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## Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in NineteenthCentury America. By Richard H. Brodhead.

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its front and its left, surely an unenviable position. An interesting fact: two of the Fourteenth's ten companies were armed with the new Sharps breechloaders (made in Connecticut), instead of the Springfield muzzle-loaders.

*Connecticut Yankees at Gettysburg's* final chapter covers the aftermath of the battle and the reunions that took place on the field until 1913. Complete casualty lists are appended, and a list of sources is found in the bibliography.

Mr. Hamblen passed away in 1986, and his work was edited and brought to publication by the well-qualified Walter L. Powell, a historic preservation officer at Gettysburg. This interesting little book is a throwback of sorts, the type of unit history so popular in the late nineteenth century, when Union and Confederate veterans strove to record their regimental exploits while they still lived. But *Connecticut Yankees at Gettysburg* takes advantage of another hundred years worth of sources and research unavailable to the Civil War veterans.

Today, each of the five Connecticut regiments at Gettysburg has a monument standing on the battlefield on or near the place it fought. After reading this book, no one will think that is too many.

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*Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America.* By Richard H. Brodhead. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. 1993. Pp. ix, 254. \$24.95.)

Challenging its readers to rethink U.S. literary history, *Cultures of Letters* provides several valuable lessons on how to embark upon this project. Richard Brodhead does not set out to suggest a new overarching narrative framework for nineteenth-century American literature. Rather, his book presents a series of localized histories, detailed readings of different contexts of cultural production. These micro-descriptions of authors, texts, and contexts demonstrate how "writing as worldly work" cannot be separated from the social-literary scene in which it is always specifically embedded. As Brodhead puts it: "Each of these schemes of literary production is bound up with a distinct social audience: *in* its production each addresses and helps call together some

particular social grouping, a portion of the whole potential public identified by its readerly interests but by other unifying social interests as well." The first three chapters of *Cultures of Letters* investigate scenes of writing and reading especially associated with domestic fiction, while the final three examine the authorial uses and reception contexts of regional writing. Brodhead treats these traditional topics in some strikingly untraditional ways.

Chapter 1 on "Sparing the Rod" gives a good example of Brodhead's exploratory inquiries. Adapting the disciplinary model of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, Brodhead convincingly argues that much prose fiction before the Civil War manifests a thematics of "disciplinary intimacy," a thematics that grows directly out of the social context of its production. As historians of childhood have noted, antebellum U.S. culture underwent a major shift in its ideologies of parenting. A patriarchal model of corporal punishment was slowly replaced by a maternal "discipline of love" that aimed to have children internalize their parents' authority. In this new view, self-surveillance established through affectionate discipline replaced bodily correction and breaking the child's will. Brodhead shows how some of the most popular fiction of the mid nineteenth century thematized these disciplinary strategies and thus helped work through the cultural problems of childrearing, subject formation, and social control.

What is especially interesting in this Foucauldian analysis is Brodhead's continual reframing of his questions and his re-examination of the answers he obtains. He carries out this scrutiny of his assumptions in two different but complementary ways: There is a prominent rhetorical pattern of reformulating and deepening questions accompanied by a sometimes more tacit circling back to answers already given. Chapter 1 exemplifies both strategies. Brodhead first develops a rather convincing hypothesis that the mid-century preoccupation with corporal punishment derived most importantly from the centrality given the lash in debates over slavery: in the cultural rhetoric of the antebellum North "whipping *means* slavery. It emblemizes both one actual practice and the whole structure of relations that identify Southern slavery as a system." But then Brodhead challenges this persuasive hypothesis in the rest of the chapter by arguing that the "imagination of whipping" played a crucial role in a more general and pervasive transformation: the change in socialization processes away from public, corrective markings of the body to the more private, reformative training of "souls" in the family, school, and other cultural sites. After suggestive readings of *The Wide, Wide World* and other fictions depicting this

"reformatory lovingness" in middle-class family governance, Brodhead concludes his discussion by returning to a text famously associated with the very topic—slavery—used in the opening explanatory hypothesis that the chapter later overrides. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, he claims, "corporal correction in all of its still-visible forms is summoned to the task of demonstrating the glory and necessity of this softer yet surer correction. A loving discipline again advertises its superiority by dramatizing its ability to render the whip unnecessary."

Brodhead's unmarked return to his original answer to the question, "What is being thought when the lash becomes the figure of thought in the antebellum years?" not only complicates the emblemizing of slavery as whipping by making slavery and whipping part of an evolving disciplinary society, but that return also suggests the overdetermined nature of the cultural practices for which he is accounting. The connection of social context to literary text is not presented simply as a causal relation in which certain social practices directly determine their representation or are merely reflected or expressed in that representation. Rather, practices of writing literature *work through* the problems of a middle-class disciplinary theory, vindicating and broadcasting it in fiction's "disciplinary thematics" for 1850s New England. Brodhead also notes that the "same social developments that promoted the idea of discipline through love as the family's essential work also re-created reading as a family pastime of first resort," and he emphasizes how this cultural rhetoric of discipline not only represents a training process in the fiction but carries it out in its readers. "The power of an 'absorbing' novel," Brodhead concludes, "is the power to transpose its orderings into its reader's felt understanding through an invisible persuasion."

Later chapters refer back to this literary-historical argument about the emergence of a disciplinary society and complicate that argument in extremely useful ways. Chapter 2 describes the cultural rhetoric imaging the ideally spiritual wife, who is the family agent most responsible for producing the maternally disciplined child described in chapter 1, and the positions of both wife and child are shown to be social constructions grounded in the ideology of middle-class domesticity. Brodhead demonstrates how a novel like *The Blithedale Romance* works with this domestic ideology, representing in Priscilla the ethereal figure of the nineteenth-century's idealized woman, whose proper sphere is the middle-class home, and simultaneously revealing through Priscilla's role as "The Veiled Lady" a new space for female social activity outside the family: the expanded field of mass entertainment.

In making this double claim, Brodhead first seems to be suggesting

two independent, opposed sites for women's work in the mid nineteenth century, the private world of childraising and the public world of entertainment. But he soon demonstrates how closely the two sites were interconnected. The domestic ideology that "defined the home as a private, leisured, nonmaterialistic, feminine space in the antebellum decades also, and with almost comparable insistence, defined reading as a preferred domestic activity"; and this effective disciplinary development, which formed particular kinds of middle-class subjects, "had the secondary effect of enlarging the demand for reading for the home—and so too of creating public roles for literary producers," including roles assumed by the tremendously popular women novelists of the mid nineteenth century. But this is not all. Brodhead ingeniously argues that the already complicated social relation of public and private received a further rhetorical turn. Not only did literature image both the new public role of woman in entertainment and that role's dependence on the private space of domesticity, but the new public space itself created exploitable relations between the public and the private, for example, new advertising possibilities that made celebrities the "public embodiment of a fascinating private life."

What cannot be missed in Brodhead's evolving argument is his insistence on a significant space for agency within a basically Foucauldian framework. Though the background picture of a disciplinary society is never entirely left behind, Brodhead's drawing of a complicated socio-economic network of cultural practices that define the conditions of literary production and consumption reveals exactly how certain options for authorship are made available and exploited in new and original ways. For example, in chapter 3 he argues that Louisa May Alcott strategically chose from among the options given her in the new, post-1850 cultural reorganization of American letters, in which a new, three-tiered stratification (and interaction) of writing levels defined the conditions of authorship for women during the later nineteenth century. Similarly in the last three chapters, Brodhead meticulously describes the very different rhetorical negotiations carried out by Sarah Orne Jewett and Charles W. Chesnutt as they established their distinct authorial identities in relation to regional fiction and high culture literary journals. These detailed rhetorical contexts simultaneously *restricted and enabled* the development of social and literary agency.

Again and again, Brodhead shows how American literature emerges out of specific economic, social, and political arrangements of literary cultures. Literary texts represent and work over those arrangements, in which separate (but interacting) worlds of writing are constituted by

social interests, authorial agency, conventional genres and styles, and audiences' needs and expectations. If "literary writing" refers to both its production and reception, I heartily agree with Brodhead's own formulation of his book's "largest contention": "American literary history should be rethought as the history of the relation between literary writing and the changing meanings and places made for such work in American social history—a history not of texts or contexts alone but of the multiform transactions that have taken place between them."

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*Free People of Color: Inside the African American Community.* By James Oliver Horton. (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press. 1993. Pp. ix, 238. \$47.95 cloth; \$19.25 paper.)

"There were," says James Horton, "many black experiences yet one overwhelming common black history" (p. 3). It is the contradictions between this people's shared racial oppression and their internal divisions of gender, color, and class that lie at the heart of *Free People of Color*, a collection of nine articles which Horton calls a "progress report, a preview" of scholarship into the "social interior" of free black communities of the mid-nineteenth century North. Actually, since Horton samples evidence from as far west as California and as far south as Washington, D.C., and offers comparative reference to Southern slavery and the racial barriers of later eras, the book is wider in scope than might be expected.

In his earlier work on antebellum Boston, Horton demonstrated a commitment to collaborative scholarship which he continues in several of the best chapters in this new volume. Lois E. Horton again joins the author, on this occasion with a timely analysis showing that educational progress during Reconstruction was not sufficient to break racial barriers to social mobility in Washington, D.C. Hartmut Keil, working with evidence comparing German and Irish immigrants in antebellum Buffalo, collaborates with the author to suggest that occupational competition and residential segregation, not immigrant status, was at the center of the era's Irish violence against blacks.

In several chapters Horton revisits antebellum Boston, a city filled with black migrants, where he finds a strong tradition of cooperation