Moral Enterprise
Derek Pacheco

Published by The Ohio State University Press

Pacheco, Derek.  
Moral Enterprise: Literature and Education in Antebellum America.  
The Ohio State University Press, 2013.  
Project MUSE.  muse.jhu.edu/book/27565.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/27565

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=1031015
"Derek Pacheco's scholarship is meticulous, and his writing is clear, concise, and jargon-free. Moral Enterprise fills a previously empty niche and invites further scholarship on the connections between pedagogy and Transcendentalism."
—Angela Sorby, Marquette University

"In Moral Enterprise, Derek Pacheco examines the development of literary culture in the antebellum United States from the vantage point of educational reform. Juxtaposing prominent authors in the literary canon—for example, Fuller and Hawthorne—with other, nonliterary figures, this book offers a series of case studies that, refreshingly, make the book more than the sum of its parts."
—Thomas August, New York University

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.

Derek Pacheco is assistant professor of English and American studies at Purdue University.