



The Province of Piety: Moral History in Hawthorne's Early Tales

Michael J. Colacurcio

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In this celebrated analysis of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Michael J. Colacurcio presents a view of the author as America's first significant intellectual historian. Colacurcio shows that Hawthorne's fiction responds to a wide range of sermons, pamphlets, and religious tracts and debates—a variety of moral discourses at large in the world of provincial New England.

Informed by comprehensive historical research, the author shows that Hawthorne was steeped in New England historiography, particularly the sermon literature of the seventeenth century. But, as Colacurcio shows, Hawthorne did not merely borrow from the historical texts he deliberately studied; rather, he is best understood as having written history. In *The Province of Piety*, originally published in 1984 (Harvard University Press), Hawthorne is seen as a moral historian working with fictional narratives—a writer brilliantly involved in examining the moral and political effects of Puritanism in America and recreating the emotional and cultural contexts in which earlier Americans had lived.



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