

## MELVILLE'S CARNIVAL NEIGHBORHOOD

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Treatments of the relationship between Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville have tended to focus on it as a failed friendship or aborted romance —as inspiring in Melville hopes and longings that Hawthorne could never fulfill. Viewed as a relationship between *neighbors*, not only friends or lovers, and seen through the prism of unconsidered works like Melville's *Israel Potter* (1854-5, 1855) and "The Encantadas" (1854, 1856), the connection might look slightly different. For as neighbors Hawthorne and Melville may have found opportunities for greater freedom, fluidity, and festivity than friendship or love could always offer. Taking place in the carnival neighborhood of their redoubtable friend, Sarah Huyler Morewood, Hawthorne's and Melville's relationship may have explored some of her subversive energies as well.

KEY WORDS: Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, male friendship, carnival, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mikhail Bakhtin, Sarah Morewood, *Israel Potter*, "The Encantadas".

### La vecindad carnalera de Melville

Los estudios sobre la relación entre Nathaniel Hawthorne y Herman Melville han tendido a analizarla como una amistad fallida o como un romance abortado que quizás generó en Melville esperanzas y deseos que Hawthorne simplemente no podía satisfacer. Pero si la entendemos como una relación entre *vecinos* —y no solo entre amigos o amantes—, y la observamos a través de algunas de las obras menos estudiadas de Melville tales como *Israel Potter* (1854-5, 1855) y "Las Encantadas" (1854, 1856), la conexión entre ambos desvela nuevos matices. Pues como vecinos, Hawthorne y Melville pueden haber gozado de oportunidades para una mayor libertad, una mayor fluidez y un espíritu más festivo que la proporcionada por la amistad o el amor. Al desarrollarse en el marco del ambiente carnavalesco potenciado por la vecina y amiga común, la formidable Sarah Huyler Morewood, la relación entre Hawthorne y Melville puede haberse impregnado de algunas de las energías subversivas generadas por esta mujer.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, amistad entre hombres, carnaval, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mikhail Bajtín, Sarah Morewood, *Israel Potter*, "Las Encantadas".

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When the big hearts strike together, the concussion is a little stunning  
 —HERMAN MELVILLE, November 1851

From 1850 to 1863, Herman Melville (1819-91) lived in the Berkshires at his farm Arrowhead, but for many readers the most significant part of that time

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coincided with the presence of his famous neighbor, Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-64), who dwelt nearby from May 1850 to November 1851. Viewing Melville's relationship with Hawthorne in terms of the novels both authors wrote during the peak of their association —Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851) and *Pierre* (1852), and Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance* (1852)— yields a rich harvest of convergences and possible influences. The so-called "Agatha" correspondence, a brief attempt to work together on a story in 1852, has received significant attention. Later works like Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun* (1860) and Melville's *Clarel* (1876) seem to look back at the relationship retrospectively, and no biographer neglects the authors' final meeting on the sand dunes in Liverpool in 1856 or the possibility that Melville's poem "Monody" expresses grief over the loss of Hawthorne, perhaps at his death in 1864. There is little doubt about the immensely creative and likewise troubled resonances of their ambiguous connection. But because of the one-sided nature of their correspondence —i.e. the fact that only Melville's letters survive— and because of the passion of Melville's writing in those letters, many readers and biographers have adopted a view of Melville as ardently pursuing the more shy and withdrawn Hawthorne. Treatments of the relationship, then, have tended to focus on it as a failed friendship or aborted romance —as inspiring in Melville hopes and longings that Hawthorne could never fulfill.<sup>1</sup> Viewed as a relationship between *neighbors*, not only friends or lovers, and seen through the prism of unconsidered works like Melville's *Israel Potter* (1854-5, 1855) and "The Encantadas"(1854, 1856), the connection might look slightly different. For, as neighbors, Hawthorne and Melville may have found opportunities for greater freedom, fluidity, and festivity than friendship or love could always offer. Taking place in the carnival neighborhood of their redoubtable friend, Sarah Huyler Morewood, Hawthorne's and Melville's relationship may have explored some of her subversive energies as well.

Neighbors are not by definition friends: a neighbor is a "boor" (or countryman) who is "nigh," or close (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Yet neighbors embody certain vital traits, even identities that may make them as valuable as friends. For Melville and Hawthorne inventing American authorship during the Young America literary movement, the neighborhood of writers had political as well as cultural meaning.<sup>2</sup> To be an American, Thomas Paine argues in *Common Sense* (1776), is to learn how to be a neighbor. In England, where everyone shares

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<sup>1</sup> On the Melville-Hawthorne relationship, see Argersinger and Person (2008); for biography see Delbanco (2005); Miller (1976); Mellow (1980); Mueller (1996); Parker (1996, 2002); Robertson-Lorant (1996); Wineapple (2001); on *Clarel* and the Melville-Hawthorne relationship, see Bezanson (1991); on the "Agatha" correspondence as collaboration, see Kelley (2008); and on Melville's "Monody" see Hayford (1990).

<sup>2</sup> For a superb reading of the political nuances of the Hawthorne-Melville relationship, see Castiglia (2008).

a common nationality, Englishness implies a given neighborliness. People who are *neighbors* at home only become *English* when they meet elsewhere:

A man born in any town in England divided into parishes, will naturally associate most with his fellow parishioners (because their interests in many cases will be common) and distinguish him by the name of *neighbour*; [...] but if in their foreign excursions they should associate in France, or any other part of *Europe*, their local remembrance would be enlarged into that of *Englishmen*. (Paine, 2004: 64)

Americans, says Paine, coming from all corners of the globe, have to remind themselves that they are neighbors and not members of different nations. The first task of Americans is therefore,

instead of gazing at each other with suspicious or doubtful curiosity, let each of us hold out to his neighbor the hearty hand of friendship, and unite in drawing a line, which, like an act of oblivion, shall bury in forgetfulness every former dissension. Let the names of Whig and Tory be extinct; and let none other be heard among us, than those of *a good citizen, an open and resolute friend, and a virtuous supporter of the RIGHTS of MANKIND, and of the FREE AND INDEPENDANT STATES OF AMERICA*. (Paine, 2004: 93)

For Paine, being a neighbor removes partisan divisions, obliterates crippling national identities, and creates a flexible form of voluntary association. American neighbors support the rights of man and the safety of the American states. When Melville describes the author Nathaniel Hawthorne as “only six miles off, and not three thousand miles away, in England, say” (Melville, 1993: 185) he captures something of Paine’s sense that American neighborliness makes Americans exceptional. If in the nineteenth century the new American nation was creating itself out of a shared American literature, as Benedict Anderson suggests, inventing imagined identities and kinships, it carried in its genes the still-recent experience of fashioning a new kind of neighborhood, one founded not on tradition but on a deliberate acceptance of former aliens, even enemies, and containing its differences through novel, flexible strategies of self-definition (Anderson, 2006: 77).

It is useful to return to this revolutionary view of neighborhood in relation to nineteenth-century Romantic and Transcendentalist definitions of friendship, which typically see neighborhood as the dull alternative to friendship. For Ralph Waldo Emerson in his essay “Friendship” (1841), neighborliness implies not revolutionary acts of association but rather the dutiful, civic-minded *opposite* of true and tender friendship. Speaking of friendship as a “covenant,” Emerson claims that it transcends the common intercourse of neighbors: “I can get

politics, and chat, and neighbourly conveniences from cheaper companions” (Emerson, 1979: 123). The neighbor in Emerson’s *Essays*, Thoreau’s *Walden*, or Hawthorne’s stories tends to be the honest farmer, uncomprehending bystander, or common villager who would never aspire to the “delicious torment” (Emerson, 1979: 117) that Emerson finds in friendship. When friendship is defined as “jets of affection which make a young world for me again” (Emerson, 1979: 114), what is left for neighborliness but the forms of social convention? Visits, meals, conversation —these would seem to be the fruits of neighborhood, especially in Boston, Concord, or Lenox, Massachusetts in the mid-nineteenth century.

Even Emerson does not entirely agree with this view. In his essay he insists that friendship must “have feet, as well as eyes and eloquence”, that friends must perform the offices of neighbors too: “I wish it [friendship] to be a little of a citizen, before it is quite a cherub” (Emerson, 1979: 120-21). Emerson warns against too hastily judging the civic functions of neighborliness as merely prudent and materialistic:

We chide the citizen because he makes love a commodity. It [citizenry] is an exchange of gifts, of useful loans; it is good neighborhood; it watches with the sick; it holds the pall at the funeral; and quite loses sight of the delicacies and nobility of the relation. But though we cannot find the god under this disguise of a sutler, yet, on the other hand, we cannot forgive the poet if he spins his thread too fine, and does not substantiate his romance by the municipal virtues of justice, punctuality, fidelity, and pity. I hate the prostitution of the name of friendship to signify modish and worldly alliances. [...] It is fit for serene days, and graceful gifts, and country rambles, but also for rough roads and hard fare, shipwreck, poverty, and persecution. (Emerson, 1979: 121)

For Emerson, neighborly kindness strengthens and sinews friendship that might otherwise become “too fine” for the “rough roads” of ordinary life. Friendship must include “municipal virtues” in its poetry. From this somewhat grudging description of the benefits of neighborliness —hardly the Christian admonition to love one’s neighbor, hardly a ringing endorsement of the ordinary citizen lacking “the god” of friendship— Emerson nevertheless offers a way to view Melville and Hawthorne as valuable neighbors, not simply friends.

The catalyst for this reading and for the kind of neighborhood Melville found when he visited Lenox in the summer of 1850 was Sarah Huyler Morewood. Almost singlehandedly, she created a form of neighborhood that enabled not simply rides and excursions, sickbed visits and parlor confidences, municipal virtues and proprietary alliances, but also a potentially subversive vision of social communion that might create the grounds for revolutionary forms of relationship. Often considered more as a Melville satellite than a leader

of their small circle, Sarah Morewood may well have provided a foundation for the extraordinary intimacies —letters, confidences, visits, and insights— that Melville and Hawthorne exchanged in her neighborhood.

Sarah Morewood made things happen in Melville's vicinity. From the first when they met as boarders in the Melvill family homestead, later to become the home (christened Broadhall) of Sarah and John Rowland Morewood, she seems to have had a fateful influence on events. On August 3, 1850, she entertained Melville's New York friends, Evert Duyckinck and Cornelius Mathews, as well as Melville and his family by sweeping them off for a fishing party at Pontusac Lake. The day that Hawthorne and Melville first met, August 5, 1850, was one of few such outings that Sarah Morewood did not attend. It began with a climb up Monument Mountain in the company of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Evert Duyckinck, James Fields, and Cornelius Mathews, then moved to a long, boisterous lunch at the home of David Dudley Field, culminated in a visit to the Icy Glen, and ended with tea at novelist Catharine Maria Sedgwick's house, a day of near-constant revelry. On August 7, Mrs. Morewood drove her family to the Shaker barn in Lebanon, where Melville's family joined them (Parker, 1996: 742-750). She then threw a masquerade ball on August 9, which Melville attended dressed as a Turk; Sarah Morewood disguised herself as Aunt Tabitha, the proper elderly dame in Oliver Wendell Holmes's satiric poem (Parker, 1996: 761-762). The next day "that Princess of Pic Nic, Fairy Belt," as Cornelius Mathews called her (qtd. in Parker, 1996: 763) organized a ride to Gulf Road for her family, the Melvilles, and their visitors. She then arranged for the party to visit the Shakers' Sunday services the next day (Parker, 1996: 765).

Against this backdrop of ceaseless festivity, Melville and Hawthorne met and conversed, Melville wrote his extraordinary review-essay "Hawthorne and His Mosses", the two authors' families exchanged visits, and eventually both men wrote some of their most famous and enduring works. It would be too much to say that Sarah Morewood created the conditions for this creative ferment, but her influence on the neighborhood was palpable. An undated letter says simply that "Mr. H. Melville and friends accept, with the most boisterous pleasure Mrs. Morewood's invitation for to night" (Melville, 1993: 537). In an 1853 letter Melville teasingly refers to her as "My Lady Countess", "your Ladyship", "Dear Lady of Southmount", and himself as "Knight of the Hill", (Melville, 1993: 253-255) in token of her peerless skills as hostess. It seems that for Sarah Morewood, festivity was a "boisterous" and unrestrained expression of neighborly feeling.

Sarah Morewood, then, kept her neighbors entertained. But more importantly, she defied convention and embodied a carnivalesque spirit of pleasure and hospitality. In the summer of 1851, she outdid her previous efforts by re-enacting the historic climb of the year before. After several days of rides, parties, and excursions, Mrs. Morewood assembled her family and miscellaneous guests, the Melvilles, and the Duyckinck brothers for a caravan to Saddleback

Mountain and Williamstown. Hawthorne did not attend, having presumably exhausted his sociability in a visit to the Shakers a few days before, but the adventure took the others up the mountain, where they feasted, lit bonfires, and stayed up late, wrapped in buffalo robes and talking (Parker, 1996: 860-861). Unlike the Monument Mountain climb of 1850, the excursion mingled the sexes in what might seem compromising ways, and Sarah Morewood's reputation has suffered since.<sup>3</sup> But for Melville, who participated actively in these events, Morewood's unconventional behavior must have seemed a refreshing instance of what Bakhtin has described as carnival license:

During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part [...] [T]hey [clowns and fools] represented a certain form of life, which was real and ideal at the same time. They stood at the borderline between life and art, in a peculiar mid-zone, as it were [...]. It is a festive life. (Bakhtin, 1968: 7-8)

Sarah Morewood, indulging in badinage all night with men besides her husband, reveling in masquerades and feasts, held undoubted sway over her merry band; and Herman Melville joined in with "boisterous pleasure" (Melville, 1993: 537).

I would submit that Sarah Morewood got away with this behavior, firstly because she was a pious woman who never openly violated propriety,<sup>4</sup> and secondly because she was being neighborly in a way that suited Berkshires residents —many of them new arrivals from New York, settled transiently in the region, and devoted to art and amusement, like the painters Melville describes in his story "The Piazza". Morewood's style was spontaneous, aggressive, inclusive, and unstoppable. She startled the Duyckinck brothers, but to Melville she was "the ever-excellent and beautiful Lady of Paradise" and "Lady of All Delight" (Melville, 1993: 297).

Most intriguingly, one can see elements of Sarah Morewood's bold style in the way Melville addresses Hawthorne in their correspondence. From the first, Melville seems to have balanced the awe he felt in the presence of Nathaniel

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<sup>3</sup> See Duberstein (1998) for a novel speculating on the possibility that Melville and Sarah Morewood were lovers. In *Melville Biography*, Hershel Parker records an exchange between himself and Donald Yannella, who argued for Morewood's salacious interest in President Tyler's brother-in-law; Hershel Parker details Morewood's pursuit of George Duyckinck. See Parker, 2012: 216.

<sup>4</sup> In a letter to Herman's sister Augusta (no date), Sarah Morewood speaks passionately and at length about her views of the Trinity. The letter is in the Gansevoort-Lansing Collection at the New York Public Library.

Hawthorne with a certain brusqueness and insouciance of manner. In a January 1851 letter, Melville tells Hawthorne he is “not to be charmed out of my promised pleasure” by Sophia Hawthorne’s excuses on her husband’s behalf: “the visit (in all its original integrity) must be made”. He promises abundant food and drink and also a cessation of all social rules: “You wont be much bored with punctilios. You may do what you please—say or say *not* what you please. And if you feel any inclination for that sort of thing—you may spend the period of your visit *in bed*, if you like—every hour of your visit”. Melville occasionally expresses himself to other correspondents —Duyckinck, his family— in fairly brash terms, but he seldom invites them to spend all day in bed, nor does he permit himself sentences like these: “Come—no nonsense. If you dont—I will send Constables after you” (Melville, 1993: 176). In his June 1851 letter, he claims “I mean to continue visiting you until you tell me that my visits are both supererogatory and superfluous. With no son of man [especially Hawthorne, it would seem] do I stand upon any etiquette or ceremony” (Melville, 1993: 190). In July, much in the way Sarah Morewood might have charged forward with plans for an outing, he proposes that “you and I—must hit upon some little bit of vagabondism, before Autumn comes” (Melville, 1993: 199). And in the November 1851 letter when he responds to Hawthorne’s “exultation-breeding letter” praising *Moby-Dick* (Melville, 1993: 212), he stoutly declares, “I can’t stop yet” before going on to describe writing “a thousand—a million—billion thoughts, all under the form of a letter to you”, then just as boldly concluding, “I sha’nt always answer your letters, and you may do just as you please” (Melville, 1993: 214).

Perhaps these peremptory statements and others like them speak to a friendship that approaches the ideal of intimacy Emerson describes in his essay. When placed in the context of Melville’s frank and unrestrained language elsewhere in the Melville-Hawthorne correspondence, they do not seem inconsistent with expressions that many readers have seen as romantic, erotic, and deeply felt: “Whence came you, Hawthorne? By what right do you drink from my flagon of life? And when I put it to my lips—lo, they are yours and not mine” (Melville, 1993: 212). My point is not that Melville and Hawthorne did not feel desires commensurate with Melville’s lyrical and erotic diction. But for Melville and Hawthorne as *neighbors* —people who could drop by unexpectedly, rustle up spontaneous meals of cold chicken, ask each other favors, as when Hawthorne requested that Melville buy shoes in Pittsfield for his son Julian—their proximity indeed put “feet as well as eyes and eloquence” into their relationship. Indeed, such neighborliness may have done much to overcome the great social gulfs between two rather awkward men. Sophia Hawthorne captured her husband’s famous reticence and Melville’s somewhat clumsy social skills in a May 1851 letter to her sister: “Nothing pleases me better than to sit & hear this growing man dash his tumultuous waves of thought up against Mr Hawthorne’s great, genial, comprehending silences” (qtd. in Melville, 1993: 184). Given the differences of age and experience between them, it is hard to imagine how

Hawthorne and Melville might have gotten on as well as they did if they had *not* been neighbors.

We will never fully know, of course. But certain passages in Melville's later works speak to the special qualities of spontaneity, brusqueness, serendipity, and sudden intimacy that neighborliness provides. In breaking, sometimes violently, through the boundaries separating friends from lovers, mates from friends, neighborliness creates space for carnival liberation of sexual and emotional desire. In *Israel Potter* we see it most fully developed in Potter's growing intimacy with John Paul Jones. Under ordinary circumstances these two men would never have met. One is a privateer working for the American revolutionaries; the other is caught up in the war, serving briefly and opportunistically as a courier for friends of Benjamin Franklin. They become neighbors in the boarding house of Franklin, who has disposed Potter under guard in a nearby room, and who then receives Jones as his guest. The relationship that evolves between the two men seems to owe more to their accidental proximity than to the ordinary routes of friendship.

Because of the inopportune arrival of French nobles, Franklin throws his revolutionary associates, Israel Potter and John Paul Jones, together into the room next door. The scene that develops in Chapter 11, "Paul Jones in a Reverie", shows the uncommon intimacy that accidental neighborhood provides. Much as with Ishmael and Queequeg at the Spouter Inn, Israel watches from the safety of his bed as Jones prowls like a "savage", a "jaunty barbarian in broad-cloth" (Melville, 1989: 62-63) about the room. Fearing for Jones's discomfort, Potter offers to share: "'Why not sleep together', said Israel, 'see, it is a big bed. Or perhaps you don't fancy your bedfellow, Captain?'" Jones "coolly" replies that on an earlier voyage, "I had for a hammock-mate a full-blooded Congo", but after a joke about the man's hair mingling with the wool of the blanket, he declares, "'it's not because I'm notional at all, but because I don't care to, my lad'" (Melville, 1989: 61-62). Both men remain awake all night, Jones plotting destruction to English ships and Israel admiring Jones's "mysterious tatooinings" and "primeval savageness" (Melville, 1989: 62-63). In no way could the men be called friends, but their sudden proximity has made them intimate in unanticipated ways.

In *Israel Potter* Melville uses the trope of neighborhood for ships as well as men and in ways that explore its subversive possibilities. After a number of adventures in which Potter is impressed into an English vessel and then, encountering Jones at sea, helps to deliver it to the American commander, Potter joins Jones's crew and engages in the historic battle between the *Bon Homme Richard* and the *Serapis*. Melville describes the two ships, locked together in deadly combat, as feuding neighbors: "The two vessels were as two houses, through whose party-wall doors have been cut; one family (the Guelphs) occupying the whole lower story; another family (the Ghibelines) the whole



upper story” (Melville, 1982: 126). A similar metaphor appears in “Benito Cereno,” where Melville describes the Yankee sealer and South American slave ship as joined in an uneasy partnership: “To be brief, the two vessels, thanks to the pilot’s skill, ere long in neighbourly style lay anchored together” (Melville, 1987: 95). In neither case is the neighborhood essentially peaceful or friendly, the “neighbourly style” being one of open warfare in *Israel Potter* and in “Benito Cereno” something like the “slumbering volcano” (Melville, 1987: 68) that Delano perceives on board the *San Dominick*. But the adjoining ships serve as a compelling image of the unsuspected and even hostile relationships between neighbors, kept in their separate but adjacent dwellings; “both house and ship, the one by its walls and blinds, the other by its high bulwarks like ramparts, hoard from view their interiors till the last moment” (Melville, 1987: 50).

Melville develops the notion of intimate yet potentially violent neighborhood in the extraordinary scene in which Israel Potter, cut off from his shipmates in a battle between Jones’s new ship, the *Ariel*, and a strange English vessel, desperately tries to find himself a safe haven among the English crew. His strategy depends upon the assumption of aggressive neighborliness in a number of different venues. At first he tries to pass himself off as a maintopman, taking his place among the sailors as if he were one of them. When they object, then ““This is too bad, maties’ cried Israel, ‘to serve an old top-mate this way. Come, come, you are foolish. Give us a quid’. And, once more, with the utmost sociability, he addressed the sailor next to him”. Rejected from the maintop, he perseveres, knowing that “to escape final detection, Israel must some way get himself recognized as belonging to some one of these bands”. With considerable intrepidity he tries to work himself in among the sailors in the forecabin and other groups, but “with equal ill success. Jealous with the spirit of class, no social circle would receive him”, until he comes to rest among the waisters, the “vilest caste of an armed ship’s company; mere dregs and settlings—sea Pariahs”. Leading them in song, Israel urges them, “let’s be sociable. Spin us a yarn, one of ye. Meantime, rub my back for me, another’, and very confidently he leaned against his neighbor”. Even the men of this “peevish, sottish” band know that such cheer belongs elsewhere, and Israel continues his “endeavor to fraternize” wherever he can. As day dawns, the sailors and officers realize that a strange man has been trying to impose himself on every group on the ship: “He’s out of all reason; out of all men’s knowledge and memories! Why, no one knows him; no one has ever seen him before; no imagination, in the wildest flight of a morbid nightmare, has ever so much as dreamed of him”. But Potter blithely gives a false name, and after a few more humorous exchanges with the officers, gets taken in to the maintop after all, where he wins the respect of the crew by his “general sociability” (Melville, 1982: 133-141).

Potter’s aggressive neighborliness saves him where friendship could not, and his behavior shows precisely the kind of bluff persistence that Sarah Morewood

demonstrated in her relations with her guests and that Melville displayed with Hawthorne. Israel never makes friends with the English. To do so would be to betray his country. But in establishing a neighborhood with them he creates a secure place for himself. No intimacies emerge from these relationships such as those between Sarah Morewood and her neighbors or Melville and Hawthorne. Potter has his temporary closeness with John Paul Jones, who admires his courage and loyalty, but he is separated from him by the chance events of war and never sees him again. An isolato for his whole career, Potter dies alone, forgotten, like the "oldest oak on his native hills" (Melville, 1982: 169).

Israel Potter's experience of neighborhood is thus festive only to the degree that it saves him from death or rejection at the hands of his fellow beings. Melville offers a more explicitly carnival neighborhood in a perhaps unexpected location, the remote, barbaric islands of his set of sketches, "The Encantadas". Being an archipelago, the Galapagos islands form by definition a neighborhood, and Melville somewhat casually speaks of sailors crossing from one isle to "the neighboring ones", or of the fact that "Narborough and Albemarle are neighbors after a quite curious fashion". More particularly in Sketch Sixth, "Barrington Isle and the Buccaneers," he claims a certain distinction for Barrington Isle, as "so unlike its neighbors, that it would hardly seem of kin to them". Yet of all the islands, Barrington Isle is most like a neighborhood, being the only one that provides home to a functioning community instead of the lonesome castaways and arrant rogues of Charles Isle (the Dog-King and his slaves), Norfolk Isle (Hunilla, the grieving widow), and Hood's Isle (Oberlus the hermit). For Barrington Isle was "the resort of that famous wing of the West Indian buccaneers, which, upon their repulse from the Cuban waters, crossing the Isthmus of Darien, ravaged the Pacific side of the Spanish colonies". Here they festively rest from their labors, "say their prayers, enjoy their free-and-easies, count their crackers from the cask, their doubloons from the keg, and measure their silks of Asia with long Toledos for their yard-sticks" (Melville, 1987: 140-150).

Melville's buccaneers live a life of ease and pleasure, founded on violence to be sure but partaking of the refined enjoyments of civilized life. They have left behind not dwellings but "fine old ruins of what had once been symmetric lounges of stone and turf [...] just such a sofa as the poet Gray might have loved to throw himself upon" (Melville, 1987: 145). The presence of these companionable seats leads the narrator to imagine a company of festive philosophers:

Could it be possible, that they robbed and murdered one day, reveled the next, and rested themselves by turning meditative philosophers, rural poets, and seat-builders on the third? Not very improbable, after all. For consider the vacillations of a man. Still, strange as it may seem, I must also abide by the more charitable thought; namely, that among

these adventurers were some gentlemanly, companionable souls, capable of genuine tranquility and virtue. (Melville, 1987: 146)

Such a combination of murderousness and gentlemanliness seems, in this description, the very height of neighborly urbanity.

Melville indicates another aspect of the buccaneering community that makes it a carnivalesque, perhaps violent neighborhood —namely its lack of respect for or interest in property. His epigraphs to Sketch Sixth seem to uphold a view of limitless freedom, such as what Adam enjoyed in Paradise, but read in context they show rather a decided antipathy to civic virtues. The first two passages, from Edmund Spenser's *Mother Hubberds Tale*, appear in the speech of the Ape advising his friend the Fox that they should not concern themselves with learning "some trade or skill", or trying to "tie our selves for certeine yeares / To anie service, or to anie place" (Spenser, 1947: 110), for they plan to live in defiance of such constraints:

Let vs all seruile base subiection scorne;  
 And, as we bee sonnes of the world so wide,  
 Let vs our fathers heritage diuide,  
 And chalenge to our selues our portions dew  
 Of all the patrimonie, which a few  
 Now hold in hugger mugger in their hand [...]  
 Lords of the world; and so will wander free,  
 Where so vs listeth, vncontrol'd of anie. (Spenser, 1947: 110-111)

The Ape and Fox seem to share the Barrington Isle buccaneers' spirit of revolt against property and vocation, but predictably they fail when they try to steal the Lion's skin and rule in his stead; eventually the other animals rise up and dethrone the false conspirators. Spenser's fable carries on in a moralizing strain missing in Sketch Sixth. Melville's buccaneers seem romantic "sonnes of the world so wide", "Lords" of themselves, roaming "Where so us listeth" in utter liberty. They seem to have won a carnival "heritage" that enables them to "wander free", somewhat as Melville describes Hawthorne as doing when he compares him to "judicious, unencumbered travellers in Europe; they cross the frontiers into Eternity with nothing but a carpet-bag" (Melville, 1993: 186).

Similarly the second epigraph, from Beaumont and Fletcher's *Wit Without Money*, seems to speak to a similarly romantic form of license: "How bravely now we live, how jocund, how near the first inheritance, without fears, how free from little troubles!" (Melville, 1987: 144). The echo of Spenser's "heritage" in Beaumont and Fletcher's "first inheritance" underscores the idea of Adam's inheritance of an Edenic world, one of complete freedom from care. Yet Valentine, the play's protagonist, has chosen a life without *financial* responsibilities, and the original line reads "how free from title-troubles", not

“little troubles”. Valentine has alienated his friends by refusing to keep up his estate, by spending all his money and borrowing from others, reneging on his obligations to family and community. Only the love of a wealthy heiress recalls him to his proprietary duties, and like the Ape and the Fox he is punished for his revolt against the duties of ownership.

These epigraphs suggest that the carnival neighborhood of the Encantadas is no Paradise but a community at odds with civil society and perhaps deluded about its own assumptions of radical freedom. Like the nautical neighborhoods of “Benito Cereno” and *Israel Potter* it is violent and unstable as well. Such disturbing characterizations of Melville’s freebooting neighborhoods may cause us to look back at his carnival Berkshires as similarly conflicted and ambiguous. Does Melville’s neighborhood with the Morewoods and Hawthorne enable him to experience unbounded romantic freedom or, on second thought, does it threaten to undermine the foundations of civil society? Melville’s correspondence with Hawthorne has typically and perhaps idealistically been read as an expression of romantic and erotic longing for fulfillment, for the kind of transcendental friendship Emerson described. In one passage, for example, Melville thanks Hawthorne “for your easy-flowing long letter (received yesterday) which flowed through me, and refreshed all my meadows, as the Housatonic—opposite me—does in reality” (Melville, 1993: 199). In “Hawthorne and His Mosses” he claims that “Hawthorne has dropped germinous seeds into my soul. He expands and deepens down, the more I contemplate him; and further, and further, shoots his strong New-England roots into the hot soil of my Southern soul” (Melville, 1987: 250). The November 1851 letter describes a complete physical and spiritual surrender: “But I felt pantheistic then—your heart beat in my ribs and mine in yours, and both in God’s” (Melville, 1993: 212). Such passages seem to borrow their erotic intensity from Emerson’s supposed letter to a friend: “If I was sure of thee, sure of thy capacity, sure to match my mood with thine, I should never think again of trifles in relation to thy comings and goings. I am not very wise; my moods are quite attainable; [...] and so thou art to me a delicious torment. Thine ever, or never” (Emerson, 1979: 117).

Yet the extravagance of Melville’s rhetoric in his letters to Hawthorne also suggests a certain violence, like the “ferocious piratical revolt” (Melville, 1987: 99) of the slaves in “Benito Cereno”. And if we remove this violence from our picture of the Melville-Hawthorne relationship and ignore its implications, like those hapless souls in Hackluyt’s passage quoted in the “Etymology” of *Moby-Dick*, those who in writing “Whale” leave out “the letter H”, we may thereby “deliver that which is not true” (Melville, 1988: xv). In his November 1851 letter to Hawthorne, Melville says that, “when the big hearts strike together, the concussion is a little stunning” (Melville, 1993: 213). Bakhtin speaks of the violence of carnival humor. Along with a “utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance”, carnival times also release the “grotesque

realism” of the licentious body (Bakhtin, 1968: 9-18). Melville’s statement about the “concussion” between himself and Hawthorne seems to acknowledge the deeper complexity of their relationship and to suggest that the term “friendship” cannot include all its carnival dimensions.

“Neighbor”, admittedly, does not fully do the trick either. But if we imagine the Melville-Hawthorne relationship not only as friendship or love affair gone awry but also as neighborliness exploring its subversive, even violent potential, then we may avoid the error of delivering that which is not true. We do not know in the end how Melville and Hawthorne thought about their relationship, do not even know that Melville and Hawthorne called themselves friends. In a letter written after Hawthorne’s death, Melville’s mother Maria claimed that, “Herman was much attached to him & will mourn his loss” (qtd. in Parker 2002: 576). Her somewhat ambiguous language leaves room for a term more nuanced than “friend” or even, as applied to Ishmael and Queequeg, “bosom friend” —but what? We do know that instead of signing his November 1851 letter to Hawthorne “H. Melville,” as Melville typically did for anyone outside his family, he wrote simply “Herman”.

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