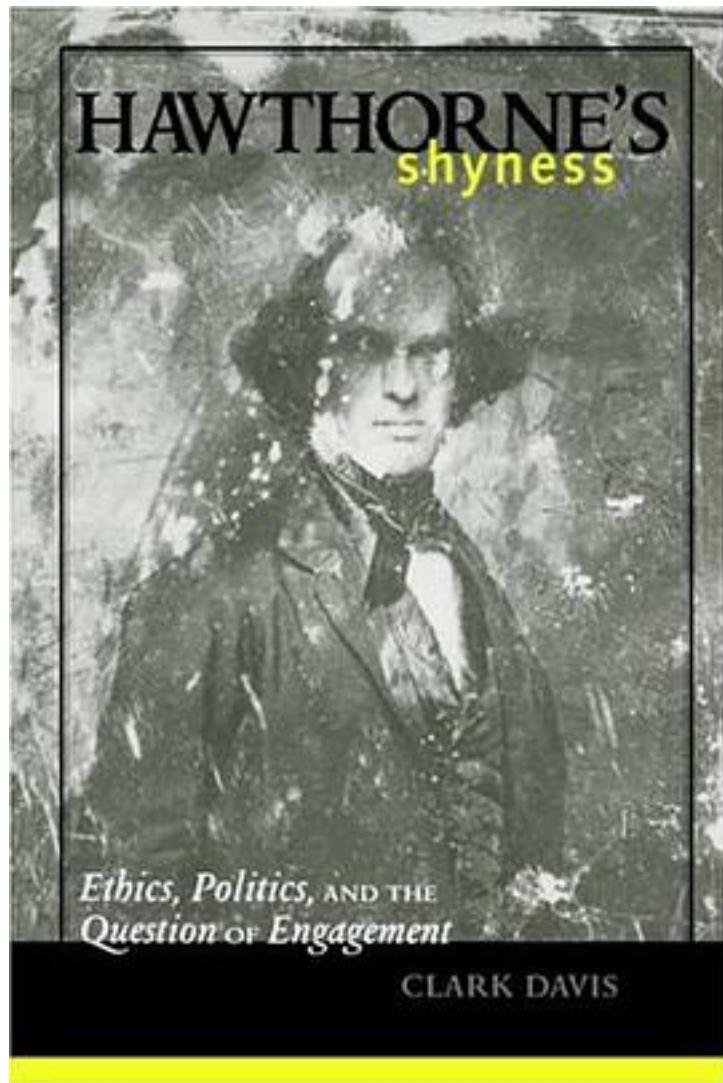


Hawthorne's Shyness



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In Hawthorne's Shyness, Clark Davis offers both a challenge to current trends in American literary studies and a striking new perspective on the writing of Nathaniel Hawthorne. He proposes an alternative to recent, ideologically driven criticism, including the range of approaches under the banner of New Historicism which continue to dominate the study of American literature. Drawing on ethical theorists including Heidegger, Levinas, Davidson, and Cavell, he finds new models for the relationship between critic and author in their philosophies of engagement with the Other. While these ideas have been increasingly influential in the criticism of European literature, they have so far made fewer inroads into American letters. Davis shows how a "hermeneutics of respect" can transform our relationship to American writers and provide a new, complex understanding of authorial intention. What makes Davis's work particularly effective, however, is the close integration of his methodological argument with its application. He directly and convincingly reexamines much of the most important current scholarship on Hawthorne, carefully developing and distinguishing his own positions. This important new reading of a central figure in American literary history, significant in its own right, also powerfully demonstrates the potential of Davis's critical approach.

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