

the case study of Winnipeg suggests that the decision by the Brigden firm to open a local branch in 1914 had a galvanizing effect on the local art scene, eventually producing artists of stature such as Charles Comfort. While it is the conventional wisdom that the Group of Seven represented the first appearance of a distinctive national art in Canada (itself a problematic notion for an Ontario-centric landscape group in a highly regionalized but also urbanizing and industrializing country), it must certainly be accepted that the foundations of much widely recognized achievement are to be found in the world of commercial art.

In all, this is a stimulating work that should help reinvigorate the study of Canadian art history. This book shows how a thoughtful use of social history can generate new insights into a traditional subject. Because the book originated in the author's dissertation on the Brigdens, there is an understandable emphasis on Toronto, Winnipeg, and the art of engraving; studies of other local and regional experiences are still needed, as are additional studies of individual firms and other branches of public art, especially in the period since the 1920s. Moreover, as Davis indicates, by the 1930s graphic artists seem to have been more concerned about the limitations both of business patronage and of elitist standards; by 1936 the Trades and Labour Congress had even chartered a new Artists' Union that was seeking new forms of sponsorship and support for the production of art. As new technologies of communication proliferate at the end of the twentieth century, the debate about production of art in the age of mass culture remains timely. Sadly, we will not hear more on the subject from this promising scholar, who died before her book was published. There are rich opportunities for the expansion of art history in this country, and it will be up to others to pursue the work.

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Doug Owrām — *Born at the Right Time: A History of the Baby Boom Generation*.  
Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996. Pp. xxv, 392.

The generation born after the Second World War continues to have a major impact on social institutions and popular culture in Canada. Preoccupation with youth culture and its needs has long given way to concern over middle age, no doubt soon to be supplanted by a focus on seniors. The demographic significance of the largest birth cohort in Canadian history will continue to be felt well into the next century, literally until death. Although this demographic bulge will remain influential throughout its existence, Doug Owrām argues that its real social legacy is found in its youth, in the turbulent 1960s. *Born at the Right Time* sets out to explain the emergence of this rebellious youth culture.

Owrām identifies his study as a "biography of the first twenty-five years of a generation" (p. ix). This social biography cuts a large swath through the middle, leaving questions of class, ethnicity, race, gender (though there is some attention to

the women's movement), and even birth cohort within the boom largely untouched. Those seeking a more complex picture of this generation will not find it here. Instead, the study self-consciously focuses on "mainstream" trends in youth culture and student radicalism.

The book is organized in eleven chapters, loosely following the life cycle of the boomers. The first three chapters explore the exceptional circumstances into which boomers were born: the relative affluence of the postwar decades; the cult of domesticity central to the baby boom itself; the "permissive" approach to child-rearing promoted by professionals; and the impact of the suburbs in creating homogenous "child-centred" spaces. The next two chapters, on leisure and schools, address the initial impact of the baby boom on social institutions and consumer culture. Owram argues that both the commercialization of childhood leisure, particularly through the new medium of television and television advertising, and immersion in the rapidly expanding school system produced a generation unusually homogenous in its experiences and outlook.

Most significant of all, however, was the real message of 1950s education: Child-centredness to an unparalleled degree. This reinforced every other experience of the young baby-boomers. Child-experts like Spock had said it from the day they were born. The child-centred families said it. The toy makers said it, and the child-dominated suburbs made it explicit. The sheer numbers of children confirmed it: This society is designed for you. (p. 135)

Having established the exceptional character of the baby boom generation, Owram then considers similarities between it and its predecessors. One of the most important contributions of *Born at the Right Time* is this careful balance between exceptionalism and cultural continuity. As Owram argues, decade of the 1950s was itself an exceptional time, as the production of the baby boom signifies. Moreover, themes in youth culture and radical politics that became prominent in the 1960s were rooted in the 1950s, including a distinctive youth culture bound up with rock and roll music and radical protest politics (the beats and the civil rights movement) that disavowed the Cold War's conservatism. These, then, were cultural forms inherited from the previous generation. "[I]t was not the baby boom that invented modern youth culture, though they transformed it" (p. 145). Why this generation transformed it is the topic of chapter 7. Owram argues that a crisis of authority and democracy throughout the west, combined with the "frenetic" growth of universities and an idealistic generation that saw itself as special, fused into a vibrant and distinctive youth culture with a radical edge.

The remainder of the book deals with three main themes: youth counter-culture immersed in drugs and rock and roll (chapter 8), student radicalism in universities (chapter 9), and the sexual "revolution", including a brief section on the women's movement (chapter 10). By the early 1970s the baby boom had ceased to function as a homogenous generation and rebellion died down.

By this time, at any rate, the great generation was well and truly divided. The

older edges had merged — a few communes aside — into the world of work and family, albeit in somewhat different forms from the work and families of their parents. The younger boomers went through adolescence in a much more uncertain economy and without the spotlight of their elder siblings.... The baby boom had grown up. (pp. 306–307)

The baby boomers may have grown up but, according to Owrham, they had a lasting impact on contemporary social values expressed, for instance, in the diversity of fashion, mores, and behaviour and the politics of race, gender, and environmentalism in the 1990s.

Surprisingly, I found the first half of *Born at the Right Time*, focusing on the 1950s, to be the most interesting. The last half of the book presents a more conventional overview of the 1960s and, in an effort to cover such a range of behaviour, explanation becomes secondary to description. Some topics received less attention than expected, including social movements for civil rights, women's liberation, sexual orientation, and the anti-war movement. Some events were confusing. For example, discussion of the events in the Political Science, Sociology and Anthropology Department at Simon Fraser University ends with the assertion that "the faculty members of the PSA remained fired" without telling the reader anything else about these firings — how many faculty were fired, when, under what circumstances, and with what long-term consequences (pp. 246–247).

Some of the limitations of *Born at the Right Time* reflect the sources used (or not used) in the study. Owrham draws heavily on representations and debates in the media and on records left by various student organizations to capture the flavour of the times. Perhaps surprisingly, interviews are rarely used, although these might have added an important dimension to this story of radicalism. Interviews might also tell us something about how the baby boomers experienced the suburbs and the schools that set the context for the events of the 1960s. The generation at the centre of *Born at the Right Time* is strangely silent throughout this study.

Overall, however, this book does accomplish most of what it sets out to do, and it will be of interest to those seeking something more than a nostalgic look at the 1960s. *Born at the Right Time* is written in an accessible style that makes it appropriate for undergraduate and graduate teaching.

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David Cheal — *New Poverty: Families in Postmodern Society*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996, Pp. xv, 209.

*New Poverty* presents a blend of theoretical and empirical perspectives. The author tests the relative merit of four theories of modernization as explanatory models for the poverty confronting families, and particularly children. These are the standard modernization theory, critical modernization theory, radical modernization theory,