

she alludes to occasions which do not exactly highlight the long way that women have come. Perhaps the most disturbing is the 1954 "Big Dig" Homecoming Jubilee, which took place on the Tupperware company grounds. Sales people were invited to attend the festivities, metaphorically presented as an American gold-rush adventure. Distributorships were issued "sites" on a "Big Dig" map of the area on the basis of sales, with the highest-selling attendants permitted to advance furthest along the trail to where the richest deposits were. Buried under the ground was an estimated \$48,500 worth of prizes, including mink stoles and diamond rings, and the object was for each person to dig frantically to unearth as many of these objects as possible. *Life* magazine reported on this "All-Girl Gathering" and CBS televised the festivities,

no doubt tempting other women to consider a career in the same field. Literally encouraging women to get down and dirty by competing head-on with each other for luxury items, this event seems to epitomize the most negative aspects of the Tupperware phenomenon.

No longer is the Tupperware party the key means of distributing these plastic paragons. Today they are marketed at shopping malls, no doubt a consequence of the rise in the number of women employed outside the home, who have less time or inclination to host such gatherings. As for my mother, her own contemporary gesture of empowerment is to take a drive to the nearest dollar store. There, anonymously, she can make her selection of containers, buying only and whatever is desirable and convenient.

Maurice Rickards, *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera: A Guide to the Fragmentary Documents of Everyday Life for the Collector, Curator, and Historian*

RUSSELL JOHNSTON

Rickards, Maurice. *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera: A Guide to the Fragmentary Documents of Everyday Life for the Collector, Curator, and Historian*. Ed. Michael Twyman, with the assistance of Sally de Beaumont and Amoret Tanner. New York: Routledge, 2000. x, 402 pp., cloth, \$98, ISBN 0-415-92648-3.

The Encyclopedia of Ephemera was clearly a labour of love for its creators: its writer, the late Maurice Rickards, and its editor, Michael Twyman. Rickards was a scholar and collector of paper ephemera, and Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Ephemera Studies at the University of Reading. This reference work was first planned in 1971. Before his death in 1998, Rickards had researched and written almost four hundred of the entries included. Twyman, also at Reading, commissioned some forty more to complete the manuscript and to include new topics that date from 1980. The result is a stylistically seamless work that bears the enthusiasm of a collector. Chronologically, it spans the history of printed paper; geographically, its strength is Great Britain, though topics range into continental Europe and North America.

"Ephemera" is a term without a universally recognized definition. Here it is defined by Rickards as "the minor transient documents of everyday life," rendered chiefly from paper. It is, as Twyman

notes, an unsatisfactory term for analytical purposes, and has been adopted for its resilience rather than its rigour (p. v).

The encyclopedia attempts to refine its scope through example rather than argument, and consequently a very wide range of objects has been included. There are some items which enjoyed domestic popularity, such as silhouettes, envelopes, and lavatory paper, while other items are the official detritus of state agencies: election papers, postal-strike labels, and riot acts, to name three. However, by far the majority of the entries describe items commercial in nature. Examples of such items include account books, ships' deck plans, and bank notes. Certain printing terms are also explained, among them Braille, tinsel printing, and electrotyping. After that, there are some oddities in the mix: wax letter seals may be understandable, given their link to paper goods, but pressed flowers, shellac "advertising records," and "silks" (printed textiles) seem to test the compilers' own boundaries. The one thing that seems to unite all of these is their appeal to collectors — a characteristic imparted to said items through the beauty of their craft or their curiosity value.

Suitably for a reference work, the individual entries are more functional than interpretive, though they are written in an engaging and

accessible style. If a featured item is recognizable to a modern reader, its entry is comprised of a short history and a few examples are described. Where an item may be obscure, the text offers a more intricate discussion of its manufacture, appearance, and purpose. The author shows a collector's fascination for "firsts." Occasionally, a prominent collection of artifacts is listed at the end of an entry, which is welcome. Unfortunately, not all entries include sources for further reading. The introduction suggests that such entries were informed by Rickards's extensive, personal network of informants, many of whom are now deceased. In their place, where authorities could not be cited, one might have wished for noteworthy literary references to the artifacts described — something that might have depicted the object in a representative context. Still, the general presentation is greatly aided by many well-selected illustrations. A two-page spread often has two or more photographs, and there are sixteen colour plates as well.

Although an attempt was made to appeal to an international audience, the volume is clearly geared to the British experience. Because the objects collected are by definition the common paper objects of daily life, their names are subject to local vernacular, and British slang serves as the bench throughout. Further, the compilers have not been consistent in their attempts to ameliorate this situation. An entry might include alternative names for an item, but these may not appear in the index or the list of entries printed on the book's end papers. One example is the entry for "dance programme," a device also known as a "dance card." A similar situation holds for paper dolls; they do not appear in the index, but enjoy a central role in the rather broad entry for "Cut-out Toys."

Other anomalies occur. For example, the entry for "Relief Printing for the Blind" mentions the

entry for Braille, but not vice versa. One wonders why the subject requires two entries. The many genres of "Comic" — or funnies (not indexed) — are mentioned in one brief entry, while "labels" are detailed in over forty separate entries for different products and package types.

Are these serious problems? To the casual reader, who will enjoy roaming through the encyclopedia's pages, perhaps not. But to the researcher, a minor difference in terminology may well prove maddening. An index which cross-listed even the most common alternative names for the items described would have been helpful.

Twyman notes in his introduction the possibilities that ephemera research may have within the fields of social and business history. This point is amply confirmed. One area that begs for further research, even after a random sampling of entries, is the extent to which advertising features among the most collectable ephemera. Here, it seems, is fertile ground to discover links between social and business history. Much scholarly work over the last twenty years has viewed the relationship between advertisers and consumers as a hostile one; what are we to make of the volumes of scrapbooks kept over the last two centuries, in which have been preserved advertising trade cards, package labels, and cigar rings? Rickards and Twyman's work as collectors and encyclopedists may help to place these private documents into the historian's field of vision.

Ultimately, this volume may not find a wide audience in Canadian and American Studies. Much of the state and commercial ephemera it describes is peculiar to Great Britain, and Canadian material is particularly rare. But, as the editor notes, this volume is a pioneering scholarly effort in the field of ephemera. For students and scholars of British social, cultural, and business history, this will be a valuable tool.

Kevin Mulroy, ed., *Western Amerykański: Polish Poster Art and the Western*

ANNA ADAMEK

Mulroy, Kevin, ed., *Western Amerykański: Polish Poster Art and the Western*. Los Angeles: Autry Museum of Western Heritage, and Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999. 229 pp., 167 illus., cloth, US\$60, ISBN 0-295-97812-0; paper, \$40, ISBN 0-295-97813-9.

Kevin Mulroy, the director of the research centre at the Autry Museum of Western Heritage recalls in his interesting preface to *Western Amerykański: Polish Poster Art and the Western* that anyone who heard about the book would instantly ask: "Why posters from Poland?" Certainly the