a culture that produced them. As Lionel Trilling put it, "certain artists . . . contain a large part of the dialectic [of their culture] within themselves."² Within organic historicism sophisticated literary history and criticism in itself became one version of political and cultural criticism. For instance, Northrop Frye could argue that the "tendency of critics to move from critical to larger social issues" is a natural outgrowth of the "balance" between criticism's two aspects, "one turned toward the structure of literature as a whole and one toward other cultural phenomena that form its environment."³

The breakdown of organic historicism has affected literary critics intent on doing cultural criticism in a variety of ways. Most obviously, it has forced them to come up with different ways of relating literary texts to the cultures of which they are a part. But it has also altered their sense of the relationship among literary texts, the cultures that produced them, and the more encompassing world of "nature" of which both texts and cultures are

a part. To simplify, one way in which organic historicists granted literary texts their representative capacity was to emphasize their use of symbolic language, which established a complicated and yet interconnected relationship between language and what it represented. For most literary critics doing cultural criticism today that relationship is no longer a natural, organic one but an arbitrary, socially-constructed one. In addition, the breakdown of organic historicism has posed a challenge to the metaphor of the body politic and how individuals and groups relate to the political entity of which they are a part. That challenge is especially apparent in debates in the United States over how multiculturalism affects the ideal of E Pluribus Unum.

In this essay I argue that, despite the breakdown of an organicist model, the relation of parts to wholes should remain an important focus of study. I also offer an alternative to synecdoche as a way of formulating that relation. My alternative is what classical logicians call "subaltern opposition." It by no means solves all of the problems of contemporary cultural criticism. Nonetheless, by describing more accurately some of the situations contributing to our current crisis in representation, it helps to clarify some of the confusions resulting from efforts to find alternatives to the model of organic historicism.

I

As a way of illustrating how attention to the relation between parts and wholes can give us insight into the problematics of representation in the political as well as aesthetic sense, I'll

start by juxtaposing two passages from a literary text written during a previous crisis of representation in the United States: Moby-Dick. A crucial question facing the country at the time that Melville wrote Moby-Dick was how individual states would relate to the federal government, a question drawing heightened attention to the questions of just who "the people" were that constituted the union and whether all of them were being represented by it. In terms of these questions of representation, Moby-Dick suggests that the figure for an ideal democracy is synecdoche, in which each part has the capacity to stand for or represent the whole. There are few better expressions of the synecdochal ideal of democracy than Ishmael's celebration of "that democratic dignity which, on all hands, radiates without end from God, Himself! The great God absolute! The center and circumference of all democracy! His omnipresence, our divine equality."⁴ Democracy in the ideal is a perfect organic union in which each part can express the "just Spirit of Equality" (MD 105) that both serves as Ishmael's muse and offers divine sanction to the American experiment.

Nonetheless, the ideal image presented in the first of the "Knights and Squires" chapters is supplemented in the second chapter of that name by a very different description of how the isolatoes making up the crew of the Pequod are actually federated. To be sure, in his description Ishmael evokes an image of a shared, democratic humanity with his metaphor of the "common continent of man" (MD 108). But he does so only to insist that the Pequod's Anacharsis Cloutz deputation does not acknowledge that commonality.

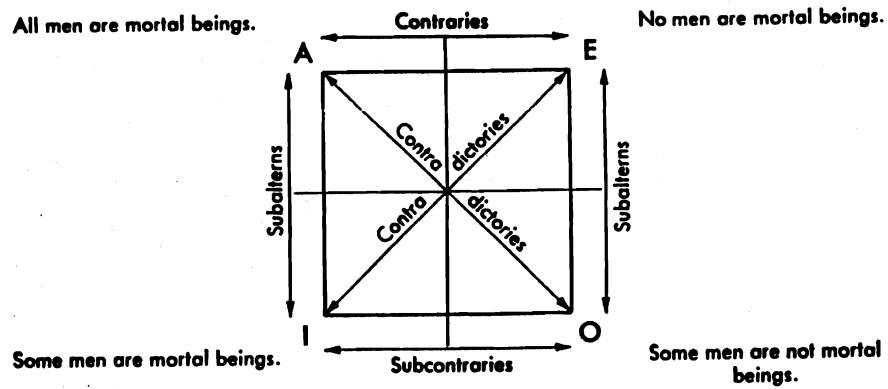
It is not united by a shared identity because each isolato lives on a "separate continent of his own" (MD 108). These isolatoes are unified through an act of federation, one that establishes relationships of subordination.

This subordination first of all evokes the relationship of individual states to the Federal government -- a relationship hotly contested in 1850. Second, it makes clear that unity aboard the Pequod is achieved at the cost of a hierarchical order, which is at odds with the democratic ideal in which parts can speak for the whole. Not synecdochal, the relation between parts and wholes can productively be described as subaltern.

The term "subaltern" is widely used today in literary and cultural studies to describe present or former subjects of colonialism. Indeed, "subaltern studies" has become the name of a separate field of study and a journal. "Subaltern" can also refer to someone of subordinate rank in the military. Both of these meanings can be applied to the hierarchical order on board the Pequod, in which colonial subjects acting as harpooners are placed in control of mates who, as in a military unit, occupy subordinate positions in relation to their captain. When I use "subaltern" to describe the representational relation between parts and wholes, however, I draw on its meaning in classical logic, a meaning that most likely led to the other two.

In order to chart immediate inferences that can be drawn from the affirmation or denial of single categorical premises, medieval logicians constructed a square of oppositions. On this square

propositions contradict one another, are contrary to one another, subcontrary to one another or exist in subaltern opposition. Contradictory and contrary oppositions are familiar. A subaltern one is not. Subaltern opposition involves the relation of a particular to a universal of which it is a part. A particular exists in a subaltern relation to a universal because the truth of the universal governs its truth whereas the particular's truth does not govern the truth of the universal. For instance, the statement "Some men are mortal beings" is subaltern to the statement "All men are mortal beings" because, if the latter is true, the former must be, whereas the truth of the former does not guarantee the truth of the latter.



The subaltern nature of the relationship on board the Pequod signals a crisis in representation because, if in the democratic ideal of synecdoche parts can speak for the whole, by definition a subaltern cannot represent the whole of which it is a part.

In what follows I will look at how the subaltern can provide insight into our present crisis in representation. My point is not

that all relations are subaltern ones. I do, however, argue that it is important to recognize them when they exist, for a relation of subalternity establishes certain limits that need to be taken into account. Nonetheless, within those limits there is a range of possibilities that also need to be acknowledged. I will look at both the limits and possibilities of subaltern opposition in terms of (1) literary texts' relation to the cultures of which they are a part, (2) the relationship between "cultural constructs" and "natural givens," and (3) the relationship of political subjects to the sovereign powers that govern them.

My sense of the possibilities allowed by subaltern opposition is deeply indebted to a brief passage in Jacques Derrida's Grammatology that describes the "logic of the supplement." The "logic of the supplement" is important to my argument because it complicates the dialectic logic that governs relations of contradiction. Based on a principle of identity, contradiction assumes that a thing cannot at the same time and in the same respect be and not be. Thus if one proposition is true, its contradictory proposition must be false. According to the logic of dialectic, contradiction can be overcome only through an Aufhebung in which a synthesis incorporates the identities of the opposed entities.

The logic of the supplement challenges dialectical logic by calling into question the principle of identity on which contradiction is based. Whereas dialectical logic assumes the separate identity of entities in relations of contradiction, the

logic of the supplement implies that, because the identity of contradictory entities is defined in part by that which it opposes, what seem to be mutually exclusive identities are in fact mutually dependent ones. An entity is defined not only by what it is, but also by what it is not. The supreme example of this supplementary logic is writing, which cannot be writing unless the material signs that constitute it represent something that it is not.

Discussing the logic of the supplement in a chapter on Rousseau, Derrida argues that writing becomes a "dangerous supplement" the moment when it, as representation, "claims to be presence and the sign in itself"; that is, when we forget that it is not the thing that it represents but only its supplement. This dangerous claim to presence is always present because "the concept of the supplement . . . harbors within itself two significations whose cohabitation is as strange as it is necessary." On the one hand, the supplement is an addition to an already existing plenitude. It merely represents that which is sufficient in itself. On the other hand, Derrida adds, supplementation is necessary because of a lack in that which it represents. In this sense it is not an addition but a substitution.

It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself in-the-place-of; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence. Compensatory [suppléant] and vicarious, the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance which takes-(the)-place [tient-lieu]. As substitute, it is

not simply added to the positivity of presence, it produces no relief, its place is assigned in the structure by the mark of an emptiness. Somewhere, something can be filled up of itself, can accomplish itself, only by allowing itself to be filled through sign and proxy. The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself.⁵

Crucial for the purposes of my essay is Derrida's designation of the supplement as "a subaltern instance." Rather than follow the logic of dialectical opposition, the supplement seems to follow that of subaltern opposition. Nonetheless, it is subaltern opposition with a difference, for, if on the square of oppositions the subaltern cannot by definition represent the whole of which it is a part, in Derrida's description of the supplement the subaltern substitutes for or takes the place of the whole that governs it. This act of supplementation is necessary because the whole -- in this case Nature -- despite its claim to self-sufficiency, cannot re-present itself. Its representation requires an act of supplementation, an act implying that rather than achieve the fullness of presence Nature is constituted by a lack. If the subaltern's act of supplementation promises to fill that lack, its existence as a subaltern implies that its attempted representation is bound to fail.

This failure opens up possibilities for subaltern opposition. Although a subaltern by definition cannot achieve the synecdochal ideal of representing the whole of which it is a part, the logic of the supplement implies that the whole, nonetheless, depends upon a

subaltern to represent it. That dependency results from the whole's inability to achieve the self-contained, self-sufficiency that it promises. Not a self-contained, self-sufficient entity, the whole is at least potentially prone to transformation by the subaltern efforts to represent it, even if those efforts are by necessity failures. Both that transformative potential and that failure are important in measuring the contribution that the subaltern can make to current debates about the relationship of literary texts to the cultures of which they are a part.

II

The sometimes tiresome debate over which texts truly represent a culture and which ones are in opposition to a culture's repressive forces is at least in part a response to the breakdown of the organic historicist model. According to that model certain great texts had the paradoxical power to be both representative and oppositional. That power resulted from their synecdochal symbolism. As we have seen, their representative capacity was linked to a complexity that synecdochally represented the dialectical tensions of the culture that produced them. Their oppositional capacity derived from a symbolism that, not only represented those tensions, but balanced them in a way that no other discourse was able to do. If in historical actuality a culture is ruled by a particular group employing a particular discourse that speaks for some interests at the expense of others, a great text opposed that dominant discourse (indeed, any discourse speaking for a particular interest) not because it was outside of

a culture or uncontaminated by its particular discourses but because in balancing them it transcended them through a symbolic unity that served as a literary counterpart to a philosophical Aufhebung.

An attribute of organic historicism in general, this transcendental aspect of selected texts was particularly important in the literary history of the United States where a federal system of government promised to provide the means to transcend the particular, factional interests of the parts making up the national whole. To be sure, as Madison argues in the 10th Federalist Paper, any such transcendence of factional interest had to be anchored in concrete political institutions. Nonetheless, even for the politically pragmatic Madison the most important institution was one involving an act of representation, one assuming that locally elected representatives to national office had a responsibility to represent the interests of the entire people, not just those who elected them. In other words, in Madison's theory of representation E Pluribus Unum is possible only if we assume a transcendental common interest of "the people" that is not necessarily the result of interest-driven politics. If that united interest remained an ideal for Madison, it found concrete embodiment for critics like F.O. Matthiessen in great works of literature, works that opposed the tendency of the culture to stray from its democratic mission.

Of the variety of responses to the breakdown of this textual model of organic historicism, I want to focus on two that, although

often at odds, share numerous assumptions. One response attacks the existing canon for representing a white, male cultural elite. Reminding us that synecdoche fulfills its democratic promise only if all parts are granted the capacity to speak for the whole, critics of the canon have pointed out that, no matter how egalitarian organic historicists might have claimed to be politically, they selected a canon that was not truly representative. As a result, such critics insist on the right of works by women and minorities to be representative, especially representative of assumptions opposed to the "dominant" culture. A second response argues that no work can oppose the culture of which it is a part, including those of minorities and women.⁷

Despite their differences, both responses challenge Matthiessen's model by denying the ability of any text to transcend interest politics. Indeed, for both texts inevitably represent a particular set of interests. Their disagreement is over what interests they represent. Eschewing complexity, various advocates of "marginalized" texts measure the value of a work by its ability to represent the political interests of a particular group opposed to the dominant culture. Still fascinated by complexity, advocates of what we can call "the containment thesis" use texts to demonstrate the complex way in which the interaction among various groups serves the interests of "culture as a whole" whose most subtle move is to contain even those who would claim to oppose it. At issue, then, is what constitutes the "dominant" culture.

For the former, a group's oppressed status signals its

position outside the dominant culture. For the latter, even oppressed groups are connected to that which oppresses them, forming a vital part of its "logic" of domination. But despite this disagreement, both continue to assume that a text can represent the culture that produces it -- however that culture is defined. It cannot, however, oppose it. Assuming that subaltern opposition is impossible, both operate as if opposition is possible only when an entity is outside of that which it opposes.

Derrida's discussion of the supplement offers an alternative to this dialectical notion of opposition by suggesting the possibility that a text can oppose the very culture of which it is a part. To be sure, as we have seen, organic historicists granted texts that same paradoxical power, but only by granting them a quasi-mystical capacity symbolically to represent the higher interests of a culture. In contrast, the supplementary logic of the subaltern comes into play only when no transcendental whole exists. Texts may be governed by the culture that produces them, but because no culture is a self-contained, self-sufficient entity, it cannot totally determine all of their possibilities. Indeed, incapable of self-representation, a cultural whole depends upon various texts for its representation. But whereas canon busters and advocates of the containment thesis grant various texts the capacity to represent the culture that produces them, whether it be the dominant, "white, male" culture, the local culture of an oppressed group, or the interwoven culture of dominant and oppressed alike, Derrida's logic of the supplement implies that no

part will ever fully represent the whole. That representational discrepancy creates the conditions for subaltern opposition, an opposition that gives a text the potential -- not necessarily activated -- to transform our sense of the culture of which it is a part.

My warning that the transformative potential of a "subaltern" text is not necessarily activated is a reminder that a text is by no means automatically transformative. Indeed, most are not. My general description of subaltern opposition does little to help account for the complex interaction of a set of concrete historical circumstances and concrete textual attributes that allow some to be transformative and others not. Nonetheless, it is not without consequences, for it guards against closing off possibilities about a text's relation to the culture of which it is a part. Precisely because no text, no matter who wrote it, can fully represent a culture, any text is potentially "oppositional." The only way to test whether one is or not is through a close reading of it in conjunction with the culture of which it is a part, however that culture is defined.

There are, I need to acknowledge, more and more such readings. Nonetheless, the formulations accounting for the "cultural work" of texts quite often give a misleading description of the relationship between them and the culture of which they are a part. This is especially the case when cultural critics rely on the figure of chiasmus. Stephen Greenblatt, for instance, cites with approval Louis Montrose's claim that A Midsummer Night's Dream "creates the

culture by which it is created, shapes the fantasies by which it is shaped, begets that by which it is begotten."⁸ Similar chiasmic formulations are Montrose's "the historicity of texts and the textuality of history,"⁹ Greenblatt's "the social dimension of an aesthetic strategy and the aesthetic dimension of a social strategy,"¹⁰ and Sacvan Bercovitch's attempt "to see how culture empowers symbolic form . . . and how symbols participate in the dynamics of culture."¹¹

What all of these formulations forget is that the relationship between a particular text and the culture of which it is a part is subaltern, not chiasmic. Unlike subaltern opposition, which relates parts to a whole, chiasmus relates parts to parts. To relate a text or even the entire realm of the aesthetic to culture chiasmically is unwittingly to grant both texts and the aesthetic too much independence by ignoring the fact that both are part of a larger entity that we call culture. To be sure, part of chiasmus' popularity today is that it enacts a dependency between two entities that would seem to be opposed to one another. But as appropriate as chiasmus is to describe certain relations, it is not appropriate to describe the relationship between texts and the culture of which they are a part. Much more appropriate is that of subaltern opposition, especially when linked to Derrida's logic of the supplement, for it allows for the paradoxical possibility that something can be a part of a larger entity without being totally contained by it. The subaltern also proves useful in defining limits and suggesting possibilities regarding a human culture's

relation to something larger than itself, something which (for lack of a better term) we call "nature," something against which many cultural critics define their work.

III

Derrida's discussion of the supplement grows out of his analysis of the dilemma that Rousseau faces in representing "Nature." In that discussion he describes the supplement as a "subaltern instance" that takes the place of that which it would represent. In the United States, however, the link between the logic of the supplement and the subaltern has, for the most part, been neglected in favor of descriptions relying on chiasmus.¹² Perhaps the most influential one is Barbara Johnson's in her translator's introduction to the appropriately titled Disseminations.

Intent on demonstrating the challenge that the logic of the supplement poses to dialectical logic, Johnson links domination to the structure of opposition itself, arguing that hierarchical relations in the West result from a set of binary oppositions that privilege categories promising the presence of self-representation and self-sufficiency over corresponding categories defined by an absence. Using Derrida's discussion of the supplement to demonstrate that the identity of the privileged category is dependent upon, indeed inhabited by, the very category that it claims to oppose, Johnson calls into question the notion of a separate identity upon which the oppositional structure of dialectic depends. As Johnson puts it, "What Derrida's reading of

Rousseau's text sketches out is indeed nothing less than a revolution in the very logic of meaning. The logic of the supplement wrenches apart the neatness of the metaphysical binary oppositions. Instead of 'A is opposed to B' we have 'B is both added to A and replaces A.' A and B are no longer opposed, nor are they equivalent. Indeed, they are no longer even equivalent to themselves. They are their own difference from themselves."¹³

Cautioning that the dominations supported by such oppositional structures can be dismantled only through concrete readings, Johnson advocates a strategy of supplementary reading that places opposing entities in chiasmic relation to one another. The point is not simply to reverse hierarchies, which would merely reinscribe the oppositional structure of dialectic. It is, instead, to set in motion a destabilizing play of difference that forces us to recognize the arbitrariness of hierarchical relations that many in the culture assume to be a product of nature. Such readings, according to Johnson, are a "critique" that "reads backwards from what seems natural, obvious, self-evident, or universal, in order to show that these things have their histories, their reasons for being the way that they are, their effects on what follows from them, and that the starting point is not a (natural) given but a (cultural) construct, usually blind to itself."¹⁴

By calling supplementary readings critiques that reveal how structures of domination are cultural constructs, not natural givens, Johnson links deconstruction to a tradition of ideological demystification powerfully articulated by Roland Barthes in

Mythologies. According to Barthes, bourgeois ideology is "the process through which the bourgeoisie transforms the reality of the world into an image of the world, History into Nature." Barthes himself cites Karl Marx in The German Ideology, ". . . we must pay attention to history, since ideology boils down to either an erroneous conception of history, or to a complete abstraction from it."¹⁵ But although Johnson links deconstruction to this tradition, she believes that the logic of the supplement "supplements" it in a very important way by challenging the dialectical logic on which it is based. Indeed, although today's cultural critics have sometimes been put off by Johnson's deconstructive emphasis on "textuality," many are directly or indirectly indebted to her, for never have so many assumed that domination results from the perpetuation of a set of hierarchical binary oppositions.

My problem with Johnson's account, as lucid and powerful as it is, is her exclusive focus on binary oppositions as a source of domination. That focus causes her to confine herself to relationships between parts and parts while ignoring those between parts and wholes. Or to refer to the square of oppositions, although she is intent on "deconstructing" the dialectical logic of contradiction, she remains fixated on relations of contradiction while ignoring those of subalternity. But certainly any account of domination that does not deal with the way in which parts are governed by wholes is seriously flawed. One result is an inadequate account of domination within the political and social spheres, a point that I will come back to in the next section.

Another result is a tendency to offer a reified account of the relationship between culture and nature.

The opposition that Johnson makes between a "(natural) given" and a "(cultural) construct," is a crucial one for a generation of cultural critics. By demonstrating that something previously thought to be an unalterable product of nature is in fact a construct of culture with a history, numerous cultural critics claim to emancipate us from the restrictions of a false ideology and thus open up new possibilities for human life. As the legal scholar J.M. Balkin puts it in terms of deconstruction, "By challenging what is 'given,' deconstruction affirms the infinite possibilities of human existence. By contesting 'necessity,' deconstruction dissolves the ideological encrustations of our thought."¹⁶ But if the task of a deconstructive reading is to destabilize binary oppositions, it is noteworthy that the enabling move of many cultural critics depends upon positing one between nature and culture.¹⁷ At stake is a naive view of both.

Despite their emancipatory efforts, cultural critics who oppose nature to culture have not freed themselves from making assumptions about nature. On the contrary, they make a particular claim about nature. If hierarchical relations are, as argued, the result of convention, not nature, then it follows that nature lacks hierarchies. But such an egalitarian view of nature has a very specific history. It is not at all self-evident, as the doctrine of the divine right of kings or Callicles's argument in Plato's Gorgias demonstrates.

To avoid misunderstanding, let me make perfectly clear that insofar as nature has been appealed to to justify the repressed status of women or various minorities, the argument that these repressions are the product of human history, not nature, has an immediate and local emancipatory effect. But it has by no means affirmed "the infinite possibilities of human existence." It has simply -- which is quite a bit -- made the case that these groups should have the same rights and opportunities as others. But even when that argument is successful, it has not freed those groups any more than others from material limitations imposed on all beings "in nature" such as the law of gravity or various chemical reactions involving oxygen. As W.E.B. DuBois puts it, there is a "natural realm of dictatorship to which all government must bow; that is, the physical laws governing the constitution of materials, the application of natural force, and the availability of certain techniques in using matter and force, which are all subject to law and cannot be changed by popular vote."¹⁸

To make the materialist argument that the possibilities of human existence are limited by certain conditions of the physical environment in which people live may be stating the obvious, but to make it is to play havoc with the effort to oppose culture to nature. The two are, to paraphrase Johnson, neither opposed nor equivalent. And yet their relation does not lend itself to chiasmatic reversals in the same way that other common oppositions do. Because men and women are subsets of the category human beings, it makes perfect sense to destabilize the hierarchical

opposition generating, for instance, the Biblical myth that women derive from men. But it is an argument of a different kind to argue that nature and culture are on an equal footing. This is because culture is a subset of nature, not vice versa, which is another way of saying that culture exists in a subaltern relation to nature. Indeed, in formal logic another use of the term "subaltern" is in the division of categories. Thus, an entity that is a subset of another is said to be in a subaltern relation to the more inclusive entity.

I know that in evoking the term "nature" I invite immediate protests because it is so difficult to define and so ideologically weighted. Nonetheless, I continue to use the term for the same reason that many cultural critics use it. It is a word that we use to designate an entity that is not purely a cultural construct. But whereas they use it in dialectical opposition to culture, implying that it has a bounded, self-contained identity, I argue that culture exists in a relation of subaltern opposition to it of the sort implied by Derrida's description of the supplement. Governing culture, but depending upon cultural forms of discourse for its representation, nature cannot be adequately described or defined because it is not a bounded, self-contained entity. To emphasize the importance of thinking of the opposition between nature and culture subalternally rather than dialectically, I can once again draw an example from Moby-Dick.

Ahab's mistake in Moby-Dick is to assume that he, as a human being, can be on equal footing with nature so as to oppose it

dialectically. In fact, he not only tries to establish an equal footing with nature, he tries to reverse hierarchies and place himself in control of that which previously controlled him. Like many cultural critics, Ahab denies the limitations imposed by nature. For him there is no whole that governs the parts of the world, including humanity. "Who's over me?" he asks. "Truth hath no confines" (MD 144).

Ahab's final failure to dominate the whale suggests that, far from emancipatory, the dialectical opposition between human culture and nature can lead to dire cultural consequences. It even raises the possibility that human beings are totally determined by a nature over which they have no control. But there is ample evidence in the book indicating that human beings do have the power to control and even destroy parts of nature. Enhanced by technological advances made available by Western cultures, that power has a transformative effect on nature. It does not, however, grant human beings the power of dialectical opposition. Part of the very entity that they oppose, human beings can transform nature by dominating other parts of a complicated ecological web not the whole itself. Indeed, humanity's power to alter that web undermines the notion of an ahistorical transcendental Nature that can be dialectically opposed to a contingent world of history, for in such a world nature itself has a history. Its history is not, however, completely determined by humanity. As we have seen, the subaltern can transform the whole of which it is a part without governing it. Indeed, humanity's subaltern relation to nature

suggests that history's contingency is influenced by its relation to a changing nature, just as nature's contingency is influenced by its relation to a changing history.

To stress humanity's subaltern relation to nature is by no means to deny the importance of cultural criticism. It is, however, to warn against a cultural criticism that draws its emancipatory thrust from a dialectical opposition between culture and nature, for, as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer have argued, that opposition is prone to lead to more subtle forms of oppression, not emancipation.¹⁹ At the same time, humanity's subaltern relation to nature also warns against an ahistorical tendency in some ecocriticism that defines Nature against culture as a way of granting to Nature a transcendental permanency violated by any human contact. In contrast, humanity's subaltern relation to nature implies that, insofar as Aristotle is correct in defining politics as the "art of the possible," no humanly-constructed political system can ignore the constraints placed upon it by nature, at the same time that those systems' political responsibilities should not be defined solely by their effect on human culture.

The interconnections between the realms of culture and nature do not mean, however, that the two become identical.²⁰ For instance, the subaltern relation between human culture and nature is not the same as the one between political subjects and the sovereign power that governs them. A crucial difference is that culture's subaltern relation to nature is not negotiable. The

relationships between political subjects and sovereign powers are in this limited sense more complicated. After all, there are various political systems that exist in various relations to one another. People who are subject to one are rarely subject to another, meaning that someone who exists in a subaltern relation to one political entity usually has a quite different relation to others. Thus, the subaltern is not universally applicable in describing political relations.

Furthermore, the subaltern provides no help in answering numerous political questions of extreme importance, such as: Who decides the boundaries of a particular entity constituting a sovereign whole, or Whether a particular entity has a right to exist or not. Nonetheless, the logical category of the subaltern does help to define certain limitations and suggest certain possibilities about the way in which subjects relate to the political whole of which they are a part. It is to a specific set of such limitations and possibilities that I now want to turn.

IV

I mentioned in the last section that any account of cultural domination that focusses exclusively on the relation of parts to parts and the binary oppositions constructed among those parts is limited. My point was not that such an account is false, but that it needs to be supplemented by one that also examines the relationship of parts to wholes. This supplementation is especially important for an understanding of a pluralistic society, like the United States. For instance, Alice Kessler-Harris, a

recent president of the American Studies Association, praises "the multicultural enterprise" for providing "a way of seeing relationally."²¹ But to understand the structures of domination in our society we cannot confine ourselves to looking at how, say, Chinese-Americans relate to other groups. We cannot because their position in society is also determined by their relation to the totality of those groups, a totality of which they are a part.

To insist on the need to relate parts to wholes as well as parts to parts is not to deny the power that one group can have over others. For instance, the power that white males have had over other groups in American society is one reason why the metaphor of the melting pot, which synecdochally promises to relate parts to a whole, is under attack. One problem with it is that it is historically inaccurate. As the late Thurgood Marshall bluntly put it, "The dream of America as the great melting pot has not been realized for the Negro; because of his skin color he never even made it into the pot."²² A major reason that the dream of the melting pot has not been realized is that for a substantial period of the country's history those with the political power to represent the country as a whole were white males. Indeed, the assumed definition of an American was white. As we have seen, synecdoche's potential as the figure for democracy fails, if only one part is allowed to speak for the whole.

It is for these reasons and others that Kessler-Harris defends multiculturalism for refusing "to acknowledge a stable meaning or precise unchanging definition of America" (CL 311). Nonetheless,

as Kessler-Harris implies when she positively evokes "that unified whole called America" (CL 311) and its traditional "search for unity, identity, and purpose" (CL 311), a part's relation to a whole need not be simply one leading to domination. It can also create conditions of possibility.

In this section I will show how the logical category of the subaltern can help to articulate various advantages of being a political subject in a modern liberal, democratic Rechtsstaat at the same time that it allows for criticism of such systems by drawing attention to relations of domination. My description of such subjects takes issue with various forms of ideological criticism that have a tendency to universalize what it means to be a political subject. Indeed, if an enabling move for cultural critics intent on emancipating us from structures of domination has been to oppose culture to nature, an enabling move for those intent on describing conditions of domination has been to insist that all individual subjects are ideological subjects.

An influential essay in this regard is Louis Althusser's "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)." Arguing that there is no position outside of ideology, Althusser declares that "ideology has no history." Quick to add, "ideologies have a history of their own," he, nonetheless, goes on to describe the structural form by which "ideology hails or interpellates individuals as subjects," a form "making it clear that individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects, which necessarily leads us to one last proposition:

individuals are always-already subjects."²³

One of the strengths of Althusser's essay is that, like the work of Gramsci, it insists that ideology should not be confined to the realm of traditional politics. Indeed, Althusser significantly revises the traditional marxist model of a material economic base and an ideological super structure. For him the ideology that interpellates individuals as subjects is manifested in the material practices of an entire society including social institutions like the church, the family, the educational system, and cultural discourses. For literary critics, who after all are usually not trained in political science, this more inclusive notion of ideology is extremely attractive. Mediated by the work of Michel Foucault and Clifford Geertz, it has allowed those offering "thick descriptions" of "culture" to practice "political" criticism without paying attention to traditional political issues.²⁴ For instance, Catherine Gallagher argues that "power cannot be equated with economic or state power, that its sites of activity, and hence resistance, are also in the micro-politics of daily life. The traditional important economic and political agents and events have been displaced or supplemented by people and phenomena that once seemed wholly insignificant, indeed outside of history: women, criminals, the insane, sexual practices, and discourses, fairs, festivals, plays of all kinds."²⁵

I can agree with almost all that Gallagher says and still worry about a slippage in her description of the type of analysis that she advocates. Traditional economic and political analysis

certainly needs to be "supplemented" by analysis of the "micro-politics of daily life," which is one reason why Trilling felt that his essays in literary criticism had political implications. But when it is "displaced" by it, we risk discounting the role played by particular economic and political systems in the construction of "political" subjects, something Trilling would never have done. To be sure, Althusser himself does not advocate such a displacement, but by describing the structure by which ideology hails subjects without detailing how the relations of subjects to the political system of which they are a part vary from system to system, he opens the door for the type of criticism that acts as if such analysis is irrelevant.

The logical category of the subaltern can help demonstrate that such analysis remains important. To be sure, it cannot simply displace the thick descriptions of the micro-politics of daily life that have characterized the work of recent literary critics turning to the analysis of "cultural politics." It can, however, supplement it in important ways by reminding us that the possibilities for political agency -- especially the agency of subaltern subjects -- depend, at least in part, on the type of political system governing the society of which they are a part.

I can illustrate my point through a brief historical comparison. Althusser's argument that "ideology has no history" can -- though not necessarily -- have an effect similar -- though not identical -- to the argument made by pro-slavery Southerners prior to the Civil War. Making no claim that under their system

slaves were free, they argued, nonetheless, that the "wage slaves" working in Northern factories weren't either. Similarly, in the context of Cold War polemics Althusser's argument served to undercut claims in the West about the "freedom" of citizens under democratic rule.

As important as it remains to point out the ideological control exerted in even the most democratic of existing political systems, the potential danger of not making distinctions among the individual histories of particular ideologies and the limitations and possibilities of subjects under particular systems is suggested by pro-slavery arguments. As worthy of criticism as the exploitative "free" labor system of the North was, to call Northern workers slaves was to minimize the horrors of slavery. Whereas some of those horrors can be detailed by traditional economic analysis, others are revealed by focussing on the different status that Northern workers and Southern slaves had as political subjects. The logical category of the subaltern can help to define that difference.

Like the crew on the Pequod, Northern workers were subaltern subjects. They may occupy subordinate positions, but they are at least considered a part of the whole. In contrast, slaves were not even granted the status of citizens. Not considered a part of the whole that governed them, they were dominated by an entity supposedly different in kind from them. As a result, as Hegel demonstrates, the master/slave relation is determined by contradictory, not subaltern, opposition. The only hope the slaves

had for transforming the system that enslaved them was dialectical confrontation. Subalterns, depending on the nature of the whole governing them, have different options.

With the demise of institutionalized slavery, it might seem unnecessary to make a distinction between subalterns and slaves. Nonetheless, confusion between the two persists, even in the work of Homi K. Bhabba, one of the best critics in the field of subaltern studies. Noticing Derrida's use of "subaltern" in the passage that I have quoted and drawing on it to describe the possibilities of subaltern agency, Bhabba confuses the subaltern with the slave, such as when he speaks of "the diametrically opposed world views of master and slave which between them account for the major historical and philosophical dialectic of modern times." To be sure, what I call Bhabba's "confusion" results in part because he is using "subaltern" to describe colonial and post-colonial subjects, not as a category from classical logic. But if he is going to evoke Derrida's logic of the supplement, he needs to pay attention to the logical use of the term, especially since he is intent on disrupting the "dialectic process" of transcendental totalization.²⁶ Unaware of the category of subaltern opposition, he attempts that disruption -- as does Johnson -- by staying solely within the language of contradiction. The point is not that the language of contradiction should never be used. There are numerous times when it is appropriate. But to stay lodged solely within it is to give inadequate descriptions of possibilities for both opposition and domination.

To come up with more precise descriptions of those possibilities we need to make distinctions not only between dialectical and subaltern oppositions but among different positions occupied by subaltern subjects in relation to a political whole. Evoking the logical meaning of the term, we can describe all people recognized as belonging to a political body as subaltern subjects. But the conditions of such subjects can vary widely. For instance, in the early years of the twentieth century in the United States, if white male citizens had full political rights, all female citizens were explicitly denied various political rights while African-American female citizens were also denied various social rights by Jim Crow laws as were African-American male citizens who at least had de jure, if not de facto, full political rights. Native Americans lived under different political conditions, as did various groups of Chicanos and Asian-Americans in various states.

As the distinction between de jure and de facto political rights for African-American male citizens indicates, descriptions of the micro-politics of everyday life are extremely important, but so too are accurate descriptions of relations that different groups have to the sovereign power(s) that govern them. For example, as limited as the political power of African-Americans was, it was greater than that of most colonial subjects; that is, the subaltern subjects of subaltern studies. Indeed, when the Spanish-American War placed such subjects under the control of the United States, the violent subjection of Filipinos caused South Carolina's Senator Tillman to mock the Republican-led policy of imperialism with,

"Republican leaders do no longer dare to call into question the justice or the necessity of limiting negro suffrage in the South . . . Your slogans of the past -- brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God -- have gone glimmering down through the ages!"²⁷ Similarly, as restricted as the possibilities were for Asian-Americans, they had a greater chance of transforming their conditions within the existing political system than some of their relatives who lived and worked in the United States but who had no chance of officially becoming a part of the body politic and thus had to appeal for protection to treaties negotiated between their home countries and the United States, treaties that tended to favor Japanese aliens over Chinese because of the respective powers of the two countries.

One reason why the analysis of what Gallagher terms "traditional" "political agents" has lost favor with many of today's cultural critics is that, although the disparity among the political and civil rights granted to various groups of United States citizens has been greatly minimized, structures of domination persist. Their persistence calls out for the sort of analysis advocated by Gallagher as well as, I might add, for traditional economic analysis. But as we conduct such analysis we should not take for granted the conditions of traditional political agency that exist in the sort of representational democracy that reigns in the United States.

As I suggested at the start of this essay, the crisis in representation experienced in current literary studies in the West is related to the discrepancy that so many feel in liberal

democracies between the promise of full political representation and the continued existence of structures of hierarchical domination. That discrepancy suggests that the promise of full political representation might be the most subtle form of ideological control. As Sacvan Bercovitch has argued, the "ideology of America" holds out the promise of complete democracy, which because its realization is perpetually deferred, serves to provoke "rites of assent" that channel the allegiance and energies of its citizens to bring about its fulfillment. But even Bercovitch insists that such an ideology is not simply a strategy of containment, since it also creates conditions for perpetual transformation.²⁸

To articulate this paradox in the terms that I have used in this essay, within the democratic system of the United States political subjects exist in conditions of subalternity, a condition that makes it impossible for any part fully to represent the whole. Nonetheless, the promise that each part can synecdochally speak for the whole is not simply a form of ideological control, because it also creates the conditions by which subaltern opposition has the potential to transform the whole.²⁹ In other words, the discrepancy between the synecdochal promise of full representation and the actuality of subaltern conditions, which marks the whole as a force of oppression, also opens up transformative possibilities by helping to work against what Kessler-Harris calls, "a stable meaning or precise unchanging definition of America." Not a self-contained, unchanging entity, the whole governing the parts relates

to them in the way that Derrida describes the "subaltern instance" of the supplement. Never fully represented by its subaltern parts, yet relying on them for representation, the political body is potentially transformed by acts of subaltern opposition, acts by which previously unrepresented parts put themselves forward as representative.

I can stress how a system's synecdochal promise of full representation can affect the possibilities for subaltern agency by drawing on one more example from the works of Melville: Captain Vere's defense of an authoritative political system. A defender of monarchy, Vere does not advocate a democratic organicism that celebrates the possibility of political self-authorization by holding out the promise that all parts can speak for the whole. Instead, he adopts an authoritarian organicism in which an already existing whole speaks through its parts. Vere's authoritarianism does not rule out the possibility of opposition, only subaltern opposition. In fact, convinced that any act of self-assertion could disrupt the formal order necessary for the maintenance of civilization, Vere is obsessed with the ever-present danger of opposition. For him subjects are always capable of opposing the whole merely by refusing to become vessels through which the whole achieves its expression. Nonetheless, given Vere's sense of closed formal structures, the moment one offers such opposition one relinquishes one's right to civilized protection. For Vere subaltern opposition is a contradiction in terms because, by his definition, a subaltern is one who does not oppose. By defending

a closed, self-contained political system, Vere guarantees that the only way in which the system will be transformed is through dialectical opposition. In contrast, the synecdochal promise of democracy encourages the attempts at self-representation that Vere's authoritarian logic sees as threats to the system. As a result, it makes possible conditions for a system's immanent transformation through subaltern opposition.

If this way of describing the possibilities of subaltern opposition within representative democracies makes them sound preferable to systems in which an existing whole speaks through its parts or a particular part -- say a specific political party -- is the only one allowed to speak for the whole, it does not license an uncritical celebration of them. First of all, it says nothing about how those who are not considered part of the body politic are treated by such a system. As we have seen, representative democracies can create possibilities of subaltern opposition for their own subjects and be a terribly repressive force to people not subject to their rule or even to those within their jurisdiction but denied citizenship, such as slaves or aliens.

Furthermore, they can be a force of repression when they deny full citizenship and political rights to various subjects, whether women or people under different forms of colonial rule. Indeed, one advantage of the logical use of subaltern is that it helps to articulate the difference between the possible political agency of those with full rights in a representative democracy and the subaltern subjects of subaltern studies, for paradoxically enough,

the latter's possibilities of transformative, subaltern opposition are dramatically limited. Limited, but not necessarily completely denied. For instance, as Ghandi acknowledged, the success of his campaign of non-violent resistance depended in part on British recognition of various rights of its colonial subjects.

Finally, to call attention to the transformative possibilities of subaltern opposition for political subjects within representative democracies is not uncritically to celebrate them because the notion of the subaltern reminds us that any such opposition assumes the prior existence of a set of governing limitations. The concrete nature of those limitations needs to be critically examined on a case by case basis. Indeed, to call subjects within democracies subaltern is to call attention to the discrepancy between the promise of full representation and actual conditions of subordination. By the very logic of subaltern opposition, those conditions can never be fully accounted for through a description of political agency that confines itself strictly to the political. Instead, any such description needs to be supplemented by a consideration of a subject's total relation to the culture of which it is a part. Thus, even though all citizens are granted equal political rights, other considerations affect, though never completely determine, their actual possibilities for political representation.³⁰

I can illustrate how valuable the notion of subaltern opposition can be for maintaining an internally critical stance toward democratic societies by ending with a look at Philip

Fisher's recent uncritical celebration of America's democratic culture.

V

Arguing for the inadequacy of ideological analysis in the field of American studies, Fisher disputes one of the major premises of ideological criticism growing out of Althusser. If Althusser claims that a social formation maintains itself by reproducing the conditions of production,³¹ Fisher claims that such formulations do not apply to "a society whose commitment to self-destruction in the name of its own next possibility is far more important than its interest in the transfer of the forms of the past to a future generation."³² Not one of "those cultures of preservation, inheritance, and self-reproduction that we tend to take anthropologically as the human norm" (NAS xxii), America undergoes permanent transformation. That transformation is possible because American culture operates rhetorically not ideologically. Constructing a problematic opposition, Fisher asserts that ideology depends upon "a monopoly on representation" (NAS viii) of the sort found in a monarchy, whereas rhetorics grow out of a situation of competing strategies of representation, which he calls a condition of civil wars. Because American culture is characterized by "incomplete dominance of representation" (NAS xv), it is a culture of permanent openness, one always in the process of change. The force behind this change, Fisher asserts, is "economic rather than religious or, in the anthropological sense, cultural" (NAS xiv). Linking "democracy and capitalism," Fisher challenges

those who fail to recognize that both are "profound and humane, exhilarating and enduring" (NAS xii).

One reason that they are enduring for Fisher is that he believes that American culture works by containing the conflicting claims to representation that power its transformations. It does so by converting a civil war of representation between individual parts into conflicts within an open-ended whole. Lacking a definable essence, American culture allows for a perpetual transformation of itself that feeds off of the opposing claims to representation that constitute it.

There are numerous problems with Fisher's argument.³³ Nonetheless, it does force me to supplement my earlier claim that subaltern opposition can challenge the containment thesis by offering transformative possibilities. After all, Fisher's argument illustrates how perpetual transformation can become the ultimate condition of containment. The conditions for transformation are not all the same.

The differences between the transformative possibilities allowed by subaltern opposition within a democratic political system and those described by Fisher's conflation of democracy and capitalism start to come into focus if we concentrate on how Fisher perpetuates two confusions that I have already touched upon. Fisher, we should note, does not assume essential identities or natural givens. On the contrary, his pragmatic distrust of a given human nature leads him to champion the openness of a culture of self-destruction over those that conform to what he considers

accepted anthropological norms. Indeed, in his version of the nature vs. culture opposition, he asserts that the study of such a culture "will always be historical not anthropological" (NAS xxii).

What Fisher fails to recognize when he opposes history and anthropology is that to deny human beings an essential nature is still to make an anthropological claim.³⁴ To be sure, it is one calling out for historical analysis (which is one reason why there is a field of historical anthropology). But whereas Fisher claims to privilege history over anthropology, he in fact risks an ahistorical account of United States culture by assuming that it has emancipated itself from the problematics of inheritance and reproduction. Indeed, if he were less intent on proving the economic role in creating the "preexisting social facts" of "national life" (NAS xiv), he might recall how much the country's democratic rhetoric appeals to founding political documents, especially the Constitution. As Clinton's 1992 campaign illustrated once again, that rhetoric is one of "renewal," not "self-destruction," an appeal to change based on the transference of values from the past to a future generation. Despite Fisher's neglect of it, that rhetoric lends itself to ideological analysis, which is not to say that there are no positive possibilities within it.

Fisher, however, is so fixated on denying that America's democratic culture has an ideology that he makes the outrageous claim that the United States lacks a state. "In the absence of a state we find ourselves freed of the intellectual component of the

systematic state: ideology. We have rhetorics because we have no ideology, and we have no ideology because we lack the apparatus of ideology: a national religion, a unitary system of education under the control of the state, a cultural life and media monopolized by the state by means of either ownership or subsidy" (NAS xxii). This capitalist fantasy of a free and open society existing without the regulatory control of a state is part of Fisher's effort to minimize the importance of the political in shaping democratic culture. Defining the "sphere of the political" as the "sphere of felt opposition" (NAS xiv), he implies that a system that works by converting "conflicts between" into "conflicts within" is one that "has stood outside" a "regionalism" (NAS xiv) that he associates with politics.³⁵

Based on a problematic opposition between anthropology and history, Fisher's highly politicized claim to stand outside the political also rests on a very limited view of the nature of politics in the United States, which is not only a sphere of dialectical opposition, but also one of subaltern opposition. Holding out possibilities for transformation, the notion of subaltern opposition also, as I have argued, draws attention to persistent conditions of subordination. It allows us, for instance, to question whether those participating within Fisher's civil war within representation occupy equal positions in relation to the whole of which they are a part or whether some begin the battle with strategically superior positions. The notion of subaltern opposition also allows members within a society capable

of perpetual transformations to contemplate the effects of those transformations on various wholes of which their society is a part, such as the community of nations or "nature," effects that Fisher doesn't even consider.

One reason that he doesn't is because, although he thinks that he has offered a description of democratic culture, he in fact has offered one of consumer capitalism. If Fisher is right to challenge those who, without demonstration, assume that capitalism and democracy are necessarily diametrically opposed, he is mistaken when he fails to note distinctions between the two. To be sure, the United States mixes democratic political institutions with capitalist economic ones. But that mixture does not make capitalism necessarily democratic.

To recall, subaltern opposition has a transformative possibility in a democratic political system only when it holds out the synecdochal promise of full representation. The problem with maintaining that promise is that it leads to a crisis in representation. Part of the exhilaration of the system that Fisher describes is its promise to solve that crisis. If ideology functions by restricting the terms of representation, Fisher's system seems to leave the question of representation endlessly open. But what seems to be a solution is simply an avoidance of the problem altogether. Although Fisher talks about a civil war within representation, his description in fact eliminates the complicated problematics of representation. After all, a system that has no interest in inheritance and reproduction has no need to

re-present. Making no effort to re-present, what Fisher calls representation is mere presentation, and the system that he describes is an ahistorical one of perpetual presents. Abandoning the logic of reproduction, it maintains itself by a mode of production that depends on endless consumption. A vast self-consuming artifact, it has already had profound effects on the ecological system. To imagine a condition of endlessly open (re)presentation is to avoid, not to address, situations of subordination underscored by our present crisis in representation.

Nonetheless, it is little wonder that those studying literature sense a crisis when confronted by the system described by Fisher, for after all what possible use could it have for literary history? Fisher's answer, it would seem, would have to be the presentist position that the reading of past texts is not an act of re-production or re-presentation, but simply the production of a point of view in the present. It is not hard to find ways of reading that oppose such presentism. They bring me to my final application of the category of subaltern opposition.

If presentist readings result from readers consuming texts, historical ones demand that readers submit to their governing power. To be sure, a contrast between presentist and historical readings can lead to a false opposition, especially if we assume, as Trilling does, that a text has successfully contained a large measure of the dialectic of its culture. Readers submitting to the constraints of a subaltern relation to such a text seem to be governed by a meaning that was fixed at a past moment of

production. But insofar as a text exists in a subaltern, rather than a synecdochal relation, to the culture that produced it, it is not a self-contained, self-sufficient work. Still governing the responses of readers, such a text requires their labor to bring it into representation. To be sure, those acts of representation involve the production of points of view in the present. But they do not follow consumer capitalism's logic of self-destructive production. Whereas their effects cannot be predicted in advance, they have the potential, not only to indicate ways in which our present crisis in representation is influenced by constraints inherited from the past, but also to present unrealized possibilities from the past that have not yet been laid to rest. If literary critics are mistaken when they allow their readings to represent an entire culture, subaltern readings can continue to play a valuable role in supplementing efforts at cultural criticism.

Notes

1. "Cultural Criticism and Society," Prisms, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), p.19.
2. The Liberal Imagination (New York: Viking Press, 1950), p.9.
3. "The Critical Path: An Essay on the Social Context of Literary Criticism," in Issues in Contemporary Criticism, ed, Gregory T. Polleta, (Boston: Little and Brown, 1973), p.57. A critic who has consistently dealt with issues that I raise in this essay, including important discussions of various rhetorical figures for literary studies oriented toward a historical analysis of culture is Jonathan Arac. See, especially, his new introduction to the paperback Commissioned Spirits (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989) and Critical Geneologies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987). I am indebted to his comments on an earlier draft of this essay as well as to those offered by an audience at the Kennedy Institute in Berlin.
4. Moby-Dick; or, The Whale, ed. Harrison Hayford and Hershel Parker (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1967), p.104. Future references will be designated in the text as MD.
5. Of Grammatology, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp.144, 145. The fact that Spivak translated Derrida's book invites important connections between his description of the logic of the supplement and subaltern studies. I am indebted to Rey Chow for reminding me of Derrida's use of "subaltern."

6. One of many examples of this position is Jane Tompkins, Sensational Designs (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
7. Two prominent examples are Walter Benn Michaels, The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987) and D.A. Miller, The Novel and the Police (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).
8. Representing the English Renaissance (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp.viii, 56.
9. "Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture," in The New Historicism, ed. H. Aram Veesser (New York: Routledge, 1989), p.20.
10. Shakespearean Negotiations (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p.147.
11. The Office of "The Scarlet Letter" (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p.xxii.
12. The most sophisticated and concentrated use of chiasmus in this regard is Andrzej Warminski, Readings in Interpretation (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
13. "Translator's Introduction," Disseminations, by Jacques Derrida, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p.xiii.
14. "Translator's Introduction," p.xv.
15. Mythologies (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), pp.141, 151 n.27.
16. "Deconstructive Practice and Legal Theory," Yale Law Journal 96 (1987), 764.
17. Derrida does destabilize that opposition both in his discussion of Rousseau and in "Structure, Sign, and Play in

- the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in Writing and Difference, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).
18. Color and Democracy (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1945), pp.83-4.
 19. Dialectic of Enlightenment, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, Inc., 1972).
 20. A critic who conflates nature and culture is Stanley Fish in Doing What Comes Naturally (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989).
 21. "Cultural Locations: Positioning American Studies in the Great Debate," American Quarterly 44 (1992), 311. Future references will be designated in the text as CL.
 22. University of California Regents v. Bakke 438 U.S. 265 (1977) at 400-1.
 23. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)," Lenin and Philosophy, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp.160, 175-6.
 24. I need to emphasize that the mediation of Althusser's argument through the works of Foucault and Geertz makes a crucial and productive difference. It also, as I will argue, has encouraged some to neglect traditional political concerns while doing "political" criticism.
 25. "Marxism and the New Historicism," in Veeder, The New Historicism, p.43.
 26. "DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern

- nation," in Nation and Narration (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp.295, 306.
27. Quoted in Charles A. and Mary R. Beard, The Rise of American Civilization (New York: Macmillan, 1927) v.2, p.484.
 28. The Rites of Assent (New York: Routledge, 1993).
 29. As E.P. Thompson writes in defense of the bourgeois legal system in England, "The law, in its forms and traditions, entailed principles of equity and universality which, perforce, had to be extended to all sorts and degrees of man." Whigs and Hunters (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), p.264.
 30. The need to supplement a narrowly-defined description of political agency with a consideration of a subject's total relation to the culture of which it is a part indicates the compatibility of the notion of subaltern opposition with Althusser's sense of the "relative autonomy" (my emphasis) of disciplines. For an earlier use of "relative autonomy" and its relation to totality see John-Paul Sartre, Search for a Method, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (New York: Random House, 1968), pp.48, 66, 111.
 31. "As Marx said, every child knows that a social formation which did not reproduce the conditions of production at the same time as it produced could not last a year. The ultimate condition of production is therefore the reproduction of the conditions of production" ("Ideology," p.127).
 32. "Introduction: The New American Studies," in The New American Studies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991),

p.xxii. Future page numbers will be designated in the text as NAS.

33. See, for example, Guenter Lenz, "Multicultural Critique and The New American Studies," in Multiculturalism and the Canon of American Literature, ed. Hans Bak (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1993), pp.27-56 and Gregory Jay, "Ideology and the New Historicism," Arizona Quarterly 49 (Spring 1993), 141-56. A list of details that invite comment would take up more space than I have, but I will note a few. Why end a series of "hyphenated Americans" with "Poles, Swedes, and Russians" (NAS xiii)? In the early years of the twentieth century did people really speak of "Chinese-Americans" (NAS xiii)? Does a distinction between the American and the English Renaissance based on the experience of civil war hold when Fisher himself notes, "the English civil war of the seventeenth century" (NAS xv)? Would Thomas Jefferson agree that "America had no experience of monarchy" (NAS xxii)? If the "creation of national life" is not "in the anthropological sense, cultural," what sort of "cultural analysis" (NAS xiv) are we being offered?
34. See Hans Blumenberg, "An Anthropological Approach to the Contemporary Significance of Rhetoric," in After Philosophy, eds. Kenneth Baynes, James Bohman, and Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge, MA: MIT University Press, 1988), pp. 423-58.
35. Compare Fisher's simplistic definition of politics to Barbara Johnson's complicated argument that "the fundamental question

of all human politics" is the relation between differences between and within. "Melville's Fist: The Execution of Billy Budd," Studies in Romanticism 18 (1979), 596.