

- part of Jean Baudrillard's 1968 classic, "Le système des objets," and eleven important essays such as Susan Stewart's "Death and Life, in that Order, in the works of Charles Wilson Peale."
11. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*, (Cambridge, Mass., and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1988). This is a critical reading for students of contemporary culture. Clifford ranges far and wide, connecting anthropology, history and art history, literature and museums. The essay, "On Collecting Art and Culture," (pp. 215-251), is invaluable to anyone trying to understand museums.
  12. See note 6. See also, *African Aesthetics and Perspectives: Angles on African Art*, and other publications of The Center for African Art, New York.
  13. See note 9.
  14. Lynne Cooke and Peter Wollen, eds., *Visual Display: Culture Beyond Appearances*, Dia Center for the Arts, Discussions in Contemporary Culture, no. 10, (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995). This collection of essays is about the act of displaying, about display as a rhetoric of concealment, and the analysis of visual representations in the search for meaning.
  15. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce Ferguson and Sandy Nairne, eds., *Thinking About Exhibitions*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996). The twenty-seven contributions to this anthology of exhibition practice, within and without museums, give a useful overview of the traditions, current variations and the politics of exhibitions.
  16. André Dévalées, ed., *Vagues : Une anthologie de la nouvelle muséologie, vols 1,2*, (Mâcon: Éditions W, 1992, 1994). Published jointly with Muséologie nouvelle et expérimentation sociale (M.N.E.S.), Savigny-le-temple, France, and with the support of the French Ministry of Culture. These two volumes are a comprehensive anthology of post-World War II writing in *La nouvelle muséologie*, the essentially French school of museological thought fathered by the late Georges Henri Rivière. The editor's excellent introductions to each volume place the contents soundly in perspective.

## Angela E. Davis, *Art and Work: A Social History of Labour in the Canadian Graphic Arts Industry to the 1940s*

BRYAN DEWALT

Davis, Angela E. *Art and Work: A Social History of Labour in the Canadian Graphic Arts Industry to the 1940s*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995. xx + 187 pp., 16 illus., cloth \$39.95, ISBN 0-7735-1280-2.

In the second half of the nineteenth century changes in graphic arts technology were central to the evolution of popular culture and the elaboration of a form of capitalism based on mass consumption. In the form either of advertising or of illustrations in popular periodicals, images produced by wood engraving and the new photographic processes became cheap and plentiful. But, as Angela Davis has argued in *Art and Work*, this industrialization of image production entailed an increasingly rigid distinction between an imaginative and expressive "high" art and the supposedly more manual skills plied by commercial illustrators and engravers. This has had major implications for our conception of the place of art in society.

*Art and Work* is subtitled *A Social History of Labour in the Canadian Graphic Arts Industry to the 1940s*. In seeking to fulfill this ambitious agenda, Davis has surveyed existing

work and produced some significant new research. The first three chapters of her book consist mainly of a synthesis of secondary sources. She provides a brief account of the emergence of a popular illustrated press in Britain. The mechanization of printing and the industrialization of wood engraving made possible the publication of popular papers like the *Illustrated London News*.

In the process, old notions of art as a unified profession encompassing all who exercised skill and creativity crumbled before an emerging class distinction between imaginative artists acceptable to such elite institutions as the Royal Academy and "art-workmen" who earned a living in the commercial realm. Over time, art-workmen became further differentiated into employers, commercial artists providing designs and pictures, and engravers working within an increasingly detailed division of labour. Having established this context, Davis then synthesizes existing research on the challenges faced by British immigrants in establishing viable engraving businesses in pre-industrial, pre-confederation Canada. In these early chapters, Davis has generally been judicious in her selection of

sources and has ably sketched in the important developments.

It is the following three chapters that form the core of *Art and Work* and demonstrate both its strengths and its weaknesses. These chapters deal with the invention of photoengraving, the establishment of a viable graphic arts industry in Toronto, the emergence of Canadian art institutions and the birth of an accepted national style of painting, and the spread of both the graphic arts industry and institutions of high art to western Canada. The means by which Davis deals with these issues is a case study of the Toronto Engraving Co. and the careers of various persons associated with it. These include the founder, Frederick Brigden, his sons, George and Fred, his nephew, Arnold, and several respected Canadian painters who earned a living in the employ of Brigden and other graphic arts firms.

This approach has yielded valuable information about an important firm in the history of the graphic arts industry in Canada. This was the company, after all, which for years produced plates for the Eaton's catalogue and which trained and employed several generations of Canadian artists and engravers. From the point of view of material culture, we learn about changes in the layout and the equipment of Brigden's Toronto plant at the time that photoengraving was being introduced there. As well, Davis has gleaned from a variety of archival sources — little known publications and oral history interviews — several other valuable pieces of information. At the turn of the century, for example, Brigden's non-union engravers earned substantially less than Toronto's unionized newspaper typographers. In the interwar years, artists in Brigden's Winnipeg operation worked punishing hours during the catalogue seasons. During slack periods, Brigden softened the pain of unemployment by paying their tuition fees at the Winnipeg School of Art. In fact, one of the most important achievements of *Art and Work* is to integrate industrial and artistic developments in Winnipeg, at one time the metropolis of western Canada, into the consideration of "national" developments.

A perusal of Davis's footnotes will reveal that assembling this sort of information was no mean feat. Business and technological history is notoriously poorly documented. Historians are forced to reconstruct what they can from the few shreds of corporate records not destroyed by mishap or ignorance, supplemented where possible by an uneven collection of scrapbooks, company histories and sentimental biographies.

Where reliable secondary sources exist — for example, Mary Allodi's *Printmaking in Canada* and Elizabeth Hulse's excellent *Dictionary of Toronto Printers, Publishers, Booksellers and the Allied Trades* — Davis has made appropriate use of them.

Too often, however, Davis has been forced to make general suppositions about the Canadian graphic arts industry on the basis of incomplete evidence about one company. She suggests, for example, that Montreal lost its leadership of the graphic arts industry to Toronto because its firms were slow to adopt photographic processes. No evidence is presented to support this assertion and, in fact, Davis offers nothing about the Montreal industry but a few anecdotes. For a more full picture of the Canadian graphic arts industry she might have benefited from consulting a printing trade journal like *Canadian Printer and Publisher*. In addition, she might have found useful comparative data in the tables of the Census of Canada and the Census of Industry, published regularly in Sessional Papers or, after 1920, in reports of the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Alternatively, Davis might have circumscribed the scope of her study to fit the limited extent of her sources.

Because Davis is primarily concerned with the implications of industrialized image production for the fields of art history and art criticism, her handling of technological developments is somewhat cursory. Her description of photoengraving and halftone reproduction would not be helpful to a reader not already acquainted with these techniques. It is also unclear whether she intends the term "photoengraving" to apply to all photo processes or to refer to the particular photo process that produces a plate for letterpress printing. This ambiguity is evident in her account of William Leggo and George Edward Desbarats. The pioneering photographs reproduced in Leggo and Desbarats's *Canadian Illustrated News*, like those in their *New York Daily Graphic* (here misnamed the *Daily Illustrated*), were not photoengravings, as Davis suggests, but photolithographs. Moreover, their real significance was in Leggo's use of a halftone screen to render the continuous tones of a photograph as a series of discreet black dots.

Davis is also on very shaky ground when she suggests that photoengraving and other forms of mechanization failed to reduce labour requirements and production costs in the printing industry. New technology did create a demand for large numbers of specialized workers, and

overall employment in the printing trade did increase in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is also true, however, that in this period the production and consumption of printed text and images increased enormously. Aside from increases in population, literacy and leisure time, consumption also grew in response to falling real prices, as employing printers exploited new technologies that reduced unit labour costs. Such factors accounted for a resurgence in typesetting employment, which had briefly plummeted after the introduction of linecasting machines in the early 1890s. Further research might reveal a similar dynamic operating in the engraving and lithography industries.

One final criticism, in a review that might seem overly critical, is that the presentation of illustrations in *Art and Work* is disappointing, given the centrality of images to the subject matter. The publisher has chosen to print all illustrations in the front matter and has not keyed them to relevant passages in the text. Reproduction of these images, printed offset on the same paper stock as the text, is indifferent. These problems, like the others cited

above, may be attributable to the circumstances of the book's publication. If not for Angela Davis's untimely death while *Art and Work* was being prepared for publication, many of them would certainly have been addressed by her.

All of this does nothing to refute Davis's main argument. In the British tradition of cultural studies, which descends from John Ruskin by way of William Morris and Karl Marx to Raymond Williams, she demonstrates that the distinction between high art and commercial art is arbitrary. In Canada before 1940, the elite painter and the commercial artist were one and the same person. The skills applied in one endeavour were not inherently diminished when applied in the other. Unfortunately, in integrating social history with the history of art, *Art and Work* speaks more to the art historian than it does to the historian of material culture. Nevertheless, *Art and Work* helps fill several gaps in our knowledge of the graphic arts in Canada. In her study of the Brigdens and the Toronto Engraving Co., Angela Davis will encourage others to continue the enquiry.

## Betsy Erkkila and Jay Grossman, eds., *Breaking Bounds: Whitman and Cultural Studies*

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Erkkila, Betsy, and Jay Grossman, eds. *Breaking Bounds: Whitman and Cultural Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. x + 292 pp., illus., paper \$28.50, ISBN 0-19-509350-X.

In what is now the third centennial collection of essays on America's arguably most celebrated poet<sup>1</sup> (the results of a three-day symposium on Walt Whitman held at the University of Pennsylvania in 1992), co-editor Betsy Erkkila's "Introduction" to *Breaking Bounds: Whitman and Cultural Studies* predicts that readers will likely be most struck by this new book's sensational cover.

There, we are given two sepia-toned frontal views of a completely naked "old man," extracted from nineteenth-century American painter Thomas Eakins' notorious collection of nude photographs dating from the 1880s. Eakins painted a famous portrait of Whitman in 1887. And Ed Folsom, in the essay "Whitman's

Calamus Photographs," thinks it might be possible for Whitman to have posed for the painter's camera as well.

But what intrigues me, especially, after long pondering these photos, is how they so shrewdly capture the sense of a "cultural studies" aura that has been gradually overtaking the field of Whitman studies — and much else in American literary scholarship — the past few years. For consider: on the left, an ancient decrepit figure seemingly pulled rigidly to attention with eyes tightly closed, head slightly bowed, and arms behind back in an attitude of defensive introversion; while on the right, a more extroverted figure with eyes opened wide, legs spread apart, and arms held behind but emphasizing now a slight lean at the hip, as if the first image had freely ambled into the second, and was about to follow the old man's gaze into a third, just *beyond* the photo's frame.