



The Salem World of Nathaniel Hawthorne

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Most readers are familiar with the works of nineteenth century American writer Nathaniel Hawthorne. Such novels as *THE SCARLET LETTER* (1850) and *THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES* (1851) are considered classics in the American literary canon. What is often less clear is the influence of Hawthorne's Salem connection upon his works. In *THE SALEM WORLD OF NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE*, Margaret B. Moore demonstrates that Salem and the literary output of this writer are inextricably linked.

Moore's book reveals a complicated individual, one who had ambivalent feelings toward his ancestors and this New England town. He was born there in 1804 and spent significant portions of both his formative and mature years in Salem. Moore, however, has gone beyond a mere summary of these well-known facts. Through extensive research, she has unearthed new findings regarding the writer and his hometown. She provides a detailed discussion of Hawthorne's family, with the surprising discovery that he was related to both the accusers and the accused in the Salem witch trials. Moore examines Hawthorne's relationships with the townspeople and identifies some possible models for characters in his tales.

This is an impressive work of scholarship, all the more so when one considers the fact that Moore wrote the book as an independent scholar. She informs the reader without resorting to scholarly jargon, and she is commendably fair when dealing with such controversies as Hawthorne's opinion of women writers. The only drawback to Moore's book is the absence of illustrations. A family tree would have clarified her discussion of Hawthorne's ancestors, and a map would have enabled the reader to visualize the buildings that figure so prominently in his life. Even so, Hawthorne enthusiasts will welcome this splendid volume.

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