

fauna, is a geographical element that is linked closely to the nature of the terrain, to climatic conditions, to landownership, and to the nature of farming." Not surprisingly, therefore, such a respect for tradition ensured the preservation of regional nuances of materials and styles, while still allowing enhanced living conditions by paying attention to hygiene, water supply, drainage, and the location of cemeteries.

By 1931, 305.3 million cubic metres of trenches had been filled; 345.9 million square metres of barbed wire had been removed; 21.2 million tonnes of shells had been destroyed; 3.4 million hectares of land had been cleared; 834 516 dwellings and farm buildings and 20 563 public buildings had been repaired or reconstructed; 61 382 kilometres of roads had been rebuilt; the population of the ten départements had rebounded to 6.5 million. It was a *pays rouge*. As Clout puts it, for many,

the bright red bricks, mass-produced tiles and cement-rendered walls were welcome and long-awaited expressions of recovery and renewal, but for others they were intrusions in the landscape which stood in stark contrast with the charm of the local vernacular architecture still visible away from the war-torn zones.

Perhaps, more than memorials and monuments, this reconstituted, lived-in world served as a daily remembrance of the Great War. But there were always to be other prompts. As recently as 1990, 23 tonnes of shells were recovered along the route of the TGV, while 36 farmers were killed by shells in 1991 alone.

The material culture of war is often expressed in terms of fortifications, weaponry, and other military paraphernalia. But there is a negative image too. From the salting of the ruins of Carthage to the insane strategies of Mutually Assured Destruction, ordinary people, their homes, and their landscapes of living and production have been targeted by war. Perhaps this is why I find it so distressing to read Clout's excellent chronicle of recovery and rebuilding. Of necessity, his study is couched in the voice of government policy, official reports, and statistical surveys in which the courage and resilience of the *sinistrés* is subdued. Even the official photographs are peopleless, or else two-dimensional shadows. But, as in all material culture, the people are there, as they have always been, rebuilding the fabric of their lived-in worlds after the ephemeral rhetoric of war has faded.

NOTES

1. Undoubtedly the best analysis of the Canadian context is Jonathan F. Vance's, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1997).
2. See Maria Tippett's *Art at the Service of War: Canada, Art, and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).
3. The following quotes are taken from David P. Silcox, *Painting Place: The Life and Work of David. B. Milne* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).
4. Angela E. Davis and Sarah M. Mckinnon, *No Man's Land: The Battlefield Paintings of Mary Ritter Hamilton, 1919-1922* (Winnipeg: The University of Winnipeg, 1992).
5. I am currently engaged in researching another volunteer group, the "British League for the Reconstruction of the Devastated Areas of France," in which Montreal participated.

Harriet Dover, *Home Front Furniture: British Utility Design, 1941 to 1951*

LYDIA SHARMAN

Dover, Harriet. *Home Front Furniture: British Utility Design, 1941 to 1951*. Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1991. 105 pp., 44 illus., cloth, \$55.95, ISBN 0-85967-842-3.

Harriet Dover has provided a comprehensive account of the British Utility Scheme as it applied to furniture during the ten-year period from 1941 to 1951. The scheme, which was implemented to manage shortages brought in by

the Second World War and for the postwar period of reconstruction, had a lasting effect on the design of British furniture and on the industry itself. In covering this period in depth and within a broad context, the book provides an unusual investigation of the social, political, intellectual and cultural context that created British furniture during this period and differentiated it from developments taking place in Europe and the United States.

The value of the book is enhanced by the unusual amount of documentation that exists and that has been thoroughly researched and presented in a clear and engaging way. Her documentation includes the voices of government, design organizations, designers, furniture manufacturers and consumers. Published in 1991, her book was the first detailed study of the Utility Scheme for furniture and was published several years earlier than the attention that has recently been accorded the Utility Scheme for fashion, including the major 1997 exhibit, *Forties Fashion and the New Look*, at the Imperial War Museum in London last year.

Part I of *Home Front Furniture: British Utility Design, 1941 to 1951* explains what the Utility Scheme was and why it came into existence. At the outbreak of war with Germany in 1939, timber and a number of other raw materials were immediately in very short supply in Britain. The production of furniture and consumer goods, including clothing and crockery, came under the control of the government's Board of Trade through the Utility Scheme. The government was concerned that, despite the rationing of timber, the quality of the furniture should be high, the price low and within the reach of the majority of British consumers.

Furniture production was limited by the Ministry of Supply to just twenty-two items. These were to be designed by one or two designers, and could only be produced by the 150 licensed manufacturers selected from the 600 who applied. Every item of furniture had to be made to an exact set of specifications and stamped with the 1941 patented logo, Utility Mark CC41. This remained until 1951 when the scheme ended due to pressure from the Freedom of Design movement, which had begun in 1948. Contravention of the specifications for this furniture was illegal and punishable by a fine of £500 for each offence, or three months in prison.

It was the overriding influence of the furniture designer, Gordon Russell, who was selected to be on the Utility Furniture Advisory Committee, and whose philosophy fitted so well with the needs of the time, that affected the look, style and design of the Utility Scheme furniture. Gordon Russell was in his forties at the time. He had fought in the First World War and on his return had joined his father's antique furniture business before leaving to set up his own furniture design company. He saw Modernism for Britain not as a break with the Arts and Crafts Movement but as a continuation of it. He adhered to the tenets of "fitness for

purpose" and "appropriate use of materials" that had been advocated by both William Morris and A. N. W. Pugin. He was supported by the Board of Trade, which was unlikely to sanction anything visually radical. Much of European Modernism was considered aesthetically alien and lacking "Englishness." Dover quotes Russell's preference for "sound, plain and functionally satisfactory furniture" and his belief that austerity and utility had useful "astringent qualities."

An attitude that separates British developments at this time from those in Europe and the United States is the lack of encouragement for innovation. In fact, Gordon Russell seemed to consider innovation and experimentation as "short-lived stunts" and "unBritish." Russell and the Board of Trade also shared, with the Arts and Crafts Movements and the European Modern Movement, a concern with the need to educate the public to accept "good design" and to improve the general standard of public taste. Dover explains the role the Council of Industrial Design (set up by the Board of Trade in 1944) and the exhibits, *Britain Can Make It* in 1946, and the *Festival of Britain* in 1951, had in trying to reform the taste of the British public.

Part II of *Home Front Furniture* is particularly interesting as it is here that the manufacturers and consumers give their opinions of the Utility Scheme furniture, which is unusual in books written about design. Dover gives many quotes from editorials in *The Cabinet Maker*, a magazine that supported the trades' extreme suspicion of the government's intervention, to which they were prepared to submit only because of the intense patriotism at the time. An editorial in *The Cabinet Maker* 1 (June 1945) made it clear that their goal was "Freedom from all controls not essential for the prosecution of the war or the transition of the war to peace; freedom to adventure our resources, our skill and our initiative as free men, not as obedient myrmidons of a totalitarian state" (p. 60). They were frustrated by the lack of scope for their creativity and resentful that even when "Freedom of Design" in 1948 allowed manufacturers to produce their own designs, the restrictive dimensions specified by the Board of Trade were still in place.

Harriet Dover has been able to give us the public's response to the furniture designed for the Utility Scheme from the files of Mass Observation, an organization that documented the opinions of consumers by listening to the comments they made to each other and interviewing them for their opinions at the Furnished Rooms exhibits at the "Britain Can Make It" exhibit. In general, opinion came down

against the "modern" for not being "homely" or "cosy" enough, although this was more often expressed by the older segment of the population. All those who responded were in favour of fixing a price limit for some items. In 1953, the Council of Industrial Design continued to try to monitor and educate the public taste. Two dining rooms, one comfortable, conventional, inter-war period, and the other "softened" modern, were set up. Again the public was asked to register their choice. Although the modern won by sixty-five percent, interviewees commented that the examples were the best type of modern and the worst type of supposedly conventional and that the choice was therefore "grossly unfair."

Dover credits the Design Research Unit, set up in 1942, for introducing the term "industrial design" into general usage, and for championing the value of industrial design to the

national economy and for raising standards of living. The term industrial designer came to mean anyone designing for mass production. Design as a profession was strengthened when the Council of Industrial Design was set up by the Board of Trade in 1944 to promote the improvement of British product design and to educate the public about "good design." It is this Council that was the inspiration of the Canadian National Design Council.

Dover concludes, in *Home Front Furniture*, that the Utility Scheme successfully fulfilled its real purpose — the provision of quality goods for those who needed them most at accessible prices — but it failed in terms of what Gordon Russell and other aesthetic reformers had hoped to achieve. Despite all the rhetoric, exhibitions and compulsory standardization, the British public was still largely able to thwart their efforts to impose "good design."

Arthur J. Ray, *I Have Lived Here Since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People*

CORY SILVERSTEIN

Ray, Arthur J. *I Have Lived Here Since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People*. Toronto: Lester Publishing Ltd and Key Porter Books, 1996. 398 pp., 209 illus., cloth \$45, ISBN 1-895555-94-9.

As the commissioners for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) point out, "history is not an exact science."¹ In practice, histories are often composed of the stories that best suit the interests and understandings of particular peoples. Until recently, the plot of Canadian history dwelt only on the heroic exploits of the founders of the new nation. Not too long ago, one could read an authoritative Canadian history text and find no more than a few lines dispensing with the history of aboriginal peoples.² Interest in Native peoples was limited to anthropological studies that attempted to "salvage" supposedly "pre-contact" cultural relics from remote communities. The pre-contact history of Native peoples was considered "mythical," while their post-contact history spelled out stories of their doom by death or assimilation. Thus, in 1932, Diamond Jenness could confidently assert that despite the huge size of the Ojibwa population and territory, they "did not play a very prominent part in the history of the Dominion," while the Iroquois of

Six Nations "earned a prominent place in every Canadian history" by siding with the British, but would "undoubtedly disappear as separate communities" within the century.³

Although Native communities have neither physically nor culturally vanished, the seeming conspiracy to "disappear" Canada's First Peoples from Canadian history has held sway in the media, in courts of law and in governmental policies affecting Native peoples. When newspapers report Native resistance to continuing infringement on Native lands and resources, they seldom explain the relevant histories of colonial land seizure, or acknowledge Native peoples' significant contributions to Canadian society. Instead, media coverage conveys the impression that Native communities are greedy and violent "special interest" groups. Where it concerns Native economic history, newspapers cite millions after millions of dollars that Native people are costing taxpayers, and citizens cling to the notion that Natives are, in fact, more privileged than "average" Canadians.⁴

With some significant exceptions (pp. 336–337, 311–312),⁵ judges have largely ignored two decades worth of scholarly and Native contributions to the rewriting of Native history. Instead, they hold to the familiar views