



Moral Enterprise: Literature and Education in Antebellum America

Derek Pacheco

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Moral Enterprise: Literature and Education in Antebellum America, by Derek Pacheco, investigates an important moment in the history of professional authorship. Pacheco uses New England "literary reformers" Horace Mann, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Elizabeth Peabody, and Margaret Fuller to argue that writers came to see in educational reform, and the publication venues emerging in connection with it, a means to encourage popular authorship while validating literary work as a profession. Although today's schools are staffed by systematically trained and institutionally sanctioned teachers, in the unregulated, decentralized world of antebellum America, literary men and women sought the financial stability of teaching while claiming it as moral grounds for the pursuit of greater literary fame.

Examining the ethically redemptive and potentially lucrative definition of antebellum author as educator, this book traces the way these literary reformers aimed not merely at social reform through literature but also at the reform of literature itself by employing a wide array of practices—authoring, editing, publishing, and distributing printed texts—brought together under the aegis of modern, democratic education. Moral Enterprise identifies such endeavors by their dual valence as bold, reformist undertakings and economic ventures, exploring literary texts as educational commodities that might act as entry points into, and ways to tame, what Mann characterized as the "Alexandrian library" of American print culture.



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