



The Book

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Newsletter of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture
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News of Collaborative History

Important progress has recently occurred in the editorial structure of the collaborative history of the book. In lieu of a full-scale report, we want to pass on the following news. The American Antiquarian Society has assumed formal sponsorship of the project. The Executive Committee of the Society's Program in the History of the Book in American Culture has constituted a formal Editorial Board (Hugh Amory, Cathy N. Davidson, Robert Gross, Michael Winship, David Hall (chair), and John Hench and Marcus McCorison (ex officio). This board held its first working meeting at the beginning of March, at which time the decision was made to appoint editors for each of the three volumes envisaged for the period up to about 1880. The editors for volume I are Hugh Amory and David Hall; for volume II, Robert Gross and Mary Kelley; and for volume III, Michael Winship, with other possibilities pending. Meanwhile, the National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded the Society a grant of \$33,000 in support of the project, principally to help defray the expenses of additional Editorial Board meetings and working conferences for editors and contributors. A detailed update of the progress of the project will appear in the next issue of this newsletter.

D.D.H.

Iconography Conference Summary

[Editors' note: *On Friday and Saturday, June 14-15, a full house of sixty persons from around the country and representing a variety of scholarly disciplines attended the Program's conference "Iconography and the Culture of the Book," which took place in the Society's Goddard-Daniels House. Details of the program were published in the March 1991 issue of this newsletter. One of the members of the steering committee for the conference, Louise Stevenson, a historian at Franklin and Marshall College, provided summary comments at the conclusion. Her remarks follow.]*

For two days, the conferees in attendance at the conference have listened to papers and presentations introducing them to the history-of-the-book iconography and methods of reading visual images. Having only heard the papers, I offer some merely tentative remarks about the lessons that I am taking home with me.

From the first slide presentation to the last, we saw in-

controvertible demonstration that reading is a gendered experience. William Moffett (Huntington Library) introduced us to images of reading dating from the first years of the Christian era. During the Middle Ages, artists began to recognize that women read, but supposedly not for the same purpose as men. Books often signified the intellectual pursuits and achievements of men, but the class and temperament of women. While artists suggested that books had promoted men's achievements as scholars, churchmen, and scientists, they used books to indicate women's ability to nurture their children, especially when painting Mary and the Christ child and Annunciation scenes. Fortunately, images from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in Europe and America, remind us that there were exceptions. Some women did become noted as authors, and they were pictured as men were. Their portraits show them pointing with modest pride to their literary productions.

Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (Georgetown University) continued Moffett's discussion and introduced the audience to more iconographic sources for American nineteenth-century artists. Besides the image of Mary, Apostolos-Cappadona revealed that a Martha image also existed showing a woman solitarily contemplating a book. Various papers also demonstrated that different forms of reading were associated with men and women. For example, artists placed newspapers and pen and ink near men in portraits, while they frequently portrayed women sitting with children and holding a small book of devotions, poetry, or fiction. The images suggest that men can create words and read media that connect them to an outside world, whereas they illustrate women's intellectual life as passive and comprising domestic concerns. Women convey knowledge from books to children or contemplate the meaning of a book for the state of their soul or domestic life. Having accepted that reading is a gendered activity, in the future we no longer need to affirm that fact. This conference should encourage scholars to move on to potentially more productive questions.

Second, we learned that the meaning of reading material changes to suit the artist's purpose. Sometimes, as in Degas's *Cotton Market* and in Eastman Johnson's *The Hatch Family*, reading a newspaper can isolate men from their surroundings: in the first place from the buzz of a commercial market and in the second from the hurly-burly of family life. At other times, artists used newspapers to show men's connections to current events, as, for instance, William Gil-

more-Lehne (Stockton State College) and Thomas Leonard (University of California, Berkley) showed in their discussions of Richard Caton Woodville's *News from Mexico*.

The third lesson concerns the methods that the paper presenters used to interpret images of reading. The art historians used one of two methods. Either they interpreted images of reading in terms of traditions of iconography, or they read the surface of the painting. Apostolos-Cappadona showed the origins of images of Mary, the nurturing mother, and Martha, the solitary reader, with books and suggested the persistence of these images into the mid-nineteenth century, while Carol Wenzel-Rideout (Pierpont Morgan Library) read the surface of paintings. She showed that the placement of the book in a composition might indicate the importance an artist attached to it. Also she borrowed from contemporary methods of literary criticism to interpret paintings by Manet and Morisot.

The historians wrestled with the the relationship of visual images to their charge as historians: how can visual images help describe the past? Many of the historians struggled with the question whether paintings present a real or ideal image of reading. But what these speakers really seemed to want to say concerned their puzzlement about how historians can use an ideal, an artist's personal statement, to talk about the past. So, to interpret visual images, historians turned to the context of the art. To develop the meaning of an image, historians drew on sermons, religious emblems, novels, the artist's biography, statistics describing newspaper publishing and readership, and popular forms of humor.

Historians' resort to the various contexts surrounding the production and reception of an image raised a provocative

question. If so little could be learned from the paintings, why look at them at all? Why did we not turn our sights from the slide projector and talk to one another about reading? Possibly we would have learned just as much.

While I do not think that we learned much from each slide displayed during the conference, we did learn much from the total display of several hundred slides. All those images of books, especially those that centered on the relationship of books to women's reading, taught us about one of the media that can enhance a culture's power to teach its new recruits and to reinforce the ideals of its members. The many images of nineteenth-century reading that we saw suggested why rates of literacy among native-born white Americans reached all-time high levels during the Victorian period. Nineteenth-century white Americans learned not only how to read, but also about the importance of reading. And visual images found in magazines, trade cards, school books, chromolithographs, and photographs taught them this lesson. Even illiterates could learn that reading was a crucial activity. One could say that the image of the book was unavoidable in mid-nineteenth-century America.

Nevertheless, we must be careful to recognize that images of reading could send messages that contradicted one another; nineteenth-century middle- and upper-class culture contained inconsistencies. For instance, *The Game of Authors* described by Alison Scott (Boston University) and Sarah Black (Smith College) included Longfellow, Bryant, Hawthorne, and Alcott as well as Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth. While manufacturers of the *Authors* parlor game saw her as a literary worthy, reading advisers and librarians deplored the popularity of her novels and were pained to include her bestsellers such as *The Hidden Hand* and *The Curse of Clifton* in their recommendations and libraries. Nineteenth-century American literary culture had no Pope; one cultural arbiter's candidate for canonization was another's candidate for censure.

Also we must be careful not to read these images with present-day sensibilities. For example, career expectations of today's women make us recoil at the many images that suggest the true purpose of women's reading was the education of children. However, could it not be seen as a good thing for women to educate their children if alternatives for mothers were spending more time on cooking, cleaning, and the manufacture of clothes? Supposing women needed the lessons of these visual images to draw them away from the demands of more immediate household tasks or from the frivolous temptations of a shopping spree. Should we be praising nineteenth-century artists for encouraging women to read and educate their children instead of criticizing them for so "limited" a vision of women's intellectual capacity and role?

In sum, the conference taught us not to look at an image in isolation. We can enrich our knowledge by understanding a particular image as belonging to iconographic tradition or as having cultural work to do.

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Nina Baym to Give 1991 Wiggins Lecture

Nina Baym, professor of English at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, will deliver the 1991 James Russell Wiggins Lecture in the History of the Book in American Culture at 5:15 p.m. on Friday, October 18, 1991. Her subject will be "At Home with History: History Books and Women's Sphere Before the Civil War." The lecture—the ninth annual Wiggins Lecture—is open to the public, free of charge.

The annual meeting of the Executive Committee of the Program in the History of the Book in American Culture will take place at 2 p.m. on the day of Professor Baym's lecture.

Book Notes

NEW BOOKS ON LITERACY

Two recent books have to do in interesting and creative ways with the protean topic of literacy. Fresh at hand is *Literacy in the United States Readers and Reading since 1880* (Yale University Press, 1991), written by Carl Kaestle with assistance from four others. A series of discrete studies, the book opens with Kaestle's careful and intelligent review of "the history of literacy" and "the history of readers." Part III, on "Americans' Reading activities," and Part IV, "Literacy and Diversity in American History," include several significant essays, including one based on women's autobiographies and another analyzing gender, advertising, and mass-circulation magazines. The entire project is informed by healthy second thoughts about the dichotomies, chief of them "oral" versus "literate," that have plagued the field.

David Vincent is a British social historian who, some years ago, published a fine study of working-class autobiographies. In a new book, *Literacy and Popular Culture, England 1750-1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), he starts from the fact that, by the close of the nineteenth century, literacy (the ability to read and write) had become nearly universal among the working class and asks, why did this happen and what were its consequences? The answers are variously surprising, imaginative, and (always) sensitive to social and cultural context. I know of no better refutation of the 'autonomous' theory of literacy—that it is a skill in and of itself—or to put this positively, no better study of literacy as a set of "practices" that are rooted in family, occupation, "leisure," and the like.

Emphasizing that the civil state came late on the scene in England, Vincent sees the cup as more than half full before schooling became compulsory. This circumstance leads him to emphasize the family as the matrix that shaped and gave rise to literacy; the reciprocal theme is that a rationalized school system severed the connections between literacy and everyday experience, creating, as it were, two systems of meaning between which people had to move. The emphasis on the creative powers of local culture carries over into the analysis of literacy and occupation; here, Vincent shows

that as late as the early twentieth century, learning occurred primarily through apprenticeship (experience). Only as the trades unions developed a bureaucracy did literacy of a different kind become essential for some. It would take too long to catalogue the kinds of research and thinking that went into this book. There is fascinating material on religion, the commercialization of culture, the role of memory, and much else, including a description of the rise of the postcard, with its connections to the emergence of the working-class seaside resort. All in all, Vincent holds with remarkable effectiveness to the perspective that literacy consists of "practices" that sometimes coincide, but often depart from, middle and upper-class representations of literacy and how it should affect the working class.

D.D.H.

Notes on Research Collections

TILESTON AND HOLLINGSWORTH CO. PAPERS

In November 1990, the American Antiquarian Society acquired an important collection of manuscript material which should have great significance for the study of nineteenth-century paper manufacture and distribution. This collection, the gift of Amor Hollingsworth, consists of papers of the Tileston and Hollingsworth Company, which was located in Boston and Milton, Massachusetts. The manuscripts now at AAS span the years from 1765 to the end of the nineteenth century, with the majority of material dating from the period 1830-1855. Inasmuch as the first papermaking machines in Boston-area mills were installed in the late 1820s, this collection provides valuable insights into an industry of mass production which paralleled the rise of mass production of books. Additionally, these manuscripts offer a rich and detailed source of information on the sale and distribution of paper in an important period of transition in the American marketplace.

Mark Hollingsworth (1777-1855) was a native of Delaware, and he probably learned the papermaking trade as an apprentice at Thomas Gilpin's mill near Wilmington. After his arrival in Massachusetts, Hollingsworth was hired in 1798 by James Boies, the owner of several mills on the Neponset River in and near Milton. In 1801, Hollingsworth formed a partnership with Edmund I. Tileston (1775-1834) of Dorchester, and together they operated a mill leased from Boies's son. As the firm prospered, Tileston and Hollingsworth bought, leased, and built additional mills on the river. By the middle of the century, they were major manufacturers of paper for a variety of uses, including printing, writing, hanging, and sugar wrapping. Tileston's son, Edmund Pitt Tileston, and Hollingsworth's son, Amor Hollingsworth (the great grandfather of the donor), entered the partnership in 1831. Eventually, control of the company passed to these sons of the founder, and later to the founders' grandsons. The business continued with the involvement of members

of the Hollingsworth family well into the twentieth century.

The largest segment of the Tileston and Hollingsworth papers is a substantial file of incoming correspondence, primarily from the period between 1830 and 1850. Totalling more than 2,500 items, these letters are arranged chronologically and housed in twelve boxes. Orders from dealers and printers predominate, usually with detailed specification for the type and size of paper required. In some cases there are references to the specific books being printed with this paper. Clearly, there were ongoing difficulties in maintaining consistent production and efficient distribution while the company was undertaking the concurrent manufacture of many different types of paper. Because Tileston and Hollingsworth's products were often used by businesses that were themselves engaged in mass manufacture and distribution, the correspondence reflects the difficulties involved in managing such complex undertakings. Thus the letters discuss problems with the quality of the paper, as well as concerns about delivery times. While sugar refiners needed a reliable source of packaging material, printers could keep their presses running only if they could get a supply of paper which was not only steady but of consistent appearance and quality. Other correspondence deals with the purchase of materials and equipment. Rags were continuously obtained from sources both in American and Europe, and other supplies such as sizing were also needed. The machinery required continual repair and improvement. This correspon-

dence also includes some letters from individuals seeking employment in the mills .

Two additional boxes contain accounts of sales and accounts current, from the years between 1831 and 1854. These accounts show stocks and sales of paper supplied by Tileston and Hollingsworth to paper wholesalers and agents. Such firms supplied paper from their warehouses to printers and other customers, charging a commission on sales. From these accounts, a picture emerges of the complexities of the distribution process, as Tileston and Hollingsworth did extensive business with companies in a number of cities beyond Boston, including New York, Baltimore, and New Orleans.

Other types of material are also present in this collection. Approximately four hundred bills of lading from 1837, 1838, and 1844 record loads of paper sent from Boston by ship. There is a group of deeds, plans, and other documents, mostly pertaining to the mills owned by the company, as well as to the division of water rights on the Neponset River. In June 1991, Mr. Hollingsworth made an additional gift to the Society which includes a journal kept by Mark Hollingsworth from 1830 to 1834 detailing his business activities, and an album of early twentieth-century photographs of the paper mills and machinery.

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