

Nathaniel Hawthorne Society – ALA 2025

“Hawthorne and Food: A Tasty Affair”

As Monika Elbert has rightly pointed out, in both his public and private writings, Nathaniel Hawthorne made no mystery of his keen appreciation of food as a source of sensory gratification—in defiance of his Puritan heritage—and of his awareness of its socio-cultural significance. In his fiction, he also showed how food could be deployed as an effective narrative element to emphasize character traits, highlight incidents, and delineate the locale and time frame of a story. Among the numerous examples disseminated throughout his production, one could mention the alluring fragrance of unattainable victuals which makes the penniless Robin feel even more of a friendless stranger in “My Kinsman, Major Molineux”; or the relish with which Hawthorne describes the fruit, cakes and candy sold by “The Old Apple-Dealer”; or the voracious appetite with which Arthur Dimmesdale, in *The Scarlet Letter*, devours a large meal after his momentous encounter with Hester Prynne in the woods, a manifestation of the re-awakening of his long-stifled sensual nature and capacity for pleasure; or the allusion to slavery in *The House of the Seven Gables* through the deceptively comical scene of Ned Higgins making quick work of two gingerbread Jim Crows, and the obvious pleasure Hawthorne takes in listing the dishes served at the banquet awaiting (in vain) Judge Pyncheon; or the way in which Miles Coverdale, in *The Blithedale Romance*, by finding fault with the water-gruel Zenobia prepares for him when he is recovering from a bad cold, is indirectly faulting her for not matching up to his idea of womanhood; or the way in which bad food in *The French and Italian Notebooks* functions as a signifier of loose morals in Italy from a strictly Anglo-Saxon and Protestant point of view, while in *The Marble Faun* the sublime sunshine wine made on Donatello’s Tuscan estate—which would lose all its wonderful qualities if sold on the market—speaks to Hawthorne’s revulsion against the corrupting influence of capitalism.

Proposals are invited for papers on Hawthorne’s representation, and literary and/or cultural use, of food in his tales, sketches, romances, travel piece, correspondence, and notebooks.

Possible topics include, but are by no means limited to:

- the pleasure of eating
- food as a status symbol
- the aesthetics of eating
- eating as a social function
- eating and class
- eating and national, regional, and local culture
- eating and gender roles
- eating and economy
- food imagery
- eating and race and ethnicity

- food and religion
- the Puritan attitude towards food
- vegetarianism
- eating disorders

Submit proposals for a 15-20 minute presentation and a brief professional biography to Leonardo Buonomo buonomo@units.it and Ariel Silver ariel.silver@svu.edu by Dec 20.

“The House of the Seven Gables in Ink, Wood, and Stone: A Roundtable Discussion”

The Nathaniel Hawthorne Society invites proposals for participation on a roundtable to complement the Society’s second annual lecture at the "House of the Seven Gables" in Salem, May 25 at 12 noon. (This years’ speaker, Robert Levine, will present "Haunted Houses: *The House of the Seven Gables* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.".) This ALA roundtable will feature curators from the “House of Seven Gables” and a variety of scholars in conversation about the book, the house, and the reception of both. We invite proposals that address topics in material culture, the history of literary tourism and house museums, Hawthorne’s novel, and relations among them. We hope to foster a lively cross-disciplinary discussion of the “House of Seven Gables” in Ink, Wood, and Stone.

Submit proposals for a 10 minute presentation and a brief professional biography to Charles Baraw barawc1@southernct.edu and Ariel Silver ariel.silver@svu.edu by Dec 20.