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Bowdoin's Chakkalakal Discusses Enduring Appeal of Nathaniel Hawthorne

Nearly two centuries after Nathaniel Hawthorne's graduation from Bowdoin College in 1825, the author's work remains very much in the spotlight and has provided inspiration for such contemporary artists as Coldplay and Taylor Swift, said Associate Professor of Africana Studies and English [Tess Chakkalakal](#).



Chakkalakal in the classroom, 2019

She was a guest on Maine Public Radio's call-in show, *Maine Calling*, which on May 2, 2023, discussed the work and legacy of Hawthorne, as well as efforts that are being made to restore his boyhood home in Raymond, Maine.

Hawthorne's classic romantic novel *The Scarlet Letter*, with its themes of love, persecution, and guilt, was referenced by Taylor Swift in two of her songs, said Chakkalakal. Hawthorne is also known for his short stories, she added. One of these—"The Birthmark" (a tale about a scientist's obsession with human perfection that Chakkalakal describes as her favorite Hawthorne work)—is the inspiration for a song by Coldplay called "The Scientist."

