

at this point is to stress the middle-class nature of English medicine at this time, which he does in a convincing way, although the attempt to fit this into the larger controversy regarding the rise of the English middle class as a whole seems irrelevant and overdrawn.

Also, it is not clear whether the statistical methodology which Gottfried employs is sufficiently stringent. It is readily apparent that the data he uses are based upon a tremendous range of sources each with their own limitations and biases. Whether this conglomeration of sources can be lumped together in one statistical package is debatable and needs much more discussion than the book gives it.

The most disappointing feature of the book — at least to this reviewer — is the almost total lack of consideration concerning the social impact of medicine at this time. For example, what effect did medicine have on mortality? What access did people have to medical treatment? Was it limited essentially to the upper classes or to urban society? In some instances Gottfried supplies clues to illuminate these issues, such as the comment that “country doctors” were seemingly scarce (250-51), but nowhere are these threads brought together in the book, where they might well have merited a separate chapter. This was particularly evident in relation to that event that year in and year out probably took more lives than any other cause of death - childbirth. What, for instance, was the relationship of midwives to doctors, a problem that still exercises medicine today? Did doctors really involve themselves that much in childbirth, or, if they did was it only in a desultory fashion? Again, Gottfried scarcely touches on these problems.

In conclusion, Gottfried's book is a useful contribution to the study of late medieval medicine, but it does leave considerable room for further research. In particular, much more needs to be done to assess the impact of medicine upon English medieval society, especially for such events as childbirth. The exploration of issues such as these is essential to the understanding of medicine in medieval England and elsewhere.

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Harvey J. Graff — *The Legacies of Literacy: Continuities and Contradictions in Western Culture and Society*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987. Pp. x, 493.

The study of literacy has been one of the most fascinating and frustrating components of socio-historical research since the 1960s. For 15 years, Harvey J. Graff has been the most prolific contributor to this research as well as the field's most attentive critic and bibliographer. *The Legacies of Literacy* is the culmination of this work and it displays all the characteristics for which Graff has become well-known. The tone of the book is aggressively revisionist, the discussion is theoretically and methodologically rigorous, and the footnoting is massive. Unlike previous work, however, this study offers the Big Sweep from early Athens to the twenty-first century. Graff strives to make sense of the great outpouring of research during the past two decades which has focussed on literacy in specific times and places. His goal is not to present a general model in which the historical importance of literacy is uniformly defined and consistently interpreted. Rather, the book rejects this possibility as an ahistorical and inappropriate ambition of certain simple-minded social scientists and policy-makers deluded by myths and misperceptions. Graff argues that literacy can only be understood as the social construction of particular historical settings. Thus, the meaning of any ability to read and write is context-dependent, and timeless and placeless generalizations can be rejected out-of-hand. There is no single history of literacy; rather, there are innumerable histories of literacy as reading and writing have interrelated with specific social, economic, and political webs defining discrete population groups in constant evolution. This perspective means that Graff continually situates literacy within the larger historical process. The result is a book which brings together the supposedly

“fragmented” sub-fields of recent research including historical demography, working-class history, the history of education, and mentalities.

Graff begins his synthesis by discussing the problems of defining, measuring, and understanding the meaning of literacy. What is reading and writing? How can such activity be measured in diverse historical contexts? And, most importantly, what conclusions can be drawn concerning the role of literacy in processes such as economic development, demographic change, and state formation? Graff stresses that these questions have no easy answers since literacy is a “technology or set of techniques for communications” (4) whose role depends upon human agency. This argument does not imply that literacy is value-free but rather that it is chameleon-like, constantly reflecting the surrounding environment. At the same time, literacy cannot be conceptualized as simply a dependent variable since, like all technologies, it takes on a life of its own leading to both intended and unintended consequences. Reading and writing are thus value-laden activities whose meanings are rooted in specific historical contexts.

The book’s emphasis on historical specificity is balanced by an insistence that, from the earliest times, literacy has been a mechanism of social and cultural hegemony. Graff maintains his Gramscian argument that literacy has been less a practical skill than a means of inculcating the attitudes and values of “proper” morality. In this sense, literacy has been a force for order, stability, and social cohesion rather than for liberty, change, or self-fulfillment. Graff traces this central theme through its religious, state and market articulations thereby explaining the chronological, gender, ethnic, and most of all class patterns of reading and writing.

Somewhat surprisingly, the author adheres to the traditional temporal divisions of Western survey texts although his syntheses reflect the best recent scholarship. He shows that expanding commerce especially from the twelfth century encouraged literacy in ways not promoted by the oral cultures of Athens, Rome, and early Christianity. Along the way, Graff situates literacy within the history of both formal and informal education often showing the importance of family and kinship more than schooling in learning to read and write before the nineteenth century. The result was vast differences in basic literacy as measured by the ability to sign religious or legal documents. Graff emphasizes these differences as part of his overall attack on the assumption of a linear increase in literacy usually associated with the development of printing. The ability to read and write has been a fragile possession easily broken either during an individual’s life or between generations especially in settings without ongoing reinforcement. Thus, discontinuities as well as continuities become evident as specific regions evolved according to distinct convergences of larger processes.

The bulk of *The Legacies of Literacy* concerns the advent of mass schooling and its relationship to the processes of state formation most evident in the nineteenth century. While Graff notes the uses of literacy for protest, popular resistance, and revolution, he is more impressed by the ways in which reading and writing have acted as modes of social reproduction in modern Western society. Mass literacy permitted the transition to industrial capitalism to occur without effective resistance despite its inherent exacerbation of social inequalities and contradictions. Through reading and writing, individuals learned to adapt, accommodate, and ultimately to accept rather than to challenge the established order. As literacy levels generally rose (now measurable through census records as well as an array of business and government documents), social and cultural hegemony increased to the point where social reproduction in the late twentieth century is nearly total. This view makes meaningless the familiar perception of literacy crises which assume that reading and writing exist independent of a larger social and economic context. Moreover, Graff brings together various studies to emphasize the considerable extent to which literacy rates have always varied among particular population groups in different times and places despite the establishment of public schooling.

In the end, Graff tempers his relentless insistence on literacy’s contextual dependency by briefly suggesting that, if appropriately conceptualized, the ability to read and write could in fact be more than a mechanism of social and cultural hegemony. The book closes by quoting Johan Galtung’s belief that while universal literacy would not make much difference, a world of “literate, autonomous, critical, constructive people, capable of translating ideas into action, individually or collectively”

(396) would indeed lead to change and action; in other words, the means of literacy could be used to different ends. This optimistic conclusion may be refreshing to readers depressed by the sobering historical analysis but it also seems inconsistent with Graff's own argument. Certainly, Graff emphasizes that human agency makes the historical process but he constantly demonstrates that literacy reinforces rather than alters the basic social formation. Thus, literacy could perhaps be a force for change in Galtung's sense but only after "critical and constructive people" had already gotten hold of the reins of power. The book's emphasis on social and cultural hegemony (facilitated by mass literacy) seems to offer no hope that this possibility can be reasonably expected by those with an informed historical perspective.

*The Legacies of Literacy* is thus an ambitious and stimulating attempt to synthesize recent studies within the diverse and changing historical contexts of Western society. By assembling the findings of an enormous secondary literature, Graff is able to insist over and over on the importance of appreciating the complexity of reading and writing as both individual and social activities whose meanings have never been uniform. While some readers may be tempted to view this complexity as evidence of the continued vitality of ethnic and cultural pluralism (despite the ambitions of public schooling and other modernization forces), Graff emphasizes hegemony and control, the "negative" (264) and predominant side of literacy. Similarly, Graff's view of the past lends no support to those who see literacy programmes as essential to solving the social and economic problems of the Third World. He is relatively sympathetic to the work of those such as Paolo Freire but, in addition to the severe limits of the surrounding material context of such work, Graff suspects that any national programme would inevitably be a double-edged sword opening both the potential for individual fulfillment and the reality of ideological standardization and, therefore, oppression. History according to Graff teaches that social reproduction (and the hegemonic myth of literacy) rather than social change would result. This major book is therefore required reading not only for social historians but also for policy-makers and activists.

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Gay L. Gullickson — *Spinners and Weavers of Auffay: Rural Industry and the Sexual Division of Labor in a French Village, 1750-1850*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. Pp. x, 256.

In *Capital* Marx was intrigued by the "intermediary forms" making up "the background of Modern Industry" that altered the traditional links between handicrafts and agriculture (1906, 559-60). Contemporary theorists and historians of proto-industrialization, largely silent about Marx's interest in their subject, have decisively advanced our historical understanding of the "background" of industrialization. Gay L. Gullickson's *Spinners and Weavers of Auffay* adds appreciably to this history by focusing on the commune of Auffay in the *pays de Caux* of Normandy famous for its cereal cultivation, as a *pays d'élevage*, and for his cottage industry. Auffay, in the department of *Seine Maritime*, has today a population of about 1,700 inhabitants and had some 1,000 in the eighteenth century. Gullickson's study decisively invites reconsideration of the current historical representation of proto-industrialization. Her history presents a nuanced account of Auffay's spinners and weavers, their unions as wives and husbands, their families, the gender distribution of their productive tasks, the decisions attending the ages of marriage, numbers of children, the frequency of remarriage by widows and widowers, the bearing of children out of wedlock; the periodization of the working experiences of spinners and weavers as the transition from proto-industrialization to industrialization compelled their loss of autonomy.

Gullickson in refashioning the debate on proto-industrialism places in question the accepted conventional necessary, sufficient causal conditions for proto-industrialism offered by Franklin F.