



# **Nathaniel Hawthorne: Tradition and Revolution (Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture)**

*Charles Swann*

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This is the first analysis of the fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne and his perception of history. In his study, Charles Swann examines the whole of Hawthorne's literary career and gives proper weight to the unfinished work. Hawthorne saw history as a struggle between the authoritative claims of tradition on the one hand and the conflicting but equally valid claims of the desires for revolutionary transformation on the other. To evaluate Hawthorne's view of history, Swann provides close readings of such key shorter works as *Alice Doane's Appeal* and *Main Street*, as well as the most detailed analysis to date of the unfinished works *The American Claimant Mss* and *The Elixir of Life Mss* (two works which exemplify the temptations of tradition and the exhilaration of the revolutionary moment). This study asks us to explore how Hawthorne presents and interprets history through his fiction: for example, the history of crucial sins of the past (and the contemporary placing of such sins) in *Alice Doane's Appeal*, the problematic nature of the American Revolution in *The Elixir of Life Mss*, and the role of society in *The Scarlet Letter*. Swann's innovative study will be of interest to students and scholars of American literature, history, cultural studies, and literary criticism.

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