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Estranged Affections
Literary Writing and the Public Sphere in Poe, Emerson, and Melville

by

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Abstract

Estranged Affections:
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This dissertation examine the influence of romantic aesthetics on the development of literary writing as a profession in America during the 1840s and 1850s. In opposition to the new historical claim that literary texts are purely reflective of the ideological presuppositions of the culture in which they were written, my analysis demonstrates how literary writing can function as an effective means of cultural transformation. By examining how Edgar Allan Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Herman Melville, respectively, take up romantic aesthetics in their work, I advance a materialist theory of history that is better suited to the study of culture in a democracy. Unlike the new historical approach to cultural analysis, which interprets historical change with reference to market forces that are thought to be rationally determinate, the materialist approach to cultural analysis I develop understands historical change to proceed via the pragmatic construction of overdetermined social identities that are written in response to changing cultural circumstances. Although this materialist approach requires critics to abandon the project of writing a total and complete history of American cultural life, it is better suited for cultural analysis in a democracy because it insists that we—not some transhistorical force like the market—bear the responsibility for determining our relation to our culture.
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Woe to those who decree
iniquitous decrees,
and the writers who keep writing oppression,
to turn aside the needy from justice
and to rob the poor
of their right.

Isaiah 10:1-2
Introduction

When I first began this dissertation I planned to write an intellectual history of the influence of post-Kantian romantic aesthetics on the writers of the American renaissance. However, as I continued to explore my interest in romantic aesthetics and how they informed the development of literary writing as a profession, in America, during the 1840s and 1850s, I gradually shifted my methodology to form of ideologiekritik grounded in the strategies of deconstruction and the psychoanalytic methods of interpretation that have been developed from the work of Jacques Lacan.¹

My initial interest in romantic aesthetics followed from my reading in recent post-structural analyses of the Enlightenment discourse of rationality that take as their focus Immanuel Kant's analytic of the sublime in his Critique of Judgment. Critics such as Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, and Jean-François Lyotard read Kant's treatment of the sublime in ways that trouble the processes of the (re)presentation of knowledge that Kant outlines in the Critique of Pure Reason. As Derrida observes, the sublime, as Kant presents it, is not a phenomenal experience that can be traced back to some determinative causal element in nature or the work of art. "[A]lthough the sublime is better presented by (raw) nature than by art, it is not in nature but in ourselves," Derrida writes,

"projected by us because of the inadequation in us of several powers, of several faculties." What Derrida's reading reveals is that the sublime is a projected imago that covers the failure of the Kantian faculties of reason, the understanding, and imagination, to comprehend materiality in some purposive, teleological conceptual form. Following this same line of thinking, and reading back from the Critique of Judgment to the Critique of Reason, de Man argues that all rational concepts are generated by a similar sort of imaginary projection, since in the earlier Critique Kant negotiates the problematic passage from concepts to sensuous intuitions by way of the "productive imagination." What this deconstructive reading makes apparent is that the (re)presentation of knowledge—rational or aesthetic—is a process that involves the imaginary projection of how we would have the world be, or, as Wittgenstein would say, each description of the world is also a prescription that tells the addressee how to relate to the world described.

As a result of my readings in the post-structural critique of Kantian aesthetics, I came to the conclusion that the sublime refers to those moments of slippage between the prescriptive and descriptive registers of discursive address. Or, in more Marxist terminology, the sublime marks moments of interpellative failure when the discourses that would shape the subject of hegemony are de-naturalized, or demythologized, shown to be the expressions of the relations of power that would reproduce the current political order of things. This led me to the further realization that I was interested in how the concept of the sublime in romantic aesthetics troubles the (re)presentation of

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knowledge because it offered a way to account for the political significance of literary writing in America during the 1840s and 1850s. In the first chapter, "Estranged Affections: Romantic Aesthetics and the Transformation of the Public Sphere," I argue through a reading of Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener" that literary writing can make visible how the discourses of hegemony structure the public sphere in a manner analogous to the ways in which the sublime makes visible how the discourse of rationality projects a standardized way of relating to the world that values knowledge in terms of productivity. With Bartleby's "preferences" as my touchstone, in the rest of the dissertation I examine how literary writing can suggest alternatives to the current forms of hegemony by creating, as Emerson says in "Circles," "a platform whence we may command a view of our present life, a purchase by which we may move it."  

However, the space literary writing opens up for reimagining our relationship to the state can also be separated off from the arena of political consequence. Alternatives to the current structure of the public sphere can be relegated to a realm of private fantasy, and the literary text can be reduced to a commodified object that gives readers relief from the constraints of hegemony, but only within the time of reading. In my second chapter, "'I live continually in a reverie of the future.' Edgar Allan Poe and the Promotion of a Cultural Sphere," I examine how Poe made use of romantic aesthetics in his critical essays and reviews to define literary writing as a space where subjects can develop the traits

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5Giles Gunn offers a parallel definition of literary writing and relates it to the pragmatic tradition in American philosophy that begins with Emerson in his *Thinking Across the American Grain: Ideology, Intellect, and the New Pragmatism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). With reference to D.W. Winicott's theory of transitional objects, Gunn defines "the space reserved for the experience of things cultural" as a "ludic" and "liminal" space "located intermediate between the self and the surrounding environment [that] seems to exist for the sake of allowing the self to more or less freely devise images or models of their relationship without having to test them, without having to pay the consequences in action" (18). Although I would agree with Gunn's description of the literary as such a space of mediation between a self and its environment, I would question the emphasis he places on the subject's freedom to negotiate its relationship to its environment, since the cultural space he describes is also a space where subjects are disciplined in functional, social roles that combine to reproduce the state.
of their private identity beyond the purview of majority public opinion. However, while apparently positing the literary text as a space free from the normative conventions of hegemony, Poe's definition of literary writing (re)produces those conventions, since, in making readers exempt from majority public opinion, Poe's texts insure that majority public opinion determines the political direction of the state.

The form of subjectivity Poe describes recently has become naturalized in Americanist criticism in the work of new historicists such as Walter Benn Michaels and Philip Fisher. Michaels, for example, claims that nineteenth-century American writers are enmeshed so thoroughly in the dominant capitalist beliefs of American culture that they can only ever write texts that are reproductive of the market and its logic. Writing, and the reading it entails, Michaels describes as activities of self-production that are thought in terms of capitalist exchange. "The desire to 'mark'—to maintain the self by producing the self and to produce the self by consuming the self—is the primitive like that makes the institution of selfhood possible."6 However, Michaels' description of subjective agency as only ever reproductive of the market economy follows from his reading of capitalist exchange as homologous with the ontological structure of desire. Furthermore, as Cary Woolf correctly observes, Michaels' version of capitalism is based on a double reduction in which "[f]irst capitalism is reduced to 'the market' (rather than being treated, say, as a system of divided labor, increased Taylorization and de-skilling of the working class, and so on) . . . [a]nd second, the market is read in terms of exchange alone (rather than in terms of, say, distribution, whose class-specific dynamics would complicate and differentiate the social space in ways not readily accommodated by Michaels'

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paradigm)." My reading of Poe's critical essays and reviews as a marketing strategy designed to generate a consumer desire for literary texts conceived as carriers of the traits of personhood demonstrates that the desire to "mark" that Michaels describes is not "primitive" but produced—the historical legacy of Poe's pragmatic revision of romantic aesthetics.

Michaels' theoretical claim that a text cannot be critical of its culture because it is inside that culture understands culture to be a homogenous, undifferentiated space in which apparent oppositions work to sustain the culture rather than leading to conflict and cultural transformation. For these reasons, Philip Fisher praises Michaels' work as representative of a pluralist tradition. In his introduction to a volume titled The New American studies, he singles out Michaels' contribution because of the way in which Michaels' readings tend to blur the boundaries between groups that are politically opposed to each other within American culture.

[I]n Walter Benn Michaels' essay, where we would expect to find the combination of the factory system in a culture of individualism, the moment of unions and bosses in America, and the aggressive methods of literary naturalism to work together to moralize the late nineteenth-century situation, and to do so by sharpening differences into opposites that invite choice and by promoting consciousness, whether class consciousness or consciousness at large[,] instead we find a systemic blending, an avoidance of transition from one coherent model to another. We find ourselves with a picture of a culture living on in spite of the requirements of facing up to its contradictions and improvisations, a culture making short-term use of opposites precisely because it has no interest in finding its way to any long-term stable, integrated identity or ideology.⁸

Fisher's understanding of how oppositional rhetorics work to stabilize rather than disrupt hegemony by delaying, interminably, the resolution of conflict is based in

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a formalist conception of the text that can be traced back to its New Critical origins in the work of Charles Feidelson. Like Feidelson's privileging of literary writing for its ability to convey through metaphor a "poetic multiplicity of meaning" that overcomes the paradoxes and oppositions of "logical statement," Fisher values "rhetoric" because at the level of its "syntax" "the undecided can be stabilized, but not resolved." In my third chapter, "This cropping out in our planted gardens of the core of the world:" Contingency and Political Action in Emerson's Conduct of Life," I demonstrate how Emerson's use of romantic aesthetics in the formulation of his poetic method generates a theory of language in which rhetoric can polarize differences to the point of their resolution through conflict. I read Emerson's late volume of essays Conduct of Life in the context of his lectures against slavery to demonstrate how Emerson uses the poetic method he developed in Nature and "The Poet" to seize on what Kenneth Burke would call the "ruling symbols" of his day—the tropes of Jacksonian self-interest—in order to convince his readers that emancipation is an inevitable stage in the progressive evolution of American culture.

Emerson's pragmatist use of the rhetoric of Jacksonian individualism, however, is grounded in a logocentric conception of Being that keeps transformations in the content of the hegemony within the limits of the patriarchal values of the bourgeoisie. In my final chapter, "How inanimate objects twine

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9Although F. O. Mathiessen's American Renaissance generally is cited as the text that first codified the Americanist canon, Feidelson's Symbolism and American Literature has a longer legacy in Americanist criticism, since it provided Americanists with a symbolic theory of language based in metaphor and synecdoche that still informs the interpretive practice of the disciple. This symbolic theory also has been used by Americanists to absorb the radicalizing effects of deconstruction. Fisher acknowledges as much in his introduction to The New American Studies. "Deconstructions most enduring outcome has been its powerful analytic techniques in the face of brief cruix passages. In this respect, deconstruction extended but did not reverse the techniques of close reading that dominated literary study in the 1950s" (xxi). Although I do not have space to demonstrate this here, Fisher's account of deconstruction is symptomatic of the persistence of the symbolic theory of language that has its origins in Feidelson's landmark text. For a recent analysis of American literary culture that succeeds this legacy, see Gregory S. Jay's America the Scrivener: Deconstruction and the Subject of Literary History (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).
themselves into our affections: 'Literary Discourse and the Specular Interpellation of the Other in Melville's Typee,' I examine Herman Melville's critical evaluation of the concept of Being that informs romantic aesthetics as the key to understanding the narrative strategies Melville employs in his fiction to disrupt the structure of hegemony. Taking as my focus Melville's first novel Typee, I argue that Melville makes use of a doubled narrative strategy in which he first solicits readers' identification with the first-person narrator, only then to undermine subtly that narrator's authority by revealing at the level of narration that narrator's interpretation of events to be mediated by one or more of the discourses of hegemony. In Typee, Melville uses this strategy to make visible how the discourse of the Other in travel narratives and narratives of colonial discovery participates in the politics of national imperialism by constructing the Other as an object of Western desire.

Melville's doubled narrative strategy exhibits the ways in which literary writing disrupts the version of culture advanced by new historicism in which culture is seen as a homogeneous space that functions to recontain oppositional rhetorics. In its parody of how travel narratives and narratives of discovery present a figure of the Other that serves as a screen for Western desire, Typee remains abscessed within the narrative of Western colonialism, an object that indicates the failure of narrative assimilation. As a testament to those elements that resist cultural assimilation, I take Typee as representative of a literary history that makes audible the silencing of oppression by articulating how the symbolic conventions of hegemony condition subjects into reflexive habits of mind. Melville provides an explicit example of the sort of literary history I have in mind in one of the final chapters of Billy Budd. He describes how, immediately following Billy Budd's execution, "a silence but emphasized by the regular wash of the sea against the hull . . . was gradually disturbed by a sound not easily to
be verbally rendered." This inarticulate sound is the murmur of the crew
beginning to give voice to their sense of the injustice of the sentence passed in
Billy Budd's case. However, their revolutionary murmurings quickly are silenced
by "the mechanisms of discipline" that govern the ship.

The seeming remoteness of its source was because of its murmurous
indistinctness since it came from close by, even from the men massed on
the ship's open deck. Being inarticulate, it was dubious in significance
further than it seemed to indicate some capricious revulsion of thought or
feeling such as mobs ashore are liable to, in the present instance possibly
implying a sullen revocation on the men's part of their involuntary echoing
of Billy's benediction. But ere the murmur had time to wax into clamor it
was met by a strategic command, the more telling that it came with abrupt
unexpectedness.

"Pipe down the starboard watch, Boatswain, and see that they go."
Shrill as the shriek of the sea hawk the whistles of the boatswain
and his mates pierced that ominous low sound, dissipating it; and yielding
to the mechanism of discipline the throng was thinned by one half. For
the remainder, most of them were set to temporary employments
connected with trimming the yards and so forth, business readily to be got
up to serve occasion by any officer-of-the-deck.11

The dissipation of the crew's "revulsion of thought" while it is yet "inarticulate" by
Captain Vere's "strategic command" exemplifies how the signs of the Symbolic
order reestablish its authority by calling subjects back to the routine relations that
insure its reproduction. Moreover, in the final chapter of Billy Budd, Melville's
texts suggests how these repressed revolutionary thoughts—for what does the
crew's revulsion from Captain Vere's decision signify if not a revolutionary break
with the Symbolic—resurface in the mythic form of cultural artifacts and literary
texts. First, "the spar from which the foretopman was suspended" is "converted
into a monument . . . a chip of it was as a piece of the cross." And then, again,
the poem "Billy in the Darbies" is written by "one of [Billy's] watch" to give "rude
utterance" to "the general estimate of his nature." In narrating how these cultural
artifacts emerge as the symptomatic expression of an earlier act of political
oppression, Melville's text demonstrates how literary writing can serve as sort of

11Herman Melville, Billy Budd, Sailor (An inside narrative), eds. Harrison Hayford and Merton
cultural fund for the renewal of democracy by serving as a repository for those elements unwritten in the official history of the state. These "rude utterances" continue to disrupt the sort of homogeneous history imagined by "New Americanists" who would figure America's history as a continuous course of events that inevitably leads to the current political disposition of power, by showing that history is written and is, therefore, subject to the disseminatory effects of further writing.
Estranged Affections: 
Romantic Aesthetics and the Transformation of the Public Sphere.

It was truly a beautiful thought to have assumed Bartleby’s departure; but, after all, that assumption was simply my own, and none of Bartleby’s. The great point was, not whether I had assumed that he would quit me, but whether he would prefer so to do. He was more a man of preferences than assumptions.
-Melville, “Bartleby the Scrivener

This dissertation examines the concept of the literary as it emerges in America as a form of discourse distinct from the other forms of discourse (legislative, economic, juridical) that make up what Jurgen Habermas has termed the public sphere. Michael Warner, in his *The Letters of the Republic*, has demonstrated that, at the end of the eighteenth century, the definition of textuality underwent a significant transformation that parallels America's transformation from a democratic republic to a modern nation-state. Developing Habermas's theory within the political context of the newly formed United States, Warner claims that, prior to the ratification of the Constitution, print publication was governed by the common-sense rules of Enlightenment rationality, which viewed language as a neutral tool for the description of an objective reality. This rational conception of textuality as a transparent medium for the exchange of "self-evident" truths was both a precondition for, and an extension of, a republican ideology founded on the subordination of private interests to the public Good. According to Warner, publication—the very act of putting something into print—was defined as disinterested action, since in addressing the public you were required to speak in terms universally applicable to any and all readers and, therefore, necessarily had to censure personal interests.
However, with the ratification of the Constitution and the subsequent rise of a liberal discourse of rights, Warner says, textuality increasingly was viewed less as a transparent medium than as a site of mediation for the accommodation of multiple and competing claims among private persons and groups. By the 1830s, he writes, "[l]anguage, far from being transparent, ha[d] become in its ambiguity the site of social conflict, even while the resolution of that conflict must be received from an authority immanent in the language" (Letters, 115). This new, "interpretive" conception of textuality began to circulate widely in the public sphere, in part as a result of its legitimation in the "official hermeneutics" of juridical review that developed after Constitutional law was put into practice. For, to the extent that it defined individual rights in relation to the text rather than in relation to one's local community, juridical review designated the text of the Constitution (and textuality, generally) as the source and substance of personal identity.¹²

I briefly rehearse Warner's thesis because it suggests an historical and political reason as to why literary writing, and particularly romantic aesthetics, emerged in the early part of the nineteenth-century, and as to how this newly emergent discourse supplements the public sphere.

Like the textual conventions established by the process of juridical review, romantic aesthetics predicated textuality as the source and substance of subjectivity. Romantic aesthetics had its origins in the response of speculative

¹²Michael Warner, The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990) pp. 113–115. Warner points out that John Marshall's decision in Marbury v. Madison, which sets the precedent for judicial review, establishes the authority of the Constitution, by repeating the same self-reflexive logic that constructs the sovereign consent of the people in the preamble's opening phrase "We the people." Very briefly, Marshall argues that, since those who framed the written constitution understood constitutions, in general, to form the "fundamental and paramount law of the nation," and since this (general) theory of constitutionality "is essentially attached to a written constitution," it follows that "any act of legislature, repugnant to the constitution, is void." This kind of formal argument obscures the historical conditions in which the constitution was framed, by making the written properties of the text, rather than the occasion of its writing, the final source of textual authority.
idealists, such as Fichte, F.W.J. Schelling, and Friedrich Schlegel, to Kant's reduction of subjectivity to a mere function of cognition. Kant's anatomy of perception had divided the subject into a moment of pure receptivity and a moment of reflective synthesis thereby reducing the "I" to an "empty form," a "pure, logical necessity," whose only function is to match up sense intuitions with the transcendental categories in the moment of (re)presentation, or *Darstellung*. Speculative idealism, as Phillipe Lacoue Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy have shown in their provocative analysis of the origins of the concept of the literary in the German romantic writers of the Atheneum group, works to restore the subject's individuality by making the act of *Darstellung* itself the very form of subjectivity. This inversion of the Kantian model of cognition results in the transfiguration of (re)presentation as the power of origination: "It is the *bildende Kraft* as *aesthetische Kraft*: formative power is aesthetic power." The effect of this inversion is to thoroughly revise the rational subject of the Enlightenment understood as "the subject of a *cogito*" that posits its own substance using only the inner, yet divine, "light of nature." If (re)presentation is taken as the form of subjectivity, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy argue, then the rational subject of the *cogito* is replaced by an interpretive subject, "the subject of judgment, the subject of the critical operation," that is to say, the subject of the operation of *Darstellung*, of coordinating and objectifying sense impressions through the forms of space and time. But the operation of (re)presentation is no longer understood as simply performing the dictates of reason. Instead, it is

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13 For an explanation of Kant's concept that complements well the romantic revision of *Darstellung* discussed below, see Jean-Francois Lyotard's *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), pp. 61-63.


16 Lacoue-Labarath and Nancy, p. 52.
the systematic, yet creative, "making sense" of heterogenous knowledge and experience.\textsuperscript{17}

Romantic aesthetics, then, extends the Kantian subject of judgment in a manner that makes subjectivity equivalent to interpretive mediation. A clear example of this can be found in Hegel's definition of "the task of thinking" as the actualization of the World-Spirit.

\textit{[T]he task nowadays consists not so much in purging the individual of an immediate, sensuous mode of apprehension, and making him into a substance that is an object of thought and that thinks [the operation of the Cartesian cogito], but rather in just the opposite, in freeing determinate thoughts from their fixity so as to give actuality to the universal, and impart to it spiritual life.}\textsuperscript{18}

By taking up the dead letters of the past and breathing life into them, by showing their relevance, or irrelevance, to the present, the subject not only "gives actuality to the universal," it also brings itself into being. "By giving determinateness an existence in its own element [the political present]," Hegel continues, "[the subject] supersedes abstract immediacy, i.e. the immediacy which barely is, and thus is authentic substance: that being or immediacy whose mediation is not outside of it but which is this mediation itself" [my emphasis].\textsuperscript{19}

"[A]uthentic substance" is achieved not so much by codifying and recording original thoughts—the activity of consciousness conceived as cogito, which Hegel describes above as "purging the individual of an immediate, sensuous mode of apprehension." It is achieved in the work (Werke) of bring to bear on the present the already discovered knowledge of the past—an act of appropriation that Hegel describes as the realization of "the sensuous mode of apprehension," the putting

\textsuperscript{17}Along these line, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy identify the valorization of Witz, or "wit," in the writings of the Athaneum group as an indication of the "new operative status" of the Kantian subject. "By means of its bizarre combination of heterogenous elements, Witz plays the role of speculative knowledge itself," and therefore, "is the solution of the enigma of transcendental schematism." p. 53, 54.


\textsuperscript{19}Ibid, p. 19.
of it into practice, for "impart[ing] to [the universal] spiritual life" is equivalent to "giving determinate [knowledge] an existence in its [the subject's] own element."

Hegel's mediating subject is at the core of romantic aesthetics. It is equivalent to the often clichéd concept of "genius." To speak of writers' "genius," however, does not mean to refer only to the unique-ness or originality of their work; it also means to refer to their uncanny ability to bring home (Heim) their story, their ability to conjure an affective intensity that shows the relevance, or the resonance, that other forms of knowledge, other ways of being, have for the political present.

However, the definition of subjectivity as "mediation itself" within romantic aesthetics raises problems for any consideration of how literary writing supplements the public sphere. To what extent in the mediating subject Hegel describes a figure of political agency? To what extent a figure of ideological inscription? The latter might seem the case, especially when we consider that, in the moment when it "giv[es] determinateness an existence in its own element," the subject is speaking the discourse of the World-Spirit, which, after Marx, often is read as equivalent to hegemony. However, as Hegel has presented it in his preface to Phenomenology of Spirit, it is precisely by challenging the discourses of hegemony, "by freeing determinate thoughts from their fixity," that the subject "actualizes the universal" and becomes "authentic substance."

"Mediation itself," therefore, can be revolutionary to the extent that its performative dimension overturns the pedagogical prescriptions that direct us to reproduce the existing modes of production\(^\text{20}\). Whether in the form of novels,

\(^{20}\) I am adopting, here, Althusser's logic in, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in Lenin and Philosophy, ed. Ben Brewster, (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp. 127-186. In his "general theory of ideology," Althusser makes a crucial distinction between the definition of ideology found in the early and late Marx. The Marx of The German Ideology seems to take for granted that the ideas of the ruling class represent, in an inverted form, the subject's real conditions of existence. However, Althusser points out that, in Marx's mature writings, it is not the conditions of existence but the subject's relation to those conditions that forms the content of ideology. Althusser's point is that the object of ideology is not the conditions of existence, but the modes of production. Therefore, it is not as if ideology obscures, in order to prevent us from returning to, some
histories, sermons, stage productions, political speeches, or whatever, to the extent that literary writing describes social relations, it can be construed as engaged in defining a 'normative' way of relating to others and, therefore, can be taken as instructing its readers, viewers, or auditors, in the relations 'proper' to the social. If the romantic definition of subjectivity as "mediation itself" is understood in this sense, then literary writing seems an effective instrument of political action, especially since the affective intensities it can generate to bring home its story make it a powerful, pedagogically prescriptive form of address. In its descriptions of our relation to the social, literary writing can question and contradict the forms of representation that present as "natural" the subject's relation to the conditions of production.

Yet in the account Warner gives of the transformation of the public sphere during America's transition from a democratic-republic to a liberal nation-state, the political agency made available by romantic aesthetics is circumscribed because confined to the realm of private life. Literary writing, especially the genre of the novel, Warner argues, was a form more conducive to the formation of "private imaginary identifications" necessarily divorced from the realm of political action. Such a publicly circulated medium for private identifications was an essential component in the formation of a properly national political subject. In their general circulation, Warner writes, novels contributed to the development of "a repertoire of self-perceptions" that, although "detached from any context of action understood as political," nonetheless are experienced as "national"

originary, primeval relation to the natural world. Instead, ideology works to keep in place a certain mode of production by depicting as natural the configuration of social relations which is necessary to sustain that mode of production.

21Gayatri Spivak's work has helped me greatly to understand literary writing as a pedagogically prescriptive form of address. See especially her discussion of "the ordinary sense of pouvoir/savoir" in Foucault's writings, a sense Spivak defines as "being able to do something—only as you are able to make sense of it." "More on Power/Knowledge," in The Spivak Reader, ed. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean (New York: Routledge; 1995), pp. 141-174, and esp. p. 150-151.
because collectively shared. It should be noted, however, that these private, yet collective, forms of national identification are overdetermined, and therefore, support conflicting and contradictory definitions of national identity. The mediating subject of romantic aesthetics I have described is found in just such an overdetermined field, engaged in a competition to define 'proper' relations to others, as well as to the Other, that is to say, the Social understood in the Lacanian sense as the structure of symbolic relations that determine legitimate knowledge.

However, Warner makes a stronger, structural claim against the political effectiveness of this sort of politics of (re)presentation. Although it allows for a range of competing definitions of what constitutes the "national," Warner argues, literary writing, ultimately, is politically beside the point, since by the 1830's it already had become separated from the increasingly professional, institutional bureaucracies that managed the government. Warner introduces, here, a structural divide comparable to the traditional Marxist division of the state into an institutional (material) base of power and an ideological (virtual) superstructure. A salient point of difference is that, for Warner, this ideological superstructure is not so much coercive as diversionary, disseminating the political interests of "the people" into an array of private desires "detached from any context understood as political." In this scenario, it is difficult to read the mediating subject of romantic aesthetics as a figure of political agency. For if, when translated into national terms, "giving determinateness an existence in [the subject's] own environment" reads "be 'American' in the way you live your daily life," then national identity becomes simply a matter of aesthetic preferences. Warner suggests just this when he writes "[modern nationalism] constructs 'American-

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22 Warner, p. 149.
ness' as a distinctive but privately possessed trait . . . It allows you to be American in the way you tailor your coat, or the way you sing, or the way you read a book.\textsuperscript{24} Reduced to the level of "fashion," the mediating (re)presentations of literary writing may address the effects of institutional practice, but it will fail to engage those practices in any real, material way. The mediating subject, in its mediations, is simply announcing a Bartleby-like "preference" for something different from the institutional practices that determine it.

The announcement of "preferences" that differ from the hegemonic norm, however, is a crucial first step toward institutional change. "Preferences" that differ from the "assumptions" of hegemony call attention to the fact that the state's claims to satisfy the needs of all of its constituents are unfulfilled. It therefore indicates a real, material need for institutional change, for the political transformation of the state. And, to the extent that these "preferences"—the mediations of the mediating subject—suggest relations different from the existing relations to the conditions of production, they indicate the direction of change in the conditions of production. For as I have already said, the mediations of the mediating subject, or literary writing in its extended sense, is a pedagogically prescriptive form of address engaged in instructing its audience in proper relations to the Social, and this instruction oftentimes entails the disruption of the current "assumptions" of hegemony.

Bartleby's "preferences" are a figure of this sort of disruptive discourse. The "assumptions" he disregards, in the quotation I have taken as epigraph, are precisely the hegemonic forms of (re)presentation that determine the subject's relation to the conditions of production. At this point in the story, the narrator is congratulating himself on his "masterly management" of Bartleby in dismissing

\textsuperscript{24} Warner, p. 149.
him from the law office. "Without loudly bidding him depart—as an inferior genius might have done—I assumed the ground that depart he must; and upon that assumption built all I had to say."25 The "ground" that the narrator assumes is the relation between employee and employer—between labor and management—that "must be so" if the reproduction of the conditions of production is to continue without interruption. That Bartleby's "preferences" interrupt that relation—not the relation to production which his refusal to copy interrupts, but the relation that reproduces the relation to production, the relation of the narrator to his employees—that Bartleby's "preferences" disrupts that relation can be seen in the moment when his fellow employees "involuntarily" begin using the word "preferences" in their conversations with the narrator (58-59). The fact that Bartleby's "preferences" have begun to spread like madness, or a revolutionary movement, is what, at bottom, leads the narrator to fire Bartleby.

[S]urely I must get rid of a demented man, who already has in some degree turned the tongues, if not the heads of myself and clerks. But I thought it prudent not to break the dismissal at once (59).

The narrator understands well that the threat that Bartleby's "preferences" pose to him and his clerks is pedagogical. Having "turned their tongues," it is only a matter of time before he turns their heads, as well. For as Slavoj Zizek has written, "[i]n general, . . . an ideological battle is won when the adversary himself begins to speak our language, without being aware of it."26

In their spread, Bartleby's "preferences" threaten to disrupt the "good natural arrangement" in which the narrator has disposed his employees through what could be called his ideology of management. In the opening pages of his story he relates with pride how he has balanced the eccentricities of his clerks—

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Turkey's lunch-time tippling, Nippers' dyspepsia—off against one another so as to create a more efficient workplace. "Their fits relieved each other, like guards. When Nippers's was on, Turkey's was off; and vice-versa. This was a good natural arrangement under the circumstances" (45).

In light of his "arrangement" of Nippers and Turkey, the narrator's interrogations of Bartleby can be read as instances of his ideology of management in practice, acts of interpellative hailing that would fix Bartleby within the economy of efficiency that governs the office. His repeated calls on Bartleby "to give a coloring to his refusal[s]" ("Will you tell me anything about yourself?") are voiced always in the interests of reducing Bartleby's character to a known quantity, something that you can make "assumptions" about, and therefore, effectively manage (63, 57). Bartleby's "preferences," in contrast, are interpellative in their own right, calling for a social relation thought in terms other than the terms of efficiency. Insisting on his "preferences," and yet refusing to define them, Bartleby is unreadable in a way that helps us read the discourses that assign to persons a functional role in the reproduction of the state. Melville's text, therefore, gives "actualization" to a more fully representative form of the state by attesting to a relation between persons that exceeds the functional terms of corporate capitalism.

Moreover, Melville's text indicates that this relation is not to be found in literary discourse conceived as a "virtual" space detatched from any context understood as political. That is the ironic lesson of the narrator's sentimental (re)presentation of the "rumor" that Bartleby worked as "a subordinate clerk in the Dead Letter Office at Washington" prior to his taking the job as scrivener in the narrator's law office. The narrator presents this "little item of rumor" in a way that mimics how literary discourse can divert public obligations to a private realm of sentimental experience. The narrator gives emphasis to the fact that "rumor"
has the status of fiction, indicating that its appeal could not be heard, nor its effects felt, in the discourse of law that he represents. "Upon what basis it rested, I could never ascertain; and hence, how true it is I cannot now tell." And yet despite his inability to verify the "truth" of the rumor, and against his insistence that he is "wholly unable to gratify" the reader's "curiosity as to who Bartleby was," the narrator, nevertheless, presents the "rumor" of Bartleby sifting through "dead letters" as the interpretive key that will unlock his character (73).

To cling to the story of the "dead letters" as the sign that interprets Bartleby's character, however, is to read him via the "assumptions" of conventional sentimentality. It is precisely these "assumptions" that are evoked in the narrator's (re)presentation of the rumor. What the narrator adds to the account he has heard of Bartleby's time in the Dead Letter Office is the image of Bartleby examining the contents of the letters he daily "assort[s] for the flames."

When I think over this rumor, hardly can I express the emotions that seize me. Dead letters! does it not sound like dead men? Conceive a man by nature and misfortune prone to a pallid hopelessness, can any business seem more fitted to heighten it than that of continually handling these dead letters, and assorting them for the flames? For by the cart-load they are annually burned. Sometimes from out the folded paper the pale clerk takes a ring—the finger it was meant for, perhaps, moulders in the grave; a banknote sent in swiftest charity—he whom it would relieve, nor eats nor hungers any more; pardon for those who died despairing; hope for those who died unhoping; good tidings for those who died stifled by unrelieved calamities. On errands of life these letters speed to death.

Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity (73).

The narrator's "mediating" development of "the rumor" demonstrates how literary discourse can separate the "real" effects of ideology from their institutional context and locate them, instead, in the private realm of sentimental experience. The contents of the letters are a survey of conventional tropes of romantic, Gothic sentimentality, and, taken together, offer a range of affective points for the reader to identify Bartleby by associating his otherwise unreadable character with already familiar narratives of tragic belatedness.
This strategy, moreover, draws the reader into sympathy not with Bartleby, but with the narrator, who seems to recognize the tragic belatedness of his own 'letter' to Bartleby in his exclamation "Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity." These words are prompted by his realization of the irony of the preceding line, "On errands of life these letters speed to death," which refers both to the dead letters Bartleby assorts for the flames as well as to the narrator's letters written *in memory* of Bartleby—in other words, written in the way in which the narrator would like to remember Bartleby. To what extent is the narrator here acknowledging his own belatedness in "writing" to Bartleby? While it is true that the story he tells, as with "the banknote sent in swiftest charity," arrives only after Bartleby "nor eats nor hungers anymore," yet can we read "Ah, Bartleby! Ah humanity" as saying something like "if I only knew then, what I know now, I would have treated you differently?" Or does the progression from "Bartleby" to "humanity in general" signify something more like a recognition of the extent to which we are isolated from one another by the hegemonic discourses that redirect instincts of "charity" to the reproduction of the conditions of production?

If the latter is the case, then the narrator's sentimental (re)presentation of the rumor, including his dramatic expostulation, should be counted among those hegemonic discourses. For as presented, the rumor supplements the narrator's attempts to reduce Bartleby to a set of "assumptions" with the story of a "natural" flaw in Bartleby's character. He encourages the reader to imagine Bartleby as "a man by nature and misfortune prone to a pallid hopelessness." If this is the case, although it may have served to "heighten" his condition, working in the Dead Letter Office was not the cause of Bartleby's "pallid hopelessness"; that "hopelessness," instead, was a defect in Bartleby's "nature," the sign of his fated "misfortune." As with his earlier designation of Bartleby's "preferences" as a sign of madness ("surely I must get rid of a demented man"), the narrator's
elaboration of the rumor presents Bartleby's unaccountable behavior as the biological symptom of an incurable disease.

This (re)presentation of Bartleby's character, moreover, serves to remove the narrator from all culpability in Bartleby's demise. His letter to Bartleby is tragically belated, in this scenario, because the damage was done well before the day Bartleby first appeared on his doorstep. In the image he presents of Bartleby handling the dead letters, the narrator figures him as absorbing the tragic loss that flows from each letter as he consigns it to the flames; until, his "natural" susceptibility to "hopelessness" continually aggravated, he becomes numbed into believing that all charity is misdirected, that no letter reaches its intended addressee. "Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity." What the narrator's version of the rumor allows him to fail to realize is his own culpability in the misdirection of letters of charity, the fact that his concern for Bartleby, in every instance, is overshadowed by his need to reduce him to a manageable set of assumptions. His elaboration of the rumor with the conventional tropes of sentimental fiction, therefore, blinds him from reading the Dead Letter Office as a metaphor for how the institutional practices he himself represents misdirect our instincts of "charity," turning that affective energy, instead, to the reproduction of the relations to production.

Read self-reflexively, therefore, as charged with an irony that undermines the narrator's sentimental image of Bartleby in the Dead Letter Office, "Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity" leads to a recognition of the ideological contradiction Melville states more schematically in "Poor Man's Pudding and Rich Man's Crumbs."

Those peculiar social sensibilities nourished by our own peculiar political principles, while they enhance the true dignity of a prosperous American, do but minister to the added wretchedness of the unfortunate, first, by prohibiting their acceptance of what little random relief charity may offer; and, second, by furnishing them with the keenest appreciation of the smarting distinction between their ideal of universal equality and their
The concluding point, that the misery and infamy of poverty "is, ever has been, and ever will be, precisely the same," should not be misread as a fated acceptance of social inequality. It refers to the universal condition of poverty not in the sense that "the poor will always be with us," but in the sense that the misery and infamy of poverty exceeds the limits of nationalism. Although the "peculiar social sensibilities nourished by our own peculiar political principles" give Americans' "the keenest appreciation of the smarting distinction between their ideal of universal equality and their grindstone experience" of poverty, that "grindstone experience" is the same regardless of time and place. The narrator of "Bartleby" never quite recognizes this. His use of the conventional tropes of sentimentality defers this recognition, perhaps because it is his foot that is pedaling the grindstone. What he never sees about Bartleby, or any of his employees, for that matter, is that their peculiar character traits result, in part, from the fact that they are underpaid and overworked. Nippers has ulcers from worrying about how to get ahead; Turkey drinks to forget that he has been left behind.

Recognizing how the narrator's version of the rumor frees him from culpability in Bartleby's death serves to estrange us from our affections, our assumptions about what it means to have sympathy for an other. And this estrangement demonstrates how literary writing can supplement the public sphere in a way that disrupts hegemony: it can indicate the inability of the hegemonic order (the state, the Nation, the ideology of business) to take care of what it claims as its own. Melville's text is politically productive, then, in that it makes visible how a transparent ideology of management, a sort of Taylorism

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27 Great Short Works, p. 172.
avant la lettre, makes use of a strategy of "othering," which projects for persons an image that it then teaches them to inhabit, so as to reproduce "the grounds" of a capitalist economy driven by speculative investment (recall that the narrator does "a snug business among rich men's bonds, and mortgages, and title deeds"). One of the contradictions that Melville's text brings out—with a characteristically piquant sense of humor—is that, in such a speculative economy, our investment in others can only be speculative as well. When the narrator finally does dismiss Bartleby, he does so because "necessities connected with [his] business tyrannized over all other considerations" (60). A temporary employee, Bartleby had to be let go when the boom went bust.

My concluding chapter examines how Melville's first novel Typee makes visible, in an analogous fashion, the transparent strategies of "othering" that inform America's expansionist policies in the Pacific. Like "Bartleby the Scrivener," Typee is a text that reads how conventional forms of (re)presentation contribute to the reproduction of a state governed by institutions that reduce public obligations to a form of speculative investment. Taking Melville's appendix as the key to the deconstructive politics of the text, I read Typee as a parody of how the popular genre of travel narrative contributed to the promotion of American imperialism. By thematizing how the narrator Tommo figures "Polynesia" as a site for the production of private fantasy, Typee puts on display the way travel narratives helped to construct a popular base of support for the imperialist foreign policies of the United States.

In Typee, as in "Bartleby," Melville is working against a particular form of popular literary discourse and the mediation it performs between subjects and the nation. In my first two chapters, I account for how that form of literary discourse emerged in America from the convergence of mass culture and American progressivism. Chapter two examines how Edgar Allan Poe promotes
the literary text in his critical essays and reviews as a means of escaping the norms of majority public opinion—what Tocqueville describes as the "mighty pressure of the mind of all upon the intelligence of each."28 However, in tales such as "The Man That Was Used Up" and "The Man of the Crowd," Poe repeatedly confronts his readers with images of their total immersion in the majority view—a condition that can be overcome only in the act of reading distinctly literary texts whose content is, by definition, outside the concerns of the political public sphere. Poe's tales, when read in combination with his critical essays, interpellate subjects as naturally dependent on literary discourse for their private identities, by raising the specter that subjective identity can contain nothing that is not drawn from the Crowd, from majority public opinion.

In chapter three, I examine Emerson's late volume of essays Conduct of Life as a response to the detachment of the literary from the political that Poe works to accomplish in his definition of the literary text. By reading it in the context of Emerson's lectures against slavery, I argue that Conduct of Life is the pragmatic application of the poetic method Emerson develops in Nature and "The Poet." What critics often read as Emerson's capitulation to the values of Jacksonian self-interest, in fact, is a calculated effort to turn those values toward the project of emancipation. However, Emerson's use of the literary to transform the political content of the public sphere is still circumscribed by the structure of hegemony, for his pragmatic strategies for turning the dominant tropes of the majority view remain grounded in a logocentric conception of Being that tacitly maintains the patriarchal structure of majority public opinion. Emerson's conception of Being, moreover, lends itself to a progressivist view of history that ultimately recontains the political force of his pragmatist interventions. My readings of Melville's texts in the fourth chapter and throughout this dissertation

are designed to question this conception of Being in order to advance a materialist conception of history that can better serve as the basis for cultural analysis in a democracy.

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Within the context of recent Americanist criticism, my analysis of how literary writing supplements the public sphere in the texts of Poe, Emerson and Melville is meant to put in play competing historicist definitions of the dialectical relationship between literature and culture. Each chapter corresponds with a particular view of the mediation that literary writing performs. My chapter on Poe is meant to engage a material historicist definition of textual mediation, which primarily understands the literary text as reflective of the dominant ideological beliefs of the time of its writing. My chapter on Emerson is meant to engage a liberal historicist definition of textual mediation, which posits the literary text as a repository for a potentially infinite range of interpretations that can be recirculated to generate ever more inclusive forms of culture. Finally, my chapter on Melville is meant to engage a political and ethical historicist definition of textual mediation, which posits the literary text as a genealogical record of the rhetorics which constitute the hegemonic forms of representation that determine the dispersal of power.

These three definitions, of course, are not distinct from one another. They intersect, merge and divide. For example, the liberal historicist conception of textual mediation is not all that different from the ethico-political conception of textual mediation. In both cases, the text is defined as a heterogeneous collection of various, often contradictory discourses. However, the liberal historicist position tends to limit the possibilities of agency with an imperative not
to privilege any one discourse over the others. This imperative is grounded in a progressivist and utilitarian faith that the market-like forces which determine what discourses achieve hegemony adequately express something like the will of the majority.\footnote{For a recent example of this progressivist and utilitarian faith see Philip Fisher’s introduction to the collection of essays titled The New American studies: Essays from Representations, ed. Philip Fisher, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).} However, to the extent that the forces that determine discursive hegemony are modelled on the forces of market capitalism, the liberal historicist’s position collapses into the material historicist’s position.\footnote{This collapse of the liberal historicist formula into the material historicist formula is essentially what Walter Benn Michaels’ accomplishes in his The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism: American Literature and the Turn of the Century. See especially his reduction of Hawthorne’s concept of romance to a form of property ownership in his reading of Hawthorne’s The House of the Seven Gables.} The performative agency made available in and through the mediation of the text is circumscribed by the material conditions of production. By contrast, the political-ethical historicist works at the limits of agency to open up space for the articulation of discourses that speak counter to the discourses of hegemony. It does this by refusing the liberal imperative not to privilege any one discourse over the others. Recognizing that the structure of address within a given discourse already presupposes an ideal of consensus that is equivalent to an acknowledgement of the rational presuppositions—and therefore the authority—of the one occupying the position of addressee, the political-ethical historicist promotes strategies that resist the authorizing structure of address within hegemonic discourse by considering the play of discourse in temporal, rather than spatial terms.\footnote{For a refined analysis of the ethical and political complications that arise from thinking mediation in terms of the structure of address see Lyotard’s discussion of prescriptives in Jean-François Lyotard and Jean-Loup Thébaud, Just Gaming, trans. Wlad Godzich, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; 1985), 45-59.}

The liberal historicist definition of textuality generally treats discourse in spatial terms. Although recognizing that culture is generated by the play of various and competing discourses, the liberal historicist views these discourses
as separate and self-contained in their competition for hegemony. The political-ethical historicist, by contrast, considers discourse in temporal, as well as spatial terms, and understands hegemony to occur in the performative moment of address. Locating the construction of hegemony in the moment of address makes visible the extent to which discursive authority is predicated on iterability, the success with which a discourse repeats its prescriptions across time, and by so doing delineates the conditions necessary for the reproduction of the material conditions that support that discourse's hegemonic status.\(^{32}\) However, the necessary repetition of the prescriptive address makes possible "the situation" Judith Butler describes as "the contemporary scene of utterance."

That situation in which subjects who have been excluded from enfranchisement by existing conventions governing the exclusionary definition of the universal seize the language of enfranchisement and set into motion a performative contradiction. Claiming to be covered by that universal, [they] thereby expos[e] the contradictory character of previous conventional formulations of the universal.\(^{33}\)

In opposition to Habermas's static, spatial understanding of consensus as a process that "remains unproblematic only so long as all participants stick to the reference point of possibly achieving a mutual understanding in which the same utterances are given equivocal meaning," Butler reminds us that "the equivocality of the utterance means that it might not always mean in the same way, that its meaning might be turned or derailed in some significant way," in the necessary moment of its repetition.

For Butler, the "disjuncture between utterance and meaning" made visible in the moment when "one with no authorization to speak within and as the universal nevertheless lays claims to the terms" is "the condition of possibility for revising the performative." This condition parallels the condition of the subject of modern ideology that Bhabha describes, following LeFort, as "split between the

\(^{32}\)My formulation here is modelled on Althusser's definition of ideology.

iconic image of authority and the movement of the signifier that produces the image."34 Attending to the movement of the signifier across time, therefore, reveals that the pedagogical directives of the discourses of hegemony are subject to performative variation, to historical change. This displacement of the subject into indeterminacy allows for the possibility of forms of political agency that exceed the limits of the "real" as defined by the discourses of hegemony. Moreover, the indeterminacy of the subject—its status as split between the pedagogical directives of hegemony and their performance—indicates that political agency predicates an ethical subject, a subject with the capacity to choose among a range of performative variations.35 This choice is not the faux liberal, "free choice" to do and say whatever one wants. It is more moderate than that, limited not only by the structure of address (Who's speaking to you, demanding your answer), but also by the material constraints of race, gender, and class that inform the structure of address. The choices we make as critics, moreover, our performative variations on the pedagogical directives of texts, are properly conceived as ethical because they prescribe ways of knowing the cultural history of America, and therefore, participate in determining the possibilities for life in a democracy. The value of the ethical political historicist position I privilege in this dissertation is its insistence, in displacing the subject and the State into indeterminacy, that consensus is not a goal to achieved through the imposition of hard and fast rules geared to achieve a Utopian ideal of

35 Bill Readings' essay "The Deconstruction of Politics," in Reading de Man Reading, ed. Lindsat Waters and Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989) provides a fuller explanation than I have provided here of how "the deconstruction of the subject/object distinction" can be conceived as "the thinking of political agency with an ethical subject." For a related reading of the possibilities for political agency generated by language's inherent indeterminacy see Gregory S. Jay's discussion of play, in his introduction to America the Scrivener: Deconstruction and the Subject of Literary History. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 1-17.
harmony at some historical endtime, but instead is a continuous struggle worked out across time.

However, it should be added that, with its insistence on performative agency and the matter of choice, the political-ethical historicist, like the liberal historicist, risks falling back into the inherent conservatism of the material historicist's position. The material historicist position maintains that choices are based on beliefs grounded in a set of cultural assumptions that cannot be questioned because these assumptions form the epistemic foundations of the subject who would question them. The effect of this rhetorical move is to relegate the effects of performative variation to a purely textual level conceived as separate from the material level of the conditions of production. As in Poe's texts, the literary can only reinscribe, or at most, anxiously deny the forces that determine the hegemonic forms of representation; it can never contend with them.

To maintain the material historicist position, however, is to forget that the conditions of production are themselves discontinuous, composed of a diverse range of competing economic practices, and, consequently, a diverse range of definitions of the 'proper' relations to the social. To the extent that literary writing (re)presents one set of relations over the others, it can influence the direction of political change. The chapters that follow are an initial attempt to map the terrain of textual mediation in the political life of American culture during the first part of the nineteenth-century. To some extent, then, I am adhering to Margaret Fuller's definition of the critic in her "A Short Essay on Critics" (1840): "The critic is the historian who records the order of creation. In vain for the maker, who knows

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without learning it, but not in vain for his race."37 By examining the different forms of textual mediation that emerged from romantic aesthetics in America, this dissertation takes part in the struggle, which continues today, to define the proper use of the technology of literary discourse.

"I live continually in a reverie of the future." Edgar Allan Poe and the Promotion of a Cultural Sphere

If, indeed, there be any one circle of thought distinctly and palpably marked out from amid the jarring and tumultuous chaos of human intelligence, it is that evergreen and radiant Paradise which the true Poet knows, and knows alone, as the limited realm of his authority—as the circumscribed Eden of his dreams.38
—E.A. Poe

Ever since James Russell Lowell, in his A Fable for Critics, described Edgar Allan Poe's work as "[t]wo fifths . . . genius and three fifths sheer fudge," Poe has occupied an ambivalent position in studies of American literary culture. For every William Carlos Williams who insists that "American literature is anchored, in [Poe] alone, on solid ground;" there seems to be a Harold Bloom to remind us, wryly, that there is "no other American writer . . . at once so inevitable and so dubious."39

However, with the recent resurgence of a criticism that reads literary texts in terms of the political, social and economic contexts in which they were written, the question of Poe's canonical status seems less important than the ways in which his texts reflect the changing perception of print discourse during the early part of the nineteenth century. As Michael Warner writes, it was Poe who "brought to full development for the first time in America a discourse of the literary distinguished from other discourses precisely by its embrace of a naturalized textuality."40 Warner calls our attention, here, to the way in which Poe's writings reflect a large-scale shift in the form and function of textuality that corresponds to the shift in America's political system from a federal republic to a

modern, liberal nation state. I would make a stronger claim. By locating the authority of meaning not in some agent of authority external to the text, but in the internal relations among the text's component parts, Poe's textual aesthetic makes it feasible for literary discourse to constitute what has come to be called the "cultural sphere"—that "imaginary" discursive space which is relatively distinct from the (more) material discourses of political and economic exchange.\textsuperscript{41}

This new perspective on Poe makes his writings central to the study of nineteenth century American culture; for, as some of the best recent ideological criticism has shown, such a "cultural sphere" is necessary for the development of national identity. If the "nation" is to carry through on its promise to fully integrate its citizens into a unified "people," it must find ways to convert the abstract "rights" of citizenship into "natural" traits of personhood. In order for this conversion of "citizens" into national subjects to be accomplished, national identity must be dissociated from the public sphere of political action and civic duty, and located, instead, in the private sphere of everyday life.\textsuperscript{42} This is imperative because, as national subjects, we experience our citizenship not as a contractual obligation between ourselves and the state, but as an integral part of the ways in which we live our daily lives.

The emergence of a distinctly literary discourse during the nineteenth century provided an effective means of translating the terms of national identity from the public to the private sphere. The intimate scene of reading—which, nonetheless, remains a collective experience via the medium of circulating print—elicits from persons an affective investment in a set of images and narratives that circulate on a national level. These national signs, in turn, provide a shared vocabulary for the articulation of national-communal values. Literary discourse,


therefore, within the order of discursive practices that Lauren Berlant calls "the National Symbolic," fulfills a crucial mediating function. It provides a space of fantasy located intermediate between the subject and the state, where the subject is more or less free to imagine images and models of its relationship to its socio-political environment.

This freedom, however, is not without its limits. For although literary discourse opens a field for the exploration and entertainment of alternatives to the political realities of national political life, this field is limited by the structure of hegemony. The images of its relation to the state that the subject models in the cultural sphere are practicable only insofar as they can be generalized, only insofar as they can be freed from any historical, practical, or experiential context.\footnote{For a somewhat dated, but nonetheless accurate, account of this process of generalization see Roland Barthes discussion of "ex-nomination" in Mythologies, (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1957), pp. 138-141.} This generalization is necessary if the alternative model is to circulate as a national sign. It must be abstracted from its local context in order to appeal to the generalized tastes of a national subject that defines its interests in the terms provided by majority public opinion.

However, as Thoreau makes clear in his "Resistance to Civil Government," majority public opinion, by the 1850s, was not an expression of the interests of a majority of the state's citizens, but of those interests as defined by an elite group of professional politicians and journalists. In an illustration of how voting practices are governed by Paley's "rule of expediency," Thoreau tells the following anecdote.

I hear of a convention to be held at Baltimore, or elsewhere, for the selection of a candidate for the Presidency, made up chiefly of editors, and men who are politicians by profession; but I think, what is it to any independent, intelligent, and respectable man what decision they may come to, shall we not have the advantage of his wisdom and honesty, nevertheless. . . . But no: I find that the respectable man, so called, . . . forthwith adopts one of the candidates thus selected as the only available
one, thus proving that he is himself available for any purposes of the demagogue [Thoreau's emphasis].

In telling this anecdote, Thoreau wants to demonstrate how our "willing[ness] to leave it [national political decisions] to the majority" ensures that "[the majority's] obligation . . . never exceeds that of expediency" (231). His point is that political engagement is strictly correlative with personal welfare. The "respectable man" will not question the content of majority opinion on national issues such as Abolition or the war with Mexico, so long as he is well-provided for at home. More significant, though, is Thoreau's feigned sense of disbelief that the "respectable man" will resign himself to authority of print media and the party system and accept as the only candidates available the ones proffered in the press. Thoreau's astonishment, feigned or otherwise, suggests that, by the 1850's, the co-development of a national party system and a publishing network capable of providing coverage at a national level led the voting public to begin to locate its political interest within a range of choices found in print discourse rather than worked out in public debate within the local community.

It is easy to grasp how the hegemonic order Thoreau describes came to determine the limits of political agency at the public level of institutionalized party politics. More difficult to grasp, however, is how a hegemonic order emerged to set the limits of agency for private identifications. For this to occur readers would have to have become habituated to locating their "private" identity traits within a public opinion which they find not in their circle of family, friends, neighbors and associates, but in the pages of popular print publications. Moreover, popular print media would have to perform a double function. In order to cathect the subject onto the complex of suitably generalized national signs, the literary text also would have to drain off the subject's residual affective attachments to local

and everyday experience. As Berlant writes, "the 'local' is an elastic concept, incorporating a wide range of political identities—national, regional, provincial—as well as the non-'political' experiences of social life in which categories like 'the people' feel, mainly, irrelevant." In order for a national subject to emerge through the formation of a complex of affective attachments to a common set of national identity traits, our attachment to "non-'political' experiences of social life" must be displaced, even as they are colonized, by the norms of the hegemonic order.

This chapter examines Edgar Allan Poe's critical essays and reviews and his sensational fiction as a two-part strategy that performs this double function. I take as my starting point Poe's 1844 correspondence with James Russell Lowell and Charles Anthon about the possibility of bringing out a magazine under their joint editorship. The monopolistic schemes Poe proposes in these letters, I claim, suggest a way of reading his sensational fiction as a means of interpellating readers into a cultural sphere. In his letter of Oct. 1844 to Anthon, for example, Poe hints that he has "the right means" to capture the attention of "the true and permanent readers of the land." These "right means," I will argue, are more than simply Poe's well known strategies for generating publicity through the creation of controversy, as in the notorious accusations of plagiarism he advanced against Longfellow. They refer also to his strategies for instilling in his readers an anxiety about their status as subjects—an anxiety that can be mastered only through further reading. In their studied manipulation of this anxiety, Poe's tales make visible the otherwise transparent protocols of reading that help to generate a national public consciousness concerned solely with interests defined as "private."

In a letter dated March 30, 1844, Poe first proposed to Lowell that they collaborate in bringing out a magazine. Poe may have thought the time opportune. In March of 1843, Lowell’s magazine *The Pioneer* had folded after only three issues, in part because Lowell suffered from a severe eye disease. By October, however, Lowell had recovered fully, so much so that he was able to complete the process of bringing to press his first volume of poetry, *Poems*, published early in the new year. In his March 30 letter, Poe compliments Lowell on the sales of this volume in words that suggest he has a personal stake in Lowell’s success. "I sincerely rejoice to hear of the success of your volume. To sell eleven hundred copies of a bound book of American poetry, is to do wonders. I hope everything from your future endeavors" *(Letters, I:173)*. That Poe was placing his hopes on Lowell’s future endeavors is clear from the rest of the letter, which is preoccupied with publicity and the ways in which it can be capitalized on in the publishing industry.

Poe begins his letter by mentioning a recent conversation he has had with George R. Graham about the possibility of his writing Lowell’s biography for the series on American authors then running in *Graham’s Magazine*. This turned out to be a perhaps too subtle ploy to get Lowell to reciprocate and to offer to write Poe’s biography for the same series. Two paragraphs later Poe writes, "My Life is not yet written, and I am at a sad loss for a Biographer—for Graham insists upon leaving the matter to myself" *(Letters, I:173)*. In handling the matter himself, though, Poe apparently returned to Graham and asked him to solicit Lowell on his behalf, perhaps because Lowell had failed to catch the hint and offer himself as Poe’s biographer. Poe’s next letter to Lowell, dated May 28,
1844, indicates that Graham did ask Lowell to write Poe's biography at Poe's request.

    Touching the Biography—I would be very proud indeed if you would write it—and did, certainly, say to myself, and I believe to Graham—that such was my wish; but as I fancied the job might be disagreeable, I did not venture to suggest it to yourself. Your offer relieves me from great embarrassment, and I thank you sincerely. You will do me justice, and that I could not expect at all hands (Letters, I:175).

Poe's concern to secure Lowell as his biographer because he "will do [him] justice" shows his understanding of the structures that govern the nascent publishing industry in America. 47 As Timothy Scherman has written, "Poe realized that he would have to bring his name before the public before he could publish under his name." 48 By writing each other's biographies for Graham's, Poe and Lowell together could build on, and benefit from, the reputation that Lowell already had acquired from the success of his first volume of poetry. Sales of Lowell's Poems would increase as Poe's biography brought his name before the Philadelphia public, and Poe's work would become more marketable when recognized by the young, and rising "genius," Lowell. And if the magazine he planned to bring out were to succeed, he would have to establish a wide public reputation as a distinguished man of letters, as well as the critic known for "using up" the authors he reviewed.

    Poe's proposed magazine was the the subtext of his statement "I hope everything from your future endeavors." Poe seems to have hoped that the public interest in the names of "Poe" and "Lowell" generated by the biographies will make it possible for them to interest others in "a well-founded Monthly Journal." He pitched this idea to Lowell in a way designed to appeal not only to


their shared concern to establish a national literature on grounds of
"Independence, Truth, [and] Originality," but also to the lingering anxiety Lowell
might feel about making a living as a writer, following the collapse of The
Pioneer.

How dreadful is the present condition of our Literature! To what are things
tending? We want two things certainly:—an International Copy-Right Law, and a
well founded Monthly Journal, of sufficient ability, circulation, and
character, to control and so give tone to, our Letters. It should be,
externally, a specimen of high, but not too refined Taste . . . Its chief aim
should be Independence, Truth, Originality . . . Such a magazine might
be made to exercise a prodigious influence, and would be a source of vast
wealth to its proprietors. There can be no reason why 100,000 copies
might not, in one or two years, be circulated: but the means of bringing it
into circulation should be radically different from those usually employed
(Letters, I:173)

Although he appeals to Lowell's aesthetic sensibilities, the "control" and
"influence" that Poe has in mind is thought more in terms of market share than of
moral cultivation. The "radically different" means of bringing this magazine into
circulation that he has in mind is a scheme for effecting a monopoly of readers of
"Taste."

Such a journal might, perhaps, be set on foot by a coalition, and, thus set
on foot, with proper understanding, would be irresistible [my emphasis].
Suppose, for example, that the élite of our men of letters should combine
secretly. Many of them control papers &c. Let each subscribe, say $200
for the commencement of the undertaking; furnishing other means, as
required from time to time, until the work be established. The articles to
be supplied by the by the members solely, and upon a concerted plan of
action. A nominal editor to be elected from among the number. How
could such a journal fail? I would very much like to hear your opinion
upon this matter. Could not the "ball be set in motion"? If we do not
defend ourselves by some such coalition, we shall be devoured, without
mercy, by the Godey's, the Snowdens, et id genus omne (Letters, I:173)

Notice how Poe concludes dramatically with an image meant to recall the failure
of Lowell's Pioneer, the image of being devoured by the competition of
magazines, such as Godey's and Snowden's, that appeal to popular tastes and
so devalue the work of, or even exclude, "the élite of our men of letters." Of
more interest, though, is Poe's belief that, in order for the journal to be
successful, the fact that it is run by coalition must be kept secret. Poe's
insistence that the coalition "combine secretly" demonstrates his conviction that public interest is created by print media, and not the other way around. He fears that, if the public knows that the journal is run by coalition, it will suspect the "originality" of the stories and poems carried in its pages, suspect them as written on commission rather than from the inspiration of "genius." Poe's scheme to keep secret the coalition indicates his sense that the authority of critical judgments of literary merit, as he wrote in "The Philosophy of Composition," requires that the critic first "dismiss as irrelevant to the poem, per se, the circumstance—or say the necessity—which, in the first place, gave rise to the intention of composing a poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste" (XIV: 196).

How Lowell responded to this scheme, or if he ever did, is not known. In the May 28, 1844, letter quoted above, in which he thanked Lowell for agreeing to write his biography, Poe concluded by questioning Lowell's silence on the topic. "I wrote you a long letter from Phil: about 7 weeks since—did you get it?—you make no allusion to it" (Letters, I:175). And five months later, under the auspices of thanking him for the finished biography, Poe reiterates his scheme for a journal run by coalition.

A long time ago I wrote you a letter to which you have never replied. It concerned a scheme for protecting ourselves from the imposition of publishers by a coalition. I will state it again in brief. Suppose a dozen of the most active or influential men of letters in this country, should unite for the purpose of publishing a Magazine of high character. Their names to be kept secret, that their mutual support might be the more effectual. Each member to take a share of the stock at $100 a share. Each, if required, to furnish one article each month—the work to be sustained altogether by the contributions of the members, or by unpaid contributions from others. As many of the members as possible to be taken from those otherwise connected with the press:—a blackball to exclude any one suggested by those already conjoined—this to secure unanimity—These, of course, are mere hints in the rough. But suppose that(the scheme originating with yourself & me) we write to any others or, seeing them personally, engage them in the enterprise. The desired number being made up, a meeting might be held, and a constitution framed. A point in this latter might be that an editor should be elected periodically from among the stockholders.
The advantages of such a coalition seem to me very great. The Magazine could be started with a positive certainty of success. There would be no expense for contributions, while we would have the best. Plates, of course, would be disdained. The aim would be to elevate without stupefying our literature—to further justice—to resist foreign dictation—and to afford (in the circulation & profit of the journal) a remuneration to ourselves for whatever we should write (Letters, I:185).

I quote this second proposal at length to show that, while Poe's scheme had not become any less cabalistic, it had become more corporatized, complete with a constitution and an editor elected by the shareholders. Clearly, Poe is anxious for Lowell to take him seriously. He concludes the letter "I have thought long and cautiously on this matter, and am persuaded that there would be little difficulty in doing even far more than I have ventured to suggest" [Poe's emphasis]. This "far more" may be a reference back to Poe's idea that all submissions to the magazine "be supplied by the members solely, and upon a concerted plan of action." Although unspecified, the "concerted plan of action" Poe has in mind probably involves something like the system of "puffing" and "clipping" that commonly was used to generate publicity for newly published works. In exchange for advertising, or sometimes simply for the advertising fee, editors would agree to publish flattering reviews, or "puffs." "Clipping" is a similar promotional strategy. It refers to the practice editors had of reprinting articles that had been made popular in other journals, in order to capitalize on their popularity. This practice was often encouraged by the editors of the magazine that originally had published the material because each reprinting would cite the original source, and thus bring publicity to the publication that first carried the story. A coalition comprised of members "otherwise connected with the press" would be able to increase the subscription rate by "puffing" and "clipping" the journal to fame. However, I will suggest that the "concerted plan of action" Poe imagines also covers the content of the articles submitted. For Poe already had worked out in his critical writings and fiction a strategy for writing texts that would
leave readers anxious to return to the pages of the journal in which they appeared.

A clue to this strategy can be found in a letter Poe wrote to Charles Anthon at approximately the same time that he wrote the second letter to Lowell reiterating the coalition scheme. Poe's letter to Anthon is without date, but Anthon's reply is dated November 2, 1844, making it likely that Poe's letter was written in late October, possibly within the same week of his second letter to Lowell, dated October 24, 1844. In writing to Anthon, Poe seems to be trying to combine his second proposal to Lowell with another promotional campaign designed to bring his name before the public and, therefore, to increase his chances of securing investors and subscribers for the new journal. Poe's letter to Anthon is a carefully crafted request that Anthon solicit the Harpers on his behalf to bring out a five-volume set of his complete prose tales to date. Poe's object, however, is not a share in the profits of his collected work but the publicity that will be generated by their publication.

I seek no pecuniary remuneration. My sole immediate object is the furtherance of my ultimate one. I believe that if I could get my tales fairly before the public, and thus have an opportunity of eliciting foreign as well as native opinion respecting them—I should by their means be in a far more advantageous position than at present in regard to the establishment of a Magazine. In a word, I believe that the publication of the work would lead forthwith either directly through my own exertion or indirectly with the aid of a publisher to the establishment of the journal I hold in view (Letters, I:186).

As with the biographies he and Lowell wrote for one another, Poe believes he can use the critical recognition accorded his complete works to secure investors and subscribers for a literary magazine of his own. To this end, Poe prefaces his request to Anthon with an elaborate account of his career as a magazinist that is meant to show him as uniquely qualified to edit a profitable journal.

After first calling Anthon's attention to a packet, apparently included with his letter, containing "a single tale as a specimen" of his writing and a collection
of "the published opinions of many of my contemporaries," Poe launches into an inspired account of what can only be described as the vision that led him to enter the profession of letters.

After a long & desperate struggle with the ills attendant upon orphanage, the total want of relatives, & before quitting the Mess[enger], I saw, or fancied that I saw, through a long & dim vista, the brilliant field for ambition which a Magazine of bold & noble aims presented to him who would successfully establish it in America. I perceived that the country from its very constitution, could not fail of affording in a few years, a larger proportionate amount of readers than any upon the earth. I perceived that the whole energetic, busy spirit of the age tended . . . to the Magazine literature—to the curt, the terse, the well-timed, and the readily diffused, in preference to the old forms of the verbose and ponderous & the inaccessible. I knew from personal experience that lying per dus among the innumerable plantations in our vast Southern and Western countries were a host of well-educated men singularly devoid of prejudice who would gladly left their influence to a really vigorous journal provided the right means were taken of bringing it fairly within the very limited scope of their observation. Now, I knew, it is true, that some scores of journals had failed (for indeed I looked upon the best success of the best of them as failure) but then I easily traced the cause of this failure in the impotency of their conductors, who made no scruple of basing their rules of action altogether upon what had customarily been done instead of what was now before them to do, in the greatly changed and constantly changing condition of things (Letters, I:186).

Poe's perception that the rapid growth of the publishing industry during the first decades of the nineteenth century follows from the "very constitution" of the country speaks to his sense of the development of a national audience for his proposed journal. In his description of the prospects such a national audience affords, he makes use of a conventional trope from the rhetoric of Western expansionism, which underwrote national identity in the 1840's. His description of the "host" of readers "lying per dus . . . in our vast Southern and Western countries," as a "brilliant field for ambition" viewed through "a long & dim vista," follows the pattern of the images of "Westering" found, for example, in the landscape paintings of Thomas Cole and, later, Albert Bierstadt, which figure the West as a space of Utopian fulfillment.  

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account of this same trope of "Westering" is Thomas Jefferson's description of the Shenandoah valley as viewed from the Blue Ridge, in Notes on the State of Virginia.

[The Mountain being cloven asunder, she presents to your eye, through the cleft, a small catch of smooth blue horizon, at an infinite distance in the plain country, inviting you, as it were, from the riot and tumult roaring around, to pass through the breach and participate of the calm below.]

In appropriating this trope of "Westering," Poe too seeks to escape "the riot and tumble roaring around," and to "participate in the calm below." The "brilliant field for ambition" he sees through "a long & dim vista," if commanded, will liberate him and his investors from the cutthroat competition of the magazine trade, the constant threat of being "devoured, without mercy, by the Godey's, the Snowden's, et id genus omne."

Moreover, Poe is confident that he can command this field for ambition because he knows the "rules of action" required to succeed in "the greatly changed and [now] constantly changing condition[s]" of the publishing market. That is to say, he knows how to capitalize on the demographic shift in reading tastes that follows from the bourgeoisie's rise to hegemony under democracy, the shift he identifies earlier in the paragraph from "the old forms of the verbose and ponderous & the inaccessible," to "the curt, the terse, the well-timed, and the readily diffused." In the "energetic, busy spirit of the age," Poe claims, people no

50Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia (1785). In Jefferson: Writings (New York: Library of America, 1984), p. 143. Myra Jehlen provides a compelling account of how Jefferson's descriptions of the landscape in Notes on the State of Virginia positions the American in "the stance of implementor" because this position is seen to be "more empowering than that of creator."

As the creators of the New World, they would henceforth be vulnerable to political challenge and to the erosions of the historical process. For a man-made world is always open to question. The settler's implementation of the continents permanent contours and conditions, in contrast, . . . places the emerging social structures beyond debate, in the realm of nature. Those who assist the emergence of those structures, moreover, wield the power of nature herself.

In his use of what we might call, following Jehlen, the rhetoric of incarnation, Poe figures himself as precisely the implementor who has "the right means" to assist in the emergence of the "host of well-educated men" that he identifies "lying perdus " in the West. Myra Jehlen, American Incarnations: The Individual, The Nation, and the Continent, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 30-32, 44-51, 57.
longer read to acquire established knowledge; they read for access to
knowledge which is current.

This shift indicates the development of a national audience of textual
consumers. As Warner has suggested, the rapid growth of a publishing industry
organized around the production and distribution of literary writing in the 1830s
and 1840s resulted, in part, from a change in reading habits that followed from
the newly reformed republic's development into a modern nation state. In the
decades after ratification, as the mechanisms of the Constitution—legislative,
juridical, and economic—were put into practice, Warner writes, "a liberal
discourse of rights increasingly regarded the state as an institution for
accommodating the conflicting claims of persons and defined persons by their
economic self-interest and their private relation to the state."51 Instead of
viewing the text as a transparent medium for the dissemination of self-evident—
that is to say, public and universal—truths, people began to view textuality as the
space in which one identified one's private interests. That Poe believed he has
developed the means to tap into this newly emerging market of literary
consumers can be seen from the paragraph in his letter to Anthon that follows
his description of "brilliant field for ambition" which a magazine offers "to him who
would successfully establish it in America."

Lest Anthon think his 'vision' of the prospects offered by "the changed and
constantly changing condition" of the publishing market too visionary, Poe
follows it with an account of the practical success he has achieved in his career
as an editor. "Not to trust too implicitly to à priori reasonings," Poe writes, "I
entered a few steps into the field of experiment" (Letters: 186). He then provides
an account of his employment at T.H. White's The Southern Literary Messenger
and George Graham's Graham's Magazine, in which he claims to have raised,

51Warner, p. 114.
single-handedly, the subscription rates of both journals—from 700 to 5,500 in the
case of *The Messenger*, and from 5,000 to 50,000 in the case of *Graham's*. His
departure, moreover, he claims, left both magazines on the verge of "extinction."

This paragraph describing his career experience offers a further clue to
the content of his hint to Lowell that "far more" could be done to secure the
success of a journal run by coalition. The extant copy of Poe's letter to Anthon is
a draft he obviously recopied before sending to Anthon in time for Anthon to
reply in his letter dated November 2, 1844.52 In the surviving draft copy, the
section relating the success he brought to *The Messenger* and to *Graham's* is
heavily rewritten. The first version of this section concludes with a description of
how Poe planned to use his journal for purposes of moral instruction. "The
influence of such a journal would be vast indeed, and I dreamed of honestly
employing that influence in the sacred cause of the beautiful, the just, & the
true." He then adds as an afterthought, "[e]ven in a pecuniary view, the object
was a magnificent one." In the revised version, however, Poe subordinates "the
sacred cause of the beautiful, the just, & the true" to a financial analysis of the
potential profits of the magazine. Referring back to the success he brought to
*Graham's*, Poe's revision reads, "[i]f 50000 can be obtained for a 3$ Maga-
among a class of readers who read very little, why may not $50,000. be procured
for a $5 journal among the true and permanent readers of the land." This
change is significant, I would suggest, because it indicates how Poe makes use
of romantic aesthetics in his critical writings and in his fiction. In revising his
account of the influence his journal will have with the public, Poe recasts those
who uphold the principles of romantic aesthetics, those dedicated to "the sacred

52 For Anthon's reply see Quinn, p. 427. Anthon did solicit Harper's on Poe's behalf to bring out
his collected works, but they declined the offer, Anthon reports, because of "complaints against
[Poe], grounded on certain movements of yours, when they acted as your publishers some years
ago." This may be a reference to lingering animosities caused by Poe's savage reviews of novels
published by Harpers that Poe wrote while they were in the process of bringing out his *Narrative
of Arthur Gordon Pym*. 
cause of the beautiful, the just, & the true," as "true and permanent readers," a reliable market of consumers for his literary wares.

His confidence that he can secure "true and permanent readers" among those who read in terms of romantic aesthetics, I will argue, suggests a way of reading his critical essays and reviews as part of a promotional strategy that also includes his sensationalist fiction. When read together with tales such as "The Man That Was Used Up" and "The Purloined Letter," Poe's critical writings can be seen as one component of a two-part strategy designed to interpellate readers as consumers of literary texts.

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As with his reputation as a writer, Poe's reputation as a critic is ambivalent. On the one hand, he is renowned for his "hatchet jobs," his habit of "using up" writers with sensational reviews that, as the Lynchburg Virginian remarked of his review of Theodore S. Fay's Norman Leslie, "will be read" because "Men—and Women alike—will always be attracted in crowds to behold an infliction of the Russian knout or to see a fellow creature flayed alive."53 On the other hand, with his concern to establish "determinate principles" for the evaluation of literary merit, Poe has been hailed as the critic who first established American letters on the solid ground of an "objective" criticism. However, it is not clear that Poe's efforts to establish an "determinate principles" for criticism can be separated from his sensationalist strategies to capture an audience. For Poe's "determinate principles," I will show, systematically redefine in material terms the romantic definition of the subject as "mediation itself." This material revision of romantic aesthetics, moreover, is part of Poe's strategy to capitalize

on the recent demographic shift toward a national audience of textual consumers.

In his critical essays and reviews Poe takes the romantic concept of subjectivity as "mediation itself" and redefines the experience of mediation as a rhetorical effect of the text. Instead of referring to the writer's ability to give actuality to the universal through his expressive acts—the writer's ability to write texts that reveal to readers the universal order of Spirit—, in Poe's critical essays and reviews such an experience of poetic transcendence follows from a writer's ability to plot his work in a way that brings the reader to a moment of recognition in which, understanding the formal composition of the work, the reader experiences that work as "absolutely original with the writer—and himself."\textsuperscript{54} In Poe's aesthetic, the subject achieves substance not by giving actuality to the universal, but by identifying with the writer's "genius," with his ability to plot such an intricate text. As a result, the subject is dependent on the writer of "genius" for his sense of himself as subject—as "absolutely original," and as self-determining in thought and action. Subjectivity, in Poe's aesthetic, is contingent on reading.

Poe first advances his systematic revision of romantic aesthetics in his 1836 review of Joseph Rodman Drake's \textit{The Culprit Fay} and Fitz-Greene Halleck's \textit{Alnwick Castle}, which he wrote while working under White at \textit{The Southern Literary Messenger}. The Drake-Halleck review has long been recognized as the first review in which Poe begins to establish his "determinate principles" for the evaluation of literary works. Critics, generally, have supposed that Poe's conviction that "determinate principles" for criticism can be established is grounded in his acceptance of the traditional romantic definition of the literary

\textsuperscript{54}Poe's review of Hawthorne's \textit{Twice Told Tales} and \textit{Mosses from an Old Manse}, in \textit{The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe}, ed. James A. Harrison, (New York: AMS Press, 1965),(XIII: 146). Further references to this text will be given parenthetically
text as a vehicle that provides access to an experience of "Beauty," which is understood to be universal because it follows from the recognition, stimulated by the text, of the teleological order of Nature. Sidney P. Moss, for example, writes that "[f]or Poe, . . . critical principles could be fixed once and for all, since that which the poem adumbrated was eternal."55 In the Drake-Halleck review, however, Poe's introduces "determinate principles" in a way that inverts this romantic definition of the text as a vehicle for poetic experience.

In the Drake-Halleck review, Poe is concerned to defend himself from the recent criticisms brought against him by Willis Gaylord Clark of the Philadelphia Gazette and Knickerbocker and Colonel William L. Stone of the New York Commercial Advertiser.56 Reacting to the praise The Messenger has received in other periodicals for its sensational reviews, Clark accuses Poe of "quackery," and writes,

There is in it[The Messenger's critical review section] a great assumption of acumen, which is completely unsustained. . . . This affectation of eccentric sternness in criticism, without the power to back one's suit withal, so far from deserving praise, as some suppose, merits the strongest reprehension (VII: 278).

Col. Stone, for his part, attacks more directly the praise Poe's reviews have received in other journals. He announces his "total dissent" from the "lavish encomiums" that have been showered upon The Messenger, and argues that this attention has only encouraged Poe to seek further notoriety. "The critic of The Messenger has been eulogized for his scorching and scarifying abilities, and he thinks it incumbent upon him to keep up his reputation in this line, by sneers, sarcasm, and downright abuse" (VII: 279). In the Drake-Halleck review, Poe introduces the need for "determinate principles" in American criticism as a response to these charges, which also serves as justification for his sensationalist tactics.

55Moss, p. 49.
56For a full account of Poe's exchange with Clark and Stone see Moss, pp. 44-51.
The Drake-Halleck review begins with a long introduction on the current state of criticism in America. Poe claims that, although critics have broken away from "their servile deference to British critical dicta,"—their tendency to read "native writers . . . only after repeated assurances from England that such productions were not altogether contemptible"—they have fallen into a practice equally "foolish;" namely, promoting the work of American authors, not because they are talented writers, but because they are American. This "misguided patriotism," Poe says, leads critics into "the gross paradox of liking a stupid book the better, because, sure enough, its stupidity is American" (VIII: 277). By contrast, he claims his own critical practice in the pages of The Messenger has been "a constant endeavor" to counter this practice of "puffing," "a current so disastrously undermining the health and prosperity of our literature." It is at this point that he introduces the criticisms that Clark and Stone had published in the Philadelphia Gazette and the New York Commercial Advertiser. Curiously, Poe does not refute Clark's charge of "quackery," writing "Mr. C has the right to think us quacky if he pleases" (VIII:279). But he does call Col. Stone's criticisms "equivocal," since Stone acknowledged, Poe writes, that "some of our notices have been judicious, fair, and candid," which contradicts his "total dissent from the public verdict in [The Messenger's] favor" (VIII:280).

Poe's quibbling about Stone's consistency in his judgments and his acknowledgment of Clark's right to his opinion, are both rhetorical ploys introduced as symptoms of a general condition in American criticism, for which Poe's "determinate principles" will be the cure. Clark and Stone have a right to the inconsistencies of their opinions, Poe writes, because American criticism lacks a theoretical basis.

Who will deny that in regard to individual poems no definitive opinions can exist, so long as to Poetry in the abstract we attach no definitive idea? Yet it is a common thing to hear our critics, day after day, pronounce, with a positive air, laudatory or condemningary sentences, en masse, upon
material works whose merits or demerits they have, in the first place, virtually confessed an utter ignorance, in confessing ignorance of all determinate principles by which to regulate a decision (VIII: 280).

Clark's and Stone's "equivocal opinions" are symptomatic of this general condition of "utter ignorance" in American criticism. In the absence of a theory of "Poetry in the abstract," Poe claims, criticism in general can pretend to no more authority than the opinion of the individual critic. However, in making this point, he also asserts his critical authority over the "opinions" of Clark and Stone. His assertion that one must have a definitive idea of Poetry in the abstract, in order to have definitive opinions about individual poems, suggests that the more strongly a critic expresses his opinions, the more definite his understanding of Poetry. Poe's claims for theory not only make Clark and Stone's opinions a confession of their "utter ignorance," it also makes his own sensationalist tactics—his "scorching and scarifying abilities"—signs of his knowledge of the "determinate principles" of Poetry. "The great assumption of acumen" that Stone had labeled "quackery," Poe claims as the basis of his critical authority.

However, in the next paragraph, Poe seems to undermine the critical authority he has just established. His knowledge of the principles of Poetry is not derived from something like a Kantian transcendental deduction. Instead, it comes from his first-hand experience of poetic transcendence. This recourse to personal experience seems to cause problems for his theory of Poetry in the abstract. Having made the claim for "determinate principles," Poe turns around and admits that poetic experience is non-communicable because subjective and immaterial. For these reasons, "[p]oetry has never been defined to the satisfaction of all parties. . . . Words cannot hem it in" (VIII:281). And yet, although inarticulate, poetic experience is understood, Poe insists, by those "true poets" who have experienced it.

[Poetry's] intangible and purely spiritual nature refuses to be bound down within the widest horizon of mere sounds. But it is not, therefore,
misunderstood—at least, not by all men is it misunderstood. Very far from it. If, indeed, there be any one circle of thought distinctly and palpably marked out from amid the jarring and tumultuous chaos of human intelligence, it is that evergreen and radiant Paradise which the true Poet knows, and knows alone, as the limited realm of his authority—as the circumscribed Eden of his dreams. But a definition is a thing of words—a conception of ideas. And thus while we readily perceive that Poesy, the term, it will be troublesome to define—still, with its image vividly existing in the world, we apprehend no difficulty in so describing Poesy, the Sentiment, as to imbue even the most obtuse intellect with a comprehension of it sufficiently distinct for all the purposes of practical analysis (VIII: 281).

Although he seems to be conceding the epistemological grounds for criticism he previously claimed, in acknowledging the incommunicability of poetic experience, Poe accomplishes two things central to his revision of the conventional definition of subjectivity in romantic aesthetics as "mediation itself." He shifts the focus of critical evaluation from the text's referent to its effect on the reader, and he defines the writer as someone who has privileged access to the experience of poetic transcendence.

As Poe defines it in the Drake-Halleck review, poetic experience is finally non-communicable. It is the subjective content of the writer's imagination, "the circumscribed Eden of his dreams." Therefore, given that the content of poetic experience cannot be communicated, the proper focus for criticism, Poe argues, is the poetic "Sentiment," the affective state that the poem is meant to generate in its readers. This affective state Poe defines with reference to the conventional romantic definition of Beauty as the perception of teleology in Nature, which he has borrowed from Kant by way of Coleridge. The sentiment of Poetry, Poe writes, is "the unconquerable desire—to know" that follows from a recognition of symmetry between "the bright valleys and rivers and mountains of the Earth" and the "burning glories of the Heaven." Within this conventional definition of Beauty, the function of the text is to indicate a teleological order in Nature that exceeds the limits of rational sense. In presenting that order, the text serves as the meditating link between subject and Spirit and so gives "actuality to the
universal." Within the logic of Poe's Drake-Hallek review, however, the text's function has been subtly redefined in ways that convert the desire to read purposiveness in Nature into a desire to read the content of private identity in the text.

Poe's earlier acknowledgment that poetic experience is radically subjective pays its dividends here. His definition of what the "true poet" knows presents poetic experience less as knowledge of teleology than as pure, private experience. The writer's imagination—"the circumscribed Eden of his dreams"—is figured as a space free from social mediation, where the subject can develop the original and unique attributes of its identity in terms separate from the terms of general public interest. Our "unconquerable desire—to know," in Poe's aesthetic of "effects," is a desire for access to that "one circle of thought" marked off from the public sphere, free of "the jarring and tumultuous chaos of human intelligence." The literary text, therefore, to the extent that it grants access to the writer's imagination, is defined as a site for private identifications outside the limits of socially sanctioned knowledge.

Poe's definition of poetic experience as pure, private experience establishes an asymmetrical relationship between writer and reader that serves well the strategies he employs in his fiction to capitalize on the demographic shift in reading habits he identified in his letter to Anthon. To the extent that the "true poet" is seen as having privileged access to the "one circle of thought" free of social mediation, the reader remains dependent on the text for the content of its private identifications. In fact, as Poe develops his aesthetic of "effects," the reader's dependency on the writer's "original" thoughts increases. In discussing "Tale-Writing" in his 1847 review of Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales and Mosses from an Old Manse published in the November issue of Godey's Lady's Book, Poe explains that, in order for the writer to engage the general reader of a mass
audience, he must avoid the "absolute novelty" in order to "preserve" the effect of originality.

[T]he novelty of effect . . . is best wrought, for the end of all fictitious composition, pleasure, by shunning rather than by seeking the absolute novelty of combination. Originality, thus understood, tasks and startles the intellect, . . . And thus understood, it cannot fail to prove unpopular with the masses, who, in seeking amusement, are positively offended by instruction. But the true originality—true in respect of its purposes—is that which, in bringing out the half-formed, the reluctant, or the unexpressed fancies of mankind, or in exciting the more delicate pulses of the heart's passion, or in giving birth to some universal sentiment or instinct in embryo, thus combines with the pleasurable effect of apparent novelty, a real egoistic delight. The reader, in the case first supposed, (that of absolute novelty,) is excited, but embarrassed, disturbed, in some degree even pained at his own want of perception, at his own folly in not having himself hit upon the idea. In the second case, his pleasure is doubled. He is filled with an intrinsic and extrinsic delight. He feels and intensely enjoys the seeming novelty of the thought, enjoys it as really novel, as absolutely original with the writer—and himself (XIII:145-46).

The "novelty effect" Poe describes makes the reader feel as if he is a self-creating subject. But the reader experiences the "intrinsic and extrinsic delight" of this full self-presence only when engaged in the act of reading. Moreover, the effect of originality soon fades as the reader recognizes that the "real egoistic delight" he experiences is the effect of a novelty that is only "apparent." Poe's definition of the "novelty of effect" provides something like built-in obsolescence for the literary text, since the effect of "originality" is "used-up" in the reading, and the activity of reading is defined as an act of private consumption rather than an engagement with public knowledge.

The "determinate principles" that Poe defines for American criticism promote the sort of cultural sphere necessary for the development of a national hegemonic order. They predicate the reader as a subject dependent on non-public, literary discourse for the grounds of its self-identity. Furthermore, in the Drake-Halleck review and elsewhere, Poe defines an asymmetrical relationship between the writer and the reader that he will exploit in his sensational fiction. In his definition of the writer's imagination as the "the one circle of thought" marked
off from the public sphere, Poe presents the writer as a figure of what Lacan terms full self-presence of and in the Other, the culmination and resolution of desire in the Symbolic. The images the writer presents to himself in the "circumscribed Eden" of his own mind satisfy fully the demands of identification with the Other. At the same time, the reader is allowed access to this space of absolute fantasy, only through the text, which, in offering the reader a phenomenal experience of full self-presence, functions not unlike the Lacanian objet petit a, the object of desire, that, in revealing itself to be not the fulfillment of desire, but only a sign of desire's need to be fulfilled, reminds the subject of its partial, incomplete status—and, therefore, of its need for the writer's writing as the means of self-fulfillment. Through this asymmetrical relation, the text is figured as fully commodified.  

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Poe's subtle revision of romantic aesthetics plays to the anxieties of a national subject under a democracy. As the national imperative E Pluribus Unum—from the many one—implies, the national democratic subject must feel itself to be radically individual and, at the same time, at one with the will of the majority. Tocqueville, in the second volume of his Democracy in America, identifies this anxious split in the democratic subject as stemming from the institution of private space that follows from the ideology of individualism, and the corresponding fear of losing one's independent judgment to the will of the majority. Individualism is not, like egotism, a narcissistic love of self to the exclusion of all others. Instead, Tocqueville writes, "[i]ndividualism is a calm and

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57 By "fully commodified" I have in mind Marx's definition of the commodity as fetish—as a sign of the fulfillment of what is lost in its production. See Zizek's discussion of the commodity in terms of the Lacanian formula of the phallus as "the signifier of the lack of the signifier," in For They Know Not What They Do, pp. 21-27.
considered feeling that disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of his family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the rest of society to look after itself.\textsuperscript{58} However, the "calm and considered feeling" with which we withdraw into private life has as its compliment a fear of that space's penetration by majority public opinion.

The citizen of a democracy comparing himself with the others feels proud of his equality with each. But when he compares himself with all his fellows and measures himself against this vast entity, he is overwhelmed by a sense of his insignificance and weakness.

The same equality which makes him independent of each separate citizen leaves him isolated and defenseless against the majority.

So in democracies public opinion has a strange power of which aristocratic countries can form no conception. It uses no persuasion to forward its beliefs, but by some mighty pressure of the mind of all upon the intelligence of each it imposes its ideas and makes them penetrate men's very souls . . . American political laws give the majority the sovereign right to rule society, and that considerably increases the dominion it has over men's minds. For nothing comes more natural to man than to recognize the superior wisdom of his oppressor.\textsuperscript{59}

Poe's definition of the text as a device that offers access to pure, private experience—"the uncircumscribed Eden of our dreams"—figures the text as an antidote to the Nietzschean resentment Tocqueville describes, here, in this passage from "Principal Source of Beliefs among Democratic Peoples." In reading Poe's texts,—in experiencing the text "as absolutely original with the writer—and himself"—the reader escapes the grasp of a mass, national culture. In aligning his thoughts with the writer's "genius," he asserts his mastery over majority public opinion.

In fact, throughout his writings, Poe presupposes a reader whose reading is motivated by an anxious need to assert his independence from majority public opinion. For example, in a review of Lowell's A Fable for Critics, Poe refutes the idea that American democratic culture is not conducive to satire because,


\textsuperscript{59}Ibid., p. 435-436.
according to Poe, "the people who write, . . . are the people who read:—thus in satirizing the people we satirize only ourselves and are never in condition to sympathize with the satire." Poe insists that this view is "more verisimilar than true."

It is forgotten that no individual considers himself as one of the mass. Each person in his own estimate, is the pivot on which all the rest of the world spins round. We may abuse the people by wholesale, and yet with a clear conscience, so far as regards any compunction for offending any one from among the multitude of which that "people" is composed (XIII: 166).

In his fiction, Poe repeatedly plays to a readership anxious to dissociate itself from the mass and to assert its superiority over "the people." An obvious example of this can be found in Poe's tale Berenice, where the narrator, Egaeus, worries that the average reader will not be able to understand his monomania. "I fear that it is, indeed, in no manner possible to convey to the mind of the merely general reader, an adequate idea of that nervous intensity of interest with which, in my case, the powers of meditation (not to speak technically) busied and, as it were, buried themselves, in the contemplation of even the most common objects of the universe." Egaeus's fear that he will not be understood by the "merely general reader" is a not too subtle ploy to stimulate in the reader a similar "nervous intensity of interest" to know Egaeus's meaning. Poe is practicing, here, the rhetorical design he advocates in the Drake-Halleck review—a writing that stimulates in readers an "unconquerable desire to know." But it is not knowledge of "Beauty," or the teleological design of Nature that readers desire to know in Berenice. It is the knowledge that they escape inclusion in the mass of "merely general readers." This desire for exemption from the mass is the basis for the strategies Poe uses in his fiction to construct an audience of "true and permanent readers." His confidence in his letters to Lowell and Anthon that "even far more " could be done to secure the success of his magazine run by coalition, I would argue, follows from his confidence that he can manipulate the
newly nationalized reader's desire to escape absorption into the mass of merely general readers.

Counter-intuitive though it might seem, Poe's common strategy for manipulating his reader's fear of what Tocqueville styled the "mighty pressure of the mind of all upon the intelligence of each" is to confront his readers with an image of their penetration by, or absorption into, majority public opinion.

Jonathan Elmer argues that, in his sensationalist fiction, Poe repeatedly presents an uncanny figure of democratic mass society that serves to remind the reader that s/he is as much "part of" the majority, as "apart from" it. Poe, then, seems to be contradicting, directly, the "determinate principles" laid out in his critical writings. Instead of showing us that "one circle of thought" free of social mediation, he presents, instead, an image of the subject as thoroughly determined by the hegemonic force of majority public opinion. However, this is to forget the effect Poe is after. In confronting his readers with an image of the extent to which desires are subject to mediation by majority public opinion, Poe means to stimulate an effect of revulsion, a turning away from that image, which is also a turning toward "the literary" as the place where the subject can read signs of its autonomy. The effect of these figures of "the Crowd," then, is to

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60Jonathan Elmer, *Reading at the Social Limit: Affect, Mass Culture, and Edgar Allan Poe.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 20. I have benefited greatly from Elmer's sophisticated account of how "Poe's interest in the production of abstracted readers and reified effects" marks "an early moment in the homogenization of the audience effected by mass culture." However, Elmer tends to fetishize the subject's precarious position at the social limit—a limit that "simultaneously exposes the self as social, unnervingly plural, and the social as self, uncannily singular"—as an existential condition in which we take a certain "masochistic" pleasure in staring into the "irreparable breach at the heart of the psychosocial world" (21). In contrast, I read this same anxiety as the origins of a particular form of subjectivity appropriate to the increasingly corporatized capitalist economy of the 1840's—a form that defines subjectivity as the consumption of commodities whose function—the cultivation of private attributes of identity—is fundamentally non-material, and yet whose effects are all too real. The sort of affective investment in commodity objects that Poe's "novelty effect" encourages defines subjectivity not in terms of production—what we do—but in terms of consumption—what we purchase. Defining subjectivity in terms of consumption marks the moment when capital emerges tout ensemble, as the terms of value shift definitively to surplus value, and the subject is defined as that which is in excess of its necessary labor. See Spivak.
make the reader ever more dependent on the text for a sense of autonomy and freedom from majority public opinion.

The paradigmatic example of this logic in Poe's fiction is his sensationalist satire, *The Man That Was Used Up*. As many critics have remarked, *The Man That Was Used Up* is a satire of Jacksonian individualism. In the story, the reader is encouraged to identify with the narrator's desire to know the essence of the "individuality" of one Brevet Brigadier General John A.B.C. Smith, recently returned from "the late campaign" against the Bugaboo and Kickapoo Indians. The tale begins with the narrator confessing that he is unable to "remember when or where [he] first made the acquaintance" of the General because their introduction was "attended, upon my part, with a degree of anxious embarrassment." The cause of his anxiety he then attributes to a "family failing." "I am constitutionally nervous . . . the slightest appearance of mystery . . . puts me at once into a pitiable state of agitation." What triggered the narrator's anxiety we learn a few pages later. The "kind friend" who introduced the narrator to the General was in the process of "whisper[ing] . . . some few words of comment on the man, . . . thrilling me with the mystery of his tone," when they were interrupted by the General himself. The narrator's desire to be 'in the know" about the General, therefore, has to do less with a desire to imitate the General's demeanor, in order to project a similar "presence singularly commanding," than it has to do with a desire to know the inside story of his private life.

The bulk of the tale then consists of the narrator's pursuit of this gossip on the General. His itinerary takes him through the town's major social gathering points: "the Church of the Reverend Doctor Drummummup," "the Rantipole Theatre," a bridge party presided over by "the lovely widow, Mrs. Kathleen O'Trump," a society ball he attends with "that bewitching little angel, the graceful
Mrs. Pirouette," and, finally, a personal interview with his "particular friend Mr. Sinivate." At each of these events, the narrator inquires as to the General's identity, and in each instance the person who responds to his questions is interrupted at exactly the moment when the truth about the General is about to be announced. For example, the Mrs. O'Trump begins, "'Smith? why, not General John A.B.C.? Horrid affair that, wasn't it? Terrible wretches those Kickapoos! . . . However, this is the age of invention. Don't you know, Why he's the man. . . ." At which point she is interrupted by someone who overhears the conversation, and mistakes it for another different item of gossip. "Mann?—Captain Mann . . . Are you talking about Captain Mann and the duel?"

Each interruption intensifies the narrator's anxiety to be "in the know," until he decides to visit the General himself and "demand, in explicit terms, a solution of this abominable mystery." On entering the General's chamber, however, the narrator discovers only "a large and exceedingly odd-looking bundle of something" close by his feet on the floor. Kicking the bundle out of the way in frustration, the narrator is "horrified" to be addressed by it in a "funny little voice between a squeak and a whistle." The narrator then watches "with staring eyes and open mouth, . . . the solution of the wonder" as the bundle begins attaching to itself a series of prosthetic devices that replace the body parts the General has lost in battle with the Bugaboo and Kickapoo tribes. What's more, as he assembles his person with the help of his manservant Pompey, the General delivers "as if in a soliloquy" an account of how he received each wound. But in this account he speaks as much about the fine quality of his prosthetic limbs as about his heroics, and talks as if he were presenting a series of product endorsements.

"And a bloody action it was . . . but then one mustn't fight with the Bugaboos and Kickapoos, and think of coming off with a mere scratch. Pompey, I'll thank you now for that arm. Thomas" [turning to me] "is decidedly the best hand at a cork leg; but if you should ever want an arm,
my dear fellow, you must really let me recommend you to Bishop." Here Pompey screwed on an arm.

This performance indicates that Poe's satire works on at least two levels. First, the essence of "individuality" that the General represents turns out to be an artificial construct generated by a commercial fashion industry that commodifies the attributes of private identity. Secondly, news of the latest "fashion," of what's "remarkable" about the General, has systematically displaced the political content of the public sphere. The sensational spectacle that the General has become leads the public's attention away from the political stakes of Western expansion, the ostensible topic of the "public meeting" where the narrator was first introduced to the General, and locates it instead in the "intimate" details of the General's private life—details which are literally commodities in public circulation.

The object of Poe's satire may be what he repeatedly refereed to as the "namby-pamby" style of fashion magazines such as Godey's Lady's Book and Snowden's Ladies' Companion. There are numerous hints that the narrator is a parody of the sort of general social critic who would report on the social scene around town. For example, in his use of a series of stock phrases taken from aesthetics ("air distingué," "ne plus ultra," "je ne sais quoi"), the narrator exhibits the same affected erudition of which Poe was sometimes accused, and while at the society Ball, he is called upon to settle "a dispute touching the title of a certain poetical drama of Lord Byron's," a drama he misidentifies, ridiculously, confusing Byron's "Man-fred" with Robinson Crusoe's "Man-Friday." The narrator's announcement at the conclusion of the narrative that the General "was the man that was used up," therefore, refers not only to how Jacksonian society has literally used him up in the process of converting him into the representative figure of American individualism. It also refers to how the narrator has been used up in his pursuit of a sensational story that will be of general interest. In
discovering "the true state of affairs" about the General, he discovers as well that the General is used up as copy, since he, the narrator, is the last to know what already has become general public knowledge.

Read as a satire on popular journalism, *The Man That Was Used Up* fulfills Poe's criteria for "effect"-ive literary writing. To the extent that they understand the story as lampooning the "utter ignorance" of critics like Clark and Stone who fail to perceive the "determinate principles" that govern literary writing,—and who, therefore, will fail to perceive that they are the subject of Poe's satire—Poe's readers will share with Poe an inside joke, and experience the tale as "as absolutely original with the writer—and [themselves]." In so doing, these critical readers participate in Poe's presumption of his superiority over the "merely general reader." And yet, as Elmer points out "the possibilities of distinction from that mob are never permanently secured" in the tale.61 For throughout the narrative, the reader has been participating in the narrator's anxious desire to know the truth about the General. As in many of Poe's tales, the narrator reflects back to the reader the reader's desire to discern the truth about itself in the text. In *The Man That Was Used Up*, I would argue, this strategy is turned to the construction of a unified field of "cultural" discourse separate from the more "properly" political discourse of the public sphere. In following the itinerary of the narrator's pursuit of the General, the readers' affective desire "to know" quilts together a distinctly "cultural" sphere of private, social discourse. The desire to know about the General, in its trajectory through Church, Theater, and high society, homogenizes the content of these otherwise disparate sites of private social exchange—a homogenization evident in the way each person who describes the General repeats the same stock phrases "Horrid affair," "terrible wretches those Kickapoos!" "the age of invention," and "prodigies

61Elmer, p. 54.
of valor." This repetition indicates that the source of these descriptive phrases is print media itself. They are lines culled from newspaper accounts of the General's lecture at the public meeting "held about something of great importance," which the narrator has forgotten in his anxiety to know what is "remarkable" about the General. At the level of their affective identification with the narrator's need to know about the General, Poe's readers are used up in that they are forced to witness their own complicity in constructing the image they would escape—the hegemonic form of subjectivity constructed by majority public opinion.

This recognition of complicity in the construction of majority public opinion compels an identification with the writer over against the narrator, which takes the form the narrator is what I am not,—the narrator is the sort of "merely general reader" who blindly follows the Crowd, whereas I am the exceptional reader; exactly the sort of reader that Poe is writing for. To identify with this exceptional, authoritative position, however, is to become, just like the narrator's interlocutors, a subject who presumes to know the content of hegemony. It is significant, in this regard, that each person questioned by the narrator about the General's identity replies with some form of the phrase "surely you know—he's the man . . . ." This presumption of knowledge indicates that the moment when readers "get it," grasp and appreciate the satire, that is the moment when they are most fully interpellated as subjects of the "cultural" sphere. To think that you escape inclusion in the class of "merely general readers" is to identify yourself as a subject in the activity of reading literary writing.

The double logic I have described in The Man That Was Used Up is the same logic of exemption Lacan identifies in his seminar on The Purloined Letter. Lacan's seminar is presented as a lesson in how not to fall into the trap of imaginary identifications by recognizing the proper "place" of the letter—namely,
in the hands of the Other. In his reading of Poe's story, Lacan identifies a
recurrent pattern that illustrates how the moment we seize the letter—the phallus
as the sign of autonomous power—is the moment that we are interpellated into
the Symbolic order. The moment we identify ourselves as exempt from the law
of hegemony is the moment we constitute ourselves as subjects of it. In Lacan's
seminar, this moment is, of course, the moment when the subject finds himself
"trapped in the typically imaginary situation of seeing that he is not seen [and,
therefore,] misconstrue[s] the situation in which he is seen not seeing."62 I would
like to suggest that Lacan finds Poe's text useful to illustrate the subject's
imaginary relation to the Symbolic because Poe was concerned to write stories
that produced an illusory "effect" of autonomy in his readers.

According to Lacan, the moment of imaginary identification with the
Symbolic is performed, successively, by the Queen, by the Minister D__, and by
Dupin. Recall that in The Purloined Letter, Dupin has been hired by the Prefect
of police to help recover a letter written to the Queen, apparently by her lover,
since it is said to contain information that, if disclosed, "would bring in question
the honor of a person of most exalted station." This letter has been stolen by
the Minister D__, who now uses it to exercise "an ascendancy over the illustrious
personage whose honor and peace are so jeopardized." Eventually, Dupin
recovers the letter, leaving in its place a facsimile on which he has written a
message meant to apprise the Minister that it was he, Dupin, who has duped
him, the Minister, with his own deceptive ploy. This message is meant to
revenge Dupin for "an evil turn" done to him by the Minister, "at Vienna once."

In his seminar on The Purloined Letter, Lacan argues that, as they take
possession of the letter, each character in turn enters into the "dual relationship"

(Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), p. 44.
to the Symbolic that is "typically imaginary." Captivated by the image of their control over the situation, they fail to recognize that control does not originate in themselves but is an effect of the structural network of exchange in which they, for the moment, occupy the privileged position of power. For example, in seizing the letter the Minister initially accedes to the position the Queen holds in relation to the King, who is representative of the Symbolic order. Holding the letter, the Queen thinks she has autonomous power: the letter from her lover represents her exemption from the Symbolic, her ability to pursue private fantasies of enjoyment and of fulfillment on her own terms—outside the constraints of the laws of hegemony. When the Minister D__ seizes the letter and uses it to gain "ascendancy" over the Queen, he, too, accedes to a position of autonomous power—a position that makes possible not so much power over the Symbolic as exemption from it. For the Minister's influence over the Queen has value only insofar as he can use her to influence the King in his decisions. The King believes the Minister is still his minister, but the Minister believes that he can dictate through the Queen the orders he will receive from the King. That the Minister's exemption from the law is imaginary can be seen once we realize that nothing guarantees that the King will follow the Queen's advice. This is why Lacan calls attention to the fact that, in Poe's story, the letter confers a power that is effective only insofar as that power is not "employed." If the Minister's power were to become actual, if he were he to disclose the letter's contents to the King, his power would dissipate. The King would take the matter in hand, and the Minister would become minister again, attendant to the Symbolic, rather than writer of his own destiny.

Dupin also, in taking possession of the letter, accedes to an autonomous power marked as imaginary. As Lacan writes, what is at stake in the message that Dupin writes to revenge himself on the Minister is the possibility of "his
withdrawal from the symbolic circuit of the letter."⁶³ Dupin thinks the message will announce his self-mastery. It is written to erase the trace of his subjection to the will of the Other, the memory of the time he was out-maneuvered by the Minister "at Vienna once." What the note indicates to Lacan, however, is the degree to which Dupin is unable to disengage from the Symbolic. His concern to make sure the Minister knows the identity of the one who duped him is evidence of Dupin's concern about his reputation, about how he appears to the public. His concern to "get even" with the Minister is a sign of his fear that the Minister might expose him in the same way that he threatened to expose the Queen. In exacting his revenge, Dupin projects an image of himself as free from all claims on his person, but this projection is motivated by a desire to live up to the expectations of the hegemonic norm, to be seen as Dupin, the master analyst.

The purpose of Lacan's reading of The Purloined Letter is to offer a lesson to psychoanalysts on how to avoid falling into a typically imaginary relation to their analysands at the moment when the psychoanalytic process is complete and it is time for analyst and analysand to disengage. He is warning the analyst to avoid, at the moment of disengagement, seizing the letter that will provide for the analysand his or her decisive orientation to the Symbolic, to avoid presenting some norm for subjectivity at the conclusion of the psychoanalytic process.

Do we [analysts] not in fact feel concerned with good reason when for Dupin what is perhaps at stake is his withdrawal from the symbolic circuit of the letter—we who become the emissaries of the letters which at least for a time remain in sufferance with us in the transference. And is it not the responsibility their transference entails which we neutralize by equating it with the signifier most destructive of all signification; namely, money.⁶⁴

The purpose of Poe's tale, however, is to move the reader into just such an imaginary relation to the Symbolic—the Symbolic understood as the law of

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⁶³Miller, p. 49.
⁶⁴Ibid.
hegemony that is majority public opinion in American democracy. This is clear from the tale's epigraph, "Nil sapientiae odiosius acumine nimio," "nothing is more hateful to wisdom than too much cunning." This line, of course, can be read as referring to Dupin's motives to foil the plans of the "too cunning" Minister D__. However, when read from the perspective of Dupin's act of revenge, it is Dupin who appears "too cunning." As John Irwin suggests, Dupin's revenge is effective only up until the moment Minister D__ reads his message, since "from what we know of the minister it is inconceivable that once he learned of Dupin's revenge he would let the matter rest there."65 In subjecting Dupin to the judgment of the epigraph, in seeing what he is blind to, the reader asserts his mastery over the master analyst. But this, of course, is to seize the letter, to enter into the imaginary relation to the text, and to think that in controlling the text we have gained determinate control over our thoughts and actions. The epigraph urges the reader to rise to this exceptional status because it is when we think we are exempt from the text in our reading of it that we are fully interpellated into the cultural sphere as Poe's "true and permanent readers."

Lacan's reading of The Purloined Letter can help us understand how Poe's sensational tales complete the strategy he employs in his criticism to interpellate subjects as consumers of literary texts. Lacan's seminar can help us see how Poe promotes the literary text as an object that performs the double function of fantasy, in which desire both completes, and serves as a defense against, the interpellative prescriptions of the Other. Slavoj Zizek explains the double function of fantasy well, using as his example, the old adage that every man seeks in a woman whom he loves his mother's substitute. In this scenario, Zizek writes, fantasy "is a construction enabling us to seek maternal substitutes, but at the same time a screen shielding us from getting too close to the maternal

Thing;" for anytime the frame of fantasy is occupied by an object that too closely resembles the maternal figure, "desire is suffocated by incestuous claustrophobia." Likewise, Poe's stories confront the reader with an image that too closely resembles their thorough interpellarion by the hegemonic order, and the "effect" of the suffocation of desire that follows from this too close-encounter with the Other, is to compel the subject to seek further substitutes for self-identity in a frame of fantasy—the literary text—that is by definition outside the public sphere. Read together, Poe's criticism and his sensational tales exhibit a strategy meant to amplify and accelerate our identification with fantasy images that are used up in their consumption, and in so doing they contribute to the construction of a cultural sphere that serves as the locus of private identity.

The conception of literary writing that emerges from Poe's critical writings and sensational fiction contributed to America's development into a liberal nation state in that it defines subjectivity as something that is to be conceived as in excess of the Social. Subjectivity, in Poe's aesthetic, is not unlike the "exceedingly odd-looking bundle of something" that is transformed into General John A.B.C. Smith only after the commodified attributes of the Jacksonian individual are attached to it. This is not to say simply that subjectivity inheres in those attributes, or that we are only ever the product of socially received identity attributes. The odd bundle of something is some material thing. Its materiality can be comprehended, however, only insofar as it takes on the characteristics of private identity sanctioned by majority public opinion.

To see the material basis of the subject in Poe's aesthetic is crucial because that materiality is the drive behind the subject's compulsion to produce itself via the consumption of literary texts. In figuring subjectivity as this material excess in need of textual definition, Poe's texts create a consumer desire for his literary products. At the same time, they perform the ideological function of the cultural sphere. They reinforce

the Jacksonian ideology of market capitalism by inscribing the relations of the subject to the Social that must be so if the reproduction of the relations of production are to continue unchallenged. As Gayatri Spivak has shown in a remarkable analysis of Marx's Das Capital, the moment when a market economy begins to reproduce itself of its own accord is exactly that moment when the subject is defined as excess, as "definitively productive of surplus-labor over necessary labor" Gayatri Spivak identifies this moment in a brilliant reading of Marx's Das Capital.

[The structural moment when the process of extraction, appropriation, and realization of surplus value begins to operate with no extra-economic coercion . . . entails the historical possibility of the definitive predication of the subject as labor-power. Indeed, it is possible to suggest that the "freeing" of labor-power may be a description of the social possibility of this predication. Here the subject is predicated as structurally superabundant to itself, definitively productive of surplus-labor over necessary labor.]

What I have tried to identify in Poe's double strategy for interpelling readers as consumers of literary texts is the historical moment Spivak describes in American cultural history. Poe's texts in defining subjectivity as "supererogatory," as something that is located in a virtual realm of textual exchange located somewhere above a material body that it describes, but from which it is thoroughly disassociated, fulfill precisely this function. In the next chapter I will take up Emerson to show how this cultural sphere is itself permeable, and therefore subject to political and structural transformation.

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67Spivak, p. 127.
"This cropping out in our planted gardens of the core of the world:"

Contingency and Political Action in Emerson's *Conduct of Life*.

The use of literature is to afford us a platform whence we may command a view of our present life, a purchase by which we may move it.\(^68\)

--R.W. Emerson

In a letter to Lydia Jackson, then his fiancee, dated February 1, 1835, Emerson declares himself a poet, by birth and by calling.

I am a born poet, of a low class without doubt, yet a poet. That is my nature and vocation. My singing to be sure is very 'husky,' and is for the most part in prose. Still am I poet in the sense of perceiver and dear lover of the harmonies that are in the soul and in matter, and especially of the correspondences between these and those. (19)

In this early definition of poetic perception, Emerson seems to posit the same asymmetrical relation between poet and reader that Poe exploited in his fiction to interpellate readers as consumers of literary texts. As with Poe's "determinate principles" for poetry, Emerson's definition of poetic perception presents the poet as someone with privileged access to poetic experience. After first separating the order of consciousness (soul) from the order of materiality (matter), Emerson puts forward the poet as a mediating figure that joins these separate spheres through his expression of "the correspondences" between them.

From *Nature* to *Essays: Second Series*, moreover, Emerson is insistent that his readers stand in need of such poetic mediation to liberate them from the suffocating effects of hegemony. In *Nature*, for example, it is the poet who can restore to man "an original relation to the universe" (22). The poet's ability to

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\(^68\) From the essay "Circles." Quoted in *Selections from Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Stephen W. Whicher, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), p. 173. Further references to this text will be made parenthetically.
perceive "real affinities between events (that is say ideal affinities, for those only are real)" Emerson writes, "enables the poet . . . to make free with the most imposing forms and phenomena of the world, and to assert the predominance of the soul" (45-46). Emerson refers here to how, through metaphor, the poet takes conventional ways of viewing the world and converts them into allegorical lessons of Spirit. In his mastery of Emerson's famous (or infamous, if you like) three-step equation for language—"1. Words are natural facts; 2. Particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts; 3. Nature is the symbol of Spirit"—the poet can take the commodified use man makes of nature and exhibit its ethical import, in the same way that "the axioms of physics translate the laws of ethics" (31, 35). For, Emerson claims, propositions such as "[T]he whole is greater than the parts" and "reaction is equal to action," "have a much more extensive and universal sense when applied to human life, than when confined to technical use" (35).

And yet, as he developed his philosophy in Essays First and Second Series, increasingly Emerson values the poet's power "to conform things to his thoughts" less for its ability to reveal the teleological order of nature, and more for its ability to reveal the extent of our conformity to the norms of hegemony (44). And this conformity, for Emerson, always, is a depletion of autonomy. "The objection to conforming to usages that have become dead to you is that it scatters your force," he writes in "Self-Reliance" (151). The poet's power to transfigure the conventional relations of things, Emerson thinks, can restore to readers an "original relation to the world" by making them aware that the structures of meaning they inhabit are not fixed, but fluid. "We are symbols and inhabit symbols; . . . but we sympathize with the symbols, and being infatuated with the economical uses of things, we do not know that they are thoughts," he writes in "The Poet." By contrast, "[t]he poet, by an ulterior intellectual
perception, gives [symbols] a power which makes their old use forgotten."
However, in his descriptions of the poet's power to "flux" the world, Emerson also
suggests that, in the absence of the poet's example, the reader may never
awake from conformity's sleep of death. "On the brink of the waters of Life and
Truth, we are miserably dying," he continues, a few pages further, in "The Poet."
"Every thought is also a prison; every heaven is also a prison. Therefore, we
love the poet, the inventor, who in any form . . . has yielded us a new thought.
He unlocks our chains and admits us to a new scene" (236).

Insofar as he figures readers as dependent on the mediation of the text to
liberate him from hegemony, Emerson's definition of poetic perception could be
said to contribute to the development of a cultural sphere of private, discursive
exchange that locates subjectivity in a virtual, textual space defined by its
opposition to, and negation of, real, material circumstance. As a result, some
critics have argued that, despite Emerson's reformist intentions, the philosophy
of poetic perception he develops in Nature, "The Poet," and elsewhere, provides
a reified conception of subjectivity that supports the ideology of Jacksonian
individualism he would condemn.69 In Emerson's esthetic, the poetic text
provides readers with a visionary, phenomenal experience that leads them to
believe that they can determine their relations to the relations of production.
However, these critics argue, the force of this belief is in direct proportion to the
reader's distance from these relations, in the act of reading. Like Emerson in the
landscape "uplifted into infinite space . . . [and] become a transparent eyeball," in
order to "see all," the argument goes, readers must first "become nothing" (24).

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69 Carolyn Porter, Seeing and Being: The Plight of the Participant Observer in Emerson, James,
Adams, and Faulkner, (Middletown, Ct.: Wesleyan University Press, 1981). Myra Jehlen,
However, this materialist line of argument misses a point that Emerson
gives increasing emphasis to in his later writings; namely, that soul and matter,
consciousness and materiality, or, in Marxist terminology, the level of
superstructure and the level of material base, overlap and are enmeshed to such
a degree that the one cannot finally be separated from the other, and set in a
relation of seer and seen, controller and controlled. "Once we thought positive
power was all," Emerson writes in "Fate." "Now we learn that negative power is
half" (336). This statement has been read as a sign of Emerson's capitulation to
the constraints of hegemony. I will argue, instead, that it announces Emerson's
steady conviction that the superstructural level of ideals, or ideologies, conditions
and is conditioned by the base level of material production. I acknowledge that
Emerson's belief in the ideological transformation of the base is underwritten by
an ethic of what Stanley Cavell calls "moral perfectionism," and that this ethic is
supportive of the progressivism that fueled western expansion and capitalist
development during the Jacksonian era. However, I will show that Emerson's
descriptions of poetic signification demonstrate that this ethic is also conditioned
by material circumstance and subject to performative iterability.70

Because of his sense of the written nature of the "correspondences"
between soul and matter, between subjectivity and its material basis in the forces
of productivity, Emerson's definition of literary writing, I will argue, resists the
bifurcation of the public sphere into cultural and political registers of discursive
exchange. By concentrating on the pedagogical force of poetic descriptions,
Emerson's definition of literary writing demonstrates that the cultural sphere
remains within the political register of the public sphere. To demonstrate this
thesis, I will examine Emerson's late volume of essays Conduct of Life as the

70Stanley Cavell, Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: the Constitution of Emersonian
perfectionism, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), and This New Yet Unapproachable
America: lectures after Emerson after Wittgenstein, (Albuquerque, NM.: Living Batch Press,
1989).
political application of the poetic program laid out in *Nature* and *Essays: Second Series*.

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Published in 1860, *Conduct of Life* generally has been read as a testament to Emerson's embrace of the Jacksonian ideology of liberal individualism. Although Emerson rejected, in his earlier essays, the Jacksonian ideology of self-interest as inimical to the transcendental project of self-realization first outlined in "Nature" and developed fully in *Essays: First Series*, in his later work, the difference between Emersonian self-reliance and Jacksonian self-interest is increasingly difficult to discern. In *Conduct of Life*, some critics suggest, the "iron-lid[ded]" market economy that Emerson denounced in "The American Scholar" as a divisive force that reduces the individual to a mere function of labor is affirmed as the natural, metabolic activity that fuels individual growth. For example, when Emerson writes in "Wealth" that "the main use of surplus capital . . . [is] the converting of the sap and juices of the planet to the incarnation and nutriment of [Man's] designs," he is taken to be affirming a marketplace economy as the natural "habitat" for the spiritual development of the individual, signaling, for some critics, his decision to locate his philosophy of self-reliance within the limits of Jacksonian ideology.

Reading *Conduct of Life* as an apologia for Jacksonian ideology, however, obscures the extent to which self-realization, in this text, is tied to an ethical commitment to transform the public sphere through political action. Emerson's commitment to a transformation of the public sphere is often overlooked, however, because of a tendency in Americanist criticism to limit his transcendental project to the confines of the private self. Sacvan Bercovitch, for example, writes that
"Emersonian dissent works not by repressing radical energies but by redirecting them into a constant conflict between self and society: the self in itself, a separate, single, non-conformist individuality versus society en masse, individualism systematized."\(^\text{71}\) This opposition of self and society figures Emerson's overt resistance to the hegemony of Jacksonian culture as a tacit endorsement of those forms, since "non-conformist individuality" has meaning only in its opposition to the status quo, "individualism systematized." In *Conduct of Life*, though, Emerson is determined to dissolve precisely this opposition between the private self and the public sphere.

It is easy to misread "Fate," the opening essay of *Conduct of Life*, as a testament of acquiescence to the forces of hegemony. However, when read as an essay written in dialogue with the second essay of *Conduct of Life*, "Power," it is clear that what Emerson describes as Fate is something like Kantian conditions of possibility for power. These first two essays—and the playful interaction between—, exhibit a dialectical logic in which Fate, or limitation, as Emerson also calls it, predicates power, and power, in turn, (re)conditions the limits of Fate.

For though Fate is immense, so is Power, which is the other fact in the dual world, immense. If Fate follows and limits Power, Power attends and antagonizes Fate. We must respect Fate as natural history, but there is more than natural history. For who and what is this criticism that pries into the matter. (339)

This criticism that pries into the matter of a history taken to be natural, I will argue, is the poet's power to "flux" the conventions of hegemony. In "Fate," however, this power is no longer exclusive to the poet; it is described generally as "the power of mind."

Every solid in the universe is ready to become fluid on the approach of the mind, and the power to flux it is the measure of the mind. If the wall remain adamant, it accuses the want of thought. To a subtle force it will stream into new forms, expressive of the character of the mind. (349)

\(^{71}\)Bercovitch, p. 343.
In *Conduct of Life*, the poet's power has become a form of ideological critique, and it is the encounter with Fate, a seemingly "natural" history, that draws forth the power of mind. An encounter with Fate, therefore, for Emerson, is equivalent to an encounter with the limits of the hegemonic determination of what counts as materiality.72 "We cannot trifle with this reality, this cropping out in our planted gardens of the core of the world," he writes in "Fate," for it is the running up against these limits that indicate "the paths to power," the possibilities of agency (338).

An encounter with Fate, or that which we respect as "natural" history—the hegemonic norm—, performs the work formerly reserved for the poet. It opens the possibility of a realignment of values at both private and public levels by uncovering "the tie between person and event," the phenomenological "fact" that "[p]erson makes event, and event person" (347). This simultaneity of person and event reveals not only the contingency of the self, but also the contingency of the Social, and opens the prospect of radical political change. In this regard, *Conduct of Life* reiterates the central tenet of the philosophy of poetic perception Emerson outlined in *Nature*: "Nature is not fixed but fluid. Spirit alters, molds, makes it" (56).

In *Conduct of Life*, however, this tenet is realized pragmatically; spiritual growth and political action are equivalent; and politics is seen as the place where Spirit can arrive: where a new way a community discloses itself to itself can be founded73. As I have said, already, this evolution of the Social—the historical permutations of the hegemonic totality of the state—, for Emerson, is grounded in

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73 My choice of language here is Heideggerian because I would indicate the extent to which Emerson's conception of political change remains tied to an onto-theological imperative. For a discussion of the relation between Heidegger and Emerson, see Cavell. For a critique of Heidegger's lingering onto-theology, the implications of which have informed my thinking in this chapter, see Jacques Derrida's discussion of "the antico-ontological priority of *Dasein*" in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, in *Aporias*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 53, and for the political implications of Derrida's point, pp. 18-20.
an ethic of moral perfectionism that lends itself to an ahistorical progressivism, which in turn constrains the effects of political transformation to the structure of hegemony—i.e. the content of hegemony may change, but only insofar as that change is endorsed by those powers that determine majority public opinion. However, Emerson's description of the written quality of what is (mis)taken as "natural history" does reveal that the structure of hegemony is non-totalizable because subject to performative iterability; "to a subtle force it will stream into new forms" (349).

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The commitment to political action in Conduct of Life emerges, most clearly, if read in the context of Emerson's antislavery addresses, many of which were written and delivered during the period when he was also preparing the series of public lectures that eventually became the text of Conduct of Life. This context, however, has been obscured, in part, because Emerson's notebook on the subject (WO "Liberty") was lost from 1903-1966, leading early biographers to underestimate the extent of his involvement in the abolitionist movement. A more crucial factor, however, in the mis-estimate of the level of Emerson's political engagement in Conduct of Life is the tendency to read his work according to a developmental narrative that divides his writings into a youthful, radical period, stretching roughly from his break with the Unitarian church to Essays: First Series, and a mature, conservative period, which begins with the skepticism of "Experience," and culminates in the resignation of "Fate." Read against the standard of his extreme statements of self-reliance in the 1830s, Emerson's recognition of the role of the social sphere in human life—his belief that "[p]erson

makes event and event person"—is devalued as a capitulation to the status quo. However, when read in the context of his abolitionist politics, this emphasis on the social marks the evolution of Emerson's transcendentalism into a pragmatic politics, whose purpose is to make "fluid" and "volatile" the Symbolic order of antebellum America.

The tendency to read Emerson's career as a movement from a youthful rebellion against institutionalism in all its forms (religious, political, economic, etc.) to a mature acceptance of the necessity of social constraints can be traced back to Stephen Whicher's influential study Freedom and Fate. For Whicher, Emerson's increasing commitment to a poetics of transcendence in Essays: Second Series "makes his earlier individualism and self-reliance meaningless."75 He reads Emerson's enthusiastic praise of the poet, for example, as symptomatic of "a relinquished hope of power."76 "It is only because the poetic life is not realized, perhaps cannot be, that the poet's prophecy of such a life can make him a liberating god. His reward, the reward he brings others, is not self-union, but a magic flare of imagination, without means and without issue, an intoxicating glimpse of the inaccessible ideal."77 In Whicher's reading, the poetic text performs the commodified function of the cultural sphere, which I identified in the previous chapter. Since the poet's prophecy is by definition unrealizable, it generates in the reader a desire for "intoxicating glimpses" of that realization, but these glimpses are available only through the mediation of the literary text—a text separate from the arena of political exchange, "without means and without issue." Moreover, Whicher suggests the political implications of such a conception of literary writing. Forced to recognize his "[f]ail[ure] to command the Power that will set him free," Whicher writes, Emerson "falls back on a renewed submission to the Law which

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76Ibid, p. 136.
had always complimented it." What Whicher identifies here as Emerson's acquiescence to the moral Law of Spirit later critics will interpret as a capitulation to the hegemonic norms of Jacksonian ideology.

Whicher's narrative of Emerson's withdrawal into the transcendental realm has framed Americanists' understanding of Emerson's relation to Jacksonian individualism. This is certainly the case with Sacvan Bercovitch in his recent work on "Emerson, Individualism, and Liberal Dissent." Like Whicher, Bercovitch also divides Emerson's career into an "early, radical Emerson," who "advocates self-reliance against all norms and conventions, especially those of liberal individualism," and a "mature Emerson, who recognized that "liberalism . . . had the modern means and methods to realize [self-reliance]." But whereas, for Whicher, Emerson's career is a narrative of tragic decline, the gradual waning of the potency of his vision, for Bercovitch, it is "a journey into ideology," a journey that culminates in Emerson's discovery that liberal individualism is the proper ideological home for his radical theory of the self.

Bercovitch associates Emerson's early opposition to Jacksonian ideology with the radicalism of European socialists, such as Pierre LeRoux and Charles Fourier. What Emerson shared with these men, he argues, was a common critique of "individualism" as the "vice of the age." However, Bercovitch claims, Emerson could never accept fully the spirit of associationism at the heart of their socialist political program, since it ran directly counter to his own "long trumpeted theory . . . that one man is a counterpoise to a city" (145). Therefore, Bercovitch argues, in his early writings, Emerson took up the socialist critique of individualism only because of the strategic necessity to define the difference between his own doctrine of the independent self and the Jacksonian's defense of individualism as a social, economic, and political system. However, by 1844, with friends, such as

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78 Ibid.
79 Bercovitch, p. 314, 332.
Orestes Brownson, Bronson Alcott, Margaret Fuller, George Ripley and others, putting socialism into practice in the utopian communities of Brook Farm, Fruitlands, and Hopedale, Emerson increasingly found it necessary to support the concept of laissez-faire as a more "natural" social policy. And the violent outcome of the socialist revolutions of the European Forty-Eight, Bercovitch concludes, served as the final catalyst that led Emerson to give his radical theory of the self "a local habitation, the Northern United States, and an ideological name, individualism."  

Emerson's career, then, in Bercovitch's reading, represents a journey from utopia to ideology.  

The journey from the one [utopia] to the other [ideology] is not so much a progression (or regression) as it is an oscillation between center and circumference. The European Forty-Eight marks the return of Emerson's utopia to its ideological home. . . . The same convictions that led Emerson to reject socialism also impelled him a decade earlier outward to the revolutionary concepts of European individuality. It was not then, or ever, a matter of transcending his culture, but (on the contrary) of plumbing its depths. Emerson's role as prophet was an effort to carry the basic premises of his culture as far as they would go, to the hither verge (the boundaries and/or frontiers) of what was ideologically conceivable, and thereby to challenge society in the act of drawing out (furthering, in the double sense of the word) its ground of consensus.  

I quote Bercovitch at length in order to call attention to the dialectical structure of his reading. The movement he describes in Emerson's career outward to the boundaries of the ideologically conceivable, and back to the grounds of consensus—a movement which serves only to naturalize the ideology it would challenge,—mirrors precisely the dialectic between Universal and Particular in Hegel's account of the formation of an Idea. The traditional Hegelian version of this dialectical process runs as follows: in order for something to be defined as a substantial entity, a division must be introduced between Universal form and Particular content. This initial split, however, this introduction of difference into the

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80Ibid, p. 332.
81Ibid.
homogenous totality of the Universal form, produces a swarm of particulars whose uniqueness threatens to subsume the Universal. But just when the dispersal of Particulars reaches its limit, the moment when the difference between particular determinations is negligible relative to their number, they reverse into their opposite, and the Idea succeeds in recollecting the wealth of particulars, again, under their Universal form, and the initial opposition between Universal and Particular is reconciled. Bercovitch's account of Emerson's career parallels perfectly this traditional account of the dialectical process. Initially "impelled outward to the revolutionary concept of European individuality," Emerson reaches the limit of "the ideologically conceivable" in actual Socialist revolution, a revolution which annihilates difference, in principle and in fact. It is at this point that Emerson comes back to himself; he recollects himself, and returns to his proper ideological home.

Jacksonian individualism, therefore, in Bercovitch's reading, provides the mediating term that resolves the opposition between socialist utopian community and Emersonian radical individuality. What is often overlooked, however, in the traditional reading of the Hegelian dialectic is that the mediating term, in the moment of sublation, is itself only a temporary construct. As Slavoj Zizek has argued, the traditional reading of Hegel leaves out the fourth and final moment of the dialectical process, the moment when the mediating term is itself negated. Zizek writes "the final moment of the dialectical process, the 'sublation of the difference,' does not consist in the act of its sublation, but in the experience of how the difference was always-already sublated; of how, in a way, it never effectively existed."82 In other words, the moment of sublation always involves a double negation. Initially, the mediating term—Jacksonian individualism, in Bercovitch's argument—is introduced as the negation of the opposition—between socialist

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utopian community and Emersonian radical individuality, in this case. However, at
this stage in the dialectical process the mediating term remains as a sign whose
signified is the opposition itself; the necessity of the institutional forms of
Jacksonian ideology indicates that the opposition between self and society
remains unresolved. The second negation in the moment of sublation, therefore,
is the negation of the mediating term itself, which vanishes once it is seen to be no
longer necessary. In a dialectical reading of Emerson's thought, Jacksonian
individualism occupies the position of vanishing mediator. It is the necessary, but
temporary, construct that will fall away the moment we recognize that its work has
always-already been accomplished.

Bercovitch's reliance on a traditional reading of the dialectical process that
forgets the fourth and final moment of the vanishing mediator prevents him from
recognizing the radical political implications of Emerson's appropriative use of the
terms of Jacksonian individualism in his late writings. In Conduct of Life, for
example, Emerson's essays on self-culture set out to complete the dialectical cycle
by revealing the contingent status of the institutional practices of Jacksonian
individualism. "Liberation of the will from the sheaths and clogs of organization
which he has outgrown," he announces, in "Fate," "is the end and aim of this
world" (346). With this liberating directive in mind, I will argue that Emerson's call
to his readers at the conclusion of "Fate" to "build altars to the Blessed Unity which
holds nature and souls in perfect solution" is not acquiescence to the status quo or
withdrawal into a transcendental beyond; it is a call to political action, since the
activity of building toward a solution in Emerson's philosophy of poetic perception
necessitates the active dissolution of the conventional practices that structure
Jacksonian society.
In order to gain a better sense of the particular conventional practices that Emerson would reform in *Conduct of Life*, it is useful to consider these essays in a double context: the self-culture movement in the Midwest that bolstered Emerson’s career as a public lecturer, during the 1850s, and Emerson’s increasing involvement in abolitionist politics during this same period. The essays included in *Conduct of Life* were written as a series of lectures to be delivered to the Literary Societies, Young Men’s Societies, and Young Men’s Mercantile Libraries in the cities along the Ohio River valley. As Mary Kupiec Cayton has shown, these organizations were established by the growing mercantile class of the new urban centers of the Northeast and mid-West as a means of disseminating practical and theoretical knowledge among young mechanics and artisans. Moreover, these institutions were seen as a means of maintaining moral order among young male migrants to the cities. Not only did they help consolidate the mercantile class, by introducing them to one another within the context of a set of shared, cultural activities, they also provided a means of instilling the central tenets of the self-culture movement. "The apostles of the self-culture movement," Cayton writes, "advocat[ed] the cultivation of an internalized system of morality especially fitted to the newly commercialized portions of the country. . . . Introspective self-examination of conduct would provide highly mobile young men of the urban centers, isolated from traditional bolsters of morality, the means for maintaining character in a disorienting environment."\(^{83}\) However, Cayton points out that, since it was the mercantile class—not the ministry or the local government—that defined the collective standards of acceptable behavior, moral and civic duties were related directly to success in business.

On the lecture circuit, then, Emerson was addressing the proponents of the Jacksonian ideology of self-interest. And in his lectures "Power," "Wealth," and "Culture,"—dominant tropes in the rhetoric of Jacksonian individualism—, I will argue that he sets out to redefine the values of the terms in which his audience conceives of the institutions that they were in the process of creating to define their lives. To what extent his audience took his meaning, however, is uncertain. Cayton argues that "Emerson may have been systematically misconstrued by his audience." Her careful analysis of the newspaper reports of Emerson's lectures reveals "an inclination to take Emerson's statements at face value as common sense, and a failure to acknowledge Emerson's reasoning by analogy from the material to the moral sphere." Therefore, Cayton concludes that, although Emerson "saw himself as preaching a message of moral reform whose warrant was a unique spiritual understanding of nature and nature's laws, [h]is audience heard the warrant to be a set of already familiar, pragmatic, common-sense rules for attaining individual financial and social success."\(^8^4\)

Cayton's reading of the popular reception of Emerson's lectures adds substantial support to the ideological reading that interprets Conduct of Life as the text where Emersonian self-reliance and Jacksonian self-interest merge. However, should Emerson's decision to adopt in his writings the terms of Jacksonian individualism be interpreted as a capitulation to hegemony or an inadvertent endorsement of bourgeois values he elsewhere questions. Emerson may have been endorsing those values for other political ends. For throughout the period that he was at work on the essays of Conduct of Life, from 1851, when he first delivered the lecture series he called "Conduct of Life," to the publication of the essay versions of those lectures in 1860, Emerson also was becoming involved, increasingly, in abolitionist politics. In fact, Emerson's inception of the

\(^8^4\)Ibid, p. 613, 614.
"Conduct of Life" lectures coincides with his first public involvement in abolitionist politics. He first delivered the set of lectures that would become Conduct of Life in Pittsburgh, in March of 1851, to the Young Men's Mercantile Library Association. In April of that same year, Massachusetts Chief Justice Lemeul Shaw upheld the Fugitive Slave Act and ordered Thomas Sims returned to bondage in Savannah. Although a long supporter of abolition, the Sims case led Emerson to speak publicly on the slave question for the first time. On May 3, 1851, in response to a petition signed by thirty-six of his Concord neighbors that asked him to deliver his "opinion upon the Fugitive Slave Act and upon the aspect of the times," Emerson gave the first of a number of lectures against slavery that he would present throughout the 1850's. This talk begins with by invoking the same dialectical logic we find in "Fate," which holds that "[p]erson makes event, and event person" (347). "It is not possible to extricate oneself from the questions in which your age is involved," he writes, "the last year has forced us all into politics." This sense of the subject's inextricable situation in the political events of the public sphere informs the entire project of Conduct of Life. When read alongside his lectures against slavery, then, Conduct of Life can be seen as not so much a sign of Emerson's withdrawal from the self-reliant political stance of his early writings, but as a pragmatic response to his recognition that subjectivity cannot be separated from the public sphere.

To demonstrate this I will first examine passages from two of Emerson's lectures against slavery that exhibit his sense of the historical mediation. The first is taken from a speech Emerson gave repeatedly while lecturing in 1854-1855 in which he argues for the emancipation of slaves by purchase of the Federal government. The second is taken from the lecture Emerson revised and

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expanded to eventually publish as "American Civilization." In the first passage, Emerson challenges the logic of Compromise, which contends that the institution of slavery was a necessary stage in the development of America's national prosperity.

The Fathers in July, 1787, consented to adopt population as the basis of representation, and to count only three-fifths of the slaves, and to concede the reclamation of fugitive slaves, for the consideration that there should be no slavery in the North-West territory. They made this fatal blunder in agreeing to this false basis of representation and to this criminal complicity of restoring fugitive slaves. The splendor of the bride, namely the magnificent prosperity of America from 1787 downward is the excuse pleaded for their crime.

They ought never to have passed the ordinance; they should have refused it at risk of making no Union. Many ways could have been taken. If the Southern section had made a separate alliance with England, or gone back to colonies, the slaves would have been emancipated at the same time as those in the West Indies, and then the colonies would have been annexed to us. The bride, if they had foresaw the prosperity we have seen, was one to dazzle common men, and I don't wonder men excuse and uphold it. But always, so much crime. So much ruin. If the South thinks it is enriched by slavery, read the census, read the valuation tables, or weigh the men. I think it impoverished. Young men are now born in that country I suppose of as much ability as elsewhere; but I know not what blight rests upon their education, perhaps I know too well, and that blight is their present reputation is there only when loving to make good the reputation of the past. And if the North thought this section gained by it—a little crime brings a minor penalty—a great crime a great ruin;—now, after 60 years, see how the inconvenience has grown into a state of distemper, which poisons every vein and every artery. (490)

In this short history, Emerson refutes the claim that slavery was a historical necessity for the accomplishment of "the magnificent prosperity of America." This sort of argument had been advanced often in support of Compromise legislation; namely, that the abolition of slavery would undermine what history had shown to be the economic base of American prosperity. However, Emerson shows that prosperity could never have been predicted in advance. It is "an excuse," retroactively applied, to justify the present political state of affairs. Furthermore, Emerson's insistence that "[m]any ways could have been taken" to Union implies that compromise legislation is likewise only one among a range of possible
domestic policies. The current political situation, therefore, stands open to intervention.

Moreover, in his description of "the blight" that rests upon the education of the young men of the South, Emerson identifies what might be called an historiographical impulse as the cause of the protraction of the crisis over slavery. "I know not what blight rests upon their education, perhaps I know too well, and that blight is their present reputation is there only when loving to make good the reputation of the past." Emerson's involuted syntax fits well the condition he describes. The blight of their present reputation appears only when the next generation of Southerners tries to justify historically the institution of slavery, and in so doing become participants in what otherwise would be an accident of birth. Is this not the situation that Faulkner describes in the character of Quentin Compson as portrayed in *Absalom, Absalom*, where the son is compelled to ceaselessly repeat the history of the fathers that he would renounce, but cannot because he knows no other? Furthermore, Emerson acknowledges the North's complicity in this same process. He "knows too well" the blight because he sees the extent to which Northerners are engaged in an analogous historiographical operation. To the extent that they deny their complicity in the profits of slavery, they contribute to its growth from an "inconvenience" to a "state distemper, which poisons every vein and every artery." It is crucial to see how Emerson's involuted syntax involves both North and South in the historiographical reproduction of the institution of slavery because what he would show his audience is how, in the rhetoric of compromise, American prosperity is strictly correlative with the conditions of slavery. I am not saying simply that slavery was necessary for American prosperity; Emerson has shown that this is not the case. "Many ways could have been taken," he writes. Instead, I am saying that Emerson identifies how the symbol of American prosperity ("the splendor of the bride"), as it is used in
the rhetoric of compromise politics, (re)produces the institutional conditions of slavery. And this, again, is why he concentrates on the education of the young generation in both the Southern and Northern sections of the country. The symbol of American prosperity, as deployed in the rhetoric of compromise, is pedagogical, and works to confirm as "natural" the current relations of production.

Writing in 1855, Emerson concludes his lecture with a proposal to emancipate slaves by purchase, in order to translate the symbol of American prosperity back into the proper terms of its value; namely as a symbol of "liberty, the largest liberty to every man compatible to every other man" (495). Emancipation by purchase, he writes, would restore "Wealth" to its "right social or public function" and thereby resolve the contradictions that follow from the historiographical impulse (497). We can see then, that, in his lectures against slavery, Emerson is applying the philosophy of poetic perception outlined in Nature and "The Poet." Like the poet, in Nature, who restores to his readers "an original relation to the universe," by revealing the extent to which "old words are perverted to stand for things which are not," Emerson's argument for emancipation by purchase takes the conventional understanding of American prosperity and (re)turns to it its "original" meaning, "liberty, the largest liberty to every man compatible to every man" (21, 33).

Emerson's recourse to the abstract principle of liberty, at first glance, seems the antithesis of a pragmatic politics, since it apparently denies the material circumstances that have led to the current political crisis. However, this is to forget the historical lesson of Emerson's analysis of the pedagogical function of the symbol of American prosperity in the rhetoric of compromise. Emerson demonstrated, there, that advocates of compromise write an economic history of the United States that figures the institution of slavery as a historical necessity, in order to reproduce the relations to production that insure the power of the
hegemonic class. By contrast, his assertion that "the historical theory of our
government is liberty" explodes the concept of historical necessity, since the
imperative to base legislation on the principle of "the largest liberty to every man
compatible to every man" necessarily requires that the relations to production
change in accordance with technological innovation, if nothing else. What should
not be missed, however, is that Emerson's assertion that "the historical theory of
our government is liberty" is equally pedagogical. "Liberty" is exactly the sort of
symbol the poet commands in the "Language" section of Nature.

The poet, the orator, bred in the woods, whose senses have been
nourished by their fair and appealing changes, year after year, without
design and without heed,—shall not lose their lesson altogether, in the roar
of the cities or the broil of politics. Long hereafter, amidst agitation and
terror in national councils,—in the hour of revolution,—these solemn images
shall reappear in their morning lustre, as fit symbols and words of the
thoughts which the passing events shall awaken.... And with these forms,
the spells of persuasion, the keys of power are put into his hands." (34)

That Emerson uses the principle of "liberty" as just such a spell of persuasion can
be seen in the second passage I would examine, from the lecture eventually
published, in 1860, as "American Civilization."

In "American Civilization," with the war already in the offing, Emerson again
invokes principle in his call for emancipation. This time, however, he does so in a
way that indicates more clearly how principle breaks with the institutional forms of
hegemony.

In this national crisis, it is not argument that we want, but that rare courage
which dares commit itself to a principle, believing that Nature is its ally, and
will create the instruments it requires, and more than make good any petty
and injurious profit it may disturb. There never was such a combination as
this of ours, and the rules to meet it are not set down in any history. We
want men of original perception and original action, who can open their
eyes wider than to a nationality, namely, to considerations of benefit to the
human race. ... I wish I saw in the people that inspiration which, if
Government would not obey the same, it would leave the Government
behind, and create on the moment the means and executors it wanted.
Better the war should more dangerously threaten us,—should threaten
fracture of what is still whole, and punish us with burned capitals and
slaughtered regiments, and so exasperate the people to energy, exasperate
our nationality. There are Scriptures written invisibly on men's hearts,
whose letters do not come out until they are enraged. They can be read by war-fires, and by eyes in the last peril. (240).

Emerson opposes principle to argument in this passage for the same reasons that he condemned the historiographical impulse in the 1855 passage. Argument, inevitably, will lead to the reproduction of institutional slavery. In "American Civilization," he calls for the immediate emancipation of slaves "by edict, as part of the military defense which it is the duty of Congress to provide." Without this measure, Emerson warns, the people, exasperated with the war, will "go with a rush for some peace, and what kind of peace shall at the moment be easiest attained: they will make concessions for it,—will give up the slaves; and the whole torment of the past half-century will come back to be endured anew" (242-243). In order to prevent this repetition of history, Emerson calls for emancipation because that will "alter the atomic social constitution of the Southern people" and thereby prevent the rehabilitation of slavery.

However, as with the mutual involvement of North and South in the 1855 passage, in "American Civilization," altering the social constitution of the South will likewise require altering the social constitution of the North. It is to effect this change in the social constitution of his Northern audience that Emerson invokes principle. Action from principle, unlike argument, for Emerson, is not motivated by any historical relation to a specific mode of production, and therefore can "create the instruments it requires." Emerson's invocation of principle is meant to revolutionize the state by instilling in people "that inspiration which, if Government would not obey the same, it would leave the Government behind, and create on the moment the means and executors it wanted."

The difference between argument and principle, compromise and emancipation, in Emerson's writings against slavery, can be elucidated further by reference to the opposition between "politics" and "the Political" as described in
the work of Ernesto Laclau. The politics of compromise would correspond with what Laclau terms "politics": the specialized bureaucratic procedures that regulate and maintain the interaction between other systems of public exchange (economic, cultural, etc.). Emancipation would correspond with what Laclau terms the Political [le Politique]: the moment of openness that occurs when the fundamental structures that govern the (re)production of the state are held in suspension, dissolved, until the precipitation of power causes the formation of the next form of the state. Slavoj Zizek summarizes, succinctly, the implications of Laclau's work. "The political dimension is thus doubly inscribed: it is a moment of the social Whole, one among its sub-systems, and the very terrain in which the fate of the whole is decided—in which the new [social] Pact is designed and concluded." The "Political," then, can be considered a moment of subjective agency because it marks the moment when "politics" takes itself as its own subject and engages the task of redefining the conditions of possibility for the state.

In the passage from "American Civilization" quoted above, Emerson confronts precisely this double inscription of "politics" and "the Political," when he writes "[t]here never was such a combination as this of ours, and the rules to meet it are not set down in any history." In calling for the people to "leave the Government behind, and create on the moment the means and executors it wanted," he is calling his readers out of the politics of compromise and in to the moment of the Political, "in which the fate of the whole is decided—in which the new [social] Pact is designed and concluded."

What would it mean to read Conduct of Life in terms of this opposition between argument and principle, between politics and the Political? And how

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87 Zizek, p. 193.
does the privilege Emerson accords to principle in his writings against slavery relate to the philosophy of poetic perception he laid out in *Nature* and "Fate"? Recall that in *Nature*, already, Emerson identifies the political power of symbols such as "liberty" in times of political crisis. "[I]n the hour of revolution, these solemn images shall reappear in their morning lustre, as fit symbols and words of the thoughts which the passing events shall awaken. . . . And with these forms, the spells of persuasion, the keys of power are put into his hands." (34) What are the chapters of *Conduct of Life*—"Wealth," "Culture," "Power," etc.—but a collection of just such symbols. In the lectures he delivered throughout the 1850's, and in the version of these lectures he published as *Conduct of Life* in 1860, Emerson takes these symbols of Jacksonian individualism and presents them as principles that would provoke in his readers "that inspiration which,. . . would leave the Government behind, and create on the moment the means and executors" necessary for the abolition of slavery. And we have already seen an example of this in the 1855 lecture in which Emerson calls for emancipation by purchase. His claim that emancipation by purchase is "the right social or public function" of "Wealth" is the practical, political application of the allegorical lesson of the essay "Wealth." "The counting-room maxims liberally expounded are the laws of the Universe" (84). In the lectures and essays of *Conduct of Life*, Emerson uses his philosophy of poetic perception to turn the symbols of Jacksonian self-interest into principles that can serve as "spells of persuasion" to abolish slavery. *Conduct of Life* is an especially powerful political text, in this regard, if we remember that compromise politics were fueled by the ideology of Jacksonian self-interest, since it was the expansionist policies of the Jacksonian era that led to the introduction of new state and territories into the Union, which made necessary the compromise politics that polarized the country. In *Conduct of Life*, Emerson uses his poetic method to take the conventional terms that inform arguments in support of
compromise and turn them toward a principled use that, then, serves as the basis of his arguments for emancipation.

Emerson introduces his readers into this logic in the opening essay "Fate." "Fate" begins with an apparent admission that political action is ineffectual because we act from the "irresistible dictation" of our private desires. "We are incompetent to solve the times," he writes, because "we can only obey our own polarity," and he adds, a few pages later, "a good deal of our politics is physiological" (330, 335). However, in later essays in the volume, such as "Considerations by the Way," he uses a similar organic rhetoric to indicate the inevitable dissolution of the institution slavery. "The frost which kills the harvest of a year, saves the harvests of a century, by destroying the weevil or the locust. . . . There is a tendency in things to right themselves, and the war or revolution or bankruptcy that shatters a rotten system, allows things to take a new and natural order" (167). The apparent laissez-faire resignation of "Fate," which says, "we can only obey our own polarity," returns here as a positive political program. Abolition, even through civil conflict, is presented as a natural stage in the growth and development of the nation.

Throughout Conduct of Life, Emerson uses the dialectical logic of "Fate" to lead his readers to presuppose the necessity of abolition. Recall that in this logic "Fate," or limitation, predicates power, and power, in turn, (re)conditions the limits of "Fate." Remembering this, and reading within the context of his lectures against slavery, Emerson's description of the rude ways of Providence seems less like a fated resignation to the constitutional defects of our nature, and more like a call to political action.

The way of Providence is a little rude. The habit of snake and spider, the snap of the tiger and other leapers and bloody jumpers, the crackle of the bones of his prey in the coil of the anaconda,—these are in the system, and our habits are like theirs. You have just dined, and however scrupulously the slaughter-house is concealed in the graceful distance of miles, there is complicity,—expensive races,—race living at the expense of race. The
planet is liable to shocks from comets, perturbations from planets, rendings from earthquake and volcano, . . . But these shocks and ruins are less destructive to us than the stealthy power of other laws which act on us daily. An expense of ends to means is fate;—organization tyrannizing over character. (332-333)

In calling attention to "the odious fact" of "race living at the expense of race, Emerson is not preaching Social Darwinism; nor is he saying that these are inevitable facts to which we must concede. Emerson confronts his readers with the odious facts so that they will turn to the work of overcoming those facts. "[Y]et it is wholesome to man to not look at Fate, but the other way: the practical view is the other. His sound relation to these facts is to use and command, not to cringe to them" (340). The use and command Emerson advocates here is the pragmatic legacy of his philosophy of poetic perception. His recognition that "[p]erson makes event, and event person"—which follows from the encounter with "Fate"—marks the beginnings of a pragmatic tradition of the politics of everyday life, which understands subjective agency—the indeterminacy that emerges within the structure of hegemony in its iteration—as a means of political action, a way of reiterating with a difference the relations to production.88

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Literary writing in Emerson's texts is figured as a means of disrupting the public sphere in order to open a space for political transformation. As such they can be viewed as a sustained engagement with the possibilities of individual agency within the constraints of mass democracy. In Emerson's essays and lectures, literary writing is figured as a means of turning the subject away from the conventional as it is shaped via the mediation of the public sphere in our

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daily lives. This definition of the literary opposes the definition of the literary put forward in Poe's essays and criticism, where the work of literature is the systematic projection of a distinctly "literary' discursive sphere, separate from public discourse, and designed to elicit and satisfy collectively held, yet private, fantasies and desires. In Emerson's esthetic, by contrast, the literary serves as a means to open the public sphere to new and different forms of representation.

And yet, although Emerson identifies the tropological dimension of language as the source of personal and political agency, the agency of "troping" in his writings is itself governed by the structure of hegemony, since the meaning put forward in the performative "turn" acquires cultural currency only in so far as it coincides with majority public opinion. This is our "Fate," as Emerson reiterates in "Illusions," the essay which concludes Conduct of Life. "The intellect is stimulated by the statement of truth in a trope, and the will by clothing the laws of life in illusions. But the unities of Truth and of Right are not broken by these" (324). The "unities of Truth and Right" refers to a set of shared universal values, what he calls "absolute Nature" in the next sentence; or the Godhead, in "The Divinity School Address;" or as he puts it in "Experience," "what we call in our more proper philosophical language, Being" (324, 106, 268). These universal values, in Emerson's writings, at times seem to be subject to historical variation; or, it might be better to say, subject to an historical evolution, similar to the evolution of Spirit described in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit. As such, following Marx's critique of Hegelian phenomenology in The German Ideology and elsewhere, "the unities of Truth and Right," in Emerson's writings, could be said to be equivalent to the hegemonic norms of the bourgeoisie. For example, in "Circles," Emerson writes that "[t]he very hopes of man, the thoughts of his heart, the religion of nations, the manners and morals of mankind are all at the mercy of a new generalization." However, he insists that these "generalizations,"
a sort of paradigm shift in cultural values, are "always a new influx of divinity into the mind." Using a rhetorical maneuver that is a characteristic feature of his thought, Emerson averts the threat of the historical contingency of knowledge with an affirmation of our progression toward unity with the Godhead.

In other passages in "Circles," however, being open to the Godhead, to new influxes of divinity, turns out to be equivalent to an acceptance of the historical contingency of knowledge. And, through a circular line of reasoning that is analogous to the logic of "Fate," contingency itself serves as the grounds for subjective agency. Subjectivity, what Emerson calls "[T]he power of self-recovery, so that a man cannot have his flank turned, cannot be out-generated, but put him where you will he stands," is attainable "only by his preferring truth to his past apprehension of truth, and by his alert acceptance of it from whatever quarter; the intrepid conviction that his laws, his relations to society, his Christianity, his world, may at any time be superseded and decease" (172).

What produces our sense of subjective self-identity is what remains in the wake of change, the "intrepid conviction," which is our will to insist that "we" go on, even when everything we know, our "laws," our "relations to society," etc., has been "superseded and decease." Emerson purchases the continuity of the subject, here, at the price of universality, "the unities of Truth and Right." Truth is figured as a phenomenological event, not as a codified set of categorical rules. It arrives in multiple forms, and from multiple points. As with the growth of an embryo, Emerson writes in "Experience," so too in the evolution of truth: "evolution was not from one central point, but coactive from three or more points" (266). And this "coetaneous growth of the parts," is guided by a "universal tendency."

Because of this "universal tendency," each stage within the organic growth of culture, in Emerson's philosophy,—each "new generalization," conforms
structurally to the form of hegemony. To return to "Circles," these "generalizations," or "revolutions" in culture, reproduce hegemony because each revolution installs a "new," but nonetheless "universal," set of cultural norms.

History and the state of the world at any one time [are] directly dependent on the intellectual classifications then existing in the minds of men. The things which are dear to men at this hour are so on account of the ideas which have emerged on their mental horizon, and which cause the present order of things, as a tree bears its apples. A new degree of culture would revolutionize the entire system of human pursuits. (172)

In this claim, culture's power to revolutionize the entire system of human pursuits, and the prospect of a transvaluation of values, is contained within a structure of totality. "A new degree of culture" can revolutionize, effectively, "the entire system of human pursuits" only to the extent that it becomes the dominant "intellectual classification then existing in the minds of men." That "intellectual classification" is itself a totalized system; it represents the hegemonic order of the bourgeoisie that defines the limits of the socially permissible, and that marks the boundaries of the public sphere. New degrees of culture "revolutionize" the system only to the extent that they saturate that system completely, and with a power that makes one forget the past. "True conquest is the causing the calamity to fade and disappear as an early cloud of insignificant result in a history so large and advancing." (178). What Emerson advocates, here, is a form of cultural forgetting which is the corollary of his evolutionary model of cultural progress. This active forgetting serves to reestablish the hegemony of the "current" generalization.

Looked at from the perspective of this passage in "Circles," then, the opening-up of the public sphere accomplished in Emerson's "turning" of the dominant tropes of Jacksonian culture is also a closing-off of other cultural alternatives, an erasure of those pasts that don't support the best, possible future. Although Emerson defines the literary as a way of "revolutionizing" the hegemonic content of the public sphere, these revolutions do not challenge the
structure of hegemony, since they succeed only insofar as they become inscribed within history as an organically necessary stage in the evolutionary development of the state. The mutability of culture, therefore, produces as its compliment an unchanging, timeless state that is characterized by the indefinite repetition of its self-same identity. Emerson's essays contribute to the production of a positive history, "a closed continuity of progression leading to those who rule today."

In the next chapter, I will examine Melville's first novel, *Typee*, as an instance of the way in which Melville's conception of literary writing opposes this co-implication of "the literary" and a progressivist history. Although Emerson may be right about history—only subsequent history will determine retroactively if the current, revolutionary opening-up of the public sphere will take hold, and be legitimated—Melville writes in a way that prevents specific historical crises from being closed off by the retroactive movement of cultural forgetting that Emerson describes in "Circles." As such Melville's texts represent a tradition of the oppressed within the official temporality of American culture that can be drawn on to revolutionize the hegemonic.

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"How inanimate objects twine themselves into our affections:"
Literary Discourse and the Specular Interpellation of the Other in
Melville's *Typee*.

This 'all' feeling, though, there is some truth in... But what plays the mischief with the truth is that
men will insist upon the universal application of a
temporary feeling or opinion.91
H. Melville

In the previous chapters it has been my claim that romantic aesthetics
were introduced into American cultural life at the same time that print media
achieved national coverage. Insofar as romantic aesthetics informed the popular
perception of how literary writing mediates readers' relations to their culture, I
have argued, they helped shape the ideological processes that generate the
hegemonic form of majority public opinion in the 1840's and 1850's. However, in
moving from Poe's "determinate principles" for criticism, to Emerson's poetic
method, to—in this chapter—Melville's strategies of narration, I also am concerned
to show that the appropriative use writers have made of romantic aesthetics
varies in politically significant ways. In chapter one, I identified how Poe's
materialist reading of romantic aesthetics strategically promotes the development
of a mass audience by defining protocols for reading that interpellate readers as
consumers of a distinctly literary form of writing. As such Poe's texts can be read
as symptomatic of the development of a cultural sphere of discursive exchange,
in which subjects cultivate the traits of "private" identity in terms that are defined
by their opposition to the political, economic, and legislative issues of the public

91 *Correspondence: Herman Melville*, ed. Merrel R. Davis and William H. Gilman, (Chicago:
Northwestern University Press and The Newberry Library, 1993) p. 194. From the postscript of a
sphere. In the second chapter, I showed how Emerson made use of a liberal and progressive reading of romantic aesthetics in his essays *Conduct of Life* and in his writings against slavery to reintegrate the cultural and the political dimensions of the public sphere that Poe's writings render distinct. However, although the iterative and tropological strategies that Emerson employs and advocates in his later writings perform the pedagogical work of redefining subjects' relations to the (re)production of the state—and therefore demonstrate how literary writing can trouble and transform the norms of hegemony—, Emerson's use of these strategies remains grounded in a logocentric conception of Being that keeps in place the structural parameters of the current hegemonic order (white, male, Anglo-Saxon, middle-class, etc.). Even though his poetic method defines literary writing as a means of reinscribing the content of hegemony, his application of this method reinscribes the form of hegemony.

In this chapter, I will examine Herman Melville's ontological critique of romantic aesthetics in order to explain how the narrative strategies deployed in his fiction disrupt the structure of hegemony that Emerson's essays reinforce. In his 1850 review of Hawthorne's *Mosses from an Old Manse* and in subsequent letters to Hawthorne in the following year, Melville consistently refers to the romantic concept of Spirit, or Being, in ways that expose its written status. Being, for Melville, is not an experience of full presence in the world that follows from the mediation of some universal essence like Emerson's Godhead. Instead it is a sign of authority claimed by a range of competing and often unrelated discourses. Melville's ontological critique of Being—his sense that "what plays the mischief with the truth is that men will insists upon the universal application of a temporary feeling or opinion"—can help explain his understanding of how literary writing relates to the public sphere. Believing that we suffer under the burden of an inheritance of multiple and conflicting socio-cultural, political, and
theological prescriptions as to the content of Being (Pierre), Melville develops in his fiction narrative strategies that negate the interpellative call of Being as it is announced in various discourses of hegemony. In a letter to Hawthorne, Melville self-mockingly described this strategy of negation as his "ontological heroics." But despite this irony (or because of it), Melville's ontological critique of Being led him to develop in his fiction narrative strategies that deconstruct the ways in which specific popular discourses within the public sphere interpellate readers as national subjects.

In this chapter, I take as my focus Melville's first novel Typee because its chronicle of colonial encounter and its critique of Western missionary activity in the Pacific exemplify well the ways in which Melville's narrative strategies expose how popular discourses—in the case of Typee, travel narratives and missionary tracts—help write subjects' relations to the hegemonic norms of their culture. In Typee, the narrator Tommo's encounters with the colonial Other generate a double recognition for the reader that is then directed to a specific political crisis. Through the course of the narrative Tommo's encounters with the Typeeans gradually reveal how his (and the readers') perception of the Polynesian peoples has been conditioned by the discourse of discovery in travel narratives that figures the colonial Other as an object of Western desire. Moreover, through the account he provides in his preface and appendix of the role played by Methodist missionaries in the determination of United States foreign policy in the Pacific, Melville locates his critique of the discourse of discovery narratives within

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93 *Correspondence*, p. 196.


a political context that makes visible the pedagogical role literary writing plays in the construction of the nation.

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Melville's review Hawthorne's *Mosses from an Old Manse* makes claims for a national literature that are characteristic of the "young America" movement. He presents Hawthorne as "an unimitating, and, perhaps, in his way, an inimitable" example of American literary genius. However, at the beginning of the essay Melville playfully defines the romantic concept of genius in a way that subtly undercuts his later praise of Hawthorne's originality.

I know not what would be the right name to put on the title-page of an excellent book, but this I feel, that the names of all fine authors are fictitious ones . . . simply standing, as they do, for the mystical, ever-eluding Spirit of all Beauty, which ubiquitously possesses men of genius. (1154)

Melville's use of genius to erase the name of Hawthorne has been read as symptomatic of a Bloomian anxiety of influence that Melville experienced in his friendship with Hawthorne. However, as much as Melville's definition of genius negates in advance his praise of Hawthorne's originality, it also negates the concept of genius itself, since the descriptive terms he uses to define the Spirit of all Beauty, "ubiquitous" and "ever-eluding," ironically, cancel out one another, leaving genius both everywhere and nowhere. In his definition of genius, Melville may be concerned less to conceal the name of Hawthorne than to expose the critical term that has conditioned his public reputation as a writer.

Melville's wry humor is prompted by his recognition that the romantic definition of genius as the "Spirit of all Beauty" has become a cliché in American criticism. Later in the review, he writes that "it is the least part of genius that

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attracts admiration" because the term is used, conventionally, by critics to refer to "a pleasant style" (1157). This conventional use of genius, Melville thinks, has led critics into an "absurd misconception" of Hawthorne's writings (1159). In praising Hawthorne, Melville writes, critics have concentrated their attention on "the Indian summer sunlight on the hither side of [his] soul" and so have overlooked "the other side" of his genius, which is "shrouded in a blackness, ten times black" (1158). This "black conceit" Melville identifies in those moments when Hawthorne "sometimes insinuates the things, which we feel to be so terrifically true, that it were all but madness for any good man, in his own proper character, to utter, or even hint them" (1160). What Melville values as Hawthorne's genius, then, is his ability to suggest the psychological motivations of power and desire that cannot be spoken within the constraints of civil society.

It is not my purpose to fetishize Melville's writings—or Hawthorne's, for that matter—for their power to confront the reader with something like "the human capacity for evil." Instead, I would call attention to the fact that Melville understands genius to encompass the full range of human desire. Unlike Emerson, Melville does not conceive of genius—the mediation of Spirit, or Being,—in logocentric terms. It is not purposively directed to some Platonic conception of the good. For Melville, Being, if it is to be universal in its purport, must encompass the fact that "every one has his own distinct peculiarity." Melville uses this "other side" of genius—the radical peculiarity of desire—in his review of Hawthorne's _Mosses from an Old Manse_ to (re)open the field of literary production. The conventional definition of genius, he thinks, contributes to a sense of modern belatedness among American authors, since it constrains literary writing to the hegemonic norms associated with the logocentric conception of Being. But if genius is viewed from the other side, the radical

\[97\textit{Correspondence}, p. 180. Letter to Evertt Duyckinck, 12 February, 1851.\]
peculiarity of desire leads to a proliferation of possibilities for meaning, rather than to the exhaustion of meaning.

[It] will [not at] all do to say, that the world is getting gray and grizzled now, and has lost that fresh charm which she wore of old, and by virtue of which the great poets of past times made themselves what we esteem them to be. Not so. The world is as young today, as when it was created; and this Vermont morning dew is as wet to my feet, as Eden's dew to Adam's. Nor has Nature been all over ransacked by our progenitors, so that no new charm or mysteries remain for this latter generation to find. Far from it. The trillionth part has not yet been said; and all that has been said, but multiplies the avenues to what remains to be said. (1162)

This image of the dissemination of knowledge I would suggest helps explain Melville's strategy for troubling the hegemonic structure of the public sphere. His sense that each utterance "multiplies the avenues to what remains to be said" indicates an awareness that the (re)production of the cultural norms of hegemony is an iterative process and that, therefore, the discourses of hegemony stand open to performative variations. In his fiction, Melville characteristically writes narratives that parody popular discourses by rendering ambiguous their referents to the point where their authority collapses under the weight of multiple and conflicting interpretations.

A fuller understanding of how Melville radicalizes the logocentric conception of Being can be had, if Melville's review of *Mosses from an Old Manse* is read in the context of his letter to Hawthorne dated [16 April?] 1851. Melville writes this letter to give Hawthorne his "impressions" of *The House of Seven Gables*, and in so doing he jokingly assumes the critical persona of his anonymous review of the *Mosses*, offering to Hawthorne "a little criticism extracted from the 'Pittsfield Secret Review.'" This "extract" addresses Hawthorne's power to embody in his writings "the tragicalness of human thought." That tragic dimension, for Melville, seems to consist in the transferential attribution of meaning to symbols void of content. He praises

Hawthorne for his ability to convey to his readers "the intense feeling of the visable truth," by which he means "the apprehension of the absolute condition of present things as they strike the eye of the man who fears them not, though they do their worst to them." Melville’s famous definition of the visable truth refers to an existential condition in which the subject "declares himself a sovereign nature (in himself) amid the powers of heaven, hell and earth." This sovereignty is attained by the systematic negation of the discourses that would lay claim to one’s being.

But it is this Being of the matter, there lies the knot with which we choke ourselves. As soon as you say Me, a God, a Nature, so soon you jump off from your stool and hang from the beam. Yes, that word is the hangman. Take God out of the dictionary, and you would have Him in the street.

There is the grand truth about Nathaniel Hawthorne. He says NO! in thunder; but the Devil himself cannot make him say yes. For all men who say yes, lie; and all men who say no,—why they are in the happy condition of judicious, unincumbered travelers in Europe; the cross the frontiers into Eternity with nothing but a carpet-bag—that is to say, the Ego. Whereas those yes-gentry, they travel with heaps of baggage, and, damn them! they will never get through the Custom House.99

Melville’s famous "NO! in thunder" often has been read in terms of his struggle to come to terms with his strict Calvinistic upbringing.100 Less attention has been paid, however, to what it can tell us about the politics of narration in Melville’s fiction. Melville’s description of giving-a-name-to-Being as an act of suicide, I would suggest, can be read as a response to the sort of poetics of interpellation Emerson practices in Conduct of Life. Melville values the power to say "NO! in thunder" as a means of denying the interpellative calls of the hegemonic discourses that make use of the symbols of Being—"Me, a God, a Nature,"—to persuade subjects to pledge their allegiance to the state. Not unlike Bartleby's

refrain "I would prefer not to," Melville's saying no! in thunder announces a strategic resistance to the claims of hegemony.

These self-styled "ontological heroics" can help explain the narrative strategies he develops in his fiction. Throughout his writings, he employs a doubled narrative perspective that makes visible the interpellative effects of hegemonic discourse. After first soliciting readers' identification with the first-person narrator, the language of Melville's narration subtly undermines that narrator's authority, generally by revealing his position to be mediated by one or more of the discourses of hegemony. This pattern is fairly obvious in a text such as "Benito Cereno," in which the third person narrative voice alternates with Captain Delano's conscious perception of events on board the San Dominick in ways that expose the extent to which Delano views the Africans in terms of the popular discourse of domestic slave life then circulating in the public sphere in support of the politics of compromise. It is less apparent in a first person narrative such as "Bartleby the Scrivener," in which Melville's critique of the discourse of management remains implicit throughout the text. Melville's Typee is a first-person narrative of the latter type, and the critical perception of its narrative politics has been further complicated by a tendency to read the text as a near autobiographical account of Melville's time in the Marquesas islands. However, as James Duban has written, if we are to understand the politics of Melville's texts, we must grant Melville the ability to take a critical stance toward his narrators. Only then, Duban writes, will we be able to understand Melville's practice of "imbuing self-discrediting narrator's with culturally biased assumptions," so as "to manipulate—for the purposes of exposing—consensus ideology."

Such a distinction between the narrator and his narration, when applied to Typee shows that novel to expose how the discourse of the Other in

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travel narratives and narratives of colonial discovery participate in the politics of national imperialism by constructing the Other as an object of Western desire.

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The doubled narrative perspective in Melville's fiction is a response to the doubled relation literary writing bears to the public sphere, during the middle of the nineteenth century. On the one hand, as in Poe's aesthetic, the literary text must address itself to the "private sphere;" it must present itself as the occasion for the reader to develop a personal and unique set of interests and experiences that define self-identity within a space removed from any context of action understood as political. On the other hand, a residual sense of the republican ideal that all literature is a dimension of civic virtue requires that the literary text address issues of general public concern. Melville negotiates this double imperative for literary writing, in the preface to Typee, which, along with the appendix, provides a frame for the ensuing narrative. Both preface and appendix present Typee to the reader as an opportunity to participate in a "thrilling adventure" no longer available in modern bourgeois life. But they also relate these experiences to an issue of general public interest: the imperial politics of American expansionism in the Pacific. The "effect" of this doubled frame of preface and appendix is to expose how the construction of the subject via affective experience in the "private" sphere relates to the production of the "nation" in the public sphere.

Melville's preface to Typee is a complex rhetorical performance that falls into two parts. The first part of the preface presents Typee to the reader as an escapist romance, a bourgeois fantasy, for the class of "fireside people" who no

longer see "anything like stirring adventure." In soliciting this middle-class audience, Melville calls attention to the narrative strategies he has used to heighten the sensational appeal of his text.

[Notwithstanding the familiarity of sailors with all sorts of curious adventure, the incidents recorded in the following pages have often served, when "spun as a yarn," not only to relieve the weariness of many a night watch at sea, but to excite the warmest sympathies of the author's shipmates. (vii)]

Unlike most travel narratives of the nineteenth century, Melville implies, Typee will be more a narrative of "curious adventure" than an anthropological account of a foreign culture.

That the narrative of adventure will take precedence over a scientifically accurate description of Polynesian culture is made more explicit in the subsequent paragraph. In describing the customs of the Typeeans, Melville writes, "[the author] refrains in most cases from entering into explanations concerning their origins and purposes," preferring instead to "treat of their more obvious peculiarities" (vii). Part of "the author's" strategy to promote his work as a narrative of thrilling adventure, then, is the presentation of the Typeeans as an object of exotic fascination. The "peculiarities" of Polynesian culture promise to fulfill a spectatorial desire suggested already in the subtitle to Typee, A Peep at Polynesian Life During a Four Month's Residence in a Valley of the Marquesas. What we will see, the first part of the preface suggests, when we "peep" into the pages of Typee is an image of the exotic Other, an image which represents all that is outside the limits of the permissible, as defined by Western, "enlightened" civilization.

In its second part, though, the preface directs the reader's desire to know more about the "peculiarities" of Typeean culture to a political struggle over the representation of "the Polynesian" in the public sphere. His account of the "singular and interesting people" of Typee valley, Melville admits has
interspersed within it "a few passages . . . which may be thought to bear rather
hard upon a reverend order of men, the account of whose proceedings in the
different quarters of the globe—transmitted to us through their own hands—very
generally, and often very deservedly, receives high commendation" (viii)." These
"few passages" are the sections of Typee critical of missionary activity in the
Pacific. However, a closer examination of Melville's language reveals that the
object of his criticism is not so much missionary activity as it is the missionaries'
representation of that activity in the popular press. For what "receives high
commendation" in the sentence just quoted is not "the reverend order of men,"
nor is it their "proceedings in various quarters of the globe," their missionary
work. Instead, it is "the account" of those proceedings, an account made
suspect, moreover, because "transmitted to us through their own hands."
Melville's phrasing subtly accuses the missionaries of misrepresenting their work
to the public.

Furthermore, Melville links the missionaries' misrepresentation of the
Christian mission in the Pacific to the politics of imperialism. His "otherwise
unwarrantable digressions" are justified, Melville writes, because of "[t]he great
interest with which the important events lately occurring at the Sandwich,
Marquesas, and Society Islands, have been regarded in America and England,
and indeed throughout the world." Melville is referring here to the conflict he
discusses at length in the appendix to Typee: the political crisis between Great
Britain and the United States over the sovereignty of the Sandwich Islands, in
1843. In the appendix, Melville relates, directly, the missionaries'
representation of the effects of Christian mission to America's expansionist
politics in the Pacific. The appendix, then, completes the frame for the narrative
of Typee begun in the preface by locating that narrative within the current
debate in America over Manifest Destiny.
The appendix, which Melville likely wrote concurrently with the preface, provides a detailed account of the incident that caused the political tensions between Great Britain and the United States: the "provisional cession" of the Hawaiian islands in February of 1843 by King Kamehameha III to Lord George Paulet, commander of the frigate H.M.S. Carysfort. Lord Paulet had been sent by Rear-Admiral Thomas, the English commander in chief on the Pacific station at Valparaiso, to seek redress for Richard Charlton, the British consul in Honolulu, who had recently vacated his position, in September of 1842. During his tenure as British consul, Charlton often found himself at odds with Dr. Gerrit Parmele Judd, a New York Presbyterian minister who served as government interpreter and recorder to King Kamehameha III. After Charlton's departure from Honolulu, Dr. Judd refused to recognize Charlton's appointee as acting consul, and had a missionary-controlled court attach Charlton's property. It was in response to these provocations that Lord George Paulet was dispatched to the islands. On his arrival, King Kamehameha refused to meet with him, informing Paulet that Dr. Judd would conduct all negotiations with Lord Paulet on his behalf. Paulet rejected these terms, convinced that Dr. Judd "ha[d] been the prime mover in the unlawful proceedings of [King Kamehameha's] government against British subjects."¹⁰³ Paulet demanded restitution for Charlton's property, and acknowledgment of his appointee as acting British consul. In response, King Kamehameha agreed to the "provisional cession" of the islands, so as to avoid further conflict. But at the same time, he appealed to President Tyler, through Dr. Judd, for the United States to intercede with Great Britain on his behalf.

The version of these events that Melville provides in the appendix to *Typee* figures the missionaries as provocateurs in a political incident that would

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help define America as a colonial power. The appendix is Melville’s response to
"the distorted accounts and fabrications" of the Paulet’s temporary occupation of
the Hawaiian islands that he read "on his arrival at Boston, in the autumn of
1844" (281). "No transaction has ever been more grossly misrepresented" he
writes, "than the events which occurred upon the arrival of Lord George Paulet at
Oahu" (280). What Melville discovered was that the "provisional cession" of
Hawaii to Lord Paulet had been reported in the American press as an act of
British imperial aggression that threatened American interests in the Pacific and
violated the Hawaiians’ democratic rights. He largely attributes the
misrepresentation of these events to the reports of missionaries who claimed to
have witnessed the affair.104 In his appendix, he sets out to invert these
distorted accounts, by praising Paulet’s "administration of Hawaiian affairs" as a
model of liberal government, while at the same time exposing the missionaries
as the leaders of a puppet monarchy that seeks to perpetuate the King’s "feudal
sway over the common people" (282).

The first part of the preface establishes a clear opposition between Lord
Paulet, "a bluff and straightforward sailor," and the missionaries, "a junta of
ignorant and designing Methodist elders," led by Dr. Judd, "a sanctimonious
apothecary-adventurer" (282, 281). This stark contrast, however, is used subtly
to suggest how the covert policies of Manifest Destiny corrupt the liberal ideals of
a democratic republic. For Melville associates the political machinations of the
missionaries with the "iniquitous designs" employed by the French to seize both
Tahiti and the Marquesas. The appendix begins with Melville’s firsthand account
of the "piratical seizure of Tahiti, with all the woe and desolation that attended it,"

104 It is possible that one of the "distorted and fabricated accounts" Melville refers to in the preface
is Rev. Sheldon Dibble’s A History of the Sandwich Islands, which contains an appendix that
reports the events surrounding the provisional cession of the islands to Paulet. This appendix
may have been the model for Melville’s appendix, which, in sections, reads almost as a parody of
Dibble’s version of events.
and then uses this incident as a benchmark from which to evaluate the political actions of both Paulet and the missionaries.

The author of this volume arrived at Tahiti the very day that the iniquitous designs of the French were consummated by inducing the subordinate chiefs, during the absence of their queen, to ratify an artfully drawn treaty, by which she was virtually deposed. Both menaces and caresses were employed on this occasion and the 32 pounders which peeped out of the portholes of the frigate were the principal arguments adduced to quiet the scruples of the more conscientious islanders. (281)

This description of the French coercion of the Tahitians sets up Melville's defense of Lord Paulet's administration. The crucial element, here, is the "artfully drawn treaty" the French use to depose the Tahitian Queen. For, in the missionary's version of Paulet's temporary occupation of the Hawaiian islands, King Kamehameha is represented as having been similarly coerced into signing the "provisional cession." Melville's appendix, however, inverts this version of events, suggesting that the missionaries drafted the "provisional cession" as a species of entrapment that would make it possible for them, in their appeals to the United States government and to the American public for intervention on behalf of King Kamehameha and the Hawaiian people, to paint Paulet as an imperialist aggressor, not unlike the French.

According to Melville's preface, "a third epistle" from Paulet, "demanding compliance with his requisitions, under penalty of immediate hostilities," forced the missionaries' hand.

The government was now obliged to act, and an artful stroke of policy was decided upon the despicable counselors of the king to entrap the sympathies and rouse the indignation of Christendom. His majesty was made to intimate to the British captain that he could not, as the conscientious ruler of his beloved people, comply with the arbitrary demands of his lordship, and in deprecation of the horrors of war, tendered to his acceptance the "provisional cession" of the islands, subject to negotiations then pending in London. Paulet, a bluff and straightforward sailor, took the king at his word, and after some preliminary arrangements, entered upon the administration of Hawaiian affairs, in the same firm and benignant spirit which marked the discipline of his frigate, and which had rendered him the idol of his ship's company. He soon endeared himself to nearly all orders of the islanders; but the king and the chiefs, whose feudal sway over the common people is laboriously sought to be perpetuated by their missionary advisors,
regarded all his proceedings with the most vigilant animosity. Jealous of
his growing popularity, and unable to counteract it, they endeavored to
assail his reputation abroad by ostentatiously protesting against his acts,
and appealing in Oriental phrase to the wide universe to witness and
compassionate their unparalleled wrongs (282).

According to Melville's version of these events, the "provisional cession" was
drafted in a way that figures King Kamehameha as a pacifist, who concedes his
rule only "in deprecation of the horrors of war," and, at the same time, figures
Lord Paulet as an imperialist aggressor, who, like the French at Tahiti, presents
a list of "arbitrary demands" as pretext for the seizure of the islands. Melville's
version inverts this account, presenting Paulet as a political naïf, not unlike
Amasa Delano or Captain Vere, who, "bluff and straightforward," takes the King
at his word and accepts the terms of the cession. The missionaries, meanwhile,
are presented as practicing the same sort of rhetorical manipulations that
Melville's appendix is performing, as they use the details of the "provisional
cession" to invert, with their "appeal[ ] . . . to the wide universe to witness and
compassionate their unparalleled wrongs," the popular reputation Paulet had
gained "with nearly all orders of the islanders." The missionaries' "appeal . . . to
the wide universe," moreover, is written to gain popular support for American
intervention in the crisis--"to entrap the sympathies and rouse the indignation of
Christendom"--in order to restore King Kamehameha to the throne, and,
therefore, restore the basis of the missionaries' power.

Whereas the missionaries tried to figure Paulet as an imperialist
aggressor, Melville's appendix figures the missionaries as political puppet-
masters, who manipulate not only King Kamehameha, but also the United States
government and the American public via the public sphere. The ironic repetition
of certain descriptive phrases in the appendix further associates the
missionaries' political machinations with the deceptive tactics the French use to
seize Tahiti. For example, the use of the phrase "artful stroke of policy" to
describe the "provisional cession" drafted by the missionaries relates that
document to the "artfully drawn treaty" the French used to usurp the throne of the
Tahitian Queen. Similarly, in the following sentence, the repetition of "iniquities"
associates the missionaries' involvement in the Hawaiian government with the
"iniquitous designs" of the French at Tahiti. "The iniquities [Lord Paulet] brought
to light and instantly suppressed [on assuming command of the islands] are too
numerous to be here recorded; but one instance may be mentioned that will give
some idea of the lamentable misrule to which these poor islanders are
subjected" (282).

The example itself also contributes to Melville's inversion of missionaries'
accounts of the beneficial influence of Christian mission on Hawaiian culture by
representing their means of conversion as the source of corruption in the
Hawaiian state. One of the "iniquities" that Paulet uncovered, Melville claims,
was General Kekuanoa's, "the governor of Oahu, [and] one of the pillars of the
Hawaiian church," use of the Connecticut blue laws to swell the ranks of a
prostitution ring he ran to service the crews of vessels that put into Oahu for
resupply and repairs.

It so happened that, at the period of Paulet's arrival, the Connecticut blue
laws had been for at least three weeks steadily enforced. In consequence
of this, the fort at Honolulu was filled with a great number of young girls,
who were confined there doing penance for their slips from virtue. Paulet,
although at first unwilling to interfere with regulations having reference
solely to the natives themselves, was eventually, by the prevalence of
certain reports, induced to institute a strict inquiry into the internal
administration of General Kekuanoa, governor of the island at Oahu, one
of the pillars of the Hawaiian church, and captain of the fort. He soon
ascertained that numbers of the young females employed during the day
at work intended for the benefit of the king, were at night smuggled over
the ramparts of the fort—which on one side directly overhangs the sea—and
were conveyed by stealth on board such vessels as had contracted
with the general to be supplied with them. Before daybreak they returned
to their quarters, and their own silence with regard to these secret
excursions was purchased by a small portion of those wages of iniquity
which were placed in the hands of Kekuanoa (283).
Melville's account of General Kekuanoa's prostitution of the prisoners in his charge is sensational, and whether it is based in fact has not been determined. However, this sensational account of the practical effects of the missionaries' policy recommendations to the Hawaiian government—King Kamehameha having adopted the Connecticut blue laws at the suggestion of Dr. Judd and the other missionary leaders—does invert the missionaries' published accounts of Lord Paulet's administration. Moreover, Melville not only points out that this prostitution ring was run by "one of the pillars of the Hawaiian church"—the church established by the Methodist missionaries—he also suggests that the missionary controlled government shared in the profits of this "iniquitous" enterprise. "The vigor with which the laws concerning licentiousness were at that period enforced, enabled the general to monopolize in a great measure the detestable trade in which he was engaged, and there consequently flowed into his coffers—and some say into those of the government also—considerable sums of money" (283).

In identifying the blue laws as the root cause of the "lamentable misrule" to which the Hawaiians are subjected, the appendix not only indicts the missionaries for their involvement in the Hawaiian state, but also contradicts the missionaries' reports that the blue laws have improved moral and civil conduct in the islands. Prior to the time Paulet took charge of the islands, the Connecticut blue laws had been in effect for about six months. According to the missionaries' reports, improvement in the moral and civil deportment of the Hawaiians and of the American and European inhabitants of the islands had been significant. Paulet, however, rescinded the blue laws soon after taking command of the islands, possibly as a part of a larger policy to levy taxes that would fund the reparations due to ex-consul Charlton. In "their appeal . . . to the wide universe to witness and compassionate their unparalleled wrongs," missionaries, such as
the Rev. Sheldon Dibble, pointed to Paulet's abrogation of the blue laws as the visible sign of his corruption of the Hawaiian state. After detailing how Paulet's commission added a one-percent tax on imported goods and ordered an audit of land titles and leases (again, presumably, to exact reparations for ex-consul Charlton), Rev. Dibble reports the most "shameful" of Paulet's actions. "The next act! One's pen, for very shame, shrinks from recording it! Directly in the face of a solemn obligation clearly expressed in the articles of Cession, not to interfere with the laws of the nation, the Commission proceeds to abrogate a very important statute—and what statute!—the statute against fornication! making the crime punishable only when committed in the highways and thoroughfares."

In order to detail the effects of Paulet's abrogation of the blue laws, Dibble quotes an editorial published by the Rev. Samuel C. Damon in an extra of the Temperance Advocate and Seamen's Friend, on 31 July, 1843. Rev. Damon, the chaplain of the Seamen's Bethel in Honolulu, and the editor of the Friend, records the effect that Paulet's abrogation of the blue laws had on public conduct. Previous to Paulet's rule, Damon writes, "a higher regard for purity and morality did not exist in any port this side Cape Horn or the Cape of Good Hope." However, Paulet's abrogation of the blue laws has reversed the course of reform set by the missionaries, and, Damon suggests, if moral order is not restored, lawlessness threatens to spread throughout the islands.

Since the force of law has been restrained, the tide has changed—the current flows in an opposite direction... a different state of things is fearfully rife! The influence of grog shops in their baleful effects falls far short of unrestrained licentiousness. Houses to sell wines and spirituous liquors, are under certain checks and prohibitions; but upon the pimps and panders of the brothel there are no restrictions—no tabus. They may pursue their calling without rebuke from the public authorities. Boat loads of lewd women have been seen going and returning from vessels which have recently touched at this Harbor for supplies. The law is prostrate—the arm of justice paralyzed—the officers of justice permitted to witness iniquity, but forbidden to arrest the guilty offenders. The most disgusting scenes are to be seen at noon-day in the streets of Honolulu, and around certain places of resort. Report of this state of things has drawn hither scores and hundreds of simple minded and unwary females from the
other Islands. Landsmen as well as seamen have taken advantage of this state of public morals.105

Damon's account of the change in the "state of public morals" that followed from Paulet's administration is curiously dated, as it appears in Dibble's appendix to A History of the Sandwich Islands. As Herschel Parker explains, Damon's account was published in a special extra to the Friend on 31 July 1843, the day King Kamehameha was restored to power; however, it is dated 21 July, and written, according to the text, early in June, but held back from print in the hopes that Paulet would repudiate the cession106. This discrepancy in dates makes it uncertain whether Damon's essay was written to garner public support for American intervention in the crisis, or whether it was written, after the fact, as a vindication of the steps taken by the United States to restore King Kamehameha—and the missionaries—to power. In either case, though, Damon's editorial and Dibble's History of the Sandwich Islands associate the work of mission with American imperial expansion in the Pacific.

It is the missionaries' involvement in the politics of American imperialism that Melville's appendix works to hinder. The appendix is less a defense of Lord Paulet, as some critics have assumed, than it is an effort to counter the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny as it occurs in the discourse of mission.107 To this end, the appendix ends with a firsthand account of King Kamehameha's return to power. This account parodies Rev. Damon's description of the "state of public morals" instituted by Lord Paulet's abrogation of the blue laws, and shows that the

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105 Quoted in Parker, p. 248.
106 ibid, p. 247.
107 Critics generally have read Melville's championing of Lord Paulet and his condemnation of the missionaries as a double strategy designed, in the first case, to win the good graces of his English readers, and, in the second case, to exact revenge on the Harper brothers—prominent Methodists who publicly supported Christian mission in the Pacific—for their rejection of Typee on the grounds that "it couldn't be true" and, therefore, "was without real value." This, however, is to ignore the fact that Melville's critique of the missionaries in the preface/appendix is no different from his critique of the missionaries in the body of the text.
restoration of a missionary controlled government does not promote republican ideals of democratic self-rule, but installs, instead, the tyranny of a dictatorship.

Who that happened to be at Honolulu during those ten memorable days will ever forget them! The spectacle of universal broad day debauchery, which was then exhibited, beggars description. The natives of the surrounding islands flocked to Honolulu by hundreds, and the crew of two frigates, opportunely let loose like so many demons to swell the heathenish uproar, gave the crowning flourish to the scene. It was a sort of Polynesian saturnalia. Deeds too atrocious to be mentioned were done at noonday in the open street, and some of the islanders caught in the very act of stealing from the foreigners, were, on being taken to the fort by the aggrieved party, suffered immediately to go at large and to retain the stolen property--Kekuanoa informing the white men, with a sardonic grin, that the laws were "hannapa" (tied up). (284-285)

As with the earlier passages that associate the missionaries' policy recommendations with the "iniquitous designs" of the French, this description of the "universal broad day debauchery" that followed King Kamehameha's restoration to power inverts Rev. Damon's descriptions of the lawlessness that followed from Lord Paulet's administration. The phrase "Deeds too atrocious to be mentioned were done at noonday in the open street," for example, echoes directly the phrase Damon used to describe the scenes of "iniquity" he witnessed after Paulet's abrogation of the blue laws: "The most disgusting scenes are to be seen at noon-day in the streets of Honolulu." By incorporating Damon's language into this passage, which shows that King Kamehameha's return to power results in a "state" of lawlessness, the appendix suggests that the missionaries' call for American intervention on behalf of the Hawaiian people did not help establish democratic self-rule; it instead helped establish the arbitrary rule of a dictatorship, as figured in the final image of Gov. Kekuanaoa (the leader of the prostitution ring, recall) "informing the white men, with a sardonic grin, that the laws were 'hannapa.'"

Melville's description of the "Polynesian saturnalia" works to expose a moment of failure in the narrative of American imperialism circulating in the American press, during the 1840's. However, it does not contradict, necessarily,
the representation of the colonized subject within that narrative. For, in his
efforts to figure the utter failure of the project of Christian mission in the Pacific,
Melville describes the natives as "depraved and vicious" by nature.

The history of these ten days reveals in their true colors the character of
the Sandwich islanders, and furnishes an eloquent commentary on the
results which have flowed from the labors of the missionaries. Freed from
the restraints of severe penal laws, the natives almost to a man had
plunged voluntarily into every species of wickedness and excess, and by
their utter disregard of all decency plainly showed, that although they had
been schooled into a seeming submission to the new order of things, they
were in reality as depraved and vicious as ever. (285)

The rhetorical purpose, here, is to present "the results which have flowed from
the labors of the missionaries." Although the Hawaiians "had been schooled into
a seeming submission to the new order of things," their apparent conversion was
only conformity instituted by "the restraint of severe penal laws." Once given the
opportunity, the reverted to their "true" nature, and "almost to a man had plunged
voluntarily into every species of wickedness and excess." Melville's point is that
one cannot legislate morality, a position he takes explicitly in the body of the text.
"In short, missionary undertaking, however it may be blessed by Heaven, is in
itself but human; and subject, like everything else, to errors and abuses" (223).
The description of the "true colors" of the Hawaiians is part of an argument for
the separation of church and state. The state of civil and moral unrest that
follows from "the labors of the missionaries" is placed in contrast with the liberal
rule of Paulet, and used to show that, when the United States intervened and
restored King Kamehameha and his missionary counselors to the throne, the
Hawaiian people lost the benefits of liberal government. "[T]o this hour the great
body of the Hawaiian people invoke blessings on [Lord Paulet's] head, and look
back with gratitude to the time when his paternal sway diffused peace and
happiness among them" (285).

Melville's exposure of the missionaries' involvement in the crisis over
Hawaiian sovereignty, although critical of the representation of the Polynesian
peoples in the discourse of Christian mission, still figures the Hawaiians as the Other of civilization, as "in reality . . . depraved and vicious." Moreover, the sentence above praising Paulet, implies that the Hawaiians recognize that they need the "paternal guidance" of colonial rule, and so would welcome the overthrow of their government by a foreign power. More puzzling, though, is the description of the Hawaiians as "depraved and vicious," for this seems to contradict the descriptions given in the body of the text of the Typeeans as "pure and upright . . . in all the relations of life"—that is until we recognize that, as "depraved and vicious," the Hawaiians serve the same purpose that was defined for the figure of the "Polynesian" in the preface: their "utter disregard for all decency," their voluntary plunge "into every species of wickedness and excess," presents the "Polynesian" as a screen for the reader's fantasy of everything not permitted within civilization, and retroactively posits Typee as the site for the performance of the reader's fantasy of "Polynesian saturnalia." The appendix, then, completes the double frame for Tommo's narration, begun in the preface, that figures Typee valley as a site for the production of readers desire. For, even as it bends this affective energy toward a critique of American imperialism, the appendix nonetheless reproduces the general logic of western colonialism, insofar as it figures the colonized subject as the Other of civilization, as an object of desire.

However, although the outer frame of preface and appendix figures the Polynesian peoples as a screen for Western fantasy, the narrative that frame contains, the story told by Tommo of his time among the Typeeans, works to expose how narrative in general, and the genre of travel literature in particular, constructs the colonial Other as an object of Western desire. Using the same strategies of ironic repetition that associated the missionaries with the "iniquities"
of French colonialism, the narrative of Typee works to expose how Tommo's narration transforms the Polynesian peoples into a screen for collective fantasy.

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The preface and the appendix together form the frame that establishes the political context in which to read the narrative proper of Typee. Tommo's narrative employs the same pattern used in the preface to direct readers' attention to how the discourse of Christian Mission underwrites the politics of Manifest Destiny. After first soliciting the reader's identification with Tommo's fantasy of a Polynesian paradise, the narration gradually exposes this fantasy to be a product of the discourse of the Other found in travel narratives and narratives of discovery. The doubled narrative perspective of Typee exhibits how Tommo's description of Typee valley as a natural paradise itself objectifies the Typeeans in a manner homologous with the objectification of the Other in the discourse of Mission and Manifest Destiny. However, Tommo's account of Typeean culture functions ambivalently as both critique of the politics of Manifest Destiny and endorsement of a colonial consciousness that figures the Other as the object of Western desire. In other words, Tommo's narrative does not cancel the discourse of Manifest Destiny, nor does it simply enable that discourse. Instead, it brings to the surface the perennial problem of how popular narration underwrites national politics.

The opening chapters of Typee fulfill the promise of the preface, and in a way that solicits readers' identification with Tommo's desire for an experience of the exotic. As Melville, in the preface, presented his book to an audience of "fireside people" as an antidote for the monotonous routine of bourgeois life, so too Tommo presents the Marquesas islands as an antidote for the monotony of
shipboard life "six months out of sight of land; cruising after the sperm whale beneath the scorching sun of the Line" (15). After relating the hardships endured by the crew—"fresh provisions all exhausted . . . nothing left us but salt horse and sea biscuit . . . Oh for a refreshing glimpse of one blade of grass"—Tommo relates the complex of affective emotions he experienced on hearing that the
Dolly was to put in at the Marquesas for refitting and provisions.

"Hurrah, my lads! its a settled thing; next week we shape our course to the Marquesas!" The Marquesas! What strange visions of outlandish things does the very name spirit up. Naked hounis—cannibal banquets—groves of coconut—coral reefs—tattooed chiefs—and bamboo temples; sunny valleys planted with breadfruit trees—carved canoes dancing on the flashing blue waters—savage woodlands guarded by horrible islands—heathenish rites and human sacrifices.

Such were the strangely jumbled anticipations that haunted me during our passage from the cruising ground. I felt an irresistible curiosity to see those islands, which the olden voyagers had so glowingly described. (17)

Melville's use of direct address, —"Hurrah, my lads! its a settled thing; next week we shape our course to the Marquesas!"—facilitates readers' identification with Tommo's fantasy of the Marquesas by positioning readers' with Tommo as the recipients of the first mate's announcement of the next port of call. Tommo's "strangely jumbled anticipations" are derived from his reading of travel narratives and narratives of colonial discovery, the glowing descriptions of the olden voyagers. Melville's narration, therefore, locates Tommo's narrative within a history of the colonial discovery and conquest of the Marquesas.

Melville gets his readers to participate in Tommo's fantasy of colonial discovery, here, in the opening pages, so that in subsequent chapters he can expose how that participation makes one complicit in the dispossession of colonized peoples. To this end he associates Tommo's vision of the Marquesas with the colonial discovery of the islands. Prominent among the sources for Tommo's "jumbled anticipations" is "the vague and magnificent account of [Alvara de] Mendanna," the first Westerner to 'discover' the islands in 1595.
In the watery path of Mendanna, cruising in quest of some region of gold, these islands had sprung up like a scene of enchantment, and for a moment the Spaniard believed his bright dream was realized. (17)

In his description of Mendanna's discovery, Tommo presents the Marquesas as an image of the realization of colonial desire. However, the language of Melville's narration ironically places emphasis on the fact that it is an image of that realization—not the realization itself. Mendanna's bright dream was realized "only for a moment." Even as Tommo uses the discourse of discovery to present the Marquesas as the realization of Western desire, the language of the narration suggests that realization will culminate in an experience of disillusion that follows from the disruption of the fantasy by the fact of colonization.

This moment of disillusion is performed in the text when Tommo makes his first landing at Nukuheva. That Tommo's arrival is modeled on narratives of colonial discovery is clear from the language of the narration that presents his first sighting of the Marquesas. Just prior to landing Tommo views the island from the deck of the Dolly with a gaze that repeats Mendanna's gaze at the moment of discovery. After describing the scenery, Tommo writes "Very often when lost in admiration of its beauty, I have experienced a pang of regret that a scene so enchanting should be hidden from the world in these remote seas, and seldom meet the eyes of devoted lovers of nature." As with his use of direct address in the opening chapter, here too Melville's choice of language associates readers' desire for the exotic with the history of colonial discovery and conquest. The phrase "scene so enchanting" with its echo of the earlier phrase used to describe Mendanna's first sighting of the islands, "scene of enchantment," associates Tommo's desire with the discourse of colonial discovery and conquest. And, of course, it is Tommo's narrative, that is the vehicle that will carry this "scene so enchanting" to "the eyes of devote lovers of nature," his audience of readers of travel narratives, who like Tommo have an
irresistible curiosity to see" the exotic locales described in narratives of discovery.

In the account that follows of Tommo's first encounter with the Marquesan peoples, this "enchanting scene" dissolves into an image of colonial conquest. When he first sets foot on the beach at Nukuheva Tommo is greeted by "a parcel of juvenile savages, who stood prepared to give [him] a kind reception." But oppressed by the heat, Tommo plunges into the first grove that offers, pursued by the natives of the valley. His entrance into the "enchanting" scenery he had admired from the deck of the *Dolly* initially seems the fulfillment of his fantasy of an exotic paradise, as he describes the pleasures of "the shade baths of Tior."

What a delightful sensation did I experience! I felt as if floating in some new element, while all sort of gurgling, trickling, liquid sounds fell upon my ear. People may say what they will about the refreshing influences of a cold water bath, but commend me when in a perspiration to the shade baths of Tior, beneath the coconut trees, and amidst the cool delightful atmosphere which surrounds them." (42).

However, as he pushes farther into the grove for a better view of the glen, the imagery of tropical paradise is supplemented by a scene of colonial conquest. Pushing aside the foliage and peering into the glen, Tommo sees not an exotic scene of native life, but the King of Tior surrendering his lands to the French Admiral du Petit Thouars, who "had come down in state from Nukuheva to take formal possession of the place" (44).

What is disclosed then within the scene of enchantment is the colonial dispossession of the lands of the Marquesan peoples. Moreover, the narrative has placed Tommo and, by association, the reader in a position that gives a doubled perspective on this event. On the one hand, Tommo participates in the French colonial conquest of the island, having himself just penetrated the glen of Tior. On the other hand, the veil of colonial fantasy has been likewise penetrated, since Tommo views the dispossession of the valley from the perspective of the children of the tribe of Tior. Recall that the "parcel of Juvenile
savages," who greeted Tommo when he landed, followed him into the glen, and he now stands among them. What the narration presents to its readers, then, is the fantasy of colonial discovery and conquest, but viewed from the position of the colonized subject.

By leading its readers through the fantasy of Western colonial desire to view it from the other side, Melville's text confronts readers of travel narratives with the "real" of their desire; with the fact that their specular interest in the exotic predicates a relation of power that results in the fetishization of the colonial other. The chapter that narrates Tommo's landing at Nukuheva ends with a description of the meeting of East and West that exemplifies how travel narratives participate in colonial politics by reducing the other to a fetishized image of the exotic that can be recalled at will to stimulate private fantasy.

From his position concealed within the foliage at the foot of the glen, Tommo gives a lengthy description of the interview between the King of Tior and the French admiral Du Thouars that establishes the opposition between "savage" Polynesian and "civilized" Westerner that is the basis of the colonial reduction of the colonized subject to an object of Western desire. Tommo presents this scene of exchange between colonist and colonized in terms of generational succession, in which the aged, primitive race makes way before the young, modern nation. At the same time though language of Tommo's narration questions the progressivism implicit in the logic of generational succession.

The patriarch-sovereign of Tior was a man very far-advanced in years; but though age had bowed his form and rendered him almost decrepit, his gigantic frame retained all its original magnitude and grandeur of appearance. He advanced slowly and with evident pain, assisting his tottering steps with the heavy war spear he held in his hand, and attended by a group of gray-bearded chiefs, on one of whom he occasionally leaned for support. The admiral came forward with head uncovered and extended hand, while the old king saluted him by a stately flourish of his weapon. The next moment they stood side by side, these two extremes

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of the social scale—the polished, splendid Frenchman, and the poor tattooed savage. They were both tall and noble-looking men; but in other respects how strikingly contrasted! Du Petit Thouars exhibited upon his person all the paraphernalia of his naval rank. He wore a richly decorated admiral's frock coat, a laced chapeau-bras, and upon his breast were a variety of ribbons and orders; while the simple islander, with the exception of a slight cincture about his loins, appeared in all the nakedness of nature.

At what an immeasurable distance thought I, are these two beings removed from one another. In the one is shown the result of long centuries of progressive civilization and refinement, which have gradually converted the mere creature into the semblance of all that is elevated and grand; while the other after a lapse of the same period, has not advanced one step in the career of improvement. "Yet, after all," quoth I to myself, "insensible as he is to a thousand wants and removed from harassing cares, may not the savage be the happier man of the two?" (43).

What makes this scene so "striking," for Tommo, is the contrast between "the polished, splendid Frenchman and the poor, tattooed savage." The "immeasurable distance" between the two is the pre-condition for Tommo's critical reflection. The value he attributes to the King of Tior as a representative of "the nakedness of nature" is apparent only when juxtaposed to the ostentatious dress of the French admiral. In the terms of Tommo's comparison, the admiral represents "the result of long centuries of progressive civilization and refinement, which have gradually converted the mere creature into the semblance of all that is elevated and grand," while the King of Tior, "after a lapse of the same period, has not advanced one step in the career of improvement." Melville's ironic use of the word "semblance" implies that Western progress is a surface phenomenon, a cosmetic effect of the social conventions of dress—the admiral's "richly decorated frock coat," his laced chapeau bras," and the "variety of ribbons and orders" he wears on his chest, these are the substance of civilization.

On recognizing how the irony of the word "semblance" tends to reduce the progressive values of civilization to little more than artificial conventions of dress, one can also begin to see how Tommo's description subtly revalues the fact that the king of Tior "has not advanced one step in the career of improvement."
"Improvement," as represented in the "richly decorated" figure of the Admiral Du Petit Thouars, refers to affectations of style adopted to advance one's "career." Read in its ironic register, the fact that the king of Tior "has not advanced one step in the career of improvement" indicates his resistance to the artificial hierarchy of values that structures Enlightenment "civilization."

Tommo advances here Rousseau's argument in his Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, which claims that civilization, through the institution of property rights, generated a hierarchy of values that has alienated subjects from a utopian state of nature. In Tommo’s description of the French occupation of the glen of Tior, the King of Tior is presented as a Rousseauian figure of man in the state of nature. However, the structural position from which Tommo views this natural state reveals how his use of this Rousseauian line of argument displaces the "real" of Marquesan culture with an image of the absence of the restraints of civilization. In Tommo’s comparative analysis of the King of Tior and the French admiral, the savage is the "happier man of the two" because he represents the absence of the "thousand wants and . . . harassing cares" that follow from progressive civilization. Moreover, Tommo engages in his Rousseauian speculations from a position of leisurely observation that is analogous to the position of the readers that Melville identifies in his preface as "fireside people" in search of vicarious, "thrilling adventure."

Such were the thoughts that arose in my mind as I gazed upon the novel spectacle before me. In truth it was an impressive one, and little likely to be effaced. I can recall even now with vivid distinctness every feature of the scene. The umbrageous shades where the interview took place—the glorious tropical vegetation around—the picturesque grouping of the mingled throng of soldiery and natives—and even the golden-hued bunch of bananas that I held in my hand at the time, and of which I occasionally partook while making the aforesaid philosophical reflections (44).

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One of the reasons why the "impressive scene" is "little likely to be effaced" is because it is a "novel spectacle," an image drawn from other texts. By the 1840's, the "picturesque grouping of the mingled throng of soldiery and natives" that Tommo describes had long been a conventional image in American culture that sought to naturalize the exchange of power between colonist and colonized. It could be modeled, for example, on Edward Hick's painting Peaceable Kingdom, which, in its depiction of William Penn signing with the Delaware tribe the treaty that founded Pennsylvania, shows a similar "mingled throng" of colonists and colonized. In Hick's painting, this moment of colonial exchange is set off behind a foregrounded illustration of Isaiah 11:6, "The wolf shall also dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." implying that the dispossession of the land from its native inhabitants is the fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

At the time Melville was writing Typee, this sort of conventional cultural iconography was being employed to support the politics of Manifest Destiny that informed America's colonial interest in the Pacific. Melville's narrative parodies how conventional images of colonization, such as Hick's Peaceable Kingdom, naturalize the political aggressions of the imperial state by foregrounding Tommo leisurely reclining and casually partaking of a freshly picked bunch of bananas, while watching in the background the colonial dispossession of the islands by the French—who already have been condemned in earlier chapters for their "tyrannical seizure" of Tahiti. Moreover, the image of Tommo engaged in an act of leisurely consumption while engrossed in the spectacle of colonization exposes how travel narratives and narratives of adventure participate in colonial politics by reducing the colonial other to a fetishized image of the exotic that can

be recalled at will to stimulate private fantasy. Tommo can "recall even now with vivid distinctness every feature of the scene," and his subsequent list of exotic, tropical images is meant to produce in the minds of his readers a complex of associative images similar to that complex presented in the opening chapter of the images in his own mind associated with the name "Marquesas." The description of Tommo as a reclining spectator of colonization in the Pacific makes visible the fact that such images of the exotic are written and makes obvious the political effects of this writing of the other. To the extent that this parody dissociates readers from their participation in Tommo's pleasure in the "novel spectacle" of colonization, it can be said to expose how popular narratives underwrite the politics of imperialism.

Melville's text exhibits how Tommo's descriptions of Typee valley displace the "real" of Marquesan culture by repeatedly suggesting that his Rousseauian fantasy of a utopian natural state is symptomatic of his anxiety over being held captive by the Typeeans. This is plainly the case, for example, in chapter XVII, "Comparative Wickedness of Civilized and Unenlightened People." This chapter begins with Tommo recovering from a fever brought on by his unexplained injury to his leg. While ill, he had "lost all knowledge of the regular recurrence of the days of the week, and sunk insensibly into that kind of apathy which ensues after

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113 I have limited my claims for the political effectiveness of Melville's parody of how popular travel narratives interpellate readers into the ideology of imperialism in light of Umberto Eco's "Theory of Sign Production," in *A Theory of Semiotics,* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), pp. 151-298. Eco writes, "A critical semiotic survey of ideological discourses does not eliminate the speaker's pragmatic and material motivations and therefore does not change the world (or the material bases of life). It can only contribute to making them more explicit" (296). In the case of Melville's text, I agree with Eco, that Melville's material and pragmatic motivations to sell his novel leads him to reproduce—even as he parodies—the processes that contruct the "Polynesian" as an image of Western desire. However, I would also suggest that in making these processes more explicit Melville's text does promote change at the level of the material bases of life. In its pedagogical prescriptions—prescriptions that are politically exact when read through the cosmopolitan politics of Melville's appendix—Melville's parody redefines its readers' relation to the interpellative processes that reproduce their relations to the state.
some violent outbreak of despair (143). Tommo's despair follows from his sense that he is entirely at the mercy of the Typeeans. As he recovers and is able to move around the valley again, his outbreak of despair gives way to "an elasticity of mind which placed me beyond the reach of those dismal forebodings to which I had so lately been prey" (143). Although he clearly remains a captive, escorted in all his movements by members of the tribe, Tommo becomes "enraptured" by the tropical scenery and, in a moment that repeats the moment when he gazed at Nukuheva from the deck of the Dolly, imagines his captivity as a release from the oppressive restraints of civilization.

I gave myself up to the passing hour, and if ever disagreeable thoughts arose in my mind, I drove them away. When I looked around the verdant recesses in which I was buried, and gazed up to the summits of the lofty eminence that hemmed me in, I was well disposed to think that I was in the "Happy Valley," and that beyond those heights there was nought but a world of care and anxiety (144).

Tommo's reflections on Typee valley as a Utopian space not unlike the "Happy Valley" described by Johnson in his Rasselas serve as a compromise-formation that blocks the "disagreeable thoughts" of his possible fate at the hands of a tribe known to practice ritual cannibalism. From the position of a leisurely spectator enjoying the scenic views of the valley, Tommo can present his captivity as a release from the "cares and anxieties" of civilization.

This scene of reflection prefigures the functional use of the descriptions of Typee valley that follow in the chapter. In his "comparative analysis of civilized and unenlightened people," Tommo uses again a Rousseauian critique of civilization to present Typee valley as the negation of the anxieties that attend bourgeois life in the West. In his descriptions of the valley, instead of presenting the particulars of Typeean culture, Tommo lists the "evils" of civilization that were not to be found there.

In a primitive state of society, the enjoyments of life, though few and simple, are spread over a great extent, and are unalloyed; but Civilization, for every advantage she imparts, holds a hundred evils in reserve—the
heart burnings, the jealousies, the social rivalries, the family dissensions, and the thousand self-inflicted discomforts of refined life, which make up in units the swelling aggregate of human misery, are unknown among these unsophisticated people. (145).

Melville's critique of Western civilization draws from Rousseau its claim that social discord follows from the institution of property rights. As the language of quantification in the paragraph implies, "the swelling aggregate of human misery" is generated by the hierarchy of value that follows from the unequal distribution of goods in a society based in property rights. Compared to such a Hobbesian civil society the islands are a paradise, since property is "spread over a great extent" and shared communally within the Typeean tribe.

Tommo's descriptions of Typee valley figure Polynesia as a utopian site that represents the absence of the self-alienating effects of capital. It therefore symbolizes the negation of the cares and anxieties of the bourgeoisie, the "fireside people" addressed in the preface.

There were none of those thousand sources of irritation that the ingenuity of civilized man has created to mar his own felicity. There were no foreclosures of mortgages, no protested notes, no bills payable, no debts of honor in Typee; no unreasonable tailors and shoemakers, perversely bent on being paid; no duns of any description; no assault and battery attorneys to foment discord, backing their clients up to a quarrel, and then knocking their heads together; no poor relations everlastinglly occupying the spare bedchamber, and diminishing the elbow room at the family table; no destitute widows with their children starving on the cold charities of the world; no beggars; no debtor's prisons; no proud and hardhearted nabobs in Typee; or to sum up all in one word—no Money! "That root of all evil" was not to be found in the valley (146).

In his descriptions of the valley, it is not so much what Typeean culture is that concerns him, as what it lacks; namely, " those thousand sources of irritation that the ingenuity of civilized man has created to mar his own felicity." By making Typeean culture the negative image of enlightened society—the absence of the ill effects of civilization—, Tommo's Rousseauian critique figures Typeean culture as a site for the production of fantasies beyond the limits of the licit as defined by
Western hegemony. It is a blank screen, a homogenous space for the representation of pleasures not permitted in Western civil society.

Although Tommo repeatedly presents Typeean culture as a Rousseauian state of nature, Melville's narrative just as consistently shows how Marquesan culture disrupts Tommo's fantasy of a utopian space free of the restraints of civilization. For example, in an early chapter Tommo relates an anecdote in which the Queen of Tahiti, having been invited on board the US. naval vessel *United States*, for an official state visit, publicly exposes herself to the crew. Tommo tells this anecdote as part of his strategy to present the Polynesians as still sexually unrestrained, despite their increasing contact with the civilizing influences of colonization. However, as the anecdote develops in its telling, the Tahitian queen's actions violate the fantasy by suggesting her power to assimilate Westerners.

In this anecdote, the French commanders at Tahiti arranged for King Mowanna and his Queen to perform an official state visit to the United States frigate *United States*, in order to demonstrate "the beneficial effects of [French] jurisdiction" in the islands (19). To this end, the French took pains to dress the Queen in "the gaiety of their national taste."

Their appearance certainly was calculated to produce an effect. His majesty was arrayed in a magnificent military uniform, stiff with gold lace and embroidery, while his shaven crown was concealed by a huge *chapeau bras*, waving with ostrich plumes. There was one slight blemish, however, in his appearance. A broad patch of tattooing stretched across his face, in a line with his eyes, making him look as if he wore a huge pair of goggles; and royalty in goggles suggested some ludicrous ideas. But it was in the adornment of his dark-complexioned spouse that the tailors of the fleet had evinced the gaiety of their national taste. She was habited in a gaudy tissue of scarlet cloth, trimmed with yellow silk, which, descending a little below the knees exposed to view her bare legs, embellished with spiral tattooing, and somewhat resembling two miniature Trajan's columns. Upon her head was a fanciful turban of purple velvet, figured with silver sprigs, and surmounted by a tuft of variegated feathers. (20)
In order to suggest the failure of the colonists' efforts to assimilate the Marquesan's into French national culture, this description calls attention to the discrepancy between the royal couple's European clothes and the tattooing of their tribe. The "gaiety of [French] national taste" cannot conceal the inscriptions of Marquesan culture visible in the tattooing around the King's eyes and on the Queen's legs. Since these marks of tribal belonging cannot be erased, since they can be covered only partially and inevitably show through, they function as a metaphor for the inevitable failure of the French efforts to suppress Polynesian culture. As in Melville's description in the appendix of the Hawaiians as only "schooled into seeming submission to the new order of things," while "in reality as depraved and vicious as ever," here, the civilized demeanor of the Tahitians is a "calculated effect" that conceals only temporarily the "true" nature of the Polynesian peoples.

This "true" nature is soon exposed. During her review of the crew, the Queen, attracted by the elaborate tattooing on the chest of an ordinary seaman, turns around, lifts up her dress—representative of the effects of French culture on the natives—and offers herself to the sailor on the spot.

She singled out from their number an old salt, whose bare arms and feet and exposed breast were covered with as many inscriptions in India ink as the lid of an Egyptian sarcophagus. Notwithstanding all the sly hints and remonstrances of the French officers, she immediately approached the man, and pulling further open the bosom of his duck frock, and rolling up the leg of his wide trousers, she gazed with admiration at the bright blue and vermilion pricking thus disclosed to view. She hung over the fellow, caressing him, and expressing her delight in a variety of wild exclamations and gestures. The embarrassment of the polite Gauls at such an unlooked for occurrence may be easily imagined; but picture their consternation when all at once the royal lady, eager to display the hieroglyphics on her own sweet form, bent forward for a moment, and turning sharply around, threw up the skirts of her mantle, and revealed a sight from which the aghast Frenchman retreated precipitately, and tumbling into their boat, fled the scene of so shocking a catastrophe (20-21).

This description of the Queen's self-exposure shows how, in Melville's doubled narrative strategy, exposing the failure of Western efforts at colonization fades
almost seamlessly into the construction of the Marquesan peoples as a figure of unrestrained sexuality. As the climax of the anecdote approaches, the "embarrassment" and "consternation" of "the polite Gauls" serves only as a comic cover for the eroticism of the Queen's burlesque performance. However, that performance itself exceeds the limits of burlesque. For there is an element of the uncanny in it, a recognizable logic which shows that she has not simply abandoned the dictates of Western civilization for some abnormal or irrational action. Instead, she has switched back to operating within the codes of her own culture. Her admiration for "the old salt" follows from her interpretation of his tattoo markings as signs that he is a celebrated warrior of the ship's tribe. The sense of the uncanny stems from the recognition that her actions do express a recognizable cultural logic that, although other than the logic of the West, is nonetheless coherent and meaningful.

What emerges, then, in between the narrative's exposure of the failure of French colonialism and its construction of the Polynesian as a figure of unrestrained sexuality is a glimpse of the "reality" of Marquesan culture. In this moment of slippage between two discursive strategies, the object of the discourse emerges as subject, and the subject suddenly finds itself objectified. I have in mind, of course, not the moment when the Queen hikes up her skirts, but the earlier moment when "pulling further open the bosom of [the sailor's] duck frock, and rolling up the leg of his wide trousers, she gazed with admiration at the bright blue and vermilion pricking thus disclosed to view." The Queen's exposure of the sailor's body comically prefigures her exposure of her own body, but what is disconcerting, what mars the comic element, is the suggestion that the Queen is actively, and accurately, reading the "hieroglyphics" written on the sailor's chest, tattoo markings of tribal belonging or rank, whose meaning Western eyes fail to comprehend. "She hung over the fellow, caressing him, and
expressing her delight in a variety of wild exclamations and gestures." The Queen's reading of the tattoo markings on the sailor's chest inverts the cultural hierarchy that the French colonists would establish by showing that indigenous Marquesan culture continues to govern the islands and even has the power to interpellate Western subjects.

The power of Marquesan culture to assimilate the colonial subject that would penetrate and subdue it poses, perhaps, the greatest threat to Tommo's narrative authority. For, although he must submit to Marquesan culture to the degree necessary to tell his readers what life is like among the Typeeans, the authority of his account is grounded in his ability to maintain an objective, analytic perspective on his subject. The distance to observe, in other words, is a pre-condition for the act of interpellative mastery. The anxious laugh that may attend a reading of the passage in which Mowanna's Queen reads the writing on "the old salts" chest is the uncanny affect generated in the moment when interpellative mastery is undone—when the object of, in this case, "colonial," desire suddenly becomes subject and looks back at the gaze that would transfix it. The is the moment when the narrator's position of interpellative mastery is usurped by the narrated\(^{114}\).

This glimpse of Marquesan cultural autonomy is perhaps the most serious threat to the integrity of Tommo's fantasy of the islands as a Rousseauian state of nature because it collapses the distance that separates civilized from savage, colonist from colonized. The anecdote of the Queen reading the sailor's tattoos suggests that, during moments of cultural exchange, processes of assimilation work in both directions. Similarly, Tommo's interaction with the Typeeans

\(^{114}\) The Queen's encounter with the sailor is an example of the "narrative pragmatics" Jean-François Lyotard describes as the moment of address when the narrated picks up the narrative in a "ruse" that works to turn conquest into a symbiotic relationship. See his Just Gaming, with Jean-Loup Thébaud, translated by Wlad Godzich, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), pp. 41, 51-53, 64-65.
introduces the alterity of Polynesian culture into the homogenous zone of his Rousseauian fantasy.

Tommo's narrative is punctuated, throughout, with moments that disrupt his specular mastery of the Other by exhibiting his failure to comprehend the complexity of Marquesan culture. There is a progression in the novel: as Tommo becomes more deeply enmeshed in Marquesan culture, his attempts to reassert narrative mastery over the text increase. One such strategy is his anthropological categorization of Typeean culture, as in the chapter "A History of a Day as Usually Spent in the Typee Valley." Malini Johar Schueller has argued that in this chapter, the narrator "using the anthropological imperative of control, catalogs, labels, and judges Typee culture without doubt or hesitancy, [and] assert[s] the powers of definition and control." Schueller's point is that, although critical of missionary and imperial colonization of Polynesia, Melville's text nonetheless conveys a "colonial subtext" in that it reproduces the "presumed racial hierarchies" of the West. However, I would suggest that Typee is critical of those hierarchies. By consistently undermining Tommo's authority as narrator, the text exposes how those hierarchies are written constructs of Western culture that do not reflect, but produce their objects of reference. It is for these reasons that the text shows that Tommo's anthropological accounts of Typeean culture recurrently end in bafflement. It is not the transparency or simplicity of Typeean culture that is conveyed by Melville's text, but that culture's complexity and the West's inability to comprehend it.

For example, in chapter XXVII, "The Social Condition and General Character of the Typees," in order to account for the absence of crime in Typee valley, Tommo attributes to the Typeeans the logocentric values of Enlightenment rationality.

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115Malini Johar Schueller, "Indians, Polynesians, and Empire Making: The Case of Herman Melville," in Genealogy and Literature, ed. Quinby.
[The Typeeans] are governed by that sort of tacit common sense law, which, say what they will of the inborn lawlessness of the human race, has its precepts graven on every breast. The grand principles of virtue and honor, however they may be distorted by arbitrary codes, are the same all the world over: and where these principles are concerned, the right or wrong of any action appears the same to the uncultivated as to the enlightened mind. It is to this indwelling, this universally diffused, perception of what is just and noble, that the integrity of the Marquesans in their intercourse with each other is to be attributed. (226).

This universal sense of the just and noble, however, is another "novel spectacle," which, like Tommo's Rousseauian descriptions of the valley, is imported into the text to explain the otherwise inexplicable Marquesan culture.

A few chapters later, the narrative contradicts Tommo's claim that universal principles govern Typeean society with a description of the complex interrelated systems of religion, tattoo markings, and taboo. This is the actual system of law that governs social interaction in the valley, but it is thoroughly incomprehensible to Tommo, and even threatens his own integrity as objective observer.

Although convinced that tattooing was a religious observance, still the nature of the connection between it and the superstitious idolatry of the people was a point on which I could never obtain any information. Like the still more important system of the taboo, it always appeared inexplicable to me.

There is a marked similarity, almost an identity, between the religious institutions of most of the Polynesian islands, and in all exists the mysterious taboo, restricted in its uses to a greater or lesser extent. So strange and complex is this remarkable system, that I have in several cases met with individuals who, after residing for years among the islands of the Pacific, and acquiring a considerable knowledge of the language, nevertheless have been altogether unable to give any satisfactory account of its operations. Situated as I was in the Typee valley, I perceived every hour the effects of this all-controlling power, without in the least comprehending it. Those effects were indeed, widespread and universal, pervading the most important as well as the minutest transactions of life. The savage in short lives in continual observance of its dictates, which guide and control every action of its being. (247)

This account of the taboo as "guid[ing] and control[ling] every action" of the Polynesian's "being" contradicts Tommo's earlier argument that universal "principles of virtue and honor" are the source of harmony in their community. The taboo remains utterly incomprehensible to Tommo, a sign of the irrational. It
is, therefore, the antithesis of the "indwelling [and] universally diffused perception of what is just and noble" cited previously as the basis of the Typeeans' communal society. Moreover, Tommo's subsequent elevation of taboo to a correspondingly universal system of value compensates for the failure of enlightenment principles to comprehend the "strange and complex" workings of Typeean culture. His claim that there is "a marked similarity, almost an identity, between the religious institutions of most of the Polynesian islands, and in all exists the mysterious taboo" (re)presents Polynesian alterity as a homogenous totality. Polynesian culture may be other than Western culture, but, then, it must be absolutely Other, so as to affirm the boundaries between Polynesian and Western cultures. Tommo's insistence that not only he, but several long-term residents of Polynesia, "with considerable knowledge of the language," have been unable to explain the system of taboo figures the taboo as absolutely inexplicable, in order to maintain the integrity of Tommo's narrative authority as the subject presumed to know.

It is especially urgent for Tommo to assert the integrity of his identity, at this point in the narrative, because Typeean culture is threatening to assimilate him. The discussion of taboo, above, occurs immediately after—and in explanation of—Tommo's description of the tribe's tattoo artist, Karky Karky's, repeated attempts to inscribe the marks of tribal belonging on Tommo's face. Karky Karky's attempts to tattoo Tommo's face are perhaps the most obvious example of an autonomous Marquesan culture that threatens to assimilate Western subjects. Like the moment when the Tahitian Queen reads the old sailor's chest, Tommo's encounters with Karky Karky are presented as a moment of interpellative inversion, in which the observing subject suddenly finds itself objectified by the gaze of the subject it would fix as the object of its desire. When he first encounters Karky Karky at work, Tommo is in the midst of one of
his leisurely strolls around the valley in the company of Kory Kory, who both accompanies and polices Tommo during these walks. In these strolls Tommo exercises his privilege as a tourist of Typeean culture, recording any native "peculiarities" he may encounter. He is the flaneur of the valley. It is in this mode that he comes across Karky Karky at work on "a venerable savage, whose tattooing had become somewhat faded with age and needed a few repairs" (243). Appropriately, for this scene of interpellative inversion, "[t]he parts operated upon were the eyelids, where a longitudinal streak, like the one which adorned Kory Kory, crossed the countenance of the victim." This writing across the eyes suggests the complex tangle of practices of writing and seeing that come together in this scene, especially since this is the moment when Tommo begins to shut his eyes to the "reality" of Typeean culture.

When Tommo and Kory Kory come upon Karky Karky, he is "[s]o deeply engaged in his work" that he does not observe their approach, and they "enjoy an unmolested view of the operation" (244). Their specular gaze is soon interrupted, though. Tommo moves to "attract [Karky's] attention," and Karky, thinking he is wanted "in his professional capacity, seized hold of [Tommo] in a paroxysm of delight, and was all eagerness to begin the work" (244). Karky Karky's insistence that he be allowed to practice his artistic skills threatens to invert the specular relation between Tommo's narrative has established between himself and the Typeeans. In the figure of Karky Karky, Typeean culture literally seizes the pen and threatens to write Tommo in terms of its discursive conventions. Karky approaches and begins to trace out tattoo patterns on Tommo's face. "When his forefinger swept across my features, in laying out the borders of those parallel bands which were to encircle my countenance, the flesh fairly crawled upon my bones." Tommo's crawling flesh vividly conveys his
horror at being objectified by the Other, a fear stated explicitly a few paragraphs later, "What an object he would have made of me!" (245).

The threat of objectification by the other is offset, somewhat, by Tommo's realization that facial tattooing signifies tribal inclusion. "A fact which I soon afterward learned augmented my apprehension," he writes, "[t]he whole system of tattooing was, I found, connected with their religion; and it was evident, therefore, that they were resolved to make a convert of me." King Mehevi himself becomes involved and encourages Tommo to go through with the operation.

The only consolation afforded me was a choice of patterns: I was at perfect liberty to have my face spanned by three horizontal bars, after the fashion of my servingman's; or to have as many oblique stripes slanting across it; or if, like a true courtier, I chose to model my style on that of royalty, I might wear a sort of Freemason badge upon my countenance in the shape of a mystic triangle. However, I would have none of these, though the king most earnestly impressed upon my mind that my choice was wholly unrestricted (246).

The king's insistence that Tommo's choice is unrestricted, indicates that not only will the Typeeans welcome Tommo into the tribe, but that they will extend to him all the privileges of tribal aristocracy.

Tribal inclusion, however, would compromise Tommo's specular relation to the Typeeans. If he becomes a full member of the tribe than he will lose his freedom to move freely among them, for in choosing a tattoo pattern, he also would be choosing a caste within the tribe: servant, warrior, etc.116 Submitting to Karky's operations, would fix, permanently, Tommo's identity within the tribe.

Worse than the threat of assimilation, therefore, is the threat of losing the ability to move between cultures. "This incident opened my eyes to a new danger; and I now felt convinced that in some luckless hour I should be disfigured in such a

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116 There is even a suggestion in the text King Mehevi may offer Tommo warrior status because he admires his prowess as a boxer. A later section, "Admiration of the Savages at Beholding a Pugilistic Performance," describes the King's "pleasure" at seeing Tommo "go through the attitudes of a pugilistic encounter" (254).
manner as never more to have the face to return to my countrymen, even should an opportunity offer" (245). If visibly marked by Polynesian culture, Tommo fears, he will himself appear as the Other of Western culture. What he fears most is a condition of cultural hybridity, for that hybrid state will inhibit his ability to cross freely the boundary between "savage" and "civilized."  

In order to stave off the threat of assimilation Tommo elevates that threat to its absolute form: consumption. Soon after he recognizes the Typeeans' interest in assimilating him into the their tribe, Tommo reintroduces into his narrative the threat he faces of possibly being cannibalized by the tribe—despite the fact that he has just demonstrated their interest in integrating him into their community. Within the logic of the narrative, the reality of cannibalism negates the threat of assimilation by making assimilation literal. In the movement from tribal inclusion via ritual tattooing to cannibalism, merging with the Other is refigured as the dismemberment of the Self. For example, returning to the pi-pi where he sleeps, Tommo discovers some members of the tribe gathered around "three mysterious bundles" that had been hanging from the rafters. Pushing his way into the group "with an indescribable desire to penetrate the secret," Tommo discovers the packages to contain three human heads. "Two of the three were heads of islanders; but the third, to my horror, was that of a white man" (259). Tommo's response to this evidence of Typeean ritual cannibalism figures cannibalism as an absolute threat to Tommo's bodily integrity, a fate worse than death.

It was not, however, alone the murder of the stranger that overcame me with gloom. I shuddered at the idea of the subsequent fate his inanimate body might have met with. . . . Was I destined to perish like him—like him, perhaps, to be devoured, and my head to be preserved as a memento of the event. (259)

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117 See Kwame Anthony Appiah "Cosmopolitan Patriots." *Critical Inquiry* 23 (Spring) 617-639, where he argues that discrete national identities are essential to the maintenance of difference.
The threat of dismemberment conveyed by the image of the "head preserved as a memento of the event" converts the prospect of being assimilated into the tribe into an image of an absolute fragmentation of the Self by the Other, and therefore, restores the absolute difference between Polynesian and Western culture, insofar as it suggests that a merger of Polynesian and Western can be accomplished only through an act of literal consumption.

As I have already suggested in my reading of Karky Karky's attempts to tattoo Tommo's face, the threat of assimilation in Tommo's narrative is linked to the activity of writing. Part of his response to this threat, at the level of the narration of events, is the displacement of Typeean cultural autonomy with sensational images drawn from sea narratives and narratives of discovery. His reintroduction of cannibalism marks a return to the sensationalist strategies of the first chapters, which lure readers on with the promise of images to come of "cannibal banquets," "heathenish rites," and "human sacrifices" (17). After seeing the three human heads kept as "mementos" by the tribe, Tommo witnesses, one week later, a group of Typeean warriors returning from a skirmish with the neighboring Happar tribe "bearing the bodies of their slain enemies" (262). After a two-day feast he is not permitted to attend, Tommo then discovers a "curiously carved vessel of wood, of considerable size," which contains "the disordered members of a human skeleton, the bones still fresh with moisture, and with particles of flesh clinging to them here and there" (265). These sensational episodes displace the earlier example of Typeean cultural autonomy by reducing the Typeeans to a stock image of cannibal savagery. In fact, Tommo's discovery of the remains of the cannibal feast is prefaced with a catalogue of "[European] accounts of cannibal tribes," which shows that "we have seldom received the testimony of an eyewitness to the revolting practice" (260). Presented in the context of this collection of narrative accounts of
cannibalism, the leftovers Tommo discovers are studiously ambiguous evidence of cannibalism. Tommo is not an eyewitness of "the revolting practice," and so it remains unclear if he discovered the human remains or concocted them from the images available in other popular accounts of cannibal tribes.

Tommo's (re)presentation of the formerly inviting Typee valley as a site of revolting horror demonstrates the easy convertibility of images of the colonial Other. And as in the earlier scene when Tommo, from his specular position leisurely eating bananas, transforms the scene of colonial exchange between the King of Tior and the French Admiral du Thouars into a fetishized image that can be recalled at will to stimulate private fantasy, here at the end of the novel, Tommo is placed again in a position of specular observation that exposes how the scene of writing converts Typeean culture into a fetishized commodity image. In the penultimate chapter, immediately prior to the account of his dramatic escape from the valley, Tommo presents an image of himself enjoying a mid-morning siesta, his "limbs intertwined" with those of Kory Kory, Fayaway, and other members of his adoptive family in the tribe. This image inverts the earlier image of the King of Tior and the French Admiral du Thuoars amidst a "mingled throng of soldiery and natives." Only now, Tommo is trapped within the scene of fantasy. His limbs intertwined with those of the Typeeans is an image not of sexual license, but of confinement. His situation among the natives reminds him only of "the loved friends who were thousands and thousands of miles from the savage island in which I was held a captive" (270).

Tommo's transposition of an image of the Typeean's acceptance of him into their community into an image of his captivity by savages is followed by a second transposition of images, at the level of narration, that reveals how the undoing of Tommo's affective ties to the Typeeans is accomplished through a weaving together of images that translates the Typeeans into a screen for
Western fantasy. While he contemplates his situation" among the Typeeans "thousands and thousand of miles" from family and friends, Tommo's "melancholy" expression prompts Marheyo, the elder father-figure of his adoptive family, to offer him comfort.

Noticing my melancholy eye fixed upon him, he would raise his head with a gesture expressive of deep commiseration, and then moving towards me slowly would enter on tiptoes, fearful of disturbing the slumbering natives, and taking the fan from my hand, would sit before me, swaying it gently to and fro, and gazing earnestly into my face.

Just beyond the pi-pi, and disposed in a triangle before the entrance of the house, were three magnificent breadfruit trees. At this moment I can recall to my mind their slender shafts, and the graceful inequalities of their bark, on which my eye was accustomed to dwell day after day in the midst of my solitary musings. It is strange how inanimate objects twine themselves into our affections, especially in the hour of affliction. Even now, amidst all the bustle and stir of the proud and busy city in which I am dwelling, the image of those three trees seems to come as vividly before eyes as if they were actually present, and I still feel the soothing quiet pleasure which I then had in watching hour after hour their topmost boughs waving gracefully in the breeze (271).

In the movement between these two paragraphs, Marheyo's face dissolves and is replaced by the image of "three magnificent breadfruit trees . . . disposed in a triangle before the entrance of the house." This transposition of Marheyo's "earnest gaze" of "deep commiseration" with the "inanimate objects," the breadfruit trees, shows how travel narratives and narratives of discovery present the colonial subject as an object of Western desire. Melville's text relates this metonymic conversion of Third World subject into a fetishized image that can be "recall[ed]" at will to stimulate private "pleasure" directly to the scene of writing, which is also the scene of reading. Tommo recalls to mind the image of the breadfruit trees "even now, amidst all the bustle and stir of the proud and busy city in which I am dwelling." The present tense refers both to the time of the production and consumption of the image, the time of writing and the time of reading.

Moreover, by providing a frame in which to view Tommo's escape from Typee valley, the transposition of Marheyo's face with the image of the breadfruit
Norberg, p. 145

trees in the scene of writing indicates how the objectification of the Other via narrative contributes to the suppression of colonized peoples. In the final chapter of the text, during his escape from the valley, Tommo strikes and drives underwater a Typeean warrior in a gesture that symbolizes how Tommo's sensationalism forces under the "real" of Polynesian culture. After he has managed, with the help of Marheyo's intervention, to embark from the beach in the whaleboat commanded by Karakoe, an Oahu Kannaka who has come to purchase Tommo's freedom at the request of a captain in need of trained whalemen, Tommo is still pursued by six or seven Typeeans, who are led by the warrior Mow Mow. Under Mow Mow's direction, these warriors run to a headland that projects out across the mouth of the harbor, and swim out to intercept the boat, apparently with the intention of "grappling the oars, and seizing the gunwale, [to] capsize [it]," so as to have Tommo and crew "entirely at their mercy." The Typeeans warriors succeed in maneuvering themselves into position, and spread themselves in a line across the whaleboat's path, with Mow Mow, "his tomahawk between his teeth, [and] dashing the water before him till it foamed again," closest to the bow (279). This image of Mow Mow as savage, complete with tomahawk between his teeth," prompts Tommo to ward him off from the boat.

He was the nearest to us, and in another instant he would have seized one of the oars. Even at the moment I felt horror at the act I was about to commit; but it was no time for pity or compunction, and with a true aim, and exerting all my strength, I dashed the boat hook at him. It struck him just below the throat, and forced him downwards. I had no time to repeat my blow, but I saw him rise to the surface in the wake of the boat, and never shall I forget the ferocious expression of his countenance (279).

This dramatic escape scene, culminating in Mow Mow's "ferocious expression," completes the effacement of the Typeeans by the figure of the "Polynesian savage." By placing the scene of writing immediately before this literal scene of the "forcing . . . downwards" of the Typeean, the narrative line suggests that the
objectification of the Polynesian peoples via an act of narration precedes, and makes possible, their violent suppression. By placing the scene of writing between these two encounters with the Other, Melville's *Typee* exposes the role that narration plays in the colonization of the Other. What this final sequence of scenes describes is how popular narratives perform a metonymic movement of introjection—the taking of the Other into oneself through an act of narrative interpellation. However, this taking in of the Other threatens the integrity of the Self, as with the threat of tattooing/cannibalism. In order to prevent the violation of the integral Self the Other must be objectified—or commodified. This commodification of the Other as an accessory to the Self is effected by a ritual act of violence against the Other. This ritual act of violence is a casting off of the other as Other, a rejection of a particular person in a gesture that figures that person as the antithesis of the Self; only then can the Other be incorporated into the Self, without threatening the Self's integrity. The act of casting off, the act of objectification, assures the Self that the Other can be possessed fully and, therefore, will signify only as object. It is this sort of containment of the Other that Tommo's narration performs on the Typeeans in the final sequence of scenes that moves us from Marheyo's "earnest gaze" of "deep commiseration" to Mow Mow's "frolicious expression," a movement that passes through the scene of writing, the scene which "twines inanimate objects into our affections."

But the Other, as object of desire, can never be assimilated fully. And this, returns us to the point made in Melville's appendix. Recall that, there, in his attempt to disable the figuration of the Polynesian peoples within the discourse of Christian mission and Manifest Destiny, Melville described the Hawaiian islanders as "depraved and vicious," a description that re-figures the Hawaiians as a screen for Western fantasy, insofar as it represents them as removed from the moral restraints of civilization. In other words, even though the appendix
represents the Hawaiians in a way that effectively disables the dominant representation of the "Polynesian" within the public sphere, it still represents the Hawaiians within the conventional discursive parameters of travel literature. However, the slippage between these two discursive registers—Christian Mission and travel literature—reveals the "true" condition of the Polynesian peoples within the public sphere. This "true" condition, let me stress, is not the reality of Polynesian culture, but the fact that Polynesian culture, in the 1840s, is in circulation in the public sphere of the West only as an object of desire.

Melville's appendix, then, reveals that the public sphere is governed by conditions homologous to the conditions that govern the projection of "the people" within "the time of writing the nation," as described by Homi Bhabha. Within the discursive parameters of the public sphere, the Polynesian peoples—be they "Tahitian," "Typeean," or "Hawaiian"—are neither simply historical persons, nor political entities. Instead, they are also "a complex rhetorical strategy" within a process of signification that includes Methodist missionaries, Catholic priests, the governing bodies of the United States, France, and Great Britain, and the literary imagination of Herman Melville (the list can, and does, go on, even as I write this).\(^{118}\) When we recognize that Melville's characterization of the Hawaiians as "depraved and vicious" is a rhetorical strategy that works to disrupt the narrative of Christian conversion, then the disjuncture between the sign "Hawaiian people" and its referent, the discrete persons collectively designated by that name, becomes apparent. This disjuncture between sign and referent troubles the fixed pedagogical function of "the Polynesian" within the Christian narrative of conversion, but it does so by introducing into that discourse another conventional, Western image of "the Polynesian" as a figure of desire.

Melville’s exposure of the written status of the "Polynesian" in the discourses of Christian mission and Manifest Destiny indicates clearly the difference between his and Emerson’s conception of the relation between literary writing and the public sphere. To the extent that Emerson’s poetic method is grounded in a logocentric conception of Being, his call, in "Circles," for "a new degree of culture" to revolutionize the public sphere advocates the radical refoundation of culture on a set of universal values that would be the source of the social. Melville, in contrast, thinks of literary writing as already situated within the social, within what Ernesto Laclau calls "the Machiavellian situation of a plurality of struggles." The conception of literary writing in Melville’s Typee compliments, then, the conception of literary writing in Emerson’s Conduct of Life in that it represents the act of writing as a closing-off, as well as an the opening-up, of the public sphere. This point needs to be made in qualification of the liberal claim that literature has the power to produce a more open society, by fostering a sympathy for people who come from cultures other than one’s own. That open space of tolerance, Melville’s fiction reminds us, is also a space for the contestation of cultural values. By putting on display the performative dimension of narration, Melville’s fiction situates us, his critics, within that plurality of struggles.

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119 Ernesto Laclau, "Power and Representation."
Conclusion:
What came before was written after

By opposing Melville's narrative strategies to Emerson's poetic method, I have been concerned to suggest an approach to the study of culture that attends to the ethical and political implications of historiography. The difference between Emerson and Melville corresponds to the difference between history conceived as evolutionary idealism and history conceived as creationist materialism. As Slavoj Zizek observes with reference to Lacan's seminar on The Ethic of Psychoanalysis, the ideology of evolutionism "always implies a hidden, disavowed teleology" that figures events as a natural and, therefore, inevitable progression toward some final objective, "which guides the course of history from its very beginning." Materialism, by contrast, is always creationist in that "the final Goal is not inscribed in the beginning; things receive their meaning afterwards; the sudden creation of an Order confers backward signification to the preceding Chaos."\textsuperscript{121}

The materialist position, I would argue, is better suited to the study of cultural production in a democracy because it acknowledges that historical transformation does not take place at the level of a rationally determinable ground of the social. Unlike an evolutionary approach to history, in which change from one structural form of the state to another is explained with reference to a predefined conception of what the state must be, a materialist approach to history recognizes that change is radically contingent on the relations of power among a plurality of social identities and relations. To stick

with Zizek's terms, the materialist position is creationist in that it recognizes the writing of history to be itself a political act that is constitutive of the state, since, in the absence of rationally determinable grounds for the social, it institutes social relations in a primary sense. As Ernesto Laclau writes, "[i]f politics is the ensemble of the decisions taken in an undecidable terrain—that is, a terrain in which power is constitutive—then the social can consist only in the sedimented forms of a power that has blurred the traces of its own contingency."\textsuperscript{122} The blurring of the traces of contingency is the socially constitutive work of an evolutionary history that strives to totalize the field of historical events. A materialist history, by contrast, reads the act of totalization as a sign of the contingency of power, by showing what is presented as historical necessity to be in fact a pragmatic construction. Materialist history, therefore, is ethical as well as political because it makes clear that we ourselves are the agents of historical transformation; not reason, spirit, providence, or whatever the motive force behind an evolutionary history.

Throughout this dissertation, I have privileged Melville's narrative strategies because they are representative of the sort of materialist history advocated by Zizek, Laclau, and others, who are sometimes grouped under the heading "New Left democrats." In the final chapters of \textit{Typee}, for example, Melville's doubled narrative strategy reveals Tommo's history of Polynesian culture to be creationist by showing Tommo systematically (re)presenting the Typeeans he has come to know intimately in the stereotypical terms used to characterize "the Polynesian" in travel narratives and narratives of discovery that he initially used to figure the Marquesas islanders. Melville's text makes visible the retroactive restructuring of his relation to the Typeeans that Tommo must make in order for his story to coincide with the presupposed contents of

\footnote{\textsuperscript{122}Ernesto Laclau, "Power and Representation," p. 295.}
"Polynesia" in the minds of his readers. The final escape scene in which Tommo drives under the Typeean warrior Mow Mow, moreover, symbolizes how those Western presuppositions of the savage Other make licit the violent conquest of non-Western peoples.

In Melville's first novel Typee, therefore, we find already his characteristic strategy for exposing the blurred traces of the contingency of state power. Tommo's relation to the Typeeans parallels exactly the narrator's relation to Bartleby, Captain Amasa Delano's relation to Babo, and Captain Vere's relation to Billy Budd—all of which exemplify precise moments in American history in which the contingency of power is blurred by a naturalized conception of the relations between employer and employee, master and slave, representative of the law and subject of it. In each instance, the ironic register of Melville's text makes apparent how the figure of authority constitutes its power by "reorder[ing] past contingencies, [and] conferring on them the sense of necessities to come."123 This process is most painfully apparent in the relationship between Captain Vere and Billy Budd, in which Vere retroactively constructs Budd's contingent encounter with Claggart as a historical necessity that serves the purpose of presenting Budd as an example to the other crews in the Atlantic of punishment for mutiny. Especially telling is the way in which Melville's text reveals, in its account of the "closeted interview" between condemner and condemned, how Vere convinces not only himself, but Budd, as well, of the historical necessity of his death.

In revealing the contingency of what is presented as historical necessity, Melville's texts demonstrate how the writing of culture is constitutive of the relations of subjects to the state. As such I take his texts as representative of a conception of literary writing that exceeds that posited in the work of Sacvan

Bercovitch, Walter Benn Michaels and Philip Fisher, who to varying degrees view literary writing as reflective of a homogeneous ideology of consensus grounded in a determinative logic of capitalist exchange. Bercovitch, Michaels, and Fisher, when there work is taken together, present an evolutionary history of American culture that is grounded in the values of America's capitalist economy. The limitations of this approach to the study American culture is that it limits the significance of historical transformations to technological advances in productivity, a measure that serves to reinscribe the patriarchal values of the bourgeoisie insofar as a white, male, middle-class continues to dominate the corporate labor force.\textsuperscript{124}

It is not fortuitous, therefore, that I began this dissertation in opposition to that corporate form of hegemony with my reading of Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener, A Story of Wall-Street." For the value of literary culture in a democracy is its power to serve as a space from which to challenge the institutional accumulation of power in the hands of the few, at the expense of the many. The materialist approach to history I have developed through my readings of Melville can reveal the traces of the contingent status of the sedimented forms of capitalist power that the evolutionary history of Bercovitch, Michaels, and Fisher would naturalize. In so doing though, it also reveals that the ideal of pluralist inclusion, of total representability, is an unsustainable illusion. However, as Laclau has observed, if we lose the concept of total representation, we cannot really speak of partial representation either. What we are left with is representation understood as "the pragmatic construction of highly

\textsuperscript{124}This tendency is most clearly apparent in Philip Fisher's introduction to the collection of essays "The New American studies: Essays from Representations, ed. Philip Fisher, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), which also features prominently essays by Bercovitch and Michaels. In his introduction to this volume, Fisher characterizes recent revisionary approaches to the Americanist canon as a new wave of "regionalism" that inevitably will be subsumed by the pluralist tradition in American culture—a tradition grounded, for Fisher, in the capitalist economy of United States. For a telling analysis of Fisher's introduction that has powerfully influenced my dissertation at an early stage see Carolyn Porter's essay "What We Know That We Don't Know," American Literary History, V. 3. pp. 466-525.
overdetermined social identities" in response to changing social circumstances. This is appropriate to a democracy, however, for what we gain in abandoning the utopian promise of America is the freedom to determine our relations to one another.

125 Laclau, p. 296.