



Hawthorne and Melville: Writing a Relationship

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Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne met in 1850 and enjoyed for sixteen months an intense but brief friendship. Taking advantage of new interpretive tools such as queer theory, globalist studies, political and social ideology, marketplace analysis, psychoanalytical and philosophical applications to literature, masculinist theory, and critical studies of race, the twelve essays in this book focus on a number of provocative personal, professional, and literary ambiguities existing between the two writers.

Jana L. Argersinger and Leland S. Person introduce the volume with a lively summary of the known biographical facts of the two writers' relationship and an overview of the relevant scholarship to date. Some of the essays that follow broach the possibility of sexual dimensions to the relationship, a question that "looms like a grand hooded phantom" over the field of Melville-Hawthorne studies. Questions of influence—Hawthorne's on *Moby-Dick* and *Pierre* and Melville's on *The Blithedale Romance*, to mention only the most obvious instances—are also discussed. Other topics covered include professional competitiveness; Melville's search for a father figure; masculine ambivalence in the marketplace; and political-literary aspects of nationalism, transcendentalism, race, and other defining issues of Hawthorne and Melville's times.

Roughly half of the essays focus on biographical issues; the others take literary perspectives. The essays are informed by a variety of critical approaches, as well as by new historical insights and new understandings of the possibilities that existed for male friendships in nineteenth-century American culture.

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