RICHARD H. MILLINGTON

Introduction

Item one. In the "College" episode of the brilliant HBO series *The Sopranos*, mobster Tony Soprano finds himself sitting in a hallway at Bowdoin College, waiting for his daughter Meadow to complete her admissions interview. We have just watched Soprano set aside his role as bourgeois dad while he garrotes a gangster-turned-informer he has discovered in a nearby town. The camera then shows us the inscription chiseled into the wall above his head: "No man can wear one face to himself and another to the multitude without finally getting bewildered as to which may be true." The author, of course, is identified as Hawthorne, and as the scene ends an undergraduate walks by, informing Tony that "He's our most famous alumnus."

Item two. Dr. Leon R. Kass, the head of President George Bush's Council on Bioethics, assigns the members of the council – a body established to advise the President and the National Institutes of Health on the moral questions raised by controversial research initiatives like cloning – to read Hawthorne's story "The Birth-Mark," and opens the council's first meeting with a discussion of that tale of a scientific enthusiasm gone perversely awry.

Item three. "The Connection," a call-in program on National Public Radio in the US, devotes a show, featuring a panel of Hawthorne scholars, to a discussion of the 150th anniversary of the publication of *The Scarlet Letter*. They take a call from Carolyn, in Boise, Idaho: "I would just like to say that I identified with the book because I was an adulteress, I was a single mother, and I had to raise my children by myself. I make no excuses for that, but because I not only had the shame but the children, I had to become more able, stronger, better at other things . . . I believe that this is the essence of America: that one can overcome inauspicious beginnings. If you make mistakes you can change, you can overcome. Sometimes people don't let you forget it – that's their problem – but I love this book because you can identify with Hester: she made mistakes but she went on." There is a moment of stunned silence as the assembled scholars take in this unexpected fulfillment

of the English teacher's dream: a direct and moving testimony that literature matters.[1]

Taken together, these episodes from the life lived by Hawthorne's texts in present-day America give us the figure of Hawthorne that belongs to literate mainstream culture – to the descendants (in a cultural rather than a genetic sense) of Hawthorne's first readers. This Hawthorne, as my examples reveal, has written works to which we return for ethical guidance, for an acknowledgment of life's moral complexity, for encouragement in difficulty. (Indeed, in the scene from *The Sopranos*, Hawthorne operates almost as an icon of the moral, inviting us to take the measure of the ethical confusions of current American life.) We imagine this Hawthorne as the espouser of values we may think of as "universal," time-tested, foundational, and we think of him, in this guise, as a literary master, in full artistic control of the emotional and moral subtlety his works exemplify.

Readers of this *Companion* will encounter a different – though not, finally, an unrelated – writer, the Hawthorne of the colleges and the universities, the figure (or figures) that emanate from the current moment in academic discourse: from classroom discussions, from doctoral dissertations, from scholarly essays like the ones this volume contains. Where the "literary" Hawthorne taps into shared feelings and timeless themes, the "academic" Hawthorne possesses a particular and specifiable relation to the historical moment he writes in. Indeed, many currently practicing Hawthorne scholars would claim that the value of Hawthorne's texts lies precisely in the opportunity they offer to understand a clearly defined and bounded historical moment, while others might argue that the capacity of his texts to illuminate the lives of his current readers derives not from his command of universal human truths but from the fact that the middle-class cultural formations he saw coming into being are still powerfully with us. The "literary" Hawthorne is often imagined to be "above" politics, while the scholar now sees Hawthorne's texts as inevitably and variously political, and the question of whether his texts tend to resist or reinforce the particular ideological orthodoxies of his era has become almost tediously central. Finally, where the traditional Hawthorne's insights – ethical, emotional, psychological – were felt to be the products of a masterfully wielded artistic intention, our new Hawthorne's acuity and value as a cultural analyst is most often understood as the effect of his very embroilment in the conflicts and contradictions, the yearnings and anxieties, of his experience.

While my main purpose here is to introduce the essays that form this volume, I want to take a little time to consider the relationship between the Hawthorne of my opening anecdotes and the Hawthorne we are now studying, and to describe, a little more fully, how their estrangement came

about. One might begin by observing that the relationship between these apparently contemporary Hawthornes is historical. The Hawthorne evoked on public radio or discussed in the halls of government is the academic Hawthorne of a previous generation, the author taught in universities to many of the teachers now teaching American literature in US high schools. What split the scholar's Hawthorne from his more mainstream brother was the changing sense of who authors are and what books do that emerged out of the re-encounter between American literature and American history that began in the late 1970s and came to dominate academic writing and training in the eighties and nineties. Out of this encounter came a complex description of conditions of artistic creation, in which institutional structures and ideologies join the imagination as generators of texts and guarantors of artistic reputation, and what writers evade, fail to see, or defend themselves against becomes as revealing and representative as what they do see. Several academic Hawthornes emerge from influential studies of this period, ranging from a remarkably astute analyst of a fast-changing culture (the historicized version of the earlier generation's master) to a figure whose intentions are irrelevant to the value and interest of his texts – which now consist in the access they give us to otherwise submerged ideological narratives that shape American life. Yet, in whatever form this encounter with history has taken, Hawthorne has remained central, an indispensable figure both for those who would defend old verities and those who would demonstrate the validity of new kinds of argument. Let me turn now to the chapters that make up this *Companion*, to the Hawthorne they bring to life, and to the arguments they offer for the value of reading Hawthorne.[2]

In the chapter that begins the collection, "Hawthorne's labors in Concord," Larry J. Reynolds gives the contextual turn in Hawthorne scholarship a local habitation and a distinctive personal intensity. Reynolds demonstrates that Hawthorne's experience of living in Concord, especially his first years of marriage and his relationships to Emerson and Margaret Fuller, profoundly shaped his writing. Concord – as the capitol of Transcendentalism, the most intense field of Emerson's magnetic influence, and an incubator of political and social reform – presented Hawthorne, in bodily form, with the pressing questions – ethical, social, sexual – that he would interrogate in works like "The Birth-Mark," "Rappaccini's Daughter," and *The Blithedale Romance*. The concreteness and specificity of the links Reynolds establishes between life and text make this chapter a rich, compressed literary biography, while the complex emotional life of Hawthorne's Concord, along with his investments in and withdrawals from that life, resonates as revealing cultural history, setting the scene for the chapters that follow.

In "Hawthorne as cultural theorist," Joel Pfister makes the case that Hawthorne was long ago brilliantly engaged in a task that his critics have recently adopted: the delineation and exploration of an emergent middle-class ideology, particularly as it found expression in the emotions and attitudes that form and express the self. Through readings of a wide range of Hawthorne texts, Pfister makes the case that Hawthorne is one of America's "most complex, self-reflexive, daring, and artful cultural theorists." Like many of his fellow contributors, Pfister sees Hawthorne's relation to the ideological processes he explores as complex and ambivalent. While he acknowledges that in some ways these texts assist in the establishment of a new middle-class emotional orthodoxy, Pfister demonstrates how *much* Hawthorne sees, especially about the elusive – but, when seen, revisable – social processes that, in profound and specifiable relation to economic change, make us ourselves. Pfister's Hawthorne, then, serves us less as an object of cultural analysis than an incisive model of how to conduct it.

T. Walter Herbert's "Hawthorne and American masculinity" provides another exemplary case of the possibilities and ambitions of Hawthorne criticism at present, as he uses Hawthorne's characteristically conflicted acuity to write the inner history of American masculinity. Because Hawthorne lives out the creation of a new style of masculinity – the "self-reliant manhood" that replaces the "bloodline hierarchy" of an aristocratic social model – he is able in his writing to show us the operation of that ideological system with disturbing clarity. Alienated from this cultural formation, even as he assents to some of its key values, Hawthorne writes into his texts its definitive features: its generational conflicts, its inner manifestations in self-division and emptiness, its projection of its own contradictions onto women and into the emotional life of marriage. Herbert's Hawthorne – victim, analyst, rebel – is at once deeply embedded in the interior history of his time and deeply useful to his present-day readers, inheritors of the gender system he excavates, as we "encounter, as though face to face . . . the patterning of our minds and hearts."

In the counterpart to Herbert's chapter, "Hawthorne and the question of women," Alison Easton surveys depictions of women in Hawthorne's fiction, from his earliest tales to the unfinished manuscripts that close his career. Easton begins by establishing the historical context within which American thinking about women emerges: as she sees it, ideas about women must be understood in relation to the making of a distinctive middle-class culture, and the assertions of ideology always fall short of the complexities of actual women's lives and the messiness of change. Within this unfolding history, Hawthorne operates ambivalently but insightfully, as his own explorations of the Woman Question track the conflicts and possibilities engendered by

a rapidly changing culture. His earliest tales feature isolated female characters who exhibit or suffer in the plots of their lives the uneasiness of a culture in transition, while in crucial texts written after his own marriage ("The Birth-Mark," "Rappaccini's Daughter"), the couple becomes the site of struggles to define the nature and possibilities of women's lives. *The Scarlet Letter* obliquely handles the key questions of contemporary feminism, as they clustered around a new conception of marriage, built on a vision of emotional reciprocity that grounds new kinds of claims about the rights of women. In *The Blithedale Romance* and *The House of the Seven Gables,* Easton strikingly suggests, Hawthorne explores the economic vulnerabilities of middle-class women, as they play their role in the drama of class formation, while *The Marble Faun* seems to offer, via its depiction of Hilda and Miriam, a complex mix of unconvincing orthodoxies and muted possibilities. Like several of our contributors, Easton values Hawthorne's work for its inability or refusal to resolve the conflicts it so usefully exposes.

Three of our contributors give a new, historical force to what might be called questions of genre. In each case, a body of work – the sketch, the children's story – formerly under-interrogated or occluded from critical view, is shown to engage central Hawthornian issues or to perform significant cultural work. In "Hawthorne, modernity, and the literary sketch," Kristie Hamilton establishes the meaning and value of Hawthorne's "sketches" – those open form, loosely structured texts, neither story nor novel, which typically feature encounters between a wandering, observing, or imagining narrator and the fleeting phenomena of everyday life. Through Hamilton's readings, Hawthorne's sketches emerge not as minor texts that tediously or innocuously fill the spaces between the well-known stories but as one of the central interests and accomplishments of his work. Texts like "The Old Apple Dealer," "Foot-prints on the Sea-shore," and "The Old Manse" emerge as exemplary responses to and theorizations of the experience of modernity itself, and the values – aesthetic, experiential, ethical – of the sketch offer its readers a template for negotiating the anxieties and pleasures characteristic of a new, proto-urban American life.

Gillian Brown's chapter, "Hawthorne's American history," explores Hawthorne's sense of history and understanding of national identity – not, in the customary form, through Hawthorne's tales of colonial history, but primarily through his historical writing for children. Through Brown's readings of the historical narratives of *Grandfather's Chair* and her analysis of the sense of historical place generated in his works more generally, Hawthorne emerges as a pioneering theorist of children's literature, and the sponsor, through the imaginative interchanges he stages in such texts, of a distinctively open version of national affiliation. As Brown puts it, "In Hawthorne's

seemingly paradoxical sense of national identity, you identify yourself as American by identifying with conventional markers whose artificiality you simultaneously recognize. To be an American is continually to feel a kinship that you can disown." The conjunction of history and childhood is addressed in a different way in Karen Sánchez-Eppler's chapter. Noting that Hawthorne wrote more pieces aimed at a juvenile audience than any other canonical male author of his time, she reads his life and work in relation to the transformation in thinking about child-rearing that marks the reconfiguration of the middle-class family in antebellum America. As the child changed from a potential sinner in need of a strict ruling hand to an idealized, innocent creature who required a strategically tender discipline by love, a market opened up for writing that would assist in that cultural project. Her "Hawthorne and the writing of childhood" argues that we find in his writing for and about children Hawthorne's most self-conscious attempt to enter, respond to, explore, and shape this ideological realm. Though Hawthorne's writings are part of a broad codification and calling into being of this view of childhood, in his texts childhood and its relationships emerge as no less permeable to complexity than adult life, and both his writing and his experience as a parent are marked by a sense of the uncanny mysteriousness and autonomy of children – an ungraspable quality that is both celebrated in his notebooks and figured forth in the character of Pearl. Indeed, Sánchez-Eppler proposes, for Hawthorne the child really *is* father to the man, for it is in his writing and thinking about children that Hawthorne discovers the model for the atmosphere and mix of emotions – "discomfort tinged with wonder and desire" – that distinguishes his practice of romance.

Like the chapters I have been describing, the next four pieces at once capture the present moment in Hawthorne scholarship and, by providing significant new readings of the novels, recast it. Brook Thomas's chapter begins with a question that has exercised many readers of Hawthorne's best-known novel. Why, in the famous forest scene, does Hawthorne generate so much sympathy for his transgressive lovers, but not allow them to begin a new life together? Thomas's answer to this question unfolds as a wide-ranging exploration of Hawthorne's political thought. "Love and politics, sympathy and justice in *The Scarlet Letter*" is a striking departure from previous political readings of the novel, which have ignored or occluded the relationship between questions of power and questions of love. Thomas instead describes the complex balance Hawthorne strikes between valuing the transgressive and the orderly, between espousing sympathy and honoring justice. Thomas's Hawthorne emerges not as conduit of liberal ideology, but as one of its sophisticated theorists.

Like Joel Pfister, Christopher Castiglia focuses on Hawthorne's understanding of the ideological processes that shape the inner self. "The marvelous queer interiors of *The House of the Seven Gables*" argues for the book's appealing sympathy with its "queer" characters – those, like Clifford and Hepzibah, made deviant by their excessive and inscrutable emotions, but whose deviance becomes a kind of hope, pressing back against the normative world as Hawthornian romance resists the conventions of the realistic novel. The defense of the "queer" mounted in the book takes the form of its disruption of two protocols of social control – the law and other manipulations of surface by figures of power, and internal forms of discipline associated with domesticity and reform – a disruption achieved by the tendency of both identities and emotions to exceed the categories thought to define them. Such resistances are at once costly – in the form of feelings of shame and abjection – to the "queer" characters who embody or enact them – and generative, forming the basis for an alternative sociability and ethics, an oblique but resilient happiness.

In "Sympathy and reform in *The Blithedale Romance*," Robert S. Levine reads the novel as a complex interrogation of the sympathy-based culture of reform so central to antebellum culture and its literary production. Though it has been customarily seen as an ironic, even cynical, send-up of the covert hypocrisy and arrogance of reformers and their notions, Levine shows us a book with a much more engaged, and productively critical, relation to the moral and emotional foundations of the wish to improve the lives of others – in short, a "re-radicalized" *Blithedale*. Levine achieves this recasting of the book through a strikingly new reading of Coverdale's narration, which argues that the novel is a later Coverdale's retrospective and comic critique of the limits of sympathy as that virtue was exercised by the sentimental reform culture of the 1850s – and exemplified by his younger self's outrageous shortcomings as both sympathizer and reformer. When read in this light, Coverdale's narrative implicitly urges its readers to ask much harder questions about the requirements of authentic social change and the relation between reformers and the objects of their solicitude. Indeed, the novel makes available, through its other characters, the possibility of imagining "a subaltern world of the poor and disenfranchised that eludes the appropriative gazes of reformers" and a correspondingly concrete sense of the social changes that might actually transform antebellum society.

In a sense, Emily Miller Budick's rich and nuanced chapter gives us the scholarly counterpart of the figure we glimpsed at the beginning of this Introduction, a Hawthorne whose texts become the occasion for a demanding, open-ended, and surprising kind of moral interrogation. In "Perplexity, sympathy, and the question of the human: a reading of *The Marble Faun*,"

Budick proposes that Hawthorne makes an argument about the nature of our responsibility to one another – and, by implication, an argument about the ethical value of art – by demonstrating the betrayal of that responsibility by the book's main characters. For Hawthorne, she claims, ethical action in the world must begin with an acknowledgment of the perplexity and mysteriousness of that world, and such an acknowledgment demands, from both people and forms of art, the apparently simple but almost unrealizable obligation to listen or witness, often uncomfortably and inactively, to the suffering of others. And because the characters of the novel represent not only a particular set of individual desires but also different systems of value and genres of art, the book offers a profound meditation on what the practice of sympathy might mean not only to individuals but to communities and cultures.

One might imagine Gordon Hutner's chapter as a kind of afterword to this volume, but readers might also use it as a point of entry, for it offers a much richer – and perhaps bleaker – account of the recent history of Hawthorne criticism than I have sketched above. "Whose Hawthorne?," riffing on the title of Lionel Trilling's classic 1964 essay "Our Hawthorne," unfolds as a comparison between the "liberal" Hawthorne belonging to an earlier generation of critics, and the "diminished" Hawthorne created by key studies of the eighties and nineties, which took Trilling's Hawthorne as the target and hence the enabler of their dismantling of a whole set of cultural pieties surrounding authorship. Hutner casts a dispassionate eye on both these Hawthornes (as well as a few in between), showing us how the cultural work done by these texts changes with our point of view, and reminding us that there are both losses and gains in the inevitable (but always contestable) "progress" of literary history. Hutner's chapter ends, in effect, with an open question: who will be the author we find in the work of those readers of this *Companion* who are encountering, composing, or teaching *their* Hawthorne even as I write?

Who, then, is this Hawthorne *Companion*'s Hawthorne? Happily, no single figure emerges from these pages, and the reader of this volume will encounter a writer with a striking range of interests, tactics, insights, and evasions – a writer so various, we might say, as to seem almost real. Still, while there is no unanimity in the conception of Hawthorne implicit in these chapters, there is, I think, a characteristic way of viewing the writer and his work that links many of these chapters together and gives us a revealing fix on the academic Hawthorne of the present moment. Again and again in this *Companion*, whether implicitly or explicitly, we encounter a Hawthorne positioned at a point of historical transformation, at the border that marks

the emergence of a new configuration of emotional life, a new conception of civil society, a new sensibility attuned to a distinctively modern experience, a new understanding of men and women. The Hawthorne that continues to matter, and to matter so variously, many of these chapters seem to say, is neither a distant master nor an ideological vessel, but a writer made acute by the conflicts of meaning and value emerging all around him, whose articulate discomfort makes him – no less than the steadying Hawthorne spoken for by Carolyn from Boise – crucially of use.

NOTES

1. "College," *The Sopranos*, Season 1. Home Box Office. The information on Leon R. Kass is derived from Nicholas Wade, "Moralist of Science Ponders its Power," *New York Times*, 19 March 2002: C1–2. "The Scarlet Letter," *The Connection*. National Public Radio, WBUR, Boston, 16 June 2000.
2. See the fuller discussion of the recent history of Hawthorne criticism in Gordon Hutner's chapter in this volume. The two most powerful and influential "post-intentionalist" readings of Hawthorne are Sacvan Bercovitch's *The Office of "The Scarlet Letter"* and Lauren Berlant's *The Anatomy of National Fantasy*, both listed in this *Companion*'s Selected Bibliography.

1

LARRY J. REYNOLDS

Hawthorne's labors in Concord

Nathaniel Hawthorne spent three periods of his life in Concord, Massachusetts among a group of friends and neighbors called Transcendentalists. He and his wife Sophia first moved to Concord on 9 July 1842, the day of their wedding, and stayed more than three years at the Old Manse until October 1845, when they moved to Salem. These years are often described by biographers as idyllic, a long honeymoon in Paradise. Hawthorne cultivated this impression through his letters, notebooks, "The Old Manse" sketch, and stories such as "The New Adam and Eve." He left Concord in desperate financial straits, but after living in Salem, Lenox, and West Newton, Hawthorne returned to Concord as the famous author of *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), and from May 1852 to July 1853, he lived in a house on the east side of town purchased from the Alcotts, which they called The Hillside and he renamed The Wayside. In 1860, after spending seven years abroad in England and Italy, Hawthorne returned to Concord and The Wayside once more, where he lived until his death in May 1864. He chose not to die there among his family, however, going instead on a trip with his friend Franklin Pierce, who was with him during his final hours in a New Hampshire inn where they had stopped for the night. In *The Blithedale Romance* (1852), Hawthorne, in the voice of his narrator Coverdale speaking of Hollingsworth, anticipated this end when he declared "Happy the man that has such a friend beside him, when he comes to die! . . . How many men, I wonder, does one meet with, in a lifetime, whom he would choose for his death-bed companions!" (III: 39).

The Blithedale Romance has often been read as a fictionalized account of Hawthorne's life at Brook Farm, the utopian community where he spent seven months in 1841, but it can also be seen as a response to his life in Concord during 1842–45. The tensions it treats and the issues it addresses first arose in Concord, where Hawthorne struggled to establish a family and a career surrounded by a group of thinkers, writers, and artists whose ideas, values, and activities challenged his own. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret