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Active Agencies of Compromise

Hawthorne and the European Limits of the American Romance

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Abstract

Taking the cue from some of Melville's most intense epistolary exchanges with Hawthorne, this essay highlights the two writers' different codes of heroics to revisit "the heroism of compromise" in *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables*. It argues that this version of cultural heroism – allegedly, a unique aesthetic and political achievement of Hawthorne's romances (Bercovitch 1993; 1991; 1988) – may in fact be reassessed within the broader debate on the novel as a romantic form of art in 19th-century aesthetics and genre theory. In Hegel's terms, Hawthorne may be said to have dramatized the common "collisions" of the "novel in the modern sense," so as to adopt and put the typical solution of the classical *Bildungsroman* ("the education of the individual in the actual world" and his/her reconcilement with "the order of things") at the service of the American ideology. By so doing, he hybridizes his American romances with all the limits and aporias of the European novel. He transforms his New-World modern knights into Old-World-like middle-class conformists, exposing his plot resolutions to a contentious dispute over the balance of aesthetic gains and ideological losses in literature as cultural work.

Knowing you persuades me more than the Bible of our immortality.

(Herman Melville, "To Nathaniel Hawthorne," [17?] November 1851)

[Melville] has a very high and noble nature, and better worth immortality than most of us.

(Nathaniel Hawthorne, *English Notebooks*, 20 November 1856)

From September 1850 through mid-November 1851, Hawthorne and Melville were near neighbours in the Berkshires, in Western Massachusetts. Their respective residences a few miles off in Lenox and Pittsfield, they visited and got together with their growing families; corresponded more or less regularly and exchanged books; shared thoughts and feelings; had

intimations of immortality.[1]

At the end of June 1851, restored to a certain calmness and self-possession of mind and invited by "the clear air and open window," Melville wrote to Hawthorne what "in some respects" he felt to be, paradoxically, "rather a crazy letter." He envisioned himself, his friend, "and some others," as heroes "forming a chain of God's posts round the world," bound "to encounter" and confront "certain crotchetty and over doleful chimaeras" and "fight them the best way" they could. If in Melville's mind those mythical monsters were metaphors of the books they were grappling with in their creative struggles (a "chimaera" being the figuration of an "unreal creature of the imagination" [OED]), then they, as writers/fighters, were the literary geniuses positioned at vanguard stations – forefront men, chosen of God, standing not only on a still (literary) uncharted national soil ("the boundless, trackless, but still glorious wild wilderness through which these outposts run"), but also on the larger world-historical plane of universal literature (Melville 1993, 195-196). "For genius, all over the world," Melville had proclaimed less than a year before, in his enthusiastic review-essay "Hawthorne and His Mosses," "stands hand in hand, and one shock of recognition runs the whole circle round" (1987, 249).

Recalling Hawthorne's last visit to Pittsfield, Melville looked forward to going to Lenox soon in return. "When I am quite free of my present engagements," he promised his fellow writer and fighter, "I am going to treat myself to a ride and a visit to you. Have ready a bottle of brandy, because I always feel like drinking that heroic drink when we talk ontological heroics together" (1993, 196). Still hard at work on his "Whale," Melville relished in advance the pleasure of his heroic exchanges with Hawthorne, whose latest creative wrestle had just been crowned with the success of his second romance, *The House of the Seven Gables*. Melville had been given a copy of the book when he had visited the Hawthornes in Lenox, on April 11, 1851. A week later or so, he acknowledged his fruition in a most intense letter, a memorable one for both his creative misreading of Hawthorne's art and the exposition of his own heroic ideal. Building on Melville's comments on *The House of the Seven Gables*, this essay highlights the two writers' different codes of heroics to propose a reassessment of Hawthorne's versions of cultural heroism in his romances within the broader debate on the novel as a romantic form of art in 19th-century aesthetics and genre theory.

1. Fellow writers and fighters

Melville's letter of mid-April 1851, no less significantly than his 1850 piece on *Mosses from an Old Manse*, may be read as a critical response in its own right – one which starts as a friendly

[1] The Melville-Hawthorne relationship and friendship in the Berkshires has been largely explored through the decades in many different and various studies, among which, more recently, Hage 2014; Argersinger and Person 2008.

appraisal of Hawthorne's second romance to then expand into a perilous voyage into the heart of darkness. "You see, I began with a little criticism extracted for your benefit from the 'Pittsfield Secret Review,'" Melville states at the end of his letter, "and here I have landed in Africa" (1993, 187).

To begin with, Melville pictures Hawthorne as an enigmatic author-hero conflated with his own work – "a dark little black-letter volume in golden clasps, entitled 'Hawthorne: A Problem.'" Then he expresses his "exhilaration and exultation," elated by the fact "that the architect of the Gables" is an American writer. But then, after a few remarks about the general "interest" and a couple of comments on some of "the deeper passages," he moves away from the plot and any further expression of national pride, turning his letter into a philosophical reflection:

> There is a certain tragic phase of humanity which, in our opinion, was never more powerfully embodied than by Hawthorne. We mean the tragicalness of human thought in its own unbiassed, native, and profounder workings. We think that into no recorded mind has the intense feeling of the visable truth ever entered more deeply than into this man's. By visable truth, we mean 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 him, – the man who, like Russia or the British Empire, declares himself a sovereign nature (in himself) amid the powers of heaven, hell, and earth. He may perish; but so long as he exists he insists upon treating with all Powers upon an equal basis. (1993, 186)

This may be read as a compendium of romantic aesthetics and metaphysics in its own right.[2] Melville here describes an unmediated phenomenological relationship between subject and object – an "encounter," again, at the precise moment in which "things" (the object) emerge and stand out in front of "man" (the subject) who, in turn, is able to perceive them in their "absolute condition," namely as beings in their own right. If man's capability of "apprehension" is what Melville calls "the feeling of the visable truth" (despite the much-debated misspelling of the adjective [Hayford 1959]), then the "absolute condition" of "things" is what, a few lines later, he styles "this *Being* of the matter" (italicizing the no less disputed word at stake in the sentence, with its uppercased initial [Davis and Gilman 1960, 125, n. 6; Marovitz 1982]). His description of this visual experience as a perceptual-cognitive process is however problematic because the "present things" carry a force which seems to have a double value, simultaneously intrinsic and instrumental, for his aesthetics and metaphysics of the heroic character (and of the heroic writer).

Melville endows the object with an uncanny autonomy, a latent ontological potency, which constitutes its *intrinsic* value. Yet this value is also *instrumental* because it is extrinsically

[2] Melville's philosophical leanings have also been a subject of specific and different studies through the decades, among which, more recently, Arsić and Evans 2017; McCall and Nurmi 2017.

employed for something else's sake. That is to say, it works as a means to an end, namely to exalt the self-sufficiency of the subject, both in his heroic power and in his not unlikely, yet still heroic, impotence in the unequal contest. On one side, through their intrinsic objective thrust, the "present things" are agencies in and by themselves, powerful and somehow menacing. It is they that "strike the eye" and violently invade man's field of vision. On the other side, Melville emphasizes their force to measure the counterforce of the subject and magnify his heroic stature, whatever the final outcome. If the "present things" generally seem to endanger those who meet and face them, then only the brave – "the man who fears them not, though they do their worst to him" – does qualify to enter into the cognitive interaction. As in his allegory of the "encounter" and "fight" between the men of genius and their chimaeras, here Melville propounds an ideal of the self-centered individual as powerful and inflexible a personality as to be able to determine his own destiny, for better or worse. This is a self-declared "sovereign nature (in himself)," his absolute and imperial existence Miltonically taken, "amid the powers of heaven, hell, and earth," in the universal play of cosmic realms.

Allegedly "embodied" by Hawthorne, this supreme heroic ideal is based not only on man's ability to apprehend the entities of the world in their self-disclosing objectivity, but also on the hero's capability of withstanding their threatening and potentially destructive force (an "outrageous strength," to borrow Ahab's indignant words [Melville 1988, 164]), without any anxiety of failures or dangerous consequences. Melville does, in fact, heroically contemplate even the greatest of calamities for man, namely self-destruction. If the phenomenology of "the visable truth" leads man down to "the little lower layer" of ontology (in Ahab's words again [1988, 164]), then the daring experience of facing the being of beings ("this *Being* of the matter") *may* indeed turn out to be a fatal one. "[T]here lies the knot with which we choke ourselves," Melville states in his letter. "As soon as you say *Me*, a *God*, a *Nature*, so soon you jump off from your stool and hang from the beam" (1993, 186). The three words in italics, with uppercased initials, recall the post-Kantian trinity of Carlyle's and Emerson's philosophy of life and nature, though their spiritualist effects are here reversed.

The possible impediment to access to the "absolute condition of present things" would not, however, diminish man's fearless existence. "He may perish," Melville admits; "but so long as he exists," he adds, "he insists upon treating with all Powers upon an equal basis." In the ability to enter into the agon, soldier on, and hold ground – even to the verge of the extremest penalty – lies the "sovereignty" of the self, the existential greatness of the heroic individual. And this individual is Melville projected into the Hawthorne model he himself fashions, as it were, in his own image and likeness. "If any of those other Powers choose to withhold certain secrets," he continues, "let them; that does not impair my sovereignty in myself; that does not make me tributary" (1993, 186). The repetition modifies the basic assumption symptomatically shifting

the personal pronouns and adjectives ("him"/"himself"/"in himself," which then become "my"/"me"/"in myself"). The other is the self, and vice versa – a typical transfer in Melville's most intimate letters to Hawthorne. Thus he moves on, with his fellow traveller, along the untrodden paths of antagonism and nay-saying:

> 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 travellers in Europe; they cross the frontiers into Eternity with nothing but a carpet-bag, – that is to say, the Ego. (1993, 186)

With a thunderous Hawthorne and some other deniers and refusers (supposedly the same ones "forming a chain of God's posts round the world"), Melville pursues his heroic ideal of the self-subsistent artist – an adversarial individual, allegedly detached from the American context, eased of his communal obligations and cultural responsibilities, bound to "cross the frontiers into Eternity" with his unburdened "Ego," and nothing else.

2. Ontological heroics and liberal heroics

It was together with such a (fancied) fellow writer/fighter and traveller that Melville wanted to pursue his "ontological heroics." Besides the pun on "heroics," i.e., the extravagant language, which they used to indulge in, during their heady conversations (heightened by that "heroic drink," "brandy"), Melville was projecting onto Hawthorne and "all of this author's writings" a vision of heroism that he himself was actually conceiving as an American author presently at work for and against the culture.

Countercultural Melville and cultural Hawthorne diverged the most, paradoxically, at the very same moment of their closest relationship and mutual admiration. While Melville was envisioning a shared "ontological heroics," opening out to what at the end of the same letter of mid-April 1851 he called "the last stages of metaphysics," Hawthorne's position was, in fact, settling more and more firmly on what Bercovitch has defined "a code of liberal heroics" (1993, 206; 1991, 17). "Liberal heroics": this is a system whose cultural tenets and values – in opposition to "conflict and change," "isolation and schism," "marginality" and "dissent," though deeply felt and experienced by his protagonists – are "socialization" and "domestication," "compromise" and "reconciliation," "social order" and "historical continuity" (1991, xvi; 1; 15; 29; xii; 11; 16; 15; 1). It is a design by which the author asks his heroes and heroines not only to conform, but also to consent. As Bercovitch states: "Anyone can submit; the socialized believe." Hester Prynne is, supposedly, the example par excellence of this strategy. "She chooses to make herself not only an object of the law," Bercovitch points out, "but more largely an agent of the

law." This is a bond that "reconstitutes Hester herself, *as a marginal dissenter*, into an exemplum of historical continuity." The oppositional stance of the self-reliant heroine builds on "the politics of either/or," while the "symbolic method" of her author, Bercovitch argues, "requires the politics of both/and" (1991, xiii; 3; 9).

Bercovitch situates this "code of liberal heroics" within the larger and yet specific context of cultural and historical continuity, as sophisticatedly as well as somehow brutally outlined by the dominant historiography and political oratory of antebellum America. "Within that cultural symbology, the ironic development from theocracy to democracy," Bercovitch maintains, "is a persistent theme in Hawthorne's fiction" (1991, 38.) This is represented, he argues, virtually in all of Hawthorne's writings, from his early sketches and tales to his later novels and children stories. Bercovitch's influential critical and ideological view has been widely acclaimed and also challenged in Hawthorne studies.[3] Nevertheless, this distinctive version of cultural heroism can be recapitalized to reexplore and reassess Hawthorne's narrative strategy of heroic socialization and domestication. In fact, his "heroism of compromise" (Bercovitch 1988, 2), I believe, can be further (and fruitfully) complicated and elaborated – namely, questioned and delved into, through its own contradictions and impasses – if re-viewed within the larger context of the modern novel as a literary kind in its own right.

3. Heroic disjunctions and authorial constrictions

Since many emblematic examples can indeed be drawn from Hawthorne's sketches and tales, I briefly focus on "Wakefield," one of his most haunting and representative stories of the mid-1830s. Set in 18th-century London, this tale of abandonment and return opens with a prologue, in which a twice-told summary reveals all there is to know about the story. After "twenty years" of inexplicable "self-banishment," spent "in the next street to his own house," the reader is told, the husband "entered the door one evening, quietly, as from a day's absence, and became a loving spouse till death." An allegedly true "fact" (as it actually was), this "instance" of "marital delinquency" is explicitly defined a "folly" (Hawthorne 1982, 290). This is *the* "folly" of disjunction par excellence – one which strikes at the ethical foundations of human life as accepted and shared in the collective order of society. In Wakefield's allegorical case, the abdication is a temporary fulfillment of a selfish and masculine desire to suspend, if not yet dissolve, one's affective commitments and communal bonds not only in the sphere of the family, but also in the wider and organized "systems" of a connected world, as the closure of the story typologically shows:

[3] More or less sharp and convincing disagreements with Bercovitch's view and work, especially in the decades at the turn of the century, can be found, among others, in Fluck 2009; Ullén 2006; Buell 2005; Rowe 2005; Person 2001; Thomas 2001; Diffee 1996; Schweitzer 1994.

> We will not follow our friend across the threshold. He has left us much food for thought, a portion of which shall lend its wisdom to a moral, and be shaped into a figure. Amid the seeming confusion of our mysterious world, individuals are so nicely adjusted to a system, and systems to one another, and to a whole, that, by stepping aside for a moment, a man exposes himself to a fearful risk of losing his place forever. Like Wakefield, he may become, as it were, the Outcast of the Universe. (1982, 298)

Wakefield's restoration to "his place" is in accord with Hawthorne's overall strategy of heroic (re)socialization. The case of the London husband thus stands out as one of the earliest and most compelling examples of a deliberate construction *and* constriction of the fictional character. This is a defiant and misguided hero/ine whom Hawthorne typifies through a negative and antagonistic evolution and then, through a more or less gradual inversion, redirects along a path which is very much akin to the course articulated by the dominant view of progress, not only forcing the dissenter to accept common forms of compromise, but also converting him/her (and this is Bercovitch's point) to voluntarily believe in them. This peculiar version of cultural heroism is supposed to harness the schismatic impulses of an unrestrained and socially unstructured individualism. At the same time, it provides an instructive model of ideological containment of the rifts and conflicts (sexual, racial, social, political) of antebellum America. This code of heroics, as Bercovitch contends, is "most fully and subtly" dramatized in *The Scarlet Letter*, and "most explicitly" evident in *The House of the Seven Gables* where "the socialization of Hester Prynne is replayed in a 'sunny' mood as the deradicalization of the artist Holgrave" (1991, 38).

4. Threshold crossings

Wakefield may strike the imagination more as a modern deviant individual than as "a loving spouse till death." Yet, although Hawthorne does not allow his narrator and his readers, after all, to "follow" him "across the threshold," the hero is ultimately transformed into an example of moral teaching at exactly the moment in which he is about to resume (however inexplicably) his place at home. In Hawthorne's first romance, Hester, too, may strike the reader more for her deviance, transgressiveness, and resistance, despite Hawthorne's "relentless critical commentary on her every misstep into independence." Yet, she too, the self-righteous and "secret" dissident among the Puritans "who most fully appeals to our subjectivity" (Bercovitch 1991, 8; 72), is bound to return home after a long transformative process, a woman in her maturity. In addition, quite differently from the London husband, the Boston woman is allowed to be followed across the threshold of her New England cottage, where the narrator gives the reader quite an altered view from the one offered at the highest point of her radicalism.

In his second romance, Hawthorne's narrative move is even more provoking and astounding. The radical hero is already home. Holgrave has crossed the threshold before the beginning of the novel. He is introduced as "a certain respectable and orderly young man, an artist in the daguerreotype line, who, for about three months, had been a lodger in a remote gable, – quite a house by itself, indeed." (Hawthorne 1983, 377). This is a master-stroke by the author – and "a fine stroke" for the reader, Melville says with a pun in the "P.S." of his April 1851 letter to Hawthorne (1993, 187) – as one discovers the young hero's full identity only at the end of the book. This little house within the house, where the young man boards at present, stands on "the same spot of ground" of the ancient place of his own ancestors – a symbolic place of dispossession and at once real estate in its sheerest materiality – the property from which the legitimate owner and his deprived descendants, down to Holgrave himself, have been uprooted.

Though distinctively different, these homecomings are meant to seal each narrative and make it whole, so to speak, as the same type of story. Namely, "the story of a stranger who rejoins the community by compromising for principle," as Bercovitch simply puts it for the heroine of *The Scarlet Letter*, though this is a "resolution," he adds, which "has far-reaching implications about the symbolic structures of the American ideology" (1991, 30-31).

The point, however, is to see to what extent this *resolution* in Hawthorne's strategy of heroic (re)socialization, while specifically American from a symbolic, cultural and ideological perspective, may be compared to (if not even conflated with) the main *solution* to the plight of the romantic hero/ine as a radical and adversarial individual in the modern novel. This point, at least as a theoretical premise, implies the assumption that the major and most influential answer to that question may be taken to be, according to Hegel's *Aesthetics,* "the education of the individual" in the actual world (1975, vol. I, 593). And this assumption implies, in turn, that this process of "education" (*Erziehung* is Hegel's specific word),[4] or re-education (one might say for those gone further astray), may take place along different roads and eventuate in very different outcomes in relation to a narrative model – the (allegedly) classical *Bildungsroman* – which has elected the heroism of compromise as the central tenet of its ideology.[5]

[4] When I refer to the English edition of the *Aesthetics* (Hegel 1975), I may happen to silently modify some words or brief passages of the existent translation for specific terminological reasons (as commonly done by scholars using it in English), while original references or interpolations are to the German edition (Hegel 1939) where they can be easily traced.

[5] In fact a concentrated assessment of the "Roman," revolving around the central notions of *Erziehung* and *Lehrjahre* (and, implicitly, the related ones of *Entwicklung* and *Bildung*, then becoming dominant) Hegel's specific remarks stimulated different and challenging developments, further elaborations and in-depth analyses, from Schleiermacher and Dilthey to Lukács and Bakhtin, through countless theoretical and literary studies of modern narrative by the most diverse critics and scholars in the 20th century and beyond – a body of work to which it would be hard to do justice in a single essay.

5. "In the modern sense": novelistic narrative and the middle-class epic

Hegel's observations on the novel occur in two different "Parts" of his *Aesthetics*. In the first instance (Part II, Section III, Chapter III), he deals with "The Formal Independence of Individual Characters." He addresses the "subjective infinity of man in himself" (1975, vol. I, 576) in the development of romantic forms and modes of representations – the romantic stage ranging, in his comprehensive philosophical history of the aesthetic, from medieval Christianity to the present art of his time (Symonds 2020, 57 and following). The type of narrative which he styles "the *novelistic*" ("das *Romanhafte*") "in the modern sense of the word" – a form preceded by "the knightly and pastoral romances" – climaxes this process, marking "the end of the romantic form of art" itself. If the "novelistic" is "chivalry" revived and taken seriously again, then its new "heroes" may be viewed as "modern knights" who live, move, and act, quite differently from their predecessors, in the "contingency of [an] external existence [which] has been transformed into a firm and secure order of civil society and the state" (Hegel 1975, vol. I, 592).

This difference is at the heart of the formal complexity of modern narrative, as the philosopher also shows in his additional comments on "the *novel*" ("*Roman*"), always intended, as he pinpoints again, "in the modern sense." In this second instance (Part III, Section III, Chapter III), Hegel discusses epic poetry as a specific genre at length. Then, in a single compelling one-page paragraph, his sweeping picture of the epic world and its forms becomes a foil to his view of the novel as "the modern *middle-class* epic" ("die moderne *bürgerliche* Epopöe") (Hegel 1975, vol. II, 1092). Hegel adopted this definition from novelist and philosopher Johann Karl Wezel (Pirholt 2012, 27-28; Bode 2011, 47-48) who in 1780 theorized "what the novel should actually be," namely "the true middle-class epic" ("die wahre bürgerliche Epopee"), if writers wanted to bring this new type of narrative "out of contempt and […] to perfection" as a "literary kind." Wezel's comparisons with other forms of writing such as "biography," "comedy" and "the heroic poem," as well as binary oppositions such as "poetic" vs. "human," "ideal" vs. "real" (Wezel 1780, III-VII, my translation) are also relevant to Hegel's later view which contextualized all these premises in a broader historical and formal framework.

Drawing from Hegel's two sets of pronouncements, the novel can thus be more fully envisioned as to its spirit and general situation, its specific action and heroic characterization. In addition, I believe, it can be further appreciated for the possible directions and multiple plot resolutions which this type of narrative not only already included in its form (as Hegel explains) but was also bound to breed and develop as an evolving genre.

As far as the general situation is concerned, the difference between the novel and former types of narratives, whether romantic or epic, is brought about by the same kind of transformation which affected the pristine world-condition, an (allegedly) original *poetic*

condition, lost and replaced by an increasingly *prosaic* system. This is "the prose of the world" ("die Prosa der Welt"), as Hegel declares earlier in his work, a statement which he reformulates and uses (both for the "Romanhafte" and the "Roman") as "course of the world," "order of things," "order of the world" (1975, vol. I, 150; 593; vol. II, 1092).

This prosaic metamorphosis also altered the characters and their action. "As individuals with their subjective ends" and "ideals," their "subjective wishes and demands," Hegel points out, these "modern knights" (usually "young people") "stand opposed" to the objective and organized system of reality, which in turn "cruelly oppose[s]" them with its "inflexible firmness" and all its inevitable "barriers" (1975, vol. I, 592-593). Thus Hegel envisages the new heroics of the novelistic romantic narrative through this reciprocal "opposition" ("Gegensatz"), a contrast which he reiterates in his description of the novel as middle-class epic. "Consequently," he maintains, "one of the commonest and, for the novel, most appropriate, collisions [*Kollisionen*] is the conflict [*Konflikt*] between the poetry of the heart and the opposing prose of circumstances and the accidents of external situations" (1975, vol. II, 1092).

Whereas antagonism constitutes the general paradigm, the plot resolution that Hegel emphasizes in his passage on the "Romanhafte" (with Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehjahre* allegedly in his mind) is the main outcome of what has come to be interpreted, for better or worse, as the model of a classical *Bildungsroman*:

> But in the modern world these fights are nothing more than 'apprenticeship' [*Lehrjahre*], the education of the individual [*die Erziehung des Individuums*] into the realities [*Wirklichkeit*] of the present, and thereby they acquire their true significance. For the end of such apprenticeship [*Lehrjahre*] consists in this, that the subject sows his wild oats, builds himself with his wishes and opinions into harmony with subsisting relationships and their rationality, enters the concatenation of the world [*Verkettung der Welt*] and acquires for himself an appropriate attitude to it. (1975, vol. I, 593)

The philosopher here describes "the end of such apprenticeship" as a positive accomplishment. He endorses the heroism of compromises as a constructive and rewarding agreement, suitable to both the (once) rebellious individual and the community of belonging, in a world which is real, rational and interconnected, and which the hero is bound to enter harmoniously. This is what he mainly reiterates in the other passage on the "Roman." The "conflict" ("*Zwiespalt*"), he argues, "finds its settlement" when the characters,

> usually opposed to the customary order of the world [*Weltordnung*], on one side, learn to recognize in it the real and the substantial, reconcile themselves with their relations, and enter them effectively; while, on the other, strip what they do and achieve of the prosaic form, and therefore replace the prose before found with a reality made similar and congenial to beauty and art. (1975, vol. II, 1092-1093)

The "settlement" of the contrast here occurs successfully on a common ground, where to "reconcile" oneself means to reach a compromise, and to compromise means to balance and blend the social productive attitude (required by the outer world) with a personal aesthetic penchant (cultivated by the individual's inner sensibility). This is the cultural and ideological aim of the *Bildungsroman*. If the aesthetic bent prevails, so as to make "reality" more and more "similar and congenial to beauty and art [*Schönheit und Kunst*]," then the hero qualifies as a would-be "artist," his *Bildungsroman* turns into a *Künstlerroman*, and further tendencies and directions may (problematically) arise.

Not always, however, does this gradual process of learning and reconciliation take place and reach a successful conclusion. In fact, Hegel does not exclude complexities, deviations, or involutions that may weaken, put to question, or even undo the model. These eventualities are explicitly contemplated in his argument.

At the end of his discussion of "the novelistic," for instance, Hegel belittles the education of the individual (Swales 1978, 21) exactly at the very climax of his formative journey, depicting the domestication of his latter-day knight (Moland 2019, 122-125) as a kind of bourgeois catabasis in a patriarchal family and society. "However much he may have quarrelled with the world, or been pushed about in it," the philosopher concludes, "in most cases at last he gets his girl and some sort of position, marries her, and becomes as good a Philistine as others." Then among the thrills awaiting him at work and at home, he finds "vexations" and "domestic affliction," ordinary troubles and major "headaches" (Hegel 1975, vol. I, 593).

In addition to this unflattering picture, in his observations on the novel as the middle-class epic, Hegel significantly mentions two more different ways of dissolving the contrast – a "tragic" and, vice versa, a "comic" one – both as alternatives to the dominant model. These happen when the adversarial hero radicalizes the conflict and pushes to its extremest consequences his opposition. Though he does not elaborate on this point, Hegel here implicitly refers to his previous treatment of "the independence of individual characters." Thus, the clash may end tragically when the struggle of the firm individual is fixatedly subjective. Vice versa, it may end comically when his compulsive subjectivity is so eccentric as to become the source of many an odd discrepancy with the world. The latter finds its example in Cervantes's Quixote – "an originally noble nature" who, in "an intelligible self-ordered world," ends up inevitably verging on "lunacy," "comic contradiction," and "comic aberration" (1975, vol. I, 591). The former, on the contrary, finds its example in Shakespeare's tragic hero – "a purely self-dependent individual," Hegel asserts with a touch of romantic bardolatry, displaying a "taut firmness and one-sidedness that is supremely admirable." Such a character – as the Macbeth he has in mind – "persists in his course" and "nothing, neither divine nor human law, makes him falter or draw back" – "unbending and unbent," he "either realizes himself or perishes" (1975, vol. I, 577-578).

Melville's portrayal of the independent individual – the self-declared "sovereign nature (in himself)" who "insists upon treating with all Powers upon an equal basis," though "[h]e may perish" – echoes Hegel's description of the Shakespearean character as the highest example of the tragic in the romantic form of art. Likewise, Melville's hero-worship of the antagonistic author who embodies "the tragicalness of human thought" and "says NO! in thunder" in fact reasserts his previous superposition of "Nathaniel of Salem" and "William of Avon." "Not a very great deal more," Melville had proclaimed in his 1850 review-essay, "and Nathaniel were verily William" (1987, 246).

Despite this hyperbolic extolment of the "Mossy Man" (1987, 241) and the glaring misreading of "the architect of the Gables," the "tragic phase of humanity" that Melville emphasizes in his letter, does, to a certain extent, characterize the protagonists of Hawthorne's romances. These Hegelian "modern knights" beyond the ocean are also potential tragic heroes, defiantly persisting in their course, against any "divine [or] human law." Pictured as "alone in the world" and "self-dependent," with a "law" of their own in opposition to the "world's law" (Hawthorne 1983, 259; 503; 425), Hester and Holgrave are led to disown common forms of sharing and reciprocity; moved in despair to contemplate violent crimes against humanity; induced to imagine an incendiary destruction of all institutions and inherited property out of a sheer, deep-seated aversion – whether newly formed and accumulated as in the adulteress's "deeply branded" and "red-hot" breast, or handed down as "a legacy of hatred" to the descendant of the dispossessed (Hawthorne 1983, 176; 258; 527). But this is just part of the "novelistic" antecedent, so to speak, preparing the nonconformists to reconcile themselves with the world and enter its concatenation. The more subversive the consequences of their supreme self-appointed "sovereignty," the stronger the authorial presence and jurisdiction. In short, though potentially tragic, Hawthorne's antagonistic heroics are transitive, paving the way for the transformative countermove of his liberal heroics.

6. Agents of socialization

In Hester's case, the Hegelian "conflict" between "the poetry of the heart" and "the prose of the world" is intensified by its potential tragicalness. The heroine turns all her reactive energies not only against the "order of things" ("Every thing was against her. The world was hostile"), but also against herself and her child, contemplating murder and suicide as the only way out of her predicament. "At times, a fearful doubt strove to possess her soul, whether it were not better to send Pearl at once to heaven, and go herself to such futurity as Eternal Justice should provide." This is the uncompromising heroine drifting astray to the point of no return, in response to which the narrator states: "The scarlet letter had not done its office." Not done, yet, despite the seven years that "had come and gone" (Hawthorne 1983, 260; 261; 255). This blunt

ideological comment highlights "the reciprocity of process and telos" (Bercovitch 1991, 10), anticipating a certain fulfillment ahead – provided (one may add) the woman changes her tutors. "Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers, – stern and wild ones, – and they had made her strong, but taught her much amiss" (Hawthorne 1983, 290). This is the erroneous kind of education which the heroine must drastically alter to reorientate her course, come to terms with the world, and join it harmoniously.

If Hester does not pursue her tragic purpose, after all, then neither does she let the letter of the law easily do its office. In fact, she perseveres in her belief that "the infinite rights of the heart" may at last triumph over the prosaic "course of the world." This is a sort of perverted perseverance of the saints with a vengeance. It culminates in the meeting with Dimmesdale in the forest when she reminds him that their love "had a consecration of its own," convincing him to share her plan to leave the colony for good together with their Pearl. It dissolves a few days later on the platform in the marketplace "with the minister's expiring breath" before "the horror-stricken multitude" (Hawthorne 1983, 286; 339; 338).

Dimmesdale's afterthought, disclosure, and death open unexpected prospects for the characters of the drama, a turn which invests the romance as a whole with a formal complexity which ends up exposing the ideological implications of its cultural symbology. The "Conclusion" of *The Scarlet Letter* closes the action by placing the expected fulfillment far beyond the main chronology, in fact ramifying the romance into a multi-layered story with a cluster of different outcomes. These varied finales lay bare all the limits and problems of the *American* romance exactly at its climax, when *its* high *office* at the service of the dominant ideology is finally accomplished.

The conclusion's different endings are all examples of possible plot resolutions, as theorized by Hegel for the novel in the modern sense – a tragic story of spiritual trans-*formation* through self-martyrdom (Dimmesdale); another tragic story, though in reverse, of self-destructive bodily de-*formation* (Chillingworth); two different stories of reconciliation and compromise with the world that develop along a common course of educational re-*formation* and integration, ultimately diverging in space and time across the waters (Hester and Pearl). All passion spent, it is vis-à-vis her lover's trans-formation and her husband's de-formation that Hester begins to redirect her re-formative course elsewhere, together with Pearl (suddenly "the richest heiress of her day" thanks to Chillingworth's "last will" [Hawthorne 1983, 342]). Thus mother and daughter – albeit in a constrictive appendix of narrative summaries – may be said to turn into the heroines of two potential *Bildungsromane*.

Pearl's is a story of gradual growth in the world (the *Old* World), as already foreshadowed by the "great scene of grief" on the scaffold, where "her tears [falling] upon her father's cheek" become the symbol of the child's future – "the pledge that she would grow up amid human joy

and sorrow, nor for ever do battle with the world, but be a woman in it." Hester's is a story of patient and humble appeasement with the world (the *New* World), to which she finally returns, heroically submitting and conforming, consenting and believing, through the rest of "the toilsome, thoughtful, and self-devoted years" of her life (1983, 339; 344). If Pearl becomes a lovable young woman, then a happy wife and in turn a mother herself, in an unnamed land far away from the one where she was born as the "product of sin," then Hester, on the contrary, though after "many years," goes back to that distant land of "the deepest sin" of hers, where "a great law had been broken." The return of Hester Prynne takes place "one afternoon," when the heroine is seen entering her old "cottage by the sea-shore," though after an instant's hesitation, pausing on the threshold, "all alone, and all so changed." The scarlet letter back again on her breast, the woman is ready to finally come to terms with the order of the world she had violated and go through the last penitential stage of her education. "Here had been her sin; here, her sorrow; and here was yet to be her penitence" (1983, 198; 342; 166; 195; 343; 344).

As Hester has "no selfish ends," she gives herself freely and fully to the community of belonging. Thus, the once solitary and cast-off rebel is not only resocialized, but also transformed into an agent of socialization. Likewise, her once "solitary cottage" becomes the place of her active agency of compromise, for "[w]omen, more especially." These are the distressed and heartbroken women of the Puritan colony, coming to her, "demanding why they [are] so wretched, and what the remedy!" To them Hester offers comfort and advice. But the assurance of a "remedy" – one which is yet to be envisioned by the present of human action – can come only from a "firm belief" in revelation and futurity:

> She assured them, too, of her firm belief, that, at some brighter period, when the world should have grown ripe for it, in Heaven's own time, a new truth would be revealed, in order to establish the whole relation between man and woman on a surer ground of mutual happiness. (1983, 344)

This assurance is legitimated by a providential vision of history that, in the split nation of Hawthorne's times, ever more torn by tensions and discords, paradoxically invites for a wait-and-see politics of compromises. It builds on patience, faith, and hope, in view of ameliorations and changes to come, when, "in Heaven's own time," the world should be "ripe" for them. Namely, it puts in store for the future what the present does not yet want. Likewise, that "mission of divine and mysterious truth" is also indefinitely deferred, entrusted to "the angel and apostle of the coming revelation," bound to fulfill the promise of "sacred love [which] should make us happy." This "must be a woman" who expectantly belongs to a certain yet indeterminate time to come, as opposed to "the destined prophetess" that "Hester had vainly imagined" herself to be in the past (Hawthorne 1983, 344-345).

Hawthorne will notoriously reiterate this outlook in his 1852 campaign biography of General Franklin Pierce, when, advocating "the principles" of the future President of the United States (a supporter of the 1850 Compromise), he touches upon the most divisive issue of the times, slavery. As much as the question of women's wretchedness, "the slavery question" – "against agitation" and "hostility" – must be approached through "mutual steps of compromise" within the broader perspective of the God-given "progress of the world." Namely, of a process that, "at every step," as "all history" shows, Hawthorne argues, "leaves some evil or wrong on the path behind it, which the wisest of mankind, of their own set purpose, could never have found the way to rectify" (1852, 31; 110; 111; 113; 114). This "view," he claims,

> looks upon slavery as one of those evils which divine Providence does not leave to be remedied by human contrivances, but which, in its own good time, by some means impossible to be anticipated, but of the simplest and easiest operation, when all its uses shall have been fulfilled, it causes to vanish like a dream. (1852, 113)

A "fantasy of evanescence," indeed (Arac 1986, 254). Akin to the doctrine of the gradual and infinite course of human and social perfectibility in the name of an irresistible progress, typical of 19th-century historicist and utopian counter-traditions alike, this vision picks out exactly that "weakness" (in Marx's words) that "los[es] all understanding of the present in a passive glorification of the future" (1963, 20). Thus the work of the past, in this theo-teleo-logical view of process, which sustains the American ideology, comes to be mystified, ultimately employed to open up prospects of emancipation, restitution, and advancement not so much for the subdued of the present (be they women or slaves, the exploited of capital or the forlornest of mankind, the vanishing races or the vanquished of history) as for their progeny. The potential inhabitants of a delivered and reconciled nation are thus summoned in advance to fulfill the universal expectations of a common humanity in times to come.

In Hawthorne's first romance this view is the result of the tragic impossibility (due to Dimmesdale's death) to pursue a self-appointed sanctification through a transgressive love with a consecration of its own. In his second romance, on the contrary, the same view is fostered by the realized expectation of that "sacred love [which] should make us happy." In Chapter XX of *The House of the Seven Gables*, titled "The Flower of Eden," the dialogue between Phoebe (a daughter of the Puritans) and the artist Holgrave (the Hegelian modern knight recast into a New-World revolutionary avenger) is quite eloquent of this outcome. When in response to the young man's "spoken word" – the supreme "I love you" – Phoebe wonders how he can possibly "love a simple girl like her," she emphasizes their essential distance. She points out that he has "many, many thoughts, with which [she] should try in vain to sympathize." At the same time, she admits that she, too, has "tendencies with which [he] would sympathize as little." In addition

to this divide, there is her limited compass, meaning the domestic scale of her life and nature vis-à-vis the worldwide range of Holgrave's wanderings and experiences. Her restricted sphere, she thinks, has "not scope enough to make [him] happy." If their difference of character may not be an obstacle, as she herself allows ("That is less matter," Phoebe says to him), her domain paradoxically turns out to be an asset, as their exchange on fear and action shows:

> "And then – I am afraid!" continued Phoebe, shrinking towards Holgrave, even while she told him so frankly the doubts with which he affected her. "You will lead me out of my own quiet path. You will make me strive to follow you where it is pathless. I cannot do so. It is not my nature. I shall sink down and perish!" (Hawthorne 1983, 615)

Melville's heroic individual knows that he "may perish" because of his adamant "sovereign nature," as much as Hegel's tragic character knows that in his "taut firmness" of action he "either realizes himself or perishes." Likewise, yet to the contrary effect, Hawthorne's domestic heroine is aware that she will "sink down and perish" if led "out of" her "quiet path." Nevertheless, her odd "shrinking *towards* Holgrave" – namely, moving closer to, and not away *from*, him – is a half-step forward meant to reduce the chasm and possibly meet in the middle. It is an oxymoron which balances aversion and attraction, testing the margins of a productive compromise. Holgrave's rejoinder reassures the girl that it "will be far otherwise" than she predicts, thus confirming the goal of his trans- and re-formative evolution from radical to "conservative." "The world owes all its onward impulses to men ill at ease," he tells Phoebe. "The happy man inevitably confines himself within ancient limits." And it is upon this principle that he builds his new prospects for the "hereafter":

> I have a presentiment that, hereafter, it will be my lot to set out trees, to make fences, – perhaps, even, in due time, to build a house for another generation, – in a word, to conform myself to laws and the peaceful practice of society. Your poise will be more powerful than any oscillating tendency of mine. (Hawthorne 1983, 615-616)

This is the outcome of a process of deradicalization (less gradual by far than Hester's) which settles on a contrastive reassessment of the values of life as is: stability vs. onward impulses; the happy man vs. men ill at ease; ancient limits and fenced gardens vs. unknown frontiers and pathless regions; the laws and peaceful practice of society vs. a law of one's own and conflicts with the world; a domestic poise vs. any oscillating tendency of the outsider. As the little girl speaks her word too – "You know I love you" – "the one miracle" takes place and "bliss" shines around the "youth and maiden" (1983, 616). The potential revenger's tragedy turns into a middle-class comedy of liberal domesticity sanctioned by marriage.

In terms of narrative and heroic codes, the metamorphoses fostered by the two romances are even more troubling in their follow-up. To be resocialized, for the integrated heroine and hero, in fact means also to be involved in the culture's active agencies of compromise. So, it is not too much to say that their ultimate consequences go far beyond any politics that merely tends towards "inaction" (Bercovitch 1991, xiii; 8) or is simply meant to "erase and undo all action" (Arac 1986, 254).

The portrayal of Hester Prynne, gathering a resistant sisterhood of women, consoling and tutoring them, yet submissively "glanc[ing] her sad eyes downward at the scarlet letter," is no doubt moving and admirable. It envisions the wretched women of the present (like the one Hester used to be in the past) as the ancestors of future generations, requiring to be remembered, namely "to be made present by a work of memory" and thus "brought back into existence through those collective acts of recollection" by descendants to come (Pease 1986, 68-69). Yet this active agency that Hawthorne confides to his resocialized heroine tends to weaken rather than corroborate the historical consciousness of the oppressed as, in fact, "dreamers of descendants," however worthy this typical "New England habit of forming utopian communities" may appear (Marsh 2024, 179; 162), particularly in traditions of female "communitarian vision" (Bercovitch 2012, xxviii). Historical consciousness, on the contrary, cannot indulge in visions of future liberation and reconcilement, but must be kept unremittingly alert and alive (in remembrance and awareness) before conditions of domination. These conditions constitute "the state of emergency" which for "the tradition of the oppressed," in Benjamin's Marxist terms, "is not the exception but the rule" (2003, 392). Namely, it is not a temporary stage which, "at some brighter period," in some genderless, raceless, or classless society of Utopia, shall be done away with and left behind, but the essential order of things *in* history, against which the subdued of the day are called to struggle in their own present of praxis.

In Hawthorne's first romance this enervation of the downtrodden's historical consciousness is the high price that the nonconformist must pay first for her socialization, and then for her active agency in the world (the world she has rejoined "by compromising for principle," exactly as any hero/ine of a classical *Bildungsroman*). In Hawthorne's second romance the price that the radical hero must pay for his domestication as a "happy man" is even higher in terms of individual independence, and rather shabby in terms of its prosaic aftermath.

Hawthorne has Holgrave reach his compromise with the world much earlier than his unbending fellow heroine (no doubt because he was born among the underprivileged), thereby deflating his protagonist's stature as a result of a more natural and irresistible evolution (dictated by love), though arguably so ordinary and opportunistic. The romantic, brooding hero of a potential novel of the artist (though not exactly a *Künstlerroman* in its own right) comes to

be debased by that kind of prosaic reconcilement theorized by Hegel as the pejorative variant of the standard plot resolution of the novel as the modern bourgeois epic. If Phoebe may be seen as the New World natural version of the woman Pearl would become in the Old World, then Holgrave may be seen as the New World revolutionary and mobile hero who is not only made all too quickly submit and settle down, but also deflected into an unattractive Old-World middle-class conformist. "However much he may have quarrelled with world or been pushed about in it," at last Holgrave too, as Hegel says of his knight errant, "gets his girl and some sort of position, marries her, and becomes as good a Philistine as others." This is the less desirable type of a compromiser in the *Bildungsroman*, all the more diminishing if applied to the American romance.

Hawthorne's re-trans-formation of his radical hero obliterates his historical consciousness as a descendant of the downtrodden, as much as it deprives him of his firm given "identity" – one which, as an artist and a reformist with an adversarial and avenging vocation to fulfill, "he had never lost" through all his "personal vicissitudes." Further, as a result of this outcome, his active agency is already potentially at work, resolved to carry out as action (in the future) what his "presentiment" prefigures as intention (in the present). The youth who once lived a "lonesome and dreary" life and argued that to "plant a family" is the cause "of most of the wrong and mischief which men do" (1983, 504; 615; 511), at last finds his "maiden," marries her, and her wealth too (Michaels 1987, 98). The propertyless and homeless heir of the dispossessed, who inveighed against all ownership, in fact becomes an agent of its legitimation. The radical who claimed that "no man [should] build his house for posterity," let alone public edifices "of such permanent materials as stone or brick," becomes the "conservative" who plans "to build" not only "a house for another generation" but also a "house of stone" (Hawthorne 1983, 510; 616; 623). Even if Holgrave's paradoxical reversals can be seen as "satirical aspects" (Emery 2017, 75) that Hawthorne uses to critique notions and trends he mocked or disliked, such as Gothicism and Fourierism (Pfister 1991, 158-159), or New England Transcendentalism and reform movements (Milder 2013, 130-131), they appear, at the end, all too hastily engineered by "the architect of the Gables." As committed as Hawthorne may have been to dissolving the shadows of the past, so as to relieve the nation of its "crass" or "bullying philistinism" (Milder 2009, 482; 484), among other undesirable inherited forms and conflicts, his heroics of compromise ended up fashioning one of the most striking "novelistic" characters of "philistine Yankeeism" or "Yankee philistinism"[6] in classic American literature.

[6] As Milder adjusted and revised his 2009 essay for his 2013 book, he symptomatically inverted the phrase (2013, 125; 2009, 477), creating, in spite of his argument, a sort of clamp which grips Hawthorne's hero tightly as both a Philistine and a Yankee.

7. Conclusion

The plot resolutions of *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of the Seven Gables* stand out even more prominently as examples of Hawthorne's cultural heroism if compared to the opposite ones that his most outspoken and unrestrained admirer adopted in the two novels he was writing in the same years. First, and most notably, in *Moby-Dick*, the book that Melville often mentioned in his correspondence with his friend, and then generously inscribed to him in "admiration for his genius" (Melville 1988, vii). Second, in the next novel *Pierre*, the (allegedly) "rural bowl of milk" that he promised Sophia Hawthorne in a letter written in response to her appreciation of his "bowl of salt water" – "the wicked book" that her husband had already "praised" in a "joy-giving and exultation-breeding letter" that made Melville feel "pantheistic" (1993, 219; 212; 213). Contrasted with Hawthorne's compromising and (re)socialized adulteress and revenger, Melville's demoniac Ahab and titanic Pierre are both eloquent models of that heroic ideal which he attributed to Hawthorne – namely, the tragic character that he himself embodied and fulfilled even as he unpacked and undid it in his thinking and writing. The unsparing critiques of individualism in the two novels – the destruction of the American Ship of State by an "absolute dictator" on one side (1988, 97), and the dismantling of the American family by an "immature" writer ambiguously pursuing "absolute Truth" on the other (1971, 283) – voiced Melville's enormous repudiations of his own earlier democratic commitments to the country's prospects of "supremacy among the nations" (1987, 248) – in fact a "betrayal of Young America" in politics and literature (Bercovitch 1986, 49).

The different ways of dissolving the Hegelian contrast between the self-sustained individual and the course of the world are manifestly brought to light by the two writers' divergent patterns of the *nóstos* motif. Whereas Hawthorne's train of action needs a home, so that his misguided rebels may be led back and (re)join the community, Melville's tragic chain of events (what Ahab calls "the iron way") radically precludes any possible kind of heroic or unheroic homecoming (Melville 1988, 168). If in *Moby-Dick* he allows the one single survivor to return home, it is for the fateful purpose of letting Ishmael tell the story – in fact a *tragic* story of *no* return. There is a superior and inscrutable force that dominates the "supreme lord and dictator" of the Pequod himself, an unyielding hero who pursues his revenge "against all natural lovings and longings," as Ahab admits, "pushing, and crowding, and jamming [him]self on all the time." No "stubborn" dissenter can oppose the totalitarian and teleological hegemony of the leader. No counter-ideology of affections and domestic life back home (where wives and children are waiting) can make a stand to "swerve" the tragic hero from the "path" of his "fixed purpose" (1988, 122; 545; 167-168).

Likewise, in *Pierre*, the linear plot (summer to winter, idyllic country to prosaic city, joyous immaturity to premature death) develops through an irreversible process of aesthetic

Mißbildung which excludes any possibility of an even unlikely or instrumental homecoming – in fact not only a tragic (in)version of Holgrave's philistine evolution (and of the American ideology of progress at large), but also the aberration of a Carlyle-like spiritual *Bildungsroman* or a canonic *Künstlerroman*, culminating in incest, murder, and suicide. After the symbolic parricide of his late father and the abandonment of his "blue-eyed" and "golden-haired" fiancée Lucy, the young knight's hurried and (to the world's eyes) perplexing departure from "the manorial mansion" of his ancient family causes an irreparable loss of *home* in its broadest sense. No *nóstos* can ever take place for the "impulsive" and "rash boy," the "young enthusiast" who wants to champion his newly discovered half-sister Isabel, the illegitimate daughter of his own father (Melville 1971, 33; 5; 176; 175; 63-64). Disinherited from his property by his haughty mother and then held responsible for her "grief," "malady," and "insanity" that terminate "in death" (in fact an indirect matricide), the inspired writer who wants to "gospelize the world anew" with his book (1971, 285; 273) keeps "forc[ing] his way through the course of the world," as Hegel says, with a "reckless firmness," finally settling his self-destructive quarrel with the "order of things" (1975, vol. I, 593; 578) in "a low dungeon of the city prison." There "young Pierre" – like many other tragic heroes of the modern novel, from young Werther on – takes his life, his body surrounded by the corpses of the two fatal young women of his unfortunate youth (Melville 1971, 360; 14).

"Herman Melville Crazy" was the title of a scathing anonymous review of *Pierre*, a book which "appeared to be composed of the ravings and reveries of a madman" (Melville 1971, 380). Melville may well have been out of his head. Or perhaps, more simply, he had just "not been well, of late," as US Consul Hawthorne more mildly and broodily reported in his *Notebooks*, after their memorable mid-November 1856 meeting in England. Hawthorne was alluding with a touch of sadness, or sense of guilt, perhaps, to his friend's poor health, a state of suffering "from too constant literary occupation" which had conditioned his post-*Moby-Dick* works – unsuccessful "writings" that, "for a long while past," Hawthorne says, had "indicated a morbid state of mind." Melville's two iconoclastic novels had to wait more than seventy years to be recognized and then canonized as classics in their own right. Placed upon the pedestal of the so-called American Renaissance, yet opposite to Hawthorne's long acclaimed romances, *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre* may indeed be said to have finally made him and his art "better worth immortality" than most of the writers of his time, as Nathaniel of Salem had prophesized, or just confessed ruefully to himself, in the shadowy privacy of his journals (Hawthorne 1962, 432-433).

Bionote

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