

The Nathaniel Hawthorne Society
Call for Papers
American Literature Association, May 2023

Panel Title: A is for Abortion: Reading Hawthorne's Political Relevance Today

From the Supreme Court's "Dobbs" decision over-turning *Roe v. Wade* to the increasingly virulent and emboldened expressions of misogyny in public and political discourse during the 2022 mid-term election campaigns, we have entered a political moment that resonates in disturbing ways with mid-nineteenth century debates about women's rights. For this 2022 ALA panel, the Nathaniel Hawthorne Society seeks paper proposals that consider how the work of Nathaniel Hawthorne may be relevant to the politics of our current moment. We invite papers on any of Hawthorne's works and those that engage the rich tradition of feminist, queer, anti-imperialist, and anti-racist scholarship on Hawthorne that has flourished from the 1970s to the present.

While all topics are welcome, we are particularly interested in proposals that address the arguments in Dana Medoro's provocative new book, *Certain Concealments: Poe, Hawthorne, and Early Nineteenth-Century Abortion* (2022), which presents a detailed account of the antebellum criminalization of abortion and the medicalization of pregnancy from the 1820s to the 1850s. Medoro describes how nineteenth-century anti-abortion activists played on white supremacist fears of a declining white birth-rate, immigration, and threats to white, male political power. In readings of *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of Seven Gables*, and *The Blithedale Romance*, which she considers an abortion trilogy, Medoro argues that Hawthorne resists the ideology of Manifest Destiny undergirding this effort, and "turns abortion into a trope that subtly and steadily cuts through the patriotic lexicon of a national birth brought into being by its white citizens" (22).

Whether paper proposals take-up Medoro's argument or introduce others, we hope to spark a lively discussion on the relevance of Hawthorne's work at a time when women's reproductive rights (and other human rights) are again under attack.

Deadline: Please send abstracts of 250-300 words to Nancy Sweet by (nsweet@csus.edu) by Jan. 15, 2023.

The American Literature Association's 34th annual conference will meet in Boston at the Westin Copley Place from May 25-28, 2023. For more information about the conference, please consult the ALA website at www.americanliteratureassociation.org or contact the conference director, Professor Olivia Carr Edenfield, at carr@georgiasouthern.edu or the Executive Director of the ALA, Professor Alfred Bendixen of Princeton University, at ab23@princeton.edu.