



PROJECT MUSE®

---

## Cosmopolitan Detachment in Hawthorne's "Prophetic Pictures"

Andrew Loman

ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance, Volume 53, Number 1,  
2007 (Nos. 206 O.S.), pp. 56-88 (Article)

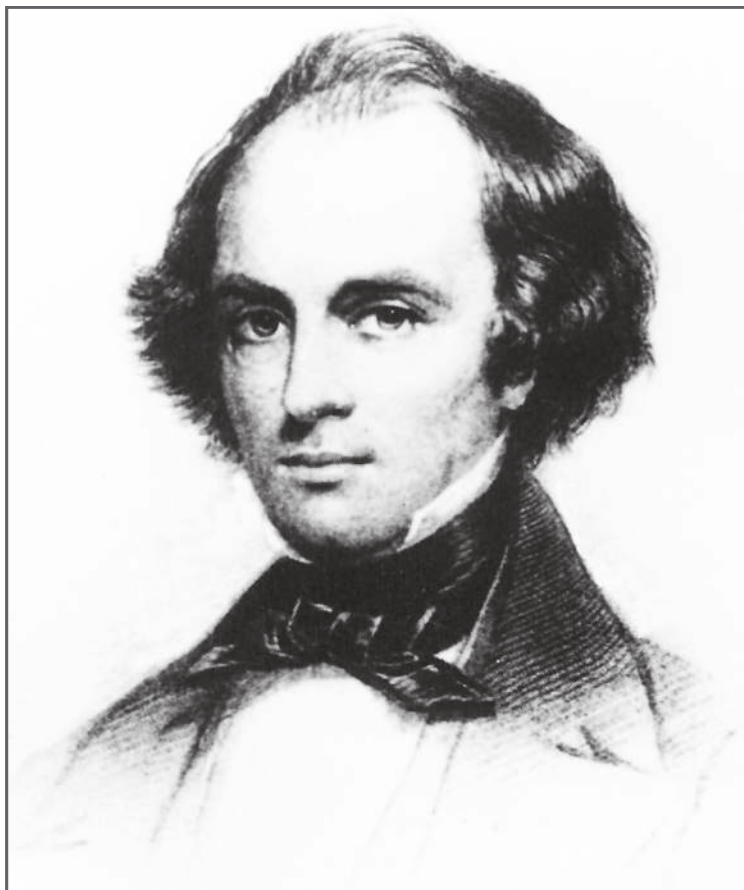
Published by Washington State University

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/esq.2007.0004>



➔ *For additional information about this article*

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/223485>



1851 engraving of Nathaniel Hawthorne, by Thomas Phillibrown,  
after the 1850 Cephas G. Thompson oil portrait.  
Reproduced courtesy of the Berkshire Athenaeum,  
Pittsfield, Massachusetts.

## Cosmopolitan Detachment in Hawthorne's "Prophetic Pictures"

ANDREW LOMAN

To seize a character, even that of one man, in its life and secret mechanism, requires a philosopher; to delineate it with truth and impressiveness, is work for a poet. . . . How shall a man, to whom all characters of individual men are like sealed books, of which he sees only the title and the covers, decipher . . . , and depict to us, the character of a nation? He . . . depicts his own optical delusions; . . . and . . . with a few flowing strokes, completes a picture, which, though it may not even resemble any possible object, his countrymen are to take for a national portrait. Nor is the fraud so readily detected: for the character of a people has such a complexity of aspect, that even the honest observer knows not always . . . what to determine regarding it.

—"State of German Literature," *Edinburgh Review*,  
quoted in Harriet Martineau, *Society in America* (1837)

At half past four, I went to see Mr. Thompson's [*sic*], the artist, who has requested to paint my picture. This was the second sitting. The portrait looked dimly out from the canvass, as from a cloud, with something that I could recognize as my outline; but no strong resemblance as yet. I have had three portraits taken before this; a picture, a miniature, and a crayon-sketch; neither of them satisfactory to those most familiar with my phiz. In fact, there is no such thing as a true portrait; they are all delusions; and I never saw any two alike, nor, hardly, any two that I could recognize, merely by the portraits themselves, as being of the same man.

—Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The American Notebooks*, 5 May 1850

In its treatment of a European portraitist arriving in the American colonies with neither apparent knowledge of nor interest in local history and culture, Nathaniel Hawthorne's tale "The Prophetic Pictures" (1837) critiques ethnographic presumption. In this respect the story resembles Harriet Martineau's *Society in America*, which was also published in 1837 and which begins with the passage from the *Edinburgh Review* quoted above.<sup>1</sup> Hawthorne's portraitist elects to paint a couple on the cusp of marriage and, registering psychic turmoil in the future husband, Walter Ludlow, decides that the man is on the brink of madness and bound to attack his bride Elinor. The wedding portraits obscurely reveal this prediction to the young couple, and in the story's climax Walter acts on the paintings' suggestion and does indeed attack his wife. The portraitist considers his so-called ability to read essential character an innate gift, but he fails to register the difficulties of "seiz[ing] a character" and "delineat[ing] it with truth and impressiveness," and ignores especially the possibility that he may be recording only his "own optical delusions." Hawthorne faults him for "fail[ing] to see the disorder of his own [bosom]" and characterizes him as "the semblance, perhaps the reality, of a madman"—a condition that is due largely, the tale intimates, to ethnographic hubris.<sup>2</sup> Lacking the interpretive humility to which Martineau aspires in *Society in America*, the artist becomes not merely a detached observer but an active participant in the events of the story: in his apparent effort to warn the couple, he may well precipitate the very attack he imagines he has predicted.

"The Prophetic Pictures," from this vantage point, is a critique of what Amanda Anderson has termed cosmopolitan detachment.<sup>3</sup> Because the portraitist, to whom Walter glowingly refers as "a true cosmopolite," is insensitive to local political tensions, he lacks the ability to contextualize the genuine psychic turmoil that grips his subjects (*CE*, 9:166). He thus constructs an explanatory narrative that elides both politics and history, postulating instead a narrowly domestic crisis. The story suggests that detachment is only productive insofar as the cosmopolitan spectator is intimately familiar with the local cultures under observation; lacking such familiarity, the spectator will invariably misperceive and consequently misrepresent what he

or she ostensibly observes.

Were the portraitist familiar with eighteenth-century Massachusetts, the story implies, he would be able to contextualize Walter's anxieties and register their part in a general social malaise. These tensions, to which the story alludes in several instances, culminate historically in the American Revolution. In other words, the signs in Walter that the portraitist apparently attributes to incipient madness are more likely symptomatic of tensions between Anglophilia and Anglophobia in the Boston of the 1720s, tensions that would erupt into revolutionary violence fifty years later. Ironically, the portraitist has the potential to anticipate the American Revolution, but fails to do so because he is oblivious to the larger cultural significance of his observations.

To perceive the story's critique, one must register its political content, something critics have been slow to do.<sup>4</sup> They have almost entirely overlooked the tale's many historical allusions, and have therefore been largely inattentive to the political contexts within which the domestic drama unfolds. Neal Frank Doubleday's interpretation of the setting typifies critical responses to these allusions: for Doubleday, the eighteenth-century setting is significant only to the extent that it provides "a Boston society developed enough to make use of a gifted and skillful portrait painter, but . . . far enough in the past to accommodate its Gothic vein, and close enough to witchcraft times for witchcraft to be entertained as a real possibility."<sup>5</sup> Michael Colacurcio has conclusively shown that readings like Doubleday's do not account for the historical complexities of Hawthorne's fiction,<sup>6</sup> and "The Prophetic Pictures" is unusual even in Hawthorne's historical fiction for the density of its historical allusions. The story is set, for instance, not at a vague moment in the early eighteenth century, but very precisely during the short governorship of William Burnet in 1728–29. Various historical figures named in the story—especially Mary Phips, Burnet, and Chief Justice Oliver—are themselves metonyms for specific moments in the colonial history of Massachusetts: respectively, the Salem witch crisis of 1692; the early eighteenth-century conflicts over governors' salaries; and 1776. Evidently, these were all moments of acute, internal crisis in

Massachusetts Bay. That "The Prophetic Pictures" so carefully locates its action at a particular moment and so directly points to other social crises in the history of Massachusetts suggests that the story meditates not only on artistic insight but also on colonial history; the personal drama of Walter and Elinor Ludlow transcribes political crisis into a domestic arena where Walter's attack on Elinor both adumbrates and displaces the American Revolution. Failing to perceive the story's political content, critics have ironically reproduced the interpretive errors committed by the portraitist himself; they have been guilty of the same kind of cosmopolitan misprision for which the story attacks the portraitist.

To say as much is not to claim that the story champions a narrowly provincial perspective over a cosmopolitan one: just as the portraitist is critiqued for his blinkered cosmopolitanism, so too are Walter and Elinor for a provincial timidity that results in slavish acquiescence to the portraitist's interpretation of them. Instead, the story invites a double perspective, both provincial and cosmopolitan, that allows one to read history poetically. Alongside its critique, that is, the story uses the portraitist's misreading of Walter and Elinor as an aesthetic resource. By reading Walter's psychic turmoil within a domestic idiom and according to gothic conventions, the portraitist unwittingly provides a means to symbolize the cultural tensions leading to the American Revolution. Walter's climactic attack on Elinor may substitute for the American Revolution, but in so doing it shows what the American Revolution uncannily resembles: the violent extromission of royalists from the nascent United States is similar at a national level to acts of violence in the domestic sphere. The portraitist's misprision functions in spite of itself as metaphor in the story's symbolic economy. However blinkered the portraitist's cosmopolitanism, it provides a mechanism whereby the story can productively negotiate between genres. The portraitist transcribes the traumas of American history into the idiom of gothic.



Barbara Groseclose's recent survey of nineteenth-century American art begins with the claim that "it's possible . . . to think of portraiture as America's first art, in time, and, on occasion, in repute."<sup>7</sup> This claim is an instructive one to read alongside "The Prophetic Pictures" because the story takes place during Burnet's governorship of 1728–29, the same years in which the American colonies acquired their first professional portraitist, the English painter John Smibert. If one accepts Groseclose's nomination of portraiture as America's "first art, in time," then Smibert's arrival in 1729 was a signal moment in the history of American culture; although Hawthorne's fictional artist is figured repeatedly as an alien to New England, he imports an art form that will subsequently be appropriated and naturalized, a process that Hawthorne apparently registers in the portraitist's immediate popularity. His arrival in Boston coincides with a primal moment in the history of art in America, and thus implicates (among other things) Hawthorne's own attempts to establish a career as a professional artist.<sup>8</sup>

Hawthorne would have been familiar with John Smibert's career from William Dunlap's *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* (1835), to which the story alludes in a crucial footnote. Although Smibert may be more important to the story for providing a date at which professional portraiture arrived in New England, reading "The Prophetic Pictures" alongside Smibert's biography also enriches elements of the tale by emphasizing how extraordinary a creature the portraitist is. Like Hawthorne's portraitist, Smibert was an immediate success in the American colonies, commissioned to paint the moneyed and influential in Boston: within five years of arriving, as recent biographer Richard Saunders records, Smibert had painted "more than one hundred" portraits.<sup>9</sup> But Smibert's popularity did not persist into the nineteenth century: Dunlap's history records the claim that he was "not an artist of the first rank."<sup>10</sup> In this nineteenth-century reappraisal (which has persisted to the present), Smibert's success derived less from his talent than from his novelty as the only professionally trained artist in colonial America.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, Smibert's studio was a more important contribution to American art than his own paintings, as Hawthorne seems to recognize. "The Prophetic Pictures" records Walter's and Elinor's awe in the portraitist's studio, which is almost certainly modeled on that of Smibert. Smibert's studio provided Bostonians with a glimpse of a wider world of art than otherwise existed in New England, and this glimpse persisted after Smibert's death in 1751 because his heirs did not disperse his estate until late in the eighteenth century. As Saunders notes, Smibert's studio "became a virtual museum to be seen by residents of Boston and culturally minded visitors to the city," including such local artists as John Singleton Copley and Charles Willson Peale. Smibert bought both original paintings and copies of famous ones, as well as casts of sculpture, so that, in Saunders's words, "Smibert's collection was a microcosm of the English art world transported to America."<sup>12</sup>

Smibert differs from Hawthorne's portraitist in important respects. The portraitist travels to the colonies because in Europe there is "nothing more for his powerful mind to learn": "He had therefore visited a world, whither none of his professional brethren had preceded him, to feast his eyes on visible images, that were noble and picturesque, yet had never been transferred to canvass" (*CE*, 9:168). Smibert's reasons were more prosaic. He traveled to the colonies in the company of Bishop Berkeley with the initial intention of becoming the instructor of art at a university Berkeley hoped to establish in Bermuda. Moreover, according to a contemporary's report, Smibert "was not contented [in London], to be on a level with some of the best painters. [*sic*] but desired to be w[h]ere he might at the present, be lookt on as at the top."<sup>13</sup> Once arrived in Boston, Smibert was far from a seemingly mad isolate; he married a Bostonian and settled into a conventional life, comfortably conservative.

Smibert's lackluster talents as a painter and his relatively conventional career in America bear no resemblance to the talents and career of Hawthorne's fictional portraitist, of whose extravagant gifts the story constantly reminds us. Hawthorne's point, I would argue, is not to suggest that the portraitist is less talented than he seems, and that the Bostonians are too easily



impressed by abilities that are, in actuality, modest: his problem is not one of talent but one of perspective. An acquaintance with Smibert's history emphasizes how impossibly anachronistic Hawthorne's painter is in the early eighteenth century, a fact that intensifies his alienation from the Bostonians he paints. Smibert's value to a reading of "The Prophetic Pictures" is therefore (at least) twofold: first and foremost, he provides a date for the inception of professional portraiture in America, and thus emphasizes that the story takes place at a primal moment in American art history; and second, he shows, in his relative mediocrity and conventionality, the doubled alienation—cultural and historical—of the fictional portraitist.

However relevant Smibert may be to "The Prophetic Pictures," criticism has focused more attention on another painter, one whom Hawthorne names in a footnote at the beginning of the story. This note states that "The Prophetic Pictures" "was suggested by an anecdote of Stuart, related in Dunlap's *History of the Arts of Design*" (CE, 9:166). Gilbert Charles Stuart is chiefly significant as the portraitist of George Washington and other "founding fathers," and William Dunlap's 1835 history of art was one of the first attempts to codify a distinctively American artistic tradition; by referring to Dunlap's anecdote of Stuart, the story unambiguously announces that it engages with issues of American identity and nationhood. Accordingly, the narrative of Walter's and Elinor's portraits relates to discourses on "America." Before arguing how the plot of "The Prophetic Pictures" may specifically intersect with issues of American nationhood, however, I shall first examine the portraitist's three central claims: first, that he is able to see the "inmost" Walter; second, that he is able to prophesy how Walter's latent tendencies will manifest themselves; and third, that he predicts rather than instigates Walter's attack.

Although it remains uncertain which anecdote in Dunlap's *History* Hawthorne has in mind, critics have generally assumed that he refers to the account of Stuart's portrait of a General Phipps.<sup>14</sup> Dunlap writes:

Lord Mulgrave, whose name was Phipps, employed Stuart to paint the portrait of his brother,

General Phipps, previous to his going abroad. On seeing the picture, which he did not until it was finished, Mulgrave exclaimed, "What is this?—this is very strange!" and stood gazing at the portrait. "I have painted your brother as I saw him," said the artist. "I see insanity in that face," was the brother's remark. The general went to India, and the first account his brother had of him was that of suicide from insanity. He went mad and cut his throat. It is thus that the real portrait painter dives into the recesses of his sitters' minds, and displays strength or weakness upon the surface of his canvas.<sup>15</sup>

Dunlap affirms without irony the romantic commonplace of the artist's preternatural insight, and in "The Prophetic Pictures" both Walter Ludlow and the portraitist himself echo this *idée reçue*. Walter claims that the portraitist is reputed to paint "not merely a man's features, but his mind and heart," while the portraitist states that the "artist—the true artist—must look beneath the exterior": "It is his gift—his proudest, but often a melancholy one—to see the inmost soul, and, by a power indefinable even to himself, to make it glow or darken upon the canvass" (*CE*, 9:167, 175). As Caren Irr notes, this claim reflects notions of "Gothic craftsmanship—where it is the subject, not the artist, whose personality is imprinted on the work."<sup>16</sup> Such notions recur in discussions of Stuart: Dunlap and Hawthorne are both repeating claims made elsewhere. Thomas Neagle, an artist acquainted with Stuart, said of him that

his object is to counterfeit the soul—to throw the intelligence of expression into the face of his picture—to catch the thoughts . . . the disposition, and with such elegant touches, that at a glance his copy is sufficient to afford an understanding of the mind of the original.<sup>17</sup>

But whereas writers like Neagle and Dunlap earnestly advance these propositions, Hawthorne encodes an ambiguity into

"The Prophetic Pictures" that suggests an ironic deflation of the artist's pretensions.

To assume that the story confirms these pretensions to insight is to ignore events in the story that cast doubt on their legitimacy. Alan Trachtenberg has argued that Hawthorne subverts the similar claims that Holgrave makes of daguerreotypy in *The House of the Seven Gables*;<sup>18</sup> the argument for Hawthorne's skepticism in this regard is especially strong in "The Prophetic Pictures." Above all, Walter's psychological turmoil is not internal but already manifestly visible on the surface. Hawthorne makes it perfectly clear that something is troubling Walter: when touring the portraitist's studio, Walter repeatedly makes comments that betray an extraordinary anxiety about his mental or moral state. Looking first at a painting of St. Peter and then at a portrait of Benjamin Colman, Walter announces discomfort at their expressions. St. Peter "has a fierce and ugly scowl," and Colman seems to "rebuke" the young man "for some suspected iniquity" (*CE*, 9:170, 171). Later, when Walter and Elinor first see their completed portraits, Walter is relieved that "no dark passions can gather on [their] faces" (*CE*, 9:173). That Walter's anxieties are so clearly evident—every time he speaks he reveals them—counters the painter's claims to see the "inmost soul" (*CE*, 9:175). Less evident—what the portraitist cannot claim to have discovered—are the source and necessary consequence of these anxieties. Certainly nothing in Walter's conduct supports the painter's assumption that he is given to murder.

The narrative neither confirms nor refutes the portraitist's interpretation of the tendency of Walter's self-loathing, but it explicitly attacks the portraitist himself. The narrator charges that the painter is "insulated from the mass of human kind" and that, although "gentle in manner, and upright in intent and action, he [does] not possess kindly feelings; his heart [is] cold" (*CE*, 9:178). Like so many characters in Hawthorne's oeuvre who divorce themselves from the normalizing and conservative influences of society—Hester Prynne is the classic example—the unregulated painter's "thoughts, desires, and hopes . . . become extravagant, and he the semblance, perhaps the reality, of a madman" (*CE*, 9:180). By indicating that the painter may himself be mad, Hawthorne casts doubt on his

ability to perceive insanity in Walter. Hawthorne writes that the painter

had caught from the duskiness of the future—at least, so he fancied—a fearful secret, and had obscurely revealed it on the portraits. So much of himself—of his imagination and all other powers—had been lavished on the study of Walter and Elinor, that he almost regarded them as creations of his own, like the thousands with which he had peopled the realms of Picture. (*CE*, 9:179, emphasis added)

By suggesting that the painter's perception of the future is a freak of his own fancy, Hawthorne subverts the authority of the painter's prophetic insight and ironizes his propensity to see Walter and Elinor as his own creations. For in effect, the narrator implies, the painter *has* created them.

The story's critique of the painter has far-reaching reverberations: not only does it subvert gothic theories of portraiture, but it proleptically complicates theories of more recent vintage as well, which argue that portraiture is a collaboration between artist and subject. For instance, Linda Nochlin notes that the portrait encodes a "meeting of two subjectivities" because portraitist and subject are equally present in the final portrait.<sup>19</sup> Describing the conventional modern logic of the relationship between portrayer and portrayed, Ernst van Alphen argues that

the artistic portrait differs . . . from the photographic portrait as used in legal and medical institutions, by doing slightly more than just referring to somebody. It is more than documentation. The portrayer proves her or his originality and artistic power by *consolidating* the self of the portrayed. Although the portrait refers to an original self already present, this self needs its portrayal in order to increase its own being. The portrayer has enriched the

interiority of the portrayed's self by bestowing exterior form to it.<sup>20</sup>

But this understanding of the relationship between portrayer and portrayed assumes that the one is capable of perceiving the "interiority" of the other, a notion that is ultimately impossible to confirm. Alongside the possibility that the portraitist of "The Prophetic Pictures" has the requisite insight into Walter's hidden character, there exists the possibility that in the "meeting of two subjectivities" he has imposed his own interpretation of Walter's anxieties and represented this imposition as an objective perception of "the inmost soul." In this case, the meeting is not one between equals but a contest of which Walter is scarcely conscious and which the portraitist easily wins.

Thus, rather than identify the inevitable tendency of Walter's and Elinor's anxieties based on an accurate reading of their interiority, the painter in his fancy may give a specific structure to what was previously amorphous. The couple fear Walter's dark passions, but both their fear and his passion are inchoate, or at least the lovers lack the vocabulary to understand them. The painter projects in his portraits and sketch of the couple a violent fantasy of his own: far from being a "polished" "mirror" of others, his paintings become a mirror of his distorted imagination (*CE*, 9:173). The lovers, intimidated by the portraitist's worldly acumen, read the portraits (and in Elinor's case also the sketch) as true characterizations of themselves and of their relationship; in doing so they relinquish their independence of action. At the story's conclusion, Walter and Elinor are literally the creatures of the portraitist, who stands "like a magician, controlling the phantoms which he had evoked" (*CE*, 9:182).

If Walter and Elinor are "phantoms" "evoked" by the portraitist, then one may readily doubt that Walter has any autonomy in his attack on Elinor. Hawthorne suggests an alternate possibility—that the painter may instigate the attack. In a crucial incident, even as the painter presents Walter and Elinor with portraits that only "obscurely reveal[1]" what he takes to be the future, he also shows Elinor a sketch that more explicitly predicts the attack (*CE*, 9:179). Whether Walter also sees the image

remains unclear: "Turning from the table," the narrator states, "[Elinor] perceived that Walter had advanced near enough to have seen the sketch, though she could not determine whether it had caught his eye" (*CE*, 9:176). If Walter has seen the sketch, then the portraitist's powers do not lie in his profound insight into character. He is more rhetorician than prophet. Because Hawthorne does not resolve the ambiguity, the story tenders the possibility on the one hand that the artist has made an accurate prophecy, predicated on an equally accurate reading of Walter's character, and on the other hand that the painter's preeminent talent lies in persuading his interlocutors to credit his interpretations.

The portraitist's attempt to warn Elinor against Walter's threat is therefore a crucial moment, and some of the larger issues implicated in it have been implied already in the story's early historical allusions. When Walter rhapsodizes about the painter, he associates him with two doctors, Mather and Boylston. The painter has not only such linguistic (and presumably theological) expertise that he can match Mather's fluency in Hebrew but also such scientific expertise that he can "give lectures in anatomy" to Boylston (*CE*, 9:166). Walter refers to these men only to illustrate the painter's virtuosity. But for Hawthorne to invoke their names together also recalls their alliance during the smallpox inoculation crisis in the early 1720s.

The inoculation controversy is a minor though important topic in Hawthorne criticism owing both to Hawthorne's account of it in *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair* (1842) and to Colacurcio's reading of "Lady Eleanore's Mantle" (1838) in *The Province of Piety*.<sup>21</sup> Briefly: When smallpox began to break out in Boston in June 1721, Cotton Mather sent a letter to Boston's medical doctors urging inoculation; as Perry Miller reports, only "Boylston was persuaded, and his way of proceeding warily was to experiment upon his own child and upon two slaves."<sup>22</sup> Boylston's method, gleaned from Mather's readings in the *Transactions of the Royal Society*, entailed collecting pus from the poxes of the infected and introducing it into the blood of a healthy subject; the latter would contract a weak form of the virus and thereafter, at least in theory, be immune. As historians of the

crisis universally observe, the science behind inoculation was sound, and those who advocated it would eventually be vindicated, but in 1721, as Gerard B. Warden notes, "the deliberate spreading of smallpox by inoculation seemed criminal stupidity while almost every house in town flew a quarantine flag and while the procession of coffins to the graveyards seemed endless."<sup>23</sup> The quite reasonable fear on the part of inoculation's critics (among them James and Benjamin Franklin) was that the subjects exposed to an etiolated version of smallpox might nevertheless be contagious and capable of transmitting the virulent form of the disease to others, a danger all the more pressing because Boylston had not thought to isolate his patients. According to Warden, "the antagonism became so great that one Bostonian threw a bomb through Cotton Mather's window."<sup>24</sup>

The painter's relationship to Walter and Elinor echoes the relationship of doctor to patient in the inoculation crisis. The painter seems to assume that in showing Elinor the sketch portending Walter's assault, in exposing her to a lesser shock from which she can recover, he will inoculate her against the foreboding assault. Yet when he exposes the sketch to Elinor, he also exposes it to Walter, with less salubrious results. Alternatively, in exposing Elinor, he simply makes her fatalistic and passive; or, possibly, in exposing her he makes her ostensible foreknowledge contagious, so that by virtue of his proximity to her, Walter also becomes pathologically aware of the painter's predictions, with tragic results for both. Most importantly, the painter may not be a neutral observer, but an active agent of an impending psychological collapse.

If Walter and Elinor come to enact the painter's fantasy rather than their own destiny, then the provenance of his fantasy deserves scrutiny. One possibility is that the painter's projections are akin to those in "Young Goodman Brown" and "Alice Doane's Appeal," as these stories have been interpreted by Colacurcio and others: such readings argue that the guilt Brown or Leonard Doane attributes to others in fact stems from his own fantasy life, so that Brown suspects everybody of the evil he both fears and harbors within himself, and Leonard Doane projects his guilty fantasy of committing incest with his

sister Alice onto Walter Brome.<sup>25</sup> But “The Prophetic Pictures” provides insufficient evidence to affirm that something comparable takes place.

Instead of supposing that the story dramatizes another instance of guilty projection, I incline to emphasize two qualities with which Hawthorne imbues his portraitist: an anachronistic sensibility and, far more importantly, a provenance outside of New England that makes him ignorant of its culture and narrows the spectrum of explanations available to him. The “picturesque vagaries of an artist’s idle moments” lying scattered on a table in the artist’s apartment attest to his anachronistic sensibility. Gothic tropes like “ivied church-towers, . . . old thunder stricken trees, oriented and antique costume” suggest an aesthetic project at odds with the first third of the eighteenth century (*CE*, 9:175). The painter’s religious attitude towards nature is similarly anachronistic: he declines to “profane” the natural spectacles he sacralizes; on his tour of New England and New York, he lies “in a canoe on the bosom of Lake George, making his soul the mirror of its loveliness and grandeur” and at Niagara flings “his hopeless pencil down the precipice, feeling that he could as soon paint the roar, as aught else that goes to make up the wondrous cataract” (*CE*, 9:177, 178). His adoration of these conventional sites of the American sublime suggests that, as much as he is a tourist in space, he is also a tourist in time. As Millicent Bell puts it, he “is a figure out of the nineteenth century”;<sup>26</sup> the colonial Americans he meets judge him by the standards of the eighteenth century, and conversely, he judges them by the standards of the nineteenth. At the same time, the painter evinces no familiarity with the culture of New England: as we shall see, it is Walter and Elinor who situate the painter’s subjects in their social and political contexts; the painter appears oblivious to such contexts, interested exclusively in subjects whose physiognomies suggest interesting psychological depths. Indeed, the story declines to situate the portraitist in any specific national context: it affirms only that he comes from Europe. The portraitist’s cosmopolitan rootlessness is absolute.

As such, the painter arrives in Boston with two liabilities that prevent him from interpreting what Perry Miller called the



New England mind. First, his cosmopolitanism deprives him of sensitivity to local cultural tensions, and is thus a hermeneutic liability: to interpret a New England subject, the painter must learn to see New Englandly. Second, he inclines to see through a nineteenth-century prism. The unsurprising result is that the painter reads Walter's turbulent psyche generically, as repressed sexual hostility, and resorts to the genre that, both pre- and post-Freud, best accommodates such repression: the gothic. Thus the violent fulfillment of the painter's "prophecy" is at root sexual. Walter, divested of autonomy, "abandon[s] himself to the [picture's] spell of evil influence" and, "drawing a knife," assaults Elinor, supporting her in a swoon and aiming his phallic knife at her "bosom" (*CE*, 9:181). The point, then, is not that the painter himself necessarily projects his own repressed misogyny onto Walter, but that his ideological and aesthetic limitations lead him to see Walter and Elinor within this narrative of sexual predator and prey.

To arrive at an alternate reading that accounts for the crisis brewing in their marriage, we must reject the painter's interpretation as an anachronistic and culturally blinkered misprision—or at least as a transcription of some more complex conflict into a narrowly domestic register—and look instead to the historical data Hawthorne takes care to provide. What becomes clear from situating Walter and Elinor more precisely in their context is that the two are riven by the political, religious, and social tensions of early eighteenth-century Boston.



David Levin argues in his study of romantic historiography that "the romantic historian considered himself a painter" and drew a parallel between history and painting so often that "one might easily dismiss it as a cliché."<sup>27</sup> "The Prophetic Pictures" reverses the terms of this cliché in its account of a portraitist who imagines himself to be a historian. "O glorious Art!" he rhapsodizes:

The innumerable forms, that wander in nothingness, start into being at thy beck. The dead live again. Thou recallest them to their old

scenes, and givest their gray shadows the lustre of a better life, at once earthly and immortal. Thou snatchest back the fleeting moments of History. With thee, there is no Past; for, at thy touch, all that is great becomes forever present; and illustrious men live through long ages, in the visible performance of the very deeds, which made them what they are. (*CE*, 9:179)

That the portraitist demonstrates no familiarity with the history of Massachusetts Bay makes his rhapsody to art's function as history deeply ironic: the story subverts the conventional equation between history and portraiture by suggesting that the portraitist thoroughly and unwittingly displaces social context and history from his paintings. This displacement is all the more ironic since it occurs in the work of one of the preeminent historical novelists of the nineteenth century.<sup>28</sup>

Hawthorne's fiction typically represents New England in the 1720s and 1730s in a crisis deriving from the combined intrusion into Puritan New England of secularization and rationalism. In *The House of the Seven Gables*, Gervayse Pyncheon abandons Puritan asceticism for luxuries associated with Europe; the narrator attacks him for his material excess and denigrates him as effeminate. In "The Minister's Black Veil," which takes place in part during Jonathan Belcher's tenure as governor from 1730 to 1741, Parson Hooper's Milford congregation has lost its Puritan consciousness of sin, and thus is all the more discomfited by his assumption of the veil. Crucially, in "Lady Eleanore's Mantle," which occurs during the smallpox epidemic of 1721–22, the Bostonians cravenly applaud when Lady Eleanore Rochcliffe humiliates the prostrate Jervase Helwyse, and are generally sycophantic in the face of her aristocratic pride. In each of these fictions, the vestiges of Bostonian Puritanism—construed as asceticism, moral seriousness, and, crucially, a masculinized proto-American identity—are in conflict with its tendency toward material luxury and moral frivolity, a tendency the stories associate with England and aristocracy. In both *The House of the Seven Gables* and "Lady Eleanore's Mantle," characters' anti-democratic tendencies are punished: Pyncheon loses his

daughter Alice, and Eleanore both contracts smallpox and is burned in effigy by Bostonians who blame her for the epidemic. Clearly, "Lady Eleanore's Mantle," in which another Eleanore becomes a target of another outburst of masculine acrimony, is an important intertext for "The Prophetic Pictures."<sup>29</sup> Reading the latter alongside "Lady Eleanore's Mantle" suggests the political significance of Walter's climactic assault. It too is a figure of the Revolution, or rather, in lieu of being reconcilable with the typology of the Revolution, Walter's attack substitutes violent misogyny for violent patriotism.

If "The Prophetic Pictures" is consistent with Hawthorne's other portraits of early eighteenth-century Boston, it also is both prospective and retrospective. The portraits that hang in the painter's apartments invoke episodes in the history of Massachusetts Bay from the 1690s to the 1770s. Mary Phips, Governor William Burnet, Elisha Cooke Jr., John Winslow, and Rev. Dr. Benjamin Colman have had their portraits painted, and one of the Olivers has commissioned, or hopes to commission, a painting—although, tellingly, the painter substitutes the portraits of Walter and Elinor for that of Oliver and his wife. *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair*, the children's history of Massachusetts that Hawthorne wrote in the early 1840s, is a useful intertext here, since it refers to all of the figures in the above catalog. But unlike "The Prophetic Pictures," *Grandfather's Chair* explicitly situates those figures in the historical moments they helped to define. Thus John Winslow—whose portrait in "The Prophetic Pictures" is that of "a very young man" who nevertheless wears "the expression of warlike enterprise, which long afterwards [shall make] him a distinguished general" (*CE*, 9:170)—is referred to in *Grandfather's Chair* in connection with the forced Acadian displacement of the 1750s (a displacement the text later links to the Tory exile, so that one cultural group's diaspora becomes the type of the other).<sup>30</sup> Where *Grandfather's Chair* treats the history of Massachusetts diachronically, "The Prophetic Pictures" reproduces the conflation of past, present, and future that the portraitist describes as the power of his art, bringing all into "that narrow strip of sunlight, which we call Now" (*CE*, 9:179). Unlike "The Prophetic Pictures," however, *Grandfather's Chair* culminates in the American Revolution.

Hawthorne deploys his historical allusions to evoke political and denominational conflict between Massachusetts and England. He sets the action of "The Prophetic Pictures" at some point during the brief governorship of William Burnet (meaning that the story takes place between Burnet's arrival in Boston on 13 July 1728 and his death on 7 September 1729). The "communication from the House of Representatives" eliciting the governor's "most sharp response" (*CE*, 9:170) in the lovers' interpretation of Burnet's portrait probably refers to a specific exchange that took place on 31 August and 3 September 1728; Thomas Hutchinson reprints these letters in their entirety in *The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts-Bay*, a source with which Hawthorne was familiar.<sup>31</sup> The letters relate to Burnet's chief concern throughout his brief governorship—that is, to establish for the position a permanent and fixed salary, in which project the House of Representatives under Elisha Cooke Jr. continuously opposed him. The conflict was not a petty one. For the House to make the governor's salary permanent would be to relinquish a measure of control over his actions. Disputes over gubernatorial salaries were a recurring problem in the American colonies: conflict had earlier erupted during Samuel Shute's governorship. But Miller suggests that Burnet was a victim of a "House [that] behaved even more arrogantly toward Burnet than they had against Shute," employing methods not only "less than heroic" but even "crude, dirty, [and] hypocritical."<sup>32</sup> Hutchinson (by no means an impartial historian) links Burnet's death in 1729 in part to exhaustion from his disputes with the House. Complicating the squabble was Burnet's Anglicanism (his father was an Anglican bishop who had written a history of the Stuart Restoration; according to Warden, the younger Burnet "quickly became involved in plots to have an Anglican bishop imposed on the colonies").<sup>33</sup> In the reaction of Hawthorne's affianced couple to Cooke's portrait, which hangs in the portraitist's studio alongside that of his opponent, Cooke's "puritanical" bearing is explicitly linked to his success as a "popular leader" (*CE*, 9:170). The dispute between Cooke and Burnet plays out in the story and in history along two mutually constitutive axes, political and denominational.<sup>34</sup>

Political meanings also inform the lovers' interpretation of the study of "the ancient lady of Sir William Phips," the next painting to which the story refers. The description of the portrait emphasizes Mary's aristocratic qualities: Sir William's lady, "an imperious old dame," eyes her portrait's viewers; rather than observing Calvinist proscriptions against extravagance in dress, Phips appears ostentatiously "in ruff and farthingale," the ruff pointedly echoing the one Elinor embroiders in the story's opening scene (*CE*, 9:170, 167). Although William Phips owed his governorship in part to Increase Mather's efforts on his behalf, Hawthorne here enlists Mary on the "imperious," royalist side of the developing political axis.

Including a portrait of Mary Phips in the portraitist's studio is a considerable anachronism, since she died almost a quarter of a century before the action of the story, in 1706. The anachronism can be explained in part as a way to relate the Salem witch trials to the events of the main plot, implying that Walter's attack on Elinor is in some measure similar to the accusations leveled against Mary Phips. The tradition that Mary Phips was "not unsuspected of witchcraft" (*CE*, 9:170) began with Robert Calef, whose scathing critique of the trials, *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, asserts that William Phips ended the trials only once she was accused. Calef states:

If it be true what was said at the Counsel-board, in answer to the commendations of Sir *William*, for his stopping the proceedings about Witchcraft, *viz.* That it was high time for him to stop it, his own Lady being accused; if that Assertion were a truth, then *New-England* may seem to be more beholden to the accusers for accusing of her, and thereby necessitating a stop, than to Sir *William*, or to the Advice that was given him by his Pastor.<sup>35</sup>

Hawthorne discloses his familiarity with Calef's accusation in *Grandfather's Chair* and in "Young Goodman Brown." At the climax of a catalog of accused witches, Grandfather tells his auditors: "The boldest thing that the accusers did . . . was to

cry out against the governor's own beloved wife. Yes, the lady of Sir William Phips was accused of being a witch, and of flying through the air to attend witch meetings. When the governor [Phips] heard this, he probably trembled, so that our great chair shook beneath him" (*CE*, 6:79). And when the narrator surveys the witches' meeting in "Young Goodman Brown," he reports that "some affirm, that the lady of the governor was there" (*CE*, 10:85).

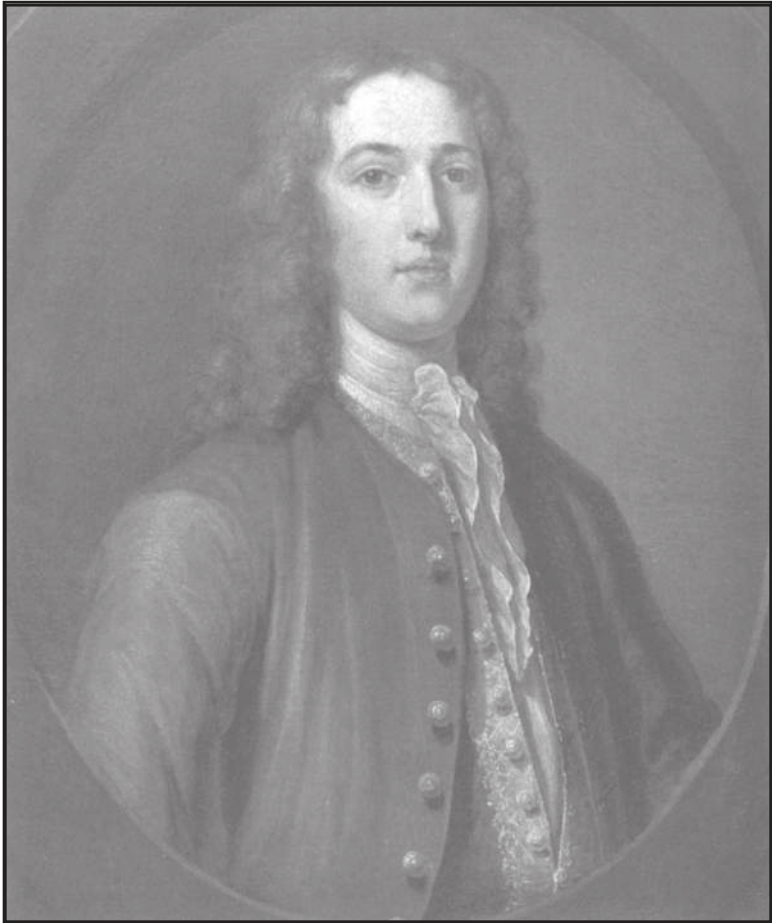
The story's veiled allusion to the Salem witch trials is particularly charged, since it would appear to implicate the witch trials in the same New England–Old England contest informing the dispute between Burnet and the House under Cooke. Hawthorne interpreted the witch trials politically elsewhere in his oeuvre: in *The House of the Seven Gables* Colonel Pyncheon seemingly manipulates events in the Salem of 1692 to dispossess Maule of his property, so that accusations of witchcraft become a weapon of the wealthy against the poor in the agon of class relations. In "The Prophetic Pictures," however, the political valences of 1692 differ: accusations of witchcraft are seemingly a popular weapon used against "imperious" authority. In this tale, that is, 1692 obscurely reveals 1776. If popular Anglophobia tends in New England to the final violent extromission of royalists that is the American Revolution, then to cast the Salem witch trials as Anglophobic is to implicate the crisis in the typology of independence: the accusers and judges of 1692 anticipate the patriots of 1776.

Where Mary Phips serves as a metonym for 1692, the couple whose prospective portrait the painter abandons when presented with the enticing spectacle of Walter and Elinor points forward to the Revolution. Determined to manifest in paint the crisis he imagines is latent in their relationship, the painter asserts to Walter and Elinor, "Your wishes shall be gratified, though I disappoint the chief Justice and Madam Oliver" (*CE*, 9:171). Oliver is, of course, a charged name. Given the role of the Olivers in the Revolution—Andrew Oliver was hanged in effigy from the Liberty Tree in the 1765 Stamp Act crisis, and signally, Peter Oliver wrote a history of the American Revolution from a Tory perspective—a nineteenth-century American reader would have difficulty not associating the name Oliver with Toryism.

Certainly, Hawthorne made this association.<sup>36</sup> In *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair*, there is another "Chief Justice Oliver," this one specifically identified as Peter Oliver. Oliver here stands as a symbol for the Tory loyalists disenfranchised in the Revolution, and Hawthorne uses him to articulate the Tories' post-Revolutionary psychic turmoil. This turmoil has palpable affinities with the condition of Walter Ludlow: "Throughout the remainder of his days," Hawthorne writes, "Chief Justice Oliver was agitated with . . . conflicting emotions": "Deep love and fierce resentment burned in one flame within his breast. Anathemas struggled with benedictions. He felt as if one breath of his native air would renew his life, yet would have died, rather than breathe the same air with rebels" (*CE*, 6:196). In Oliver's case the love and resentment that perturb him derive not from a domestic but from a political source.

A suggestive remark in *The American Notebooks* describing paintings that Hawthorne found at the Essex Historical Society corroborates the equation of this Peter Oliver with the Chief Justice Oliver of "The Prophetic Pictures." After describing images of Leverett, Pepperell, Endicott, and Pyncheon, Hawthorne turns to a series of "family portraits of the Olivers" (*CE*, 8:154). He first notes the general extravagance of their clothing, and then refers specifically to Peter Oliver, who "was crazy, [and] used to fight with these family pictures in the old Mansion House; and the face and breast of one lady bear cuts and stabs inflicted by him" (*CE*, 8:154–55).<sup>37</sup> Oliver enacts on a painting of a woman what Walter Ludlow attempts on Elinor herself. Like Peter Oliver, Walter Ludlow confuses sign with referent; but, whereas Oliver substitutes the painting for its subject, Ludlow substitutes the flesh-and-blood Elinor for the one coded as his victim in the portrait.

In his allusion to Chief Justice Oliver, one may infer, Hawthorne specifically means Peter Oliver, who must be linked to the Tories alienated in the American Revolution; but because the portraitist substitutes the Ludlows for the Olivers, the political undercurrents of New England's dis-ease remain largely mystified. Still, as the anecdote from the *American Notebooks* suggests, portraiture carries with it political meaning. Hawthorne responds to the paintings at the Essex Historical Society by as-



*Judge Peter Oliver, 1734. From a portrait by John Smibert.  
Courtesy of Andrew Oliver, Washington, DC.*



sociating their subjects with anti-democratic energies: "Nothing gives a stronger idea of old worm-eaten aristocracy—of a family being crazy with age, and of its being time that it was extinct—than these black, dusty, faded, antique-dressed portraits" (*CE*, 8:155). To some extent, this association of portraiture with aristocracy provides a useful gloss on the portrait in much (not all) of Hawthorne's fiction: the Pyncheons, presumptive aristocrats, have a similarly "black, dusty, faded, antique-dressed" portrait hanging in the House of the Seven Gables; in "Edward Randolph's Portrait," Captain Lincoln contemplates the portrait of Edward Randolph and fears some affinity between his kinsman Thomas Hutchinson and the "arch enemy of New England"—he who "obtained the repeal of the first provincial charter" with its "almost democratic privileges"—portrayed therein (*CE*, 9:261–62). The madness of Peter Oliver, like that of Walter Ludlow, reflects the tension of an American cast in the role of an aristocrat. In "The Old Tory," Hawthorne performs an act of ventriloquism analogous to the one he performs in *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair* when he describes Peter Oliver. Hawthorne imagines this Tory as internally divided, driven at once by antipathy for and a vestigial identification with the American forces; and when he contemplates the number of dead occasioned by the war, he castigates himself for his tears, "since half of them are shed for rebels!" (*CE*, 11:157). Tories in Hawthorne's fiction tend to be open objects of the narrator's sympathy, largely because, caught as they are between conflicting loyalties, they are tragic figures.<sup>38</sup>

Inevitably, one will incline to read Walter and Elinor's conflict in relation to these allusions. Significantly, however, the conflict between Walter and Elinor cannot easily be resolved into an allegory where one stands for revolutionaries and another stands for Tories. If the ruff connects Elinor to Mary Phips, and if Phips is the victim of popular animus, then one would incline to read Walter's attack as symbolic of a popular, proto-American uprising against empire and its signs, femininity and material excess. Yet if one links Walter's attack on Elinor to Peter Oliver's attacks on the portrait preserved in the Essex Historical Institute, then one would read Walter's madness in relation to a "worm-eaten aristocracy." But this inconsistency may be the story's point: the tensions internal



*Mrs. Peter Oliver (Mary Clark Oliver), 1734.*  
*From a portrait by John Smibert.*  
Courtesy of Andrew Oliver, Washington, DC.

to the colonies create turmoil in colonial subjects precisely because they cannot easily be resolved. The central implication of the allusions is that Walter and Elinor do not enact a purely domestic tragedy; instead, the story suggests that for Hawthorne the Revolution was akin to domestic violence. Like “My Kinsman, Major Molineux,” “The Prophetic Pictures” suggests that the Revolution was tragic in that, like all civil conflicts, it corrupted political relationships that ought to be predicated on affection into ones predicated on violence. Although the portraitist, according to this reading, misinterprets the Ludlow crisis, his misprision is instructive because of the comment it unwittingly makes on the American Revolution itself.



Amanda Anderson has suggested that Victorian discourses on cosmopolitanism reflect “deeply felt concerns about the promises and challenges of modernity,” and that the Victorian attitude to cosmopolitanism was essentially dialectical:

[Figures like] the dandy, the Jew, and the fallen woman . . . respectively focused anxieties about ironic distance, rootlessness, and heightened exile, while the doctor, the writer, and the professional tended to represent the distinct promises of modernity: progressive knowledge, full comprehension of the social totality, and the possibilities of transformative self-understanding.<sup>39</sup>

Detachment is evidently a central topic in Hawthorne’s stories and novels, where dandies, fallen women, doctors, and writers abound: a study of cosmopolitanism and modernity in his fiction waits to be written. Hawthorne tends to be deeply critical of such alienated figures—his doctors and writers rarely carry the positive valuations that Anderson attributes to them—and his attitude toward cosmopolitanism is not in this sense dialectical. Understood in terms of conventional oppositions between cosmopolitanism and patriotism, Hawthorne is a patriot.

“The Prophetic Pictures” critiques cosmopolitanism on

two levels. In keeping with many of Hawthorne's studies of alienation, the cosmopolitan portraitist's lack of investment in a particular community threatens to drive him mad. This critique is vitiated somewhat in "The Prophetic Pictures" by Walter's psychological instability: provincialism is evidently no guarantor of psychological soundness. But "The Prophetic Pictures" also critiques cosmopolitanism more idiosyncratically. Hawthorne suggests that the painter lacks the specific knowledge of local culture that would allow him to situate the problems of Walter and Elinor beyond the strict confines of the domestic arena.<sup>40</sup>

Cosmopolitan detachment in art, then, has generic implications: the rootless observer, obliged to resort to explanatory schemas that do not rely on specific local knowledge, will opt for genres that are likewise moveable—the gothic, in this instance. The rooted observer, flush with knowledge of local cultures and histories, will have different genres available, although such local familiarity may impose its own generic limits, demanding, for instance, a literal-minded social realism. "The Prophetic Pictures" combines both genres, as the portraitist articulates his gothic reading of Walter and Elinor even as he is subject to the narrator's tacit critique for failing to register the specific cultural origins of Walter's anxiety.

If the portraitist's cosmopolitan detachment therefore prevents him from understanding Walter, it also provides interpretive opportunities to a different—and preferable—kind of detached observer, a reader familiar with both the conventions of gothic and the history of Massachusetts Bay. The portraitist's domestic, gothic interpretation of Walter's psychic traumas implicitly suggests that the social tensions within New England that will lead to the Revolution resemble the tensions within an abusive marriage: the Revolution, Hawthorne suggests, will be akin to domestic violence. The portraitist's indifference to local context allows a reader familiar with this context to perceive affinities between these different kinds of violence. Walter's attack on Elinor is an unwitting adumbration and allegory of the American Revolution, thus domestic violence on a national scale.

## NOTES

A significantly different version of this paper was presented at the Nathaniel Hawthorne Society's 2000 conference. I am indebted to David Diamond, Mark Jones, Laura Murray, Antje Rauwerda, and Stephen Ross for their responses to earlier drafts.

1. Harriet Martineau, *Society in America* (London: Saunders and Otley, 1837), 1:v–vi. Martineau's quotation comes from the anonymous "State of German Literature," *Edinburgh Review*, no. 46 [1827]: 309–10.
2. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The American Notebooks*, vol. 9 of *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, ed. William Charvat et al., 23 vols. (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1962–94), 180. All references to Hawthorne's writings are to the centenary edition, hereafter cited as *CE*, with volume and page number. This paper's second epigraph can be found in *CE*, 8:491.
3. Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001).
4. Instead critics have overwhelmingly read the story as a meditation on art and artists. Their readings tend to explore the tension between the narrator's indictment of the portraitist, on the one hand, and the narrator's ascription of high quality to the paintings, on the other. Because "The Prophetic Pictures" has been so neglected a text in the Hawthorne canon, these readings have shown little development in the course of half a century. In 1951, Mary Dichman writes, "Hawthorne implies [that] the artist's vision—absolute truth—is too bright for the eyes of most men; instead of lighting the obscurities of this world, it is apt to blind its beholders, causing them to blunder into crimes which seem the inspiration of devilish powers" ("Hawthorne's 'Prophetic Pictures,'" *American Literature* 23 [1951]: 201). In a 1962 study of Hawthorne's artists, Millicent Bell argues that "'The Prophetic Pictures' touches the tragic center of Hawthorne's view of the evil inherent in the artist's occupation," and that here "Hawthorne writes the most terrible indictment of the artist's nature that his work contains": "The painter of the 'prophetic pictures,' he tells us, had no kindly feelings; his heart was cold" (*Hawthorne's View of the Artist* [Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1962], 114, 126). And in a 1985 article, Stephanie Fay writes that "the nameless portrait painter . . . seems unequal as a character to his own best work as an artist": "[He is] at times self-deluded, unsympathetic, and complacent, yet . . . despite his failings, produces a

work [of] aesthetic and metaphoric importance" ("Light from Dark Corners: Works of Art in 'The Prophetic Pictures' and 'The Artist of the Beautiful,'" *Studies in American Fiction* 13 [Spring 1985]: 27). A secondary theme in criticism of the story concerns the painter's role in creating the future he predicts. According to the best instance of this criticism, by Melinda M. Ponder: "Although the narrator prevents the reader from determining the extent of the artist's role in shaping the course of his subjects' lives after he paints them, the tale raises the issue of how much the painter's art has affected the psyche of his material and viewers of his art. Have his associations shaped his subjects' perceptions of themselves so that they change the future course of their lives to conform to the painter's depiction of them?" (*Hawthorne's Early Narrative Art* [Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990], 200). Critics have not, however, related these topics to the story's historical specificity, and as such miss much of what really concerns Hawthorne.

5. Neal Frank Doubleday, *Hawthorne's Early Tales: A Critical Study* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1972), 110.
6. Michael Colacurcio characteristically urges greater attention to the historical allusions of the story than other critics have been prepared to pay, writing that "The Prophetic Pictures" "reveal[s] clear evidences of Hawthorne's persistent dialogue with the sources of American moral culture, and with its rejected alternatives as well," and that it "may yet tell us more about the status of art in the American provinces than in the haunted mind of Hawthorne" (*The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne's Early Tales* [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1984], 485, 650 n. 7). Colacurcio opts not to develop a reading of the story's historical dimensions, however.
7. Barbara Groseclose, *Nineteenth-Century American Art* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), 35.
8. See Frederick Newberry's engaging essay on "Drowne's Wooden Image," which addresses "Hawthorne's felt need for artistic forebears" and his anachronistic insertion of artistic surrogates into his fiction of the eighteenth century ("Fantasy, Reality, and Audience in Hawthorne's 'Drowne's Wooden Image,'" *Studies in the Novel* 23 [1991]: 33).
9. Richard Saunders, *John Smibert: Colonial America's First Portrait Painter* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1995), 72.
10. Quoted in William Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States* (Boston: C. E. Goodspeed, 1918), 1:23–24.
11. Hawthorne himself is likely to have been familiar with Smibert's

- work—or reproductions of it—prior to having written the story. *The American Notebooks* can only prove that Hawthorne knew Smibert's work after he had published "The Prophetic Pictures" in the *Token* in early 1837. In the 1830s, however, various Smibert portraits were in the collections of the Essex Historical Institute. Recalling a visit to the institute in August 1837, Hawthorne complained that "the dresses, embroidery, laces of the Oliver family are generally better done than the faces" (*CE*, 8:155). The Olivers were Smibert's frequent patrons; wittingly or unwittingly Hawthorne was critiquing Smibert's work.
12. Saunders, *John Smibert*, 123.
  13. Quoted in Saunders, *John Smibert*, 254.
  14. A recent exception is Caren Irr, who argues that Hawthorne must be alluding to Stuart's portraits of George Washington ("Literature as Proleptic Globalization, or a Prehistory of the New Intellectual Propriety," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 100 [2001]: 786).
  15. Dunlap, *History of the Rise and Progress*, 1:221–22.
  16. Irr, "Literature as Proleptic Globalization," 786.
  17. Thomas Neagle, quoted in Dorinda Evans, *The Genius of Gilbert Stuart* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1999), 110.
  18. The camera, Alan Trachtenberg reminds us, "serves the discursive needs of its practitioners and clients" ("Seeing and Believing: Hawthorne's Reflections on the Daguerreotype in *The House of the Seven Gables*," *American Literary History* 9 [1997]: 477). Accordingly, in *The House of the Seven Gables* Hawthorne critiques what Trachtenberg calls "the popular ideology [that] assumed (or desired) a transparent relation between face and character, between expression and truth," one in which "physiognomy doubles as psychology" (478). "The Prophetic Pictures" is an earlier exploration of the same problematic.
  19. Linda Nochlin, quoted in Ernst van Alphen, "Deadly Historians: Boltanski's Intervention in Holocaust Historiography," in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, ed. Barbie Zelizer (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2001), 51.
  20. Van Alphen, "Deadly Historians," 51; emphasis in original.
  21. See Hawthorne, "The Rejected Blessing" (*CE*, 6:99–104); and Colacurcio, *Province of Piety*, 424–49.
  22. Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: From Colony to Province; The Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1953), 346.
  23. Gerard B. Warden, *Boston, 1689–1776* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1970), 86–87.

24. Warden, *Boston, 1689–1776*, 87. According to Thomas Hutchinson, “The fuze was fortunately beat off by the passing of the shell through the window, and the wild fire spent itself upon the floor. It was generally supposed that the bursting of the shell by that means was prevented. A scurrilous menacing writing was fastened to the shell or fuze” (*The History of the Colony and Province of Massachusetts-Bay* [1764, 1767] [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1936], 2:207).
25. For Colacurcio’s readings of “Young Goodman Brown” and “Alice Doane’s Appeal” see *Province of Piety*, 283–313, 78–93.
26. Bell, *Hawthorne’s View*, 116.
27. David Levin, *History as Romantic Art: Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, and Parkman* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1959), 12.
28. Hawthorne’s own historical fictions are themselves anachronistic, and thus “The Prophetic Pictures” implicates itself in its critique. But the story is not intelligible if Hawthorne’s portraitist is a self-portrait. Using the painter’s ignorance of his subjects as a negative example, “The Prophetic Pictures” implicitly calls for “good” (mis)interpretations of the past that are familiar with the subjects and contexts they presume to represent.
29. Writing on the psychic condition of the Bostonians of “Lady Eleanore’s Mantle,” Frederick Newberry states that “by 1721 . . . the colonists at large seem so utterly confused over their allegiances to native and English institutions that the only predictable outcome will be social madness” (*Hawthorne’s Divided Loyalties: England and America in His Works* [Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1987], 94). The application to “The Prophetic Pictures” is clear: Walter Ludlow’s apparent madness echoes—or at least exists alongside—the “social madness” of Boston more generally.
30. For the allusion in *Grandfather’s Chair* to John Winslow, see *CE*, 6:124; for the equation between the Acadian diaspora and the Tory flight, see *CE*, 6:196.
31. See Hutchinson, *History of the Colony*, 256n–260n. According to Marion Louise Kesselring, Hawthorne borrowed the first volume of Hutchinson’s *History* in December 1826 (*Hawthorne’s Reading, 1828–1850* [New York: New York Public Library, 1949], 53). Critical consensus holds that Hawthorne was familiar with Hutchinson’s *History* in its entirety; see Colacurcio, *Province of Piety*, 563–64 n. 70.
32. Miller, *New England Mind*, 391. Struggles between colonial governors and assemblies were common throughout the colonies in the eighteenth



- century; historians tend to represent these conflicts as part of the long prehistory of the Revolution. See, for instance, Jon Butler, *Becoming America: The Revolution before 1776* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 2000), 119–23.
33. Warden, *Boston, 1689–1776*, 91.
  34. However, all those who stand for their portraits, Elisha Cooke included, are ipso facto complicit in Boston's moral declension from strict, iconophobic Puritanism. Although politically Cooke opposes Burnet, their paintings hang not across from but alongside each other in the portraitist's apartment.
  35. Robert Calef, *More Wonders of the Invisible World, Display'd in Five Parts* (London: Printed for Nath. Hillar, 1700), 154. Available online at the Univ. of Virginia Electronic Text Center, in the Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project, <http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/speccol/calef/calef.html>.
  36. Following publication of *The House of the Seven Gables* in 1851, Hawthorne received a letter from one of the nineteenth-century members of the Oliver family (also, as it happens, called Peter Oliver), who complained about Hawthorne's use of the name Pyncheon in *The House of the Seven Gables* and of Peter Oliver in *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair* (he makes no mention of "The Prophetic Pictures"). With respect to his use of the Pyncheons' name, Hawthorne apologized in a 3 May 1851 letter, but of his use of the Olivers he was unrepentant: "You bear," he replied to Oliver, "a historic name, and cannot reasonably expect . . . that the doings and sufferings of your forefathers should be left out of the story of Massachusetts. . . . Nothing worse can be said of them, than that it was their misfortune to make an erroneous choice between two deeply seated affections—their attachment to their native land, and their loyalty to the king;—nor, for my part, am I disposed to question that they considered themselves as satisfying both these principles, and as following out the dictates of the purest patriotism by adhering to the royal cause" (*CE*, 16:428).
  37. Although Hawthorne made this entry on 22 August 1837 at the earliest, and thus after having composed "The Prophetic Pictures," his phrasing suggests that he was already familiar with the anecdote.
  38. For Tories in Hawthorne's fiction, see Newberry, *Hawthorne's Divided Loyalties*, 67–70, 99–110, 130; and especially Colacurcio, *Province of Piety*, 449–82.
  39. Anderson, *Powers of Distance*, 4.

40. Given the current interest among Americanists in the global contexts of American culture and history, the portraitist's insensitivity to the local may be useful as a cautionary tale: reading globally is only useful if it is not at the expense of local knowledge. For an exemplary instance of reading globally while preserving the nuance of the local, see Wai Chee Dimock's "Planetary Time and Global Translation: 'Context' in Literary Studies" (*Common Knowledge* 9 [2003]: 488–507), which considers Thoreau alongside the *Bhagavad Gita* and in the contexts of antebellum American nonviolence and Gandhi's *satyagraha*. Still, when Dimock declares that, to explicate a single "lexical community," "the scale appropriate" is "Asia, America, Africa," "from the fourth century B.C., passing through the nineteenth century, passing through the twentieth, and going beyond" (507)—and when she thereby implies that other lexical communities will require comparably vast temporal and spatial contexts—the risk of cosmopolitan misprision that Hawthorne critiques in "The Prophetic Pictures" is plain.