

Reviews

Edited by Peter Faulkner

William Morris: The Odes of Horace. Facsimile edition; printed on Tatami paper in coloured inks with gold and silver foil; bound in Indian smooth-grain goat-skin, following the original design by T.J. Cobden-Sanderson; gold blocked on spine, edges and doublures, 192 pp. Together with 61-page hard-bound book containing the 1870 photograph of William Morris, an eight-page Commentary by Clive Wilmer, and translations of the Odes by William Gladstone (1894). All in a large handsome box designed by David Eccles. London: Folio Society, 2014. No ISBN; £395.

Following its facsimile editions of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* and three books by Eric Gill, the Folio Society has now produced a splendid edition of Morris's manuscript version of *The Odes of Horace*. Clive Wilmer's informative Commentary tells the reader of Morris's preoccupation, in his Sunday leisure time during the period 1869–1875, with what he called 'painted books'; he produced some 1500 pages of lettering and ornament, and eighteen illustrated books, though only two of them were completed. May Morris's recollections of her father at work at his desk at the time are delightfully quoted. Morris had already shown his enthusiasm for medieval manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford when he was an undergraduate. His early attempts at writing were awkwardly Gothic in form, but he came under the influence of Renaissance writing-books and developed a clearer and more attractive style. Most of us will know Morris's work in this area mainly through the attractive 1870 *Book of Verse* facsimile produced by the Scholar Press for the V&A in 1981. Wilmer argues that the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (1872), *The Odes of Horace* (1874), and above all the unfinished folio *Aeneid* (1874–5), are even finer. Certainly, the *Book of Verse* is a quiet little volume, lacking the gold and silver exuberance of the later books. Morris ceased work of this kind in 1875, giving no explanation, but having learned lessons about the making of books that would come to fruition at the Kelmscott Press. Overall, Wilmer sees the venture as 'a qualified failure'.

Wilmer gives a clear account of Morris's life, emphasising the influence of

Ruskin, both for his criticism of industrial capitalism and, on a smaller scale, quoting his argument that the purpose of illumination ‘was not to lead the mind away from the text, but to enforce it’. Wilmer admits that we do not know why Morris chose Horace for such elaborate treatment. (I can find no reference to the Odes or to Horace as a poet in Morris’s letters. The first mention of Horace is in a letter to Charles Fairfax Murray, in Italy in 1874, instructing him to get some high-quality vellum which Morris needed for this manuscript, remarking that ‘the odes are so short so there is nearly an ornamental letter to every page’, and adding that ‘I have in mind to try and sell a book if I could find a customer: I work much neater now, & have got I think more style in the ornament, & have taken rather to the Italian work of about 1450 for a type’; Morris never found such a customer. Later, in a letter to the aspiring poet James Henderson in October 1885, Morris referred to Horace in the advice he gave, but here Horace was simply a source for common-sense ideas about writing). Wilmer argues that Horace appeals to readers in various ways, and that the Victorians, ‘troubled by doubt’, responded to his emphasis on transience and mortality, his ‘humane scepticism’. He then provides the text of Gladstone’s translation of the Odes published in 1894, though admitting that Gladstone had ‘no poetic talent’ and was politically anathema to Morris by that time. If a reader wants to know what the poems are about – though many of us may simply want to look at the pages aesthetically – it seems to me a pity that access is not given rather to the remarkable Wordsworth edition, *Horace. The Odes in English Verse*, edited by Antony Lentin in 1997; here we encounter fine versions by such poets as Cowper, Dryden, Housman, Johnson, Jonson and Rochester, as well as specialist translators.

The text that we can now happily see here is likely to impress because of Morris’s unfailing inventiveness; on page after page we find designs of the utmost elegance and vitality, using gold and silver to impressive effect. There is no repetition, and Morris clearly enjoys taking on new tasks, as for instance in the changing colour-schemes of the pages as they come before us. There is only one fully decorated page, but a host of others filled by the decorator with the energy of life. In her biography of Morris, Fiona MacCarthy has brought out well how on these pages ‘the pictorial decoration swims into the lettering’. She notes the richness of the ‘Leaves and grapes and rose hips; honeysuckle trellis; a thousand dotting rosebuds’, giving sometimes ‘a sense of demented wallpaper’, and finds the general effect ‘inexpressibly peculiar, at once beautiful and decorous yet fraught and slightly manic’. She is led to think of Lewis Carroll, Blake, French Surrealism and the Czech avant-garde. Wilmer’s conclusion is less excited, but conveys admirably the mysterious appeal to be found here.

The Odes of Horace is a little book, kept in a small box. When we open the leather covers and behold the neatly bound pages with their elegant lettering and delicate decoration, we seem to have been granted access to a treasure: vulner-

able, threatened by the very transience that Horace's odes resist and lament, and therefore all the more highly to be prized.

The book is undoubtedly expensive, but the reproductive work is of very high quality. Readers who have the good fortune to be able to afford it will find it a rich source of visual pleasure, and perhaps a stimulus to taking up the study of calligraphy or of the Latin tongue.

Peter Faulkner

Fiona MacCarthy, *Anarchy and Beauty: William Morris and his Legacy 1860–1960*, London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 2014. Hbk. 184 pp., 174 coloured illustrations, £30. ISBN 9781855144842.

William Morris, Words and Wisdom, London: National Portrait Gallery Publications in association with The William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow, 2014. Pbk. Approx. 150 unnumbered pp., 100 coloured illustrations, £10. ISBN 9781855144941.

With its ample format – the book measures 27 x 24 cm. – *Anarchy and Beauty* is clearly a volume of generous intentions. It accompanied the exhibition of the same name held at the National Portrait Gallery from October 2014 to January 2015. The advantage obtained from using the resources of the NPG is that a large number of unusual photographs were made available. Among these one would expect to find some exceptionally good portraits. After seeing the startling physiognomy of Stepniak displayed here (p. 42) all the discussion about his life and accidental death is resolved; the poor man looks totally disorientated. In contrast it is a pleasure to learn that William Morris had 'a round and genial thirteenth-century face'. While explaining that there are few portraits of Morris, because he was 'neurotically hostile to self-image' and would take no pleasure from sitting still, the book opens with the Watts portrait taking up a full page. Morris took three years to agree to sit for it. The stare is arresting. Yeats kept a copy over his mantelpiece, and in his *Autobiographies* described the 'grave wide-open eyes' as 'the eyes of some dreaming beast'.

As with the preceding Virginia Woolf exhibition, the traditional catalogue has been replaced by an independent book, in which the views of the curator are laid before you. Instead of a long list of self-contained descriptions of individual items, six themes are developed at some length. MacCarthy announces the direction her book will take in the introduction by referring to Morris's lecture 'Art under Plutocracy'.

Art [for Morris] was not just painting, sculpture, architecture, it was also 'the shapes and colours of all household goods'; art was even 'the arrangement of the fields for tillage and pasture, the management of towns and of our highways of all kinds'.

Earlier sections cover the first half of the chosen period from 1860 to 1900, while Morris was still a living influence. They are 'William Morris and the Red House Circle', 'The Fellowship of the New Life', and 'Arts and Crafts'. I shall deal briefly with these, although MacCarthy often brings out new emphases to well-known topics. There are two excellent portraits of Edward Carpenter, whom Morris evidently admired more than is usually realised; in one he is wearing his famous sandals, accompanied by a picture of the actual Indian hand-made sandals, which he learned to make himself. This seems to hit a number of Morrisian targets. Several amazing women are discussed, including Barbara Leigh Bodichon, who founded Girton College; it is suggested that Jenny Morris, who had passed the relevant examinations, might have gone to the college, had she not been suffering from epilepsy. In the Arts and Crafts section the stress is on the number of useless gentlemen who found a new way of living. William De Morgan (as spelled here) was changed from an amateur into a working potter, and Cobden-Sanderson was inspired to take up bookbinding by Janey Morris. Morris's copy of Marx's *Le Capital* 'had been worn to loose sections by his constant study of it', and we are shown how Cobden-Sanderson remade it into an art work on his second attempt at binding. In 1898, though Morris was dead by that time, Lethaby encouraged Edward Johnston, a failed medical student, to take up lettering and calligraphy, and he passed this skill down to Eric Gill. Ashbee and Voysey carried on the Arts and Crafts tradition into the next century, and we conclude with May Morris, whose own house in Hammersmith was 'the epitome of shrininess'. This is a new word to me, and I felt that May's effort in bringing out the *Collected Works* was rather devalued by saying she was 'fixated on her father'.

The second half of the book deals with the first sixty years of the twentieth century, in three sections: 'The Garden City Movement', 'Inter-War Artistic Communities', and 'The Festival of Britain', followed by a very brief Afterword on Jeremy Deller. Before we get to the Garden City there is a long diversion about Octavia Hill and the foundation of the National Trust in 1895; this was not an initiative of Morris's, although he was alive at the time, and I began to see that any number of interesting people *might* have been connected with Morris, but in fact were not. Ebenezer Howard was deftly summed up by Bernard Shaw as 'one of those heroic simpletons who do big things whilst our prominent worldlings are explaining why they are Utopian and impossible'. It seems that he was inspired by Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, which to Morrisians is entirely the wrong book. Speaking personally, I always used to enjoy visiting Letchworth,

though a friend of mine who worked there was very disillusioned by its dullness. I fell in love with the Co-op, where the café was in a vast Saxon edifice; it was a cross between a Moot Hall and something out of *Beowulf*, and it did strike me as a Morrisian structure, though it is not mentioned here. I think it has now been dismantled. But I never felt that Letchworth had anything to do with *News from Nowhere*. The section concludes with Hampstead Garden Suburb, which seems a long way from the original idea of the Garden City.

On the other hand, the interwar period seems full of genuinely Morrisian artistic enterprises. Eric Gill's community at Ditchling could have been a rebirth of Morris's early brotherhood of artists, but Gill saw Morris as having 'the fatal disadvantage of missing out on God'. The letter-carving, the printing and the stonework seem to derive exactly from Morris. So does the vision of handmade pottery for the people, and the new kind of factory Bernard Leach founded at St Ives, a place MacCarthy describes in an amazing aside as 'far beyond the Cotswolds'. But she does see the 'inner purpose', and points out that 'Leach depended on a succession of disciples who were glad to work for nothing'. This leads on to one of the disciples, Michael Cardew, a driven man, and his decision to start another pottery at Winchcombe.

Finally, the Festival of Britain is seen by MacCarthy as a great fulfilment of Morris's ideals, but the reality is summed up in the picture of the committee. Everybody is very worthy, but there is not enough about the exhibits. There is a good discussion of Gordon Russell (who had the advantage of coming from the Cotswolds!) and his production of Utility Furniture during the Second World War. John Piper, too, had the imagination to capture the appearance of 'Ancient Buildings' before and when they were destroyed. MacCarthy draws attention to his Shell Guides and his work in stained glass as truly Morrisian in their impetus. All in all, this is a splendid attempt to trace Morris's influence, and there is a clear choice between those who acknowledged this, and others who were simply driven along by the spirit of the age. MacCarthy's emphasis is almost entirely on design; even so, I wish a little more could have been said about printing and the private press movement.

William Morris, Words and Wisdom also accompanies the exhibition. It contains many of the same illustrations, which face pages of useful quotations from Morris and his friends. It is the sort of book that you could open on an easel, and turn one page every day.

John Purkis

Elizabeth Wilhide, *William Morris: Décor & Design*, London: Pavilion Books, 2014, 192 pp., Hbk, £25. ISBN 9781909815537.

First published by Pavilion Books in 1991, the third edition of this lavishly illustrated book offers to be a 'practical and inspirational guide' suggesting 'simple and cost-effective ways of incorporating a William Morris style décor'. Wilhide's rationale for creating an interior décor which aspires to the Morris fundamentals of purity, colour and craftsmanship is that 'rich colours, fluid floral patterns, light airy rooms and simple wooden furniture are all radical principles of the Arts and Crafts Movement. As these are also the fundamentals of most modern décor, there has never been a better time for introducing Morris designs into the home'. Twenty-three years ago, when Wilhide's book was first published, there was indeed a trend for rich colours and repeat floral patterns within the popular market: Liberty's colourful prints experienced a resurgence during the late 1980s and early 1990s, Laura Ashley opened hundreds of shops during the early 1990s, and Cath Kidston's vintage-inspired floral prints took off during the late 1990s. Alas, the current trend in interior design seems to be for grey, beige and for, the word that makes me shudder above all other: 'neutral'. Thus, Morris's fundamentals of rich colour and floral patterns are now needed more than ever in order to prevent home décor from slipping into a quagmire of taupe banality. One of my favourite Morris tales recalls him working in the Oxford Street shop when a high-society lady came in looking for drinking glasses. Observing the brightly coloured tumblers for sale, she asked whether he had anything in less vibrant tones. Morris escorted her to the door and said perhaps what she was looking for could be found outside: mud.

For those not familiar with the author, Elizabeth Wilhide is an accomplished and prolific writer having produced more than twenty books about design, home interiors and architecture, including *Sir Edwin Lutyens: Designing in the English Tradition*, *The Mackintosh Style*, and *Scandinavian Modern Home*. She has also contributed to many of Sir Terence Conran's books, including *Terence Conran on Design*. By happy coincidence, I purchased a copy of the 1991 edition of *William Morris: Décor & Design* from a charity bookshop only a few months before reviewing this new one. Such good fortune made it easier for me to compare the first and third versions of the book. The first thing which stuck me was the change in the cover: the dust jacket of the first edition features a photograph of an oak Letchworth dresser by Ambrose Heal festooned with glazed vases sitting in front of *Indian*, a 1868–70 wallpaper by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. The new edition features *Fruit or Pomegranate*, with slate/thyme background, one of the earliest wallpapers designed by 'the Firm', and first produced in 1864. As *Fruit* is one of the most popular of his designs, the new cover makes the book instantly recognisable as a volume about William Morris.

Both editions contain the same number of pages, the same Introduction, the same five chapters, the same glossary of patterns and the same (unforgivably I think) Select Bibliography. The key word here is same. Beyond the cover, the only additions or amendments I can see within the new book are in the Commercial Suppliers section (more about that later). And that is my criticism of the book: unfortunately, it is a lost opportunity. Why did the publishers not take the opportunity to update some of the information it contains? By not doing so they have sold short this useful, beautiful and informative book, as they have the reader. During the twenty-three years since the first edition was published, new information about William Morris has come to light, and major exhibitions have taken place, including the William Morris Centenary Exhibition at the V&A (1996), and *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-Garde* at Tate Britain (2012). Morris & Co. celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2011, with a new collection of archive-based prints, weaves, embroidered fabrics and surface-printed wallpapers, along with new designs inspired by Morris and his circle. During the last two decades, Morris & Co. has flourished, first under the umbrella of Sanderson who purchased the entire company in 1940 (for £400!) and now under Walker Greenback PLC who bought Sanderson and Morris & Co. in 2003 (presumably for a lot more). Morris & Co. fabrics and wallpapers are available in over sixty countries worldwide, including Japan, Australia, the United States and Russia. Internet retail has changed our shopping experience beyond any expectations we might have had twenty years ago. Another significant change is that the cradle of the Arts & Crafts Movement, Red House, is open to the public through its acquisition by The National Trust in 2003. When *William Morris: Décor & Design* was first published, Morris's beloved home and creative laboratory was in private ownership and only open via private appointment. Now the house is available for all to enjoy and be inspired by.

The book is a visual feast, lavishly illustrated, with historic black-and-white photographs and over sixty full-page colour photographs of Morris-related interiors at Wightwick Manor, Kelmscott Manor, Craggside, Red House, 18 Stafford Terrace and Standen. There are numerous other colour photographs of beautiful Arts & Crafts styled interiors in private homes. The Arts & Crafts style font used for the chapter headings is also a visual treat. If readers had not possessed the opportunity to compare the 1991 version with the 2014 then perhaps their conclusion would have been an optical delight. Alas, in the 2014 edition something odd seems to have happened to the colour photographs, making them seem paler, less rich and vibrant than they did in the original. The text in the 2014 edition also appears fainter than in the 1991 original, making it slightly more difficult to read – I thought this was perhaps only my review copy, but a trip to Waterstones confirmed my finding.

Now to the content; unchanged until five pages from the end. The Introduc-

tion provides an overview of Morris's life and work, acknowledging his accomplishments in fields other than home décor, and stating that the book is concerned with Morris the designer, his impact on the decorative arts and the relevance of his approach to design and decoration today. Wilhide astutely observes that a Morris design celebrates the natural world, and his work emphasises harmony with nature which in a way is particularly timely. But again, since the first edition was published, new information about the Morris circle has come to light. The portrayal of Jane Morris in the Introduction, only mentioned as a stereotypical Victorian female invalid, adulteress and muse, is a case in point: had more recent research been consulted, such as *The Collected Letters of Jane Morris* published in 2012, then readers would have been given a more complete and more accurate assessment of Jane.

Chapter 1 examines nineteenth-century interiors, where middle- and upper-class homes were festooned with too much drapery, over-stuffed sofas and a sea of clutter. Industrialisation, an explosion in house building, and a rising, status-hungry, fashion-conscious middle class, had created an expanding market for household goods. The stage was set for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., in which Morris firmly rejected current fashions, and looked instead to the medieval period as a source of inspiration as, for him, it represented the last honest period of design. Wilhide points out that Morris was opposed to reproduction: his genius was the ability to create something new out of his enthusiasm for the past. The chapter takes us on a tour of Red House, Kelmscott Manor and Kelmscott House, in order to demonstrate the ways in which Morris's beliefs about décor and design were played out at home. We learn that by the end of the nineteenth century, no fashionable home in London was without some item from Morris & Co., whose influence meant that rooms at the turn of the century were less dark, and less crowded.

Chapters 2 to 5 focus on specific aspects of interior decoration, and ways to achieve a Morris-style décor at home: decorating with pattern, wall adornment with paint, paper and fabric, window treatments, furniture and furnishings. Each chapter explores Morris's ideas on these subjects, gives examples of commissions undertaken by Morris & Co., and finishes with Wilhide offering sensible suggestions on ways to attain the desired look in the twenty-first century. I particularly enjoyed the chapter on decorating with pattern, where Wilhide writes comprehensibly about the ways in which Morris revolutionised the art of pattern-making, and changed the course of western design. The Glossary of Patterns section, illustrating sixty of the most popular designs by Morris & Co., is design heaven.

The only obvious additions or amendments to the book are in the section on Commercial Suppliers. This is now arranged into Stockists and Suppliers, and Collections. Addition of web addresses is helpful, but a simple proof-reading

and checking of these links would have identified errors with several addresses, including that of The William Morris Society. Inclusion of telephone numbers would have been helpful, as would adding Emery Walker's House under Collections. Last, the lack of an updated Bibliography is unforgivable. While all of the books listed make excellent further reading, the most recent publication date is 1990. During the last twenty-five years other excellent sources have appeared, including, in particular, *The Collected Letters of Jane Morris*, Fiona MacCarthy's *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, 1995, and Pamela Todd's *William Morris and The Arts & Crafts Home*, 2005.

William Morris: Décor & Design makes enjoyable reading, and is a visual delight for readers interested specifically in Morris's design ideas about home décor. By way of her sensible, practical suggestions, Wilhide succeeds in providing an inspirational guide for simple and cost-effective ways of creating a Morris-inflected interior. She reminds us that Morris campaigned hard in order to render the experience of everyday living more beautiful and more efficient, encouraging people to examine carefully the objects they used, and their surroundings, in order to discard the ugly and useless. She wisely concludes that it is this attitude of selection, appreciation and enjoyment of simplicity and purity which is the most important component in creating a Morris interior. I am however left with the feeling that this edition is, sadly, a lost opportunity, and I would suggest that readers looking to buy the book first have a rummage in a second-hand bookshop for the 1991 edition.

Fiona Rose

Wendy Parkins, *Jane Morris, The Burden of History*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013, 194 pp. Hbk, £70. ISBN 9780748641277.

Wendy Parkins's new book on Jane Morris promises to draw on theoretical scholarship in literary theory and gender studies in order to reinterpret Jane's history. She states that 'the myth of Jane Morris will be juxtaposed with contrasting representation and interpretations'. (p. xiv) The book is therefore not a biography of Jane, but rather a thematic study of aspects of her life. The author's ambition to make Jane 'no longer just an ancillary character in the lives of famous men' (p. xvi) is admirable.

Parkins argues that in order truly to understand Jane, a major re-interpretation is necessary, and uses a theoretical framework deriving from Pierre Bourdieu's theory of *habitus*. She assumes that every reader will be familiar with Bourdieu's

theories, and thus does not give much background about them. Essentially Bourdieu proposes that certain norms and tendencies guide thought and behaviour. These become deposited in individuals, and determine thoughts, feelings and actions. This analysis forms the core of Parkins's treatment of Jane's life.

The strongest parts of the book are straightforward examinations and interpretations of the archival record. There are particularly interesting discussions of Philip Webb's letters to Jane. To the author's credit, she has spent a considerable amount of time using both archival resources and contemporary periodicals. She has made several interesting discoveries, including in Wilfrid Scawen Blunt's diaries at the Fitzwilliam Museum where, for example, she found a previously unknown entry showing that Jane gave Blunt a tour of the Grosvenor Gallery exhibition in 1886. This finding reinforces Jane's previously known interest in the Gallery exhibitions and illustrates her familiarity and ease with contemporary painting. Publication of *The Collected Letters of Jane Morris* in 2012 came too late for systematic use of Jane's correspondence in the book, but Parkins does manage to insert a few relevant references.

Parkins divides her work into examination of a series of tropes which have been used both by her contemporaries and later writers on the Pre-Raphaelites in order to characterise Jane; invalid, mistress, lower class woman, muse and craftswoman. While Parkins is highly critical of use of these tropes in relation to Jane Morris, structuring the book around them encourages the reader to see Jane through this prism. It is ironic that the first page states that, like a refrain, 'the stories told of Jane Morris have typically involved repetitions, simplistic and persistent, that reiterate an always-already known tale' – because the chapters which follow do essentially the same thing, albeit with a repeating analysis which persistently argues that Jane's active role in her life story has been misrepresented or marginalised. It is true that the previous 'absence of Jane's epistolary voice' and the lack of any recorded recollections by Jane, previously obstructed easy biographical accounts, but in other ways her historical presence in a well-documented social circle has been assiduously picked over, as it is once more here.

Some of these older interpretations of Jane's actions, thoughts, character and emotions are so insignificant that they are hardly worth attacking, much less dissecting. Others, such as the somewhat minor role Jane is allocated in Mackail's original (1899) biography of Morris, may legitimately derive from her own preference, at a time when gossip about her private affairs was spicing up. However, the only interpretation Parkins seems to consider is that Jane was deliberately kept out of the biography.

Parkins's book is not an analysis of all works about Jane and how she has been interpreted. Rather, its focus is almost exclusively on those publications discussing Jane (mostly from the 1940s to the 1970s) Parkins finds questionable. More recent works (which in many cases seek to correct past interpretations) are barely

mentioned. For example, Parkins spends several pages analysing (and criticising) Rosalie Glyn Gryllis's 1964 description of Jane's antipathy to her husband's socialism. However, Fiona MacCarthy's conclusion (in her 1996 biography of Morris) that socialism was not a major cause of friction between the Morrises, is relegated to a footnote. MacCarthy's biography is to a large extent left out of Parkins's book.

In her discussion of previous works on Jane, Parkins almost completely overlooks Jan Marsh's groundbreaking *Pre-Raphaelite Sisterhood* and *Jane and May Morris*. There are a few stray references to Marsh's works, but these mainly dispute some minor point. While in the Introduction, she acknowledges that Marsh's work was 'trailblazing' (p. 9), nowhere is Marsh's work analysed, nor is Marsh given credit for her original research or for previously arguing some of the very revisions in views of Jane which Parkins promotes. Marsh's revolutionary work initiated a major re-evaluation of the women involved in the Pre-Raphaelite circle, and has led to a major shift in scholarship in relation to them. Certainly Marsh's work is relevant to Parkins's stated purpose in writing the book. Nowhere is this lapse explained.

One odd discussion is a lengthy review of Jane's relationship with Wilfrid Scawen Blunt: Parkins characterises Blunt's interest in Dante Gabriel Rossetti as 'almost homoerotically charged'. (p. 43) In her analysis of Jane in relation to the two men, 'the woman functions merely to authorize and confirm the idealized if unachievable homosocial relation; she may have the final word in endorsing the men's bond but it is ultimately their story not hers'. (p. 47) The remarkable aspect of this discussion of Blunt's mental state regarding the relationship is that there is relatively little analysis of Jane's own motivations and feelings. One could see this extensive dissection of the relationship through Blunt's interests (whether one agrees with Parkins homosocial theories or not) as precisely the kind of dismissive analysis of Jane which Parkins finds so false in other publications.

Parkins begins the section 'Class' with valid criticism of other authors who found Jane's class 'fixed and irrevocable'. One of the authors discussed is E.P. Thompson, who characterises Jane as 'spoiled and indifferent'. It is quite striking that an advocate of the working classes such as Thompson would have treated Jane, who originated in them, so harshly. As Parkins describes, 'a woman may marry up, these biographers imply, but her past will always betray her'. (pp. 83–84) However, she herself then goes on to refer to Jane on other occasions as a 'working class woman' or 'working class', not allowing her to break free of her status at birth. In her analysis of Jane's extensive reading, Parkins suggests that it may have been 'aspirational', as if not motivated by genuine intellectual curiosity, but an effort to make herself seem genteel. (pp. 95–97) All of this seems quite unfair to the remarkable achievement which characterises Jane's re-creation of herself. One need only compare her to other women in the Pre-Raphaelite circle with

working-class origins, such as Emma Brown, in order to appreciate the amazing, almost seamless, social and intellectual transformation Jane accomplished.

There are some errors in the book. For example, there is a discussion of Phillis Ellis (whose name she also misspells as Phyllis) as F.S. Ellis's wife, (p. 100) when in fact she was his daughter (Ellis's wife was Caroline). Similarly, some of her conclusions seem based on nothing more than speculation. Near the beginning, there is a lengthy discussion involving which name to use for Jane. In order to justify her choice not to use 'Janey', Parkins states that she chose not to, in part, because Janey was a name Jane Morris 'rarely uses' in letters. (p. xii) There may well be strong reasons for not using a diminutive to refer to Jane Morris, but this is not one of them. In Jane's published correspondence, close to one-fifth of the surviving letters are signed 'Janey'. This, of course, does not include the numerous lost letters to her husband, sister and the Burne-Joneses, to whom every letter would have been signed 'Janey'.

As the first work of theoretical scholarship on Jane Morris, this book will hopefully serve to broaden the audience of those interested in her. Certainly the book is to be welcomed as another contribution to understanding Jane's life and significance.

Frank C. Sharp

Mark Frost, *The Lost Companions and John Ruskin's Guild of St George: A Revisionary History*. London & New York: The Anthem Press, 2014, 250 pp. Hbk, £60. ISBN 9781783082834.

When William Morris 'crossed the river of fire' in 1883 and joined a Socialist body, he was making one of a number of possible choices. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, several alternatives to unchecked capitalism and the mainstream political parties existed. There were, for instance, the social Liberals, whose ideas went into the University settlements. Most of them eventually joined the Labour Party, which brought together several radical tendencies. Other movements were also developing, on the right as well as the left. There were also radical Tories, for instance, who hated the movement away from the land, and the inhumanity of the factory system.

Where did John Ruskin stand in all of this: the thinker who had, in his great essay 'On the Nature of Gothic' (1853) pointed out what Morris called 'a new road on which the world should travel'? Ruskin continued to influence Morris, was an inspiration for the University settlements, and was acknowledged at home and

abroad as presenting a serious challenge to industrial capitalism – by Tolstoy in Russia, for instance, and early during the next century, by Gandhi as well. But during the 1870s and 1880s, Ruskin was mainly concerned with his own Utopian body, which, unlike many of its rivals, is still active today. This is the Guild of St George, founded in 1871 as St George's Fund. Its main purpose was to restore and reform the rural economy, not merely as a back-to-the-land movement but as a modern response to the evils of industrialism. The Guild also promoted the arts and crafts, and planned to create communities in the countryside with their own schools and school curricula, and their own art galleries and libraries. Ruskin founded the Guild in despair at the way things were going, particularly for the artisan class, for which he felt deep sympathy.

The trouble was that Ruskin's despair was caused not only by the state of things in the world – though that was wholly genuine – but also by the state of things in his own mind and heart. In 1878, just as the Guild was finally registered with the Board of Trade, he suffered the first of seven mental breakdowns. The Guild was an obvious victim of this decline. Quite early on in the process, he seems to have lost interest in developing it, and gradually came to concentrate his attention on what everyone agrees was its chief success, the St George's Museum on the edge of Sheffield, now named the Ruskin Collection, and housed in central Sheffield's Millennium Gallery. But the Guild's prospects had never been good. Of Ruskin's obvious friends and allies, people of distinction in the arts and the public world, few rallied to his cause. Had they done so – had Morris and Burne-Jones done so, to go no further – the Guild might have moved on in spite of its Master's difficulties. Presumably they had realised that Ruskin was unstable and steered clear of all his hare-brained schemes. The irony is that the Guild survived and achieved important things – today as well as then.

But the Guild has tended to be regarded as faintly ridiculous and at best quixotic. One important feature of Mark Frost's indispensable book is that he shows how effective several of Ruskin's initiatives in fact were, and attributes the downbeat accounts one reads of them to the Master's own failure to build on his own successes. But the chief message of the book is not to Ruskin's credit and makes for painful reading, especially for those who still count themselves among his followers.

Frost argues that there was a deep contradiction in Ruskin's outlook, which puzzled his readers and deterred sympathisers from joining the Guild. The message was one of sympathy for the poor and deprived, and provoked Ruskin to the kind of radical language Morris found so inspiring. But Ruskin was not joking, as some have thought, when in the eighth of his 'Letters to the Workmen and Labourers of Great Britain' – the series *Fors Clavigera* – he wrote: 'I am, and my father was before me, a violent Tory of the old school ...' He wanted a strictly hierarchical society in which the chief duty of the labouring classes was to obey

their masters. Of course, he understood only too well that there was more than enough reason for them to disobey, given the injustice of their circumstances, but the utopia he imagined was one where the wise ruled and the poor, decently housed and fed, were there to be governed. Moreover, in the previous letter, written at the time of the Paris Commune, he had also told his (no doubt bemused) readers: 'I am myself a Communist of the old school, reddest ... of the red'.

Intellectually speaking, there is much to be said for this refusal to be tied to an existing ideology. In one of the fascinating interviews given by the Marxist historian Tony Judt, just before he died, he insisted that Socialism was in some ways a conservative movement, as Morris would surely have agreed, the implication being that capitalism is dedicated to erasing the past in the interest of future profit. Frost might have dealt with that argument, but his purpose here is to recover, from the oblivion they have fallen into, those working-class Companions who (as he sees it) became the victims of Ruskin's medievalising fantasies.

Fortunately for his readers, the grimness of Frost's conclusion accompanies the thrill of scholarly discovery. He early on tells the story of the key finding – in the library of Wellesley College, just before closing time – of 'an article tucked away in a previously uncatalogued manuscript'. The article was by a working-class Scotsman, William Buchan Graham, who had worked for something like eight years on the Guild's land in Worcestershire, and had something to complain about. That land, situated in Wyre Forest near Bewdley, was given to the Guild by the Mayor of Birmingham, George Baker, who went on to succeed Ruskin as Guild Master. Bewdley has claims to being the most important centre of Guild activity from the 1870s to the present day. It was only there that the Guild's aspirations to communal life met with success, particularly during the 1890s and early twentieth century when a group of Ruskinians from Liverpool settled there. In view of the depressing character of some of Frost's revelations, it is pleasant to add that Wyre Forest is today the site of the Guild's most imaginative work in the fields of twenty-first century sustainability, social responsibility and rural co-operation.

Yet Graham's involvement with it seems to have been, for him, something of a disaster. Frost begins with an account of the Guild's early years, and its roots in Ruskin's earlier thought. Simply as a history, it is a work of considerable value and significance, and one which it is possible to recommend to anyone interested in the radical movements of the later nineteenth century. But the real impact it makes is during its second half, which deals mainly with four largely forgotten individuals: Graham, James Burdon, John Guy and William Harrison Riley. All four were working-class men attracted to the Guild by the possibility of reviving a dignified and life-enhancing agricultural labour. They were what Ruskin called 'Companions Militant', lying in his hierarchy between 'Companions Servant' (the higher class individuals who administered the Guild) and 'Companions

Consular' (who were happy to fund it without participating in its work). In practice, though, they quickly fell to the bottom of the heap. It was they who were expected to labour on the Guild's land, often forgotten or disregarded, underpaid, paid late or not paid at all, treated by Ruskin and the 'servants' with a mixture of high-handed authoritarianism and thoughtless neglect.

Of Burdon and Riley a little was known before. The former went to prison for forging a cheque in Ruskin's name, and received financial help from him on release. The latter led the disastrous experiment in agricultural Communism at Totleigh near Sheffield. Both men appear in a dark light in Ruskin biographies, but it appears that both of them – though certainly not blameless – have been deliberately blackened in order to preserve the Master's noble reputation. It is unlikely that Ruskin himself was to blame for this, but George Baker (his successor and, in effect, his deputy) was, as also were Ruskin's posthumous torchbearers. Guy, who was briefly praised by Ruskin and seems to have deserved it, had vanished from sight when Frost began his work, while Graham was simply unknown – in spite of the fact that the Guild's successes at Bewdley were founded on his unacknowledged toil.

Was Ruskin simply a hypocrite? I think not. Believing in the importance of 'Mastership' – of taking responsibility for the ills of the time – he took on a role he was ill-equipped for. He was already committed to a punishing range of work of different kinds and from time to time he simply let the Guild slip from his thoughts. Moreover, as we have seen, his emotional life was in turmoil. None of these facts provides sufficient excuse for his failure, but they do not suggest a man who wilfully damaged the lives of others. He had created the Guild in order to help the very people it appears to have harmed, and there are innumerable instances of Ruskin treating working-class people with affection and respect. This book cites the instances of George Allen, the journeyman printer who became Ruskin's publisher, and Henry Swan, who curated the Guild's Museum in Walkley near Sheffield, both of whom he regarded as dear friends. Frost thinks Ruskin's real error lies in the inherent contradiction in his own social philosophy: that he believed in educating working-class people in a caring society, but refused to accept the implication that education would lead to equality. The result was the mock-feudalism of Companions Servant and Militant, and the dependence of everyone on a Master without the strength or consistency to support them. It is a dismal conclusion, though Frost's book actually ends with praise – justified praise, I think – for the 'bravery' of Ruskin's leap in the dark and his creation of a body committed to the idea that there is (as Morris put it, writing of Ruskin) 'pleasure in labour', when the context of that labour is creative, collaborative and in tune with the world around us.

Clive Wilmer

Mercia McDermott, *Lone Red Poppy*, London: Manifesto Press, 2014, 249 pp. Pbk, £14.95. ISBN 9781907464102.

The story of Dimiter Blagoev (1856–1924), founder of the Bulgarian Communist Party, will not be familiar to many people in Britain but the author's account of his life and political philosophy provides invaluable insights into Balkan history and the doings of communist groups on the continent when Morris was actively involved in similar bodies in Britain. It also helps challenge the generally negative view of eastern and Soviet communism held in the West. The author writes in an engaging and lucid style, which enables readers to understand some of the key political arguments within the development of revolutionary socialism.

McDermott, a long-time member of the William Morris Society, speaks both Bulgarian and Russian, lived and worked in Bulgaria for many years when it was part of the eastern bloc, and is well-known in Bulgaria for her biography of the revolutionary Vasil Levski. She has therefore been able to gain access to original documents as well as personal accounts, and the book is meticulously researched. The title *Lone Red Poppy* refers to a Bulgarian poem, which poses the question:

Why do I bloom, why am I living
Unnoticed I shall die tomorrow,
Of use to none upon this earth.

The reply states that, although frail, the poppy will scatter seeds that will eventually bloom and multiply – an apt metaphor for Blagoev's philosophy and life.

Blagoev was born in 1856 in western Macedonia, now part of Greece, but at the time populated by Bulgarians, and part of the Ottoman Empire. When Blagoev was twelve, appointment at the local school of Dinaka, an inspired teacher and ardent Bulgarian nationalist, helped develop his steely determination to continue his education and to improve the life of ordinary Bulgarians. Although the author explains the stifling of Bulgarian identity in Macedonia, she fails to contrast this with the National Revival Movement in Bulgaria, which saw a flourishing of Bulgarian pride in its history and culture. There is also, surprisingly, no mention in the book of Levski, the 'apostle' of freedom, who is still so revered throughout Bulgaria. Levski was a charismatic revolutionary leader who argued that the ordinary people needed to be educated and prepared before an armed revolt against Ottoman rule could be successful. Blagoev was to follow this philosophy when setting up the communist party later in his life. Levski was hanged in 1873, three years before the April uprising in 1876, which was put down with such great savagery by the Turks that public outrage at Disraeli's support for Turkey led to the formation of the Eastern Question Association (EQA) of which William Morris became the treasurer. Political circumstances in Bulgaria were thus instrumental in Morris's eventual conversion to socialism. In a letter to *The*

Daily News in October 1876 Morris wrote ‘as one of a large class of men – quiet men, who usually go about their own business, heeding public matters less than they ought ...’ The EQA also brought him into contact with articulate members of the working class, and led to his *Manifesto to the Working Men of England*.

In April 1877, Russia declared war on Turkey, and sent troops into Bulgaria. Blagoev, who was studying in Stara Zagora at the time, was overjoyed and set out to welcome the Russian army. The Treaty of San Stefano, which followed defeat of the Turks, ceded 60% of the Balkan peninsula to Bulgaria. However, four months later, the Western Powers, fearing establishment of a powerful Russian ally in the region, revoked this agreement by signing the Treaty of Berlin which divided Bulgaria in half, creating a separate Eastern Rumelia in the south and giving Macedonia and other territory back to Turkey. No account was taken of ethnicity, and the treaty left every Balkan nation feeling cheated, thus fuelling future wars in the region. As a consequence, Bulgaria fought six wars with other Balkan States between 1878 and WWII, mainly over Macedonia. Although himself a Macedonian, Blagoev throughout his life argued against nationalism and war, insisting that the only solution was a Balkan Federation.

In 1878, aged twenty-two, Blagoev was still determined to continue his education and so set out for Odessa and then later St Petersburg. It was during this time that he was continually reflecting, like the lone poppy, on the meaning of life. It was in St Petersburg that he found the answer. The city was a hotbed of student revolutionary fervour, and it was here that Blagoev first read Marx’s *Kapital*. On the basis of that reading, he challenged the belief of the more numerous Narodniks – that capitalism could be overthrown by the peasants – and set up the first Social-Democratic or Marxist circle in Russia and began spreading his ideas among proletarian factory workers. It was not long before he was expelled.

However, during his time in Russia, Blagoev also met the Bulgarian woman who was to become his wife. Vela Zhivkova was a committed Marxist with a special interest in women’s issues and education. Not only did she look after their four children and the home while working as a teacher, she also edited a newspaper, ran women’s groups and while in Plovdiv set up seven kindergartens. Her salary and organisational skills allowed Blagoev to concentrate on his writing and political activity. He could not have chosen a more suitable wife. It is not clear from this biography however, whether Vela was ever recognised formally in her own right as a communist activist.

In 1891, ten years after the foundation of the Social Democratic Federation in London, Blagoev was instrumental in founding the Bulgarian Social-Democratic Party, with similar objectives divided into minimum and long-term aims. Despite Bulgaria being mainly an agrarian country, Blagoev, in line with Marx and Lenin, insisted on educating the workers rather than the peasants. He also demanded complete adherence to ‘scientific socialist’ principles, thus leading

to a split with others whom McDermott terms ‘broad socialists’, and ‘opportunists’. Blagoev thus concentrated on preparing the workers for the revolution by educating them in Marxist ideology by publishing newspapers, books, and by lectures and discussions. He also gave them opportunities to govern their own affairs. This approach proved successful when the Social Democratic Party won the municipal elections in Samokov in 1910 and, despite various underhand attempts to discredit it, not only restored the town’s finances but also introduced numerous social reforms aimed at improving the lives of the poor. Such success was later reproduced in other towns.

Between 1899 and 1915, Blagoev worked tirelessly as a member of the National Assembly, writer and socialist leader. When Bulgaria declared war on Britain and France in 1915, the Social Democratic Party was the only one to speak out against the war. In 1919, their analysis proved correct, when the Treaty of Neuilly demanded approximately one quarter of the country’s wealth in reparations, punishing Bulgaria even more severely than Germany. Also the loss of Western Thrace led to the expulsion by Greece of the Bulgarians living there. Blagoev’s practice of nurturing the seeds of socialism paid off in 1919 when, helped by the success of the Russian Revolution in 1917, and the negative consequences of the war, the newly named Bulgarian Communist Party won the second largest number of seats in the National Assembly and extended its control of local councils. Despite this flowering of socialism, the period before Blagoev’s death was overshadowed by what the book describes as his only major mistake – his failure to recognise the threat posed by fascist elements resulting in his refusal to form an alliance with the Agrarian Party. In 1923, a successful fascist coup led to banning of the Communist Party and to brutal suppression of its supporters.

After a lengthy illness, Blagoev died in 1924. The seeds he had sown lay fallow until 1944 when the communist-led Fatherland Front took power. In an epilogue, McDermott acknowledges that many mistakes were subsequently made by the Communists in power, through a failure to live up to the Marxist values Blagoev held so dear, but she also makes a plea that the many positive socialist achievements of this period should not be overlooked. Significantly, Bulgaria was the one country in the former Eastern Bloc which voted in the Communist Party after 1989 despite the American Government providing the opposition with the most support given to any former soviet socialist republic.

Lone Red Poppy is worth reading not only as the biography of a remarkable man, but also as providing an opportunity of a comparison between socialism as understood by Blagoev and by Morris. How interesting it would have been to listen in to a discussion over dinner between these two famous socialists.

Helena Nielsen

Graham Peel, *Alec Miller: Carver, Guildsman, Sculptor*, Tenbury Wells, Worcs, UK: Graham Peel, 2014, 296 pp., numerous black & white and coloured illustrations, Pbk, £14. ISBN 9780992739102. Copies may be obtained from: Graham Peel, Glenville, Berrington Road, Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire WR15 8EL, e-mail: peel94@btinternet.com, £14 plus £3 p & p, payment by cheque or PayPal.

Graham Peel has written a closely researched account of the achievements, interests and hard-working life of one of the most important carvers and sculptors of the first half of the twentieth century. Alec Miller (1879–1961) was a member of the Guild of Handicraft in Chipping Campden from 1902 until its closure in 1907, and corresponded regularly with Charles and Janet Ashbee long after its dissolution, when he was to run his own studios in the town, and later the United States. He is a little known Arts and Crafts figure today, partly because he concentrated on portrait sculpture during his later career, and partly because he emigrated to the United States in 1939, when work in Britain became difficult to find. He had little sympathy with modernism and abstraction. The book is introduced by Paul Atterbury, and divided into five hefty chapters which delineate stages in Miller's interesting life: child, apprentice, guildsman, master craftsman and expatriate. The story displays the importance of motivation, life-long self-improvement, and a certain serendipity in meeting the right people at the right time. A second edition might benefit from some close editing of syntax and spelling.

Alec Miller was born into a strict, teetotal, Baptist family in Garnethill, Glasgow. Peel vividly describes life in a Glasgow tenement, with unlit staircases, communal lavatories and laundries in a back court. William Miller, Alec's father, was a self-employed cabinet maker. Life was hard, with six children to feed and clothe, until the older boys began to bring in some money. Alec became a 'milk-boy' at the age of nine, delivering milk before school, including on Sundays, for which he earned a shilling a week to supplement the family income. On Sundays, older children attended a total of three hours of church services, plus an hour's evening Sunday school. Alec did not attend church regularly after he left home in 1902 but remained a searcher after spiritual truth, and two of his most respected friends were clergymen. He read everything he was allowed or could lay his hands on and began a lifelong habit of drawing everywhere he went.

Alec left school when he was twelve and was lucky enough to be offered a seven-year apprenticeship by Caroline Anstruther, who had probably met him in his father's workshop and recognised his skill in drawing. She ran a professional wood-carving shop and school in Glasgow. Trained at the School of Art Woodcarving in South Kensington, later to be absorbed into the Royal College of Art, Miss Anstruther was an example of an upper-class woman who had been influenced by the ideas of Ruskin and Morris, not just in terms of craft and design

but also in attempting to improve the social lot of those less fortunate than she. With Scottish ancestry, she also became fascinated by the ideas of the Celtic Revival. She had enlisted the help of the Home Arts and Industries Association in setting her business on strong lines. Her picture (p. 25) shows a most attractive woman with a powerful right forearm – essential for woodcarving!

Miss Anstruther gave Alec a comprehensive training in design and artistic sensibility, as well as woodcarving. He progressed well, and supplemented what he learned during the day with evening art classes on drawing, shading and perspective and an additional woodcarving course run by the Kyrle Society. He also attended drawing classes at the Glasgow School of Art. The hard, concentrated, daily work bent over a bench or table unfortunately caused a malformation of his spine. He became very useful to Miss Anstruther and learned to carve swiftly, to a formula, in tackling multiple tasks – for instance *Acanthus* leaves on the top and bottom of a hundred pine balusters. He began to teach the less-experienced students in the school, and classes of ladies outside Glasgow where, however, he was enraged on more than one occasion to be offered lunch in the kitchen while his pupils ate in the dining room. In 1898, when Alec completed his apprenticeship, Miss Anstruther arranged him a week's holiday in London, where a friend of hers, a Miss Strode, introduced him to the British Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum, Leighton House, North End House where Burne-Jones had died a few months before, and G.F. Watts's studio where he was overwhelmed by a model for the great 'Physical Energy' equestrian statue. He particularly appreciated Watts's portraits in the National Portrait Gallery.

In 1899 Miss Anstruther opened a summer studio in Oban which Alec was to run. Here he taught and accepted commissions, two of which were precursors of the work which would dominate his career between the wars – a Boer war memorial, and a *reredos* for a private chapel. She was keen he should become as confident as possible, away from his family and Glasgow. She gave him a copy of Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and late in life Alec was to write, 'the eloquence and power, the acute analysis, the imaginative range of his mind in the book made a very powerful impression on me – an impression still vivid and potent'. (p. 45) Ruskin led to Morris, the Pre-Raphaelites, and medievalism. The idea of the medieval guild became more and more attractive. C.R. Ashbee was in the process of arranging the Guild of Handicraft's move from Whitechapel to Chipping Campden when Miss Anstruther wrote to him on Alec's behalf. Miller met Ashbee in Cheyne Walk, and was successfully interviewed in Whitechapel by the Guild foreman. He was to join them in Chipping Campden.

The culture-shock on arriving in a Cotswold market town from Glasgow must have been great. However, 'CRA' (Ashbee) and the other guildsmen did their best to settle Alec in and the glorious countryside around the town worked

its magic. The structure and discipline in the workshops is interesting:

Any guildsman arriving more than five minutes late would be locked out for half an hour and so lose half an hour's wage. The working day began at 7 am. The men worked until 8.30 when they took half an hour for breakfast. They continued from 9 until 10.50 when there was a ten minute break, time for biscuits, buns, tea, or for some men, beer. After another two hours there was an hour's break for lunch. The afternoon session lasted three and a half hours with a ten minute break for tea at 4. The beginning and end of each break was signalled on a hand bell. (p. 52)

Breaks in the working day were often spent in different workshops, so that Alec became accustomed to the disciplines of silversmithing, metalwork, bookbinding, blacksmithing, enamelling or printing.

'In the print shop he met three men who had come to the Guild only a few years earlier when the [Kelmescott] press had been bought by Ashbee after the death of William Morris. Led by Tom Binning, the foreman, they had all worked for Morris at the Kelmescott Press. They spoke of him with a wonder, reverence and admiration which never declined. Tom Binning had followed Morris in his political work into the Social Democratic Federation and he retained his ardent support for the cause'. (p. 53) Miller described Binning as 'a silent man, capable, efficient, austere till one got him started on the theme of Morris. I do not mean that he was in the least disloyal to Ashbee and his Essex House Press, but *any* press – any master – was but second best after Morris. How few men have had Morris' [s] galvanic power and capacity for arousing and keeping an undying loyalty'. (p. 54) However, Alec was surprised by how little certain guildsmen knew about Morris and his ideas.

In addition to absorbing work, comradeship, and the exchange of lively ideas, CRA introduced his workforce to extramural activities and people of quite different backgrounds. Friday evening guild singsongs and poetry readings were also enjoyed by visitors such as William and Evelyn de Morgan, and Sydney and Beatrice Webb. Alec became comfortable with people outside his own class and close friends with the Ashbees.

Graham Peel gives an exhaustive account of Miller's life's work. While carving for the Guild he received his first major ecclesiastical commission, for a *reredos* for St James's Church, Walthamstow. This was the first of many such commissions, from both sides of the Atlantic, in Canada as well as the United States. He began to carve in stone, and frequently finished his wood sculptures with colour, medieval fashion. His superb work for St Michael's Church in Coventry, later Coventry Cathedral, towards the end of the First World War, was sadly lost to the blitz. This included a magnificent, coloured statue of St Michael. After the First War, demand for war memorials from all over the country was great and Miller

was fully employed with this and further ecclesiastical work. He also began to extend his portraiture commissions. The list of extant works in the appendices is impressive, and will enliven visits to such disparate places as Boot in Eskdale, or Madresfield Court. There is another impressive list, of his lecture titles, some delivered more than once, in England and America, on subjects such as 'Morris and Burne-Jones', 'RL Stevenson', 'Ruskin Reconsidered', 'Should we be Teaching Art' and 'Sculpture as Petrified History'. He was a fluent letter writer and a loyal friend.

In 1939, the Millers left England for the United States. Alec had begun to feel out of step with the latest movements in art, although he had some sympathy with Gill and Epstein. It seemed that there would be more demand for his sort of work on the other side of the Atlantic. He was sixty. He and his wife Eleanor returned to Britain in 1961 with a full itinerary of old haunts and old friends to visit, but missed Janet Ashbee by days. She died on 8 May. In the words of Alec's daughter Jane: 'The blow was a mortal one - and yet like all such it opened a door, this time to his own release'. (p. 269) Miller died peacefully in his sleep on 17 May 1961.

Diana Andrews

Joanne Parker & Corinna Wagner, *Art & Soul: Victorians and The Gothic*, Bristol: Sansom & Co., 2014, 91 pp., fifty colour images, Pbk, £12.95. ISBN 9781908326652.

Art & Soul accompanied the Royal Albert Memorial Museum's exhibition of the same name, which ran in Exeter from 22 November 2014 until 12 April 2015. The book, like the exhibition, considers the influence of the Gothic Revival – and more broadly, medievalism – on 'art, architecture, literature, religion, politics and the monarchy' during the nineteenth century. It is made up of two illustrated essays (69 pp.) and a brief guide to visitor attractions in the South West which pertain to the Gothic Revival (11 pp.). The exhibition included work from, among others, Morris, Burne-Jones, William Burges, Pugin, and J.W. Waterhouse. Thirty of the book's fifty images are of items displayed in the exhibition, such as Morris's 'Figure of Guenevere' (watercolour and graphite), and Walter Crane's title-page for *The Story of the Glittering Plain*. However, *Art & Soul* is not merely a supplement to the exhibition: the essays stand alone as substantial explorations of Victorian attitudes to the past, and the book will appeal both to those who visited the exhibition, and those who did not.

The first essay, entitled ‘Imagining the Middle Ages’, is a thirty-two-page overview of Victorian medievalism by Joanne Parker. She begins by examining the definition of ‘medieval’, contrasting Boris Johnson’s recent usage – when he seems to have used it to mean ‘savage’ – with earlier, more neutral, uses of the word during the nineteenth century. The essay is then divided into eight further sections separated by sub-headings, which explore Victorian attitudes to the past and the Middle Ages; the links between Queen Victoria and medievalism; the works of Sir Walter Scott; medievalist literature and architecture in the South West of England; the renewed interest in King Arthur during the nineteenth century; the Pre-Raphaelites; and, finally, the legacy of Victorian medievalism up to the present day.

Of the topics covered, the section on the South West is the least well integrated. The Foreword to *Art & Soul* explains that the book and exhibition are the culmination of a multi-year research project exploring Victorian medievalism in the South West, and the section in Parker’s essay is clearly a product of that regional investigation. The majority of the essay is more broadly about medievalism in Victorian Britain, however, and the South West section, while interesting, is awkwardly sandwiched between parts of the wider analysis.

The rest of the sections work together to build up a comprehensive account of Victorian medievalism which covers the main forms, and the most influential figures. Morris’s work is featured at the end of the section on Scott, where Parker names Morris ‘the most prolific imitator of medieval literary forms’. (p. 20) She does not discuss other aspects of Morris’s medievalism – only his poetry and prose romances – but then she only briefly touches on any of her subjects before moving onto the next. This is not necessarily a weakness: by peppering the essay with so many examples, quotations, and names, Parker ensures that those coming to the topic for the first time will enjoy a wide-ranging introduction which covers a lot of material in a short space, whilst those who are already familiar with the subject will still discover something new.

The last section, which discusses the legacy of Victorian medievalism, is particularly interesting. Refreshingly, it avoids retreading the old argument that chivalry died (or was at least greatly damaged) by the First World War. Instead, Parker suggests that it was more specifically the ‘obsession with the Anglo-Saxons that came to an end in the early twentieth century after the first and second World Wars’, at least until a recent resurgence of interest in Anglo-Saxon/English identity. (p. 35) Parker traces other aspects of Victorian medievalism, such as the interest in King Arthur, and the popularity of the medieval-inspired designs of Morris and Co., up to the present day. Finally, she compares Morris, Tennyson, Swinburne, and Charlotte Yonge to George R.R. Martin, writer of *A Game of Thrones*. For Parker, the *Thrones* book and TV series is ‘the progeny of Victorian medievalism’. (p. 36) Martin shares with Victorian writers many of the same

interests, even if the amount of sex and violence in *Game of Thrones* marks it apart from earlier texts. This short comparison puts Victorian writers in a new, contemporary, context.

The second essay, by Corinna Wagner, entitled 'Victorian Resurrections: Gothic and the Challenges of Modernity', explores the idea of the Gothic in literature and architecture, considering its influence on politics, religion, and the concept of foreignness. Wagner includes four case studies: the illustrations to Pugin's *Contrasts*, which compare medieval and Victorian buildings; the construction of a Gothic-style water pumping station in Exeter; the Gothic architecture and designs of William Burges in Devon; and the woodcarving and sculpture of Harry Hems in Devon and Cornwall. Three of these case studies are taken from the South West, and this regional focus returns at the end of the essay, when Wagner discusses the ways in which Gothic writers responded to Cornwall. These examples are used to illustrate points in the wider argument, and do not shift the direction of the overarching narrative. Wagner integrates her regional focus into her national overview more smoothly than Parker.

Like the preceding essay, 'Victorian Resurrections' covers a large collection of figures and ideas. Morris is briefly included, at the end of the case study on the Exeter pumping station, where Wagner discusses the link between beautiful design and good health in Morris's aesthetic philosophy, quoting from two of his talks ('The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization' [1881], and 'How Shall We Live Then?' [1889]). Wagner traces Morris's ideas from reaction to the 1832 cholera epidemic – despite the fact that Morris was born in 1834, more than two years after the first outbreak in England – when urban reforms became part of the long fight against the disease, and some architects, as well as improving the function of buildings and towns, took the opportunity to improve their appearance by using the Gothic style. In this section, and in other parts of the essay, the author stretches her argument thin by incorporating so many different ideas, without devoting the space to develop the links between them – but as with the preceding essay, this is an inevitable effect of providing a wide-ranging overview in a short book and is not caused by bad writing.

The guide to Gothic locations in the South West, which follows the two essays, provides entries on Castle Drogo, Tyntesfield, King Arthur's Great Halls in Tintagel, Knightshayes, the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, and the Cathedrals of Exeter and Truro. The entries include brief but interesting histories, and helpfully point out particularly worthwhile things to see.

The essays are well-researched and well-referenced: the footnotes enable readers to trace the quotations and ideas to their sources with ease, and the suggested reading list will help guide those who wish to find out more about the subject. One of the captions to Pugin's illustrations is mislabelled on p. 53 – 'A Catholic Town in 1840' should be 'The Same Town in 1840' – but otherwise the informa-

tion all appears to be accurate. The essays and guide are also well-presented: the text is divided into two columns, which makes it easy to read despite the wide pages (the book has roughly the same dimensions as A4); the subheadings and image captions are attractively printed in red; the pages are thick and glossy; and the book uses the beautiful Doves Type typeface, developed for T.J. Cobden Sanderson's Dove Press in 1899 and recently revived by Robert Green.

The essays and guide only represent half the value of *Art & Soul*, however; the fifty images sprinkled throughout the book represent the other half. Some are integrated into the essays – as with the case study on Pugin's *Contrasts*, where the illustrations under analysis are reproduced beside the text – and some simply provide additional examples of Victorian medievalism. Of particular note is a facsimile of the Kelmscott Press edition of *The Stones of Venice* printed in very fine detail and displayed over a two-page spread. It is almost as good as looking at the real thing. Most of the other images take up half a page each, but some – including Sir Edwin Landseer's oil painting of Victoria and Albert in fourteenth-century costume, also reproduced on the cover – are printed on a whole page with no margins.

For those wanting an introduction to Gothic and medieval influences in Victorian culture and society, *Art & Soul* provides a good, detailed overview. The occasional focus on the South West, while not always as well integrated with the rest of the text as it could be, is nevertheless a welcome presence in the book, adding another context to the study of Victorian medievalism.

Gabriel Schenk

Michael Hall, *George Frederick Bodley and the Late Gothic Revival in Britain and America*, New Haven and London: The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art & Yale University Press, 2014, 506 pp., 298 illustrations, £45. ISBN 9780300208023.

Michael Hall begins his illuminating account of Bodley at the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford in June 1907, when honorary degrees were awarded to leaders in all fields of political and cultural life; the architect chosen for this distinction was Bodley, described in the English version of the Latin citation as 'probably the most distinguished architect of our time'. Hall argues that this judgment was not inappropriate, as only Richard Norman Shaw was equally prominent at the time, and he was known more for domestic and public buildings, while Bodley was valued for his contributions to the Gothic revival and to ecclesiastical architec-

ture. He also had a long career, lasting from 1852 to 1907, and a strong influence in America as well as Britain. During the 1960s and 1970s, Hall argues, Bodley's reputation declined along with respect for the Church of England, which Bodley had consistently served, while art history dismissed the later Gothic Revival as lacking the energy of the High Victorian period, and praised only Bodley's early buildings. For in 1862, Bodley changed his design for All Saints, in Jesus Lane, Cambridge, and developed a new style which came to be extremely influential, though it was to be decried by later critics such as J. Mordaunt Crook as showing a loss of nerve and 'increasingly feeble efforts to be "refined"'. (p. 4) Hall presents, in convincing detail, the case for Bodley, in the context suggested by his subtitle. He finds Bodley's late style 'challengingly spare and abstract'. (p. 5)

Bodley was born in 1827, his father a successful physician. His two older brothers attended Cambridge, but G.F. had developed a keen interest in architecture. He persuaded his father to arrange a pupillage for him in the office of the thirty-five-year-old George Gilbert Scott, at the beginning of his highly successful career; G.E. Street was a fellow-pupil. Bodley set up his own practice in 1852, and his involvement with the Morris circle began in 1856, when Morris joined Street's practice in Oxford. Bodley visited the newly built Red House in 1860, and we are shown, interestingly, that he was close to becoming a partner in 'the Firm' as it emerged in 1861; Hall refers to a lost letter from Morris to Brown of 14 December 1860, recorded by Mackail in 1899, including the words 'as to Bodley being one of the firm'. (p. 461, Note 106) Although this did not happen, Bodley became, in Hall's words, 'an enthusiastic collaborator' in the venture. (p. 49) This brings us to the churches with which Morrisians are familiar because of their stained glass. The earliest of these, in 1862, were, St Michael, Brighton, 'his first urban church', and All Saints, Selsley, 'in a rural Cotswold setting'. (p. 55) In Brighton, the stained glass took a prominent place, although it formed only half of the featured work, the rest being by Clayton & Bell, an unusual arrangement which Hall suggests may have been motivated by a desire to get as much of the glazing as possible completed before the opening of the church – two of Morris's windows were not ready in time; (p. 64) the arrangement put Morris on his mettle – he referred to Clayton & Bell in a letter of the time as 'only glass painters in point of fact', later writing that 'they do very fair glass now since we have taught them how to colour'.

It is Hall's view that Clayton & Bell's unusually subdued windows are more in keeping with Bodley's church than those by MMF & Co., which have 'nothing remotely thirteenth-century in their style: the figures ... are treated naturalistically like painting'. (p. 64) In discussing Bodley's next church, All Saints, Cambridge, Hall develops the unexpected argument that, although Morris was later to move away from any form of religious belief, this was not evident during the early 1860s; perhaps the 'Firm's' ecclesiastical work was undertaken not merely for

commercial reasons but by ‘a higher sense of mission to the Church’:

In its early years, the firm in many ways fulfilled the youthful idea he had shared with Burne-Jones of founding an artistic brotherhood of a quasi-religious nature, a vision – perhaps inherited from Street – that began to evaporate only with Morris’s departure from Red House in 1865. (p. 68)

Whatever Morris’s motivation, there is no doubt of the quality of the windows he supplied at Selsley. ‘Their fame is justified’, and ‘as at Brighton, the scenes are presented naturalistically, as pictures’. The glass here is ‘doing something new: something gentler, more English and subdued than the glass that Bodley had commissioned from Hardman or Clayton and Bell’. By synthesising many elements, Morris was creating a High Victorian glass, ‘both medieval and modern’, and it was Bodley who encouraged its ‘delicate transparency’. (p. 74)

A major shift in Bodley’s work is discussed in the seventh chapter, ‘The Return to Englishness’. In a section headed ‘Morris and architects in the 1860s’, Hall points out that, although Bodley favoured the work of MMF & Co., this taste was not shared by architects of the ‘developed’ Gothic style such as Butterfield and Burges. The dramatic change of direction in Bodley’s work is shown clearly in his designs for All Saints, Cambridge around 1864: the first and second designs included ‘developed’ elements which were repudiated in the final design:

Instead of a campanile, a low tower bearing a tall spire rises over the chancel. Instead of two narrow aisles, there is a single very wide aisle on the south. The early French plate tracery, the marble enrichment and the sculpture have been replaced by wholly English late thirteenth-century forms and detail. At a stroke, every element of developed Ruskinian Gothic has vanished. (p.107)

Hall places this significant change in Bodley’s work in the context of the debate at the time about Englishness in architecture, quoting letters by Warington Taylor – now working for MMF & Co. – in which he criticised ‘Burges and Seddon and hoc genus omne’ for their employment of ‘all that is huge coarse in French Gothic’, neglecting English models. For him, ‘the Firm’ was going in the right direction – ‘they get gradually lighter’; in another (undated) letter, to E.R. Robson, Taylor dismissed High Victorianism as ‘vulgar’, adding:

English Gothic is small as our landscape is small, it is sweet homely picturesque farmyardish, Japanese, Social domestic – French is aspiring, grandly straining after the extraordinary, all very well in France but wrong here ... We not only want a pointed arch &c – but we want an English version of it. (p.108)

Here, Hall argues, ‘Taylor pointed forward, to the way in which the Gothic revival was to evolve over the next decade and beyond’. (p. 109) Since Taylor has tended to be marginalised in accounts of ‘the Firm’, it is good to find our attention

drawn to his vigorous writings on this issue.

During the 1870s there occurred what Hall calls ‘the break with Morris’. The windows inserted by ‘the Firm’ in Jesus College chapel showed Burne-Jones’s later style, influenced by Renaissance painting; the results, though powerful, tended to darken the chapel. Moreover, the college refused to use MMF & Co. after 1878, and Bodley began to employ Kempe, whose work became very important for him during later years. However, Garner recommended the new firm of Burlison & Grylls, and they supplied almost all the glass for Bodley and Garner after 1870. (p. 160) A letter of January 1872 explained Bodley’s decision and also shows his fair-mindedness:

I find I get my own way more than I can with Morris ... They are much more moderate than Morris in their charges & there is not that very long delay that there is with Morris. Still, with all, Morris’s glass is very good & very original. His & ours is, I think, the only modern glass worth putting up. (p.159)

Relations seem to have deteriorated after the establishment by Morris of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1877. Bodley was by no means a reckless restorer, but he was less scrupulous on some occasions than the SPAB expected architects to be. This would seem to explain the comment Webb made to Lethaby in a letter at the time of Bodley’s death in 1907:

... for a while I had at one time pleasure in his companionship; it died away under the “Restoration”, separator of friendly familiarity, his respectability increasing and mine going-going-gone!

Webb told Lethaby that Bodley was ‘a disappointing man. W.M. recognized that he had “taste”. He was always shy on the road, and harnessed himself with blinkers – has it not been from fear, the opposite of divine courage?’ (p. 161) Hall ‘finds a certain symbolism’ in the fact that Webb’s assistance during Bodley’s illness in 1869 seems to have been their last contact, while in October Bodley wrote to Webb that ‘Morris was good enough to come & see me the other day but of course missed a few trains & had consequently but little time to stay’.

In a later chapter, Hall quotes from Morris’s account of a visit to a church ‘built by a friend of mine’ – probably Holy Angels, Hoar Cross. Morris remarked that at first he felt almost as if he was in ‘a genuine building of the 15th century’, but on looking more closely at the statuary, he came to see it as ‘*carving* not sculpture’, work produced to order without allowing the workman any freedom in the making. Hall argues that this view shows Morris looking for the Savagery that Ruskin had attributed to Gothic in *The Stones of Venice*, and that here Ruskin and Morris show themselves to be ‘locked into the aesthetic prejudices’ of the time, deriving from ‘the preconceptions of neo-classicism’, which saw medieval sculpture as ‘savage’ or ‘rudely cut’. (p. 257) In Hall’s view,

Bodley's appreciation of late medieval architects and sculptors was more accurate than Ruskin's or Morris's anachronistic view of them as admirable but simple. Morris's understanding of fifteenth-century English sculpture does not take into account those aspects of the best of it that Bodley most admired and aspired to in his own work: its emphasis on delicacy of line and a very high degree of finish combined with subordination to its architectural context. (p. 258)

I find it difficult to believe that Ruskin's view was based on neo-classical pre-conceptions in view of the accuracy of his observation of medieval buildings seen in his detailed drawings. Hall relates this disagreement to a preference for individual craftsmen over the workmen of commercial firms, and suggests that this preference was influenced by

Morris's (and Ruskin's) vision of an ideal society, which had an honoured place for craftsmen and artists but none for such products of capitalism as the companies that supplied craft skills to the building industry. However, it is also an outlook that contains a strong element of snobbery, since idealisation of working-class – ideally rural – craftsmen was accompanied by a lofty disdain for those who occupied the lowest ranks of the artist's professional ladder. (p. 259)

At this point I began to feel that Hall's admiration for Bodley was perhaps taking him too far, but the matter clearly merits further discussion.

The final chapter is preceded by a striking black-and-white photograph of workmen demolishing St Michael, Folkestone in 1953, in relation to which Hall remarks that the 'survival rate' of Bodley's buildings has been very high, with this church and the London School Board the only major losses. Hall gives a highly informative account of Bodley's legacy, concluding his story in the United States, under the heading 'American Gothic'. He quotes Bodley's remark to Bishop Satterell soon after he was given the commission for Washington Cathedral in 1907:

It would seem that the love of the beautiful Gothic style is somewhat dying out in the old world, religious and beautiful as it is. The cathedral may, in the legislative seat of the new world, hold up a light that shall be reflected for us in old England. (p. 428)

Hall remarks that 'Gothic architecture in *post-bellum* America has yet to find its historian', and himself sketches in the outlines – his range of knowledge seems inexhaustible.

The reader has been taken on an epic journey, which contains not only the career of Bodley but a great deal more, as we have seen. The book ends with two Appendices: the first of pupils and assistants, and the second a complete list of Bodley's works; followed by full bibliographical notes and an impressive bibli-

ography; acknowledgements and picture credits – the book is extremely rich in illustrations – and a thorough index. All in all, this is a remarkable book to which it is impossible to do justice in a review. I hope members will get to read it, spread word of Hall's achievement, and persuade any libraries with which they are associated to buy it.

Peter Faulkner

Cal Winslow, ed, *E.P. Thompson and the Making of the New Left: Essays and Polemics*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2014, 333 pp. Pbk, £14.99. ISBN 9781909831070.

In the previous issue of this *Journal* I reviewed a collection of essays published to mark the fiftieth anniversary of E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*, a collection which provided 'a coherent, almost chronological account of his intellectual and political activities'. Thompson's widow, Dorothy, said that if we really wished to know her husband, we should read his writings, and this volume presents us with a selection covering the period 1956–62, a crucial interval during both his political and his intellectual activity. It thus provides a useful and illuminating companion to the earlier publication.

There is a sense in which one reads these as a work of history, investigating a past now long gone; we are still in the post-war era, a period of reconstruction, rationing only just coming to an end. The Cold War is intensifying: the threat of nuclear war seems very real. It is the period of Khrushchev's 'secret speech' denouncing Stalin, the Suez Crisis, the invasion of Hungary by Soviet troops, and later the Cuban missile crisis. It is a past where the Labour Party still subscribed to the socialist Clause 4, where the unions of the mine workers, the transport workers and others still wielded enormous power, where the Communist Party of Great Britain, although weakened by the events of 1956, remained influential in certain arenas. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is drawing thousands to its rallies and marches, and one is interested by all this, but it is the past, 'a forgotten country', and times have changed. The Cold War has ended, the Communist system has collapsed. Margaret Thatcher has emasculated the unions, the mining industry has all but disappeared, along with much other heavy industry, we are in a period of coalition government and multi-party politics, with traditional political loyalties disappearing along with the old certainties. Thus the emergence of a 'New Left' in 1956, initiated by Thompson and others after their exit from the Communist Party, and the debates and disputes about the future direction of a socialist movement, are similarly interesting but ... fifty years on the

Labour Party has abolished Clause 4, we are now post-New Labour, the political agenda has moved to the right and the main parties argue solely about which of them can best manage capitalism.

And yet, fifty years on, one reads Thompson and something stirs, perhaps one's conscience? His arguments resonate, one realises that many of the things he writes about are strikingly relevant today. In *At the Point of Decay* he examines 'the apathetic decade' of the 1950s, the apparent indifference of the population, and particularly the young, to politics. Defining apathy, Thompson suggests 'it is an expression of the impotence of the individual in the face of contemporary institutions – the small man in the vast corporate enterprise, the single citizen confronted by the state, the individual trade unionist within the union "machine"'. (p. 138) We recognise this when we consider the fate of the whistle-blower in the NHS, the disabled person confronted with the iniquities of the 'bedroom tax', the struggles of ordinary people to deal with the complexities of the welfare system. And, says Thompson, 'they are indifferent to politics because – if there are no real alternatives – it does not matter very much which lot gets in'. They are apathetic because 'they do not believe there is any workable alternative, or they very much dislike any alternative (such as Communism) which is proposed.' (p. 140) Here in 2015 we recognise these arguments. 'They are all the same', 'there is no point in voting'; membership of the main political parties has collapsed, turn out in local elections is derisory, in national elections it fell to only 59.4% in 2001 (although by 2010 it had recovered slightly to 65.4%). Increasingly voters are middle-aged or older.

Thompson takes these arguments further in an essay on *The New Left*, with an illuminating examination of three 'establishments'. The first is 'the establishment of power', where he describes 'the increasing size, complexity, and expertise' of industrial concerns, the power of the managers and the anonymity and insignificance of individual workers. In an era of global corporations, multi-national financial organisations, Amazon and Microsoft, of zero-hour contracts, part-time working and non-recognition of trade unions, this is all too familiar to us. Thompson writes of a 'super-establishment' of the CBI, the TUC and the Government, with its own procedures and an air of 'official sanctity' which renders minority groups or non-conformists both powerless and liable to be demonised as 'offenders against decency, law and order': thus the 'Occupy' movement, or the current suggestion that protestors should pay for policing at demonstrations i.e. for the right to demonstrate.

His second establishment is that of 'orthodoxy'. He identifies two factors which have combined to generate a climate of intellectual conformity: first the centralised control of the mass media, either by corporations or by the state itself, with the consequent elimination of minority opinions. One may argue that the growth of the internet has militated against this, but recent debates about the

role of the BBC, the furore over the leadership debates at the coming general election, and the reporting of the *Daily Telegraph* on the HSBC scandal, suggest that Thompson's arguments are still valid. The second factor which Thompson examines is contextualised by the Cold War; he writes about ideological orthodoxy, an orthodoxy enforced by the then Communist State in Russia, but in the democratic countries by the agreement of all major political parties on the issues of nuclear arms, NATO strategy etc. Yet is Putin's Russia any different? Witness the fate of the Pussy Rioters! Are there any substantive differences of foreign policy between the main political parties on the nuclear deterrent, on how to deal with austerity, on their responses to the Libor and HSBC scandals? 'The electorate are presented with no effective choice'. (p. 122)

And third, 'the establishment of institutions', fossilised in their leadership, bureaucracy, policies and procedures, set apart from and above the mass of people: thus the antiquated procedures of the House of Commons, the rituals of the party conferences, the carefully scripted speeches of the party leaders and fear of going 'off message'. We see public anger at the MPs expenses scandal and, as I write, the 'cash for access' allegations against senior politicians Malcolm Rifkind and Jack Straw.

But while we might identify with much of Thompson's analysis does he offer us any solutions? His polemics were a call to arms, a plea for a 'New Left', free from sectarianism, a decentralised, non-hierarchical, creative and humanist left, open to debate. The keynote essay in this collection is that on *Socialist Humanism*, where Thompson defends Marxism against the distortions of Leninism and Stalinism, and returns to the true, humanist content of 'real' communism. He references Marx's earlier writings, re-asserts the humanism of Marx and Engels, their belief that socialism will make possible the assertion of our humanity. Marx, he says, emphasised intellectual and moral agency, that human beings, 'by acting on the external world and changing it ... at the same time [change their] own nature'. And this, of course, brings us to William Morris.

Morris's influence is apparent throughout Thompson's writings, an influence freely admitted, and his 1959 lecture for the William Morris Society on *The Communism of William Morris* is included here. In this lecture, Thompson argued that Morris's moral critique of society is as important as Marx's economic and historical analysis, that 'the construction of a communist community would require a moral revolution as profound as the revolution in economic and social power'. (p. 260) Thus commodities, 'things', material benefits, cannot alone satisfy men and women because they are intellectual and moral beings. 'Socialist humanism declares: liberate men from slavery to things, to the pursuit of profit or servitude to "economic necessity". Liberate man, as a creative being – and he will create not only new values, but things in super-abundance'. (p. 87)

Like Morris, Thompson is concerned with 'making socialists', and he begins

his essay on *Commitment in Politics* with Morris: 'Intelligence enough to conceive, courage enough to will, power enough to compel. If our ideas of a new society are anything more than a dream, these three qualities must animate the due effective majority of the working people and then, I say, the thing will be done'. Thompson lambasts those socialist intellectuals who see the working class as 'the passive object of social transformations which take place with geological inevitability'. (p. 105) He urges them to acquire a sense of history, to recognise that working-class history 'has never been a blind, spontaneous reflex to objective economic conditions', (p. 106) but a conscious struggle of ideas and values. The role of the intellectual and the politically active minority is not to set up new organisations but to assert these ideas and values, to make common cause in showing working people 'that man is capable not only of changing his conditions, but also of transforming himself; that there is a real sense in which it is true that men can master their own history'. (p. 99) And thus in this volume too we have *Homage to Tom Maguire*, which tells us much about Thompson's own socialism, about what he meant by 'socialism from below', and the kind of socialist movement he wanted, one rooted in community. As Winslow suggests in his introduction, he looked back to the early days of West Riding Socialism, where, 'for a time preoccupation with changing all forms of human relationships had been central in a working class movement'. (p. 17)

Thus, even in a period of apathy, Thompson reminds us to remember our history, a history which includes the socialist revival of the late nineteenth century and the Left Book Club of the 1930s. For him no 'vanguard' party or resolution-mongering within the Labour Party: he was thinker, writer, organiser, and foot-soldier. The Thompson home in Halifax was a centre of activism, an open house for all, both comrades and working-class neighbours. The New Left ventures included journals, Left Clubs and participation in CND. The clubs, by 1960 some forty of them scattered across the country, became centres of radical activity and thinking. As Winslow points out, CND's significance and the New Left's influence within it is difficult to exaggerate: 'its decentralised structures, grassroots formations, direct action, sit-downs, mass marches, and political independence ... prefigured the social movements to come'. (p. 27)

During recent years we have seen mass demonstrations against the war in Iraq, the Occupy movement, a growing environmental campaign, expanding membership of the Green Party and the election of a Green Party MP; the turn-out in the Scottish referendum demonstrated very clearly that people can be energised where they are offered genuine alternatives. And maybe, just maybe, the Left is once more raising its head above the parapet. Two new books suggest this. Peter Hain, in *Back to the Future of Socialism*, reflects on an era of looser political allegiances and urges a campaigning labour movement. Hain is about to retire from parliament but perhaps, as Tony Benn said, he will now have more time to devote

to politics. And the Blue Labour group, founded just before the last election by Jon Cruddas, Labour MP for Dagenham and the academic Maurice Glasman, have issued a compendium of essays entitled *Forging a New Politics*. Cruddas argues that inequality and identity are at the heart of political social malaise, and the group promotes notions of community engagement and decentralisation, of ethical economics and moral values.

What the essays in this volume also demonstrate is that as a writer of political prose Thompson was unrivalled. His command of detail, his style and eloquence, the precision of his arguments, illuminate the history of the New Left but they also offer insights to the present generation. The nuclear threat remains: we have seen the takeover of the global economy by a cabal of the super-rich combining a single financial ideology with the use of new technology and a political class acting as its cheerleaders. As Winslow points out in his valuable introduction, 'we now face our own "exterminisms", in the form of permanent war, the enduring curse of class, the ravaging of our environment, and the issue of the very survival of our earth as we know it'. (p. 35) I would dispute Winslow's assertion that Thompson ended his life 'not really a Marxist at all', and I would wish that this anthology covered the full range of Thompson's work rather than restricting itself to the New Left period. Nonetheless Cal Winslow has done an invaluable service in presenting this collection of Thompson's writings, writings which both educate and inspire and which, in Sheila Rowbotham's words, provide 'indispensable weapons for a new generation of activists struggling to reinvent radicalism'.

Martin Crick

Alex Prichard, Ruth Kinna, Saku Pinta & David Berry, eds, *Libertarian Socialism: Politics in Black and Red*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, 311 pp., Hbk, £66. ISBN 9780230280373.

Black is the traditional colour of anarchism and red that of Marxism or Communism; 'Is Black and Red Dead?' was a most successful conference held at the University of Nottingham in 2009; and of the forty-two papers delivered there thirteen have been selected for publication in *Libertarian Socialism: Politics in Black and Red*. Readers of this journal, however, should know that Morris was not covered at the conference and Ruth Kinna has replaced a paper she gave on the maverick Guy Aldred with the one on Morris printed here.

The epigraph to the introductory chapter is 'Crowned heads, wealth and privilege may well tremble should ever again the Black and Red unite!'; the remark

Bismarck reputedly made on hearing of the split of 1872 between the followers of Bakunin and of Marx in the First International (although it seems improbable that Bismarck would have used such language). The black and the red after a century and a quarter of antagonism have, with the failure of Communism worldwide, coupled with the intellectual bankruptcy of social democracy, to some extent been drawing together. John Holloway, the Irish author of the influential *Change the World without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today* (2002) – as well as of one of the commendations on the cover of *Libertarian Socialism* – has commented: ‘One thing that is new and exciting about the re-articulation of ideas is that the old divisions between anarchism and Marxism are being eroded’ (quoted on p. 294). Even more strikingly the Marxist geographer David Harvey observes:

Contemporary attempts to revive the communist hypothesis typically abjure state control and look to other forms of collective social organisation ... Horizontally networked, as opposed to hierarchically commanded, systems of coordination between autonomously organised and self-governing collectives of producers and consumers are envisaged as lying at the core of a new form of communism ... All manner of small-scale experiments around the world can be found in which such economic and social forms are being constructed. In this there is a convergence of some sort between the Marxist and anarchist traditions that harks back to the broadly collaborative situation between them in the 1860s in Europe before their break-up into warring camps ... (p. 295)

This is the context of the current collection whose editors express its leading contention to be that contemporary activists have ‘something to gain from re-engaging with and reflecting on the past, on the complexity of socialist history, and on problems which previous generations ... encountered’. Of their main aims, the first is to challenge traditional accounts, suggesting that the ideological boundaries between Marxism and anarchism are ‘far more complex, fluid and porous’ than existing histories have them to be. A second aim is ‘to reconsider the overlaps and tensions between and within different Marxisms and anarchisms’ – the plural forms of both are very welcome. (p. 6) This programme is addressed largely through the history of ideas, focussing on a series of thinkers, all located at some point on the continuum between anarchism and Marxism: Morris; Georges Sorel; Antonio Gramsci; the Council Communists Anton Pannokoek, Karl Korsch and Paul Mattick; C.L.R. James; Daniel Guérin; Cornelius Castoriadis; Guy Debord; and the Italian Autonomist Antonio Negri and his recent US collaborator Michael Hardt. Some of the analyses are of high quality and the totality makes for an extremely useful as well as stimulating coverage.

Morris called himself a communist and in 1955 E.P. Thompson claimed him convincingly for Marxism. He rejected anarchism with great vehemence, abhor-

ring its violence – unsurprisingly in the era of the bomb-throwers – and its individualism. Yet his politics were close to anarchism and, in particular, anarchists have been consistent in regarding *News from Nowhere* as an anarchist utopia. Kropotkin, in an admiring obituary of Morris, considered it ‘perhaps the most thorough, and deeply anarchistic conception of future society that has ever been written’. *News from Nowhere* dates from the period when Morris eschewed parliamentarianism; and his lecture of 1887, ‘The Policy of Abstention’, was hailed by the anarchist Herbert Read as ‘the best statement of the case against parliamentary action ever made in English’. While he was to moderate his hostility to parliamentary participation from 1890 with the thwarting of his revolutionary hopes and the abandonment of the Socialist League (disgusted by the antics of its anarchist members), he did so with reluctance and retained his extreme distaste for conventional politics. It was in 1893–1894 that he subjected anarchism to uncompromising criticism: in the Hammersmith Socialist Society’s *Manifesto for English Socialists*, an interview in *Justice* entitled ‘A Socialist Poet on Bombs and Anarchism’ and ‘Why I Am a Communist’ published in *Liberty* (which happened to be an anarchist newspaper).

Kinna has previously shown the root cause of Morris’s opposition to anarchism by comparing his ideas to Kropotkin’s. The two men knew one another, their families were on visiting terms, and they had great mutual respect. Kinna, examining their analyses of the mediaeval commune, showed that, whereas Kropotkin believed it was the later development of the state which had perverted an innate capacity for freedom and co-operation and that society could therefore dispense with the state, Morris, although also anti-statist, did not believe the state could be immediately abolished but that a new form of social organisation would need to be painstakingly constructed. This she did in 1999 in ‘Morris, Anti-Statism and Anarchy’ (in Peter Faulkner & Peter Preston, eds, *William Morris: Centenary Essays*). She now returns to Morris’s antagonism to anarchism in ‘Anarchism, Individualism and Communism: William Morris’s Critique of Anarcho-Communism’, exploring his rejection of its individualism. He is revealed as not operating at his best, conflating the considerable range of late-Victorian individualisms as a single bugbear, ‘individualism’. Kropotkin’s anarchist communism, not only anti-authoritarian but also anti-capitalist, was at an extreme to the *laissez-faire* ideology of the pre-eminent nineteenth-century individualist, Herbert Spencer (much admired though he was by anarchist Spain for his enmity to the state). Between these left- and right-libertarian poles was a raft of other types of individualism, including that of a friend of the young Beatrice Webb, the once well-known Auberon Herbert. He advocated the release of the ‘living energies of the free individuals’, leaving them ‘free to combine in their own way, in their own groups ... respecting deeply and religiously alike their own freedom, and the freedom of all others’. Herbert, whose thought possessed affini-

ties to Tolstoy's, described himself not as an anarchist but a 'voluntaryist' since he supported a system of regulation to 'repress aggression or crime'. (p. 44) A comprehensive study of the entire range of Victorian individualism is much needed.

Kinna's chapter is followed by Lewis H. Mates on 'The Syndicalist Challenge in the Durham Coalfield before 1914'. Attention has centred on the syndicalism of the South Wales miners, who produced the notable programme, *The Miners' Next Step*, their intention being to 'take over the mining industry, and carry it on in the interests of the workers'. Mates makes a persuasive case for the importance of syndicalism in County Durham, emphasising the impact of two militants, Will Lawther and George Harvey. Lawther was to achieve national prominence as a right-winger after the Second World War, ending with a knighthood. Sorel's most celebrated work, little read nowadays, is *Reflections on Violence* (1908); yet it is an original contribution to libertarian political theory as well as a profound essay on the sociology, or social psychology, of mass movements and the institutionalisation of dissent. Renzo Llorente argues convincingly that Sorel was an 'anarcho-Marxist', drawing equally upon anarchism and Marxism. In contrast, Carl Levy who has been working for many years on a biography of the major Italian anarchist, Errico Malatesta but is also an authority on Gramsci – he has written *Gramsci and the Anarchists* (1999) – sees little that is anarchist in Gramsci's thought. It was not anarchism as a philosophy which influenced him but rather his encounters with individual anarchists in the Turinese factory movement.

Saku Pinta provides a lucid and very welcome account of Council Communism, a predominantly German and Dutch tendency stemming from the experience of the workers' councils set up during the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917, as well as the aborted German Revolution of 1918–1920. On being denounced in 1920 by Lenin in *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, the Marxist councilists established their own organisations. The collectivisation of the Spanish Revolution and their understanding of the CNT-FAI's predicament during the Civil War led them to draw close to anarchism; and Pinta highlights the particular convergence with the critique of the Friends of Durruti group in *Towards a Fresh Revolution*.

Christian Høgsbjerg, author of *C.L.R. James in Imperial Britain* (2014), gives a further instalment of his impressive work on James with 'A "Bohemian Freelancer"? C.L.R. James, His Early Relationship to Anarchism and the Intellectual Origins of Autonomism'. After breaking free of Trotskyism, of which he had been a prominent activist, James developed a creative and anarchistic Marxism, deeply impressed by the workers' councils of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 – as were also Castoriadis and Debord. Yet James continued to insist that he remained a Leninist (and the same applies to Negri). It was Leninism indeed which held Marxism and anarchism far apart for most of the twentieth century,

since its vanguardism and democratic centralism are anathema to libertarians. Rosa Luxemburg was an early – and libertarian – critic of Lenin’s political innovations of 1905 in *What Is To Be Done?*, answering it the following year with *The Mass Strike, the Political Party and the Trade Unions*. This is mentioned by several contributors and a chapter on her politics is an unfortunate omission. Høgsbjerg concludes by describing James as ‘perhaps the “William Morris of the Twentieth Century”’, which he explains by quoting from the second edition of Thompson’s *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*: ‘Either he was an eccentric, isolated figure, personally admirable, but whose major thought was wrong or irrelevant and long left behind by events. This could be so ... on the other hand, it may be that Morris was a major intellectual figure [who] may be assimilated to Marxism only in the course of a process of self-criticism and re-ordering within Marxism itself’. (pp. 159–160)

Guérin had also been a Trotskyist, but he moved on to accept anarchism and what he called ‘libertarian communism’. When I asked him in 1986, two years before his death, whether he was a Marxist or an anarchist, he replied ‘Some mornings when I wake up I’m an anarchist, other mornings I’m a Marxist’. So Guérin was another anarcho-Marxist and is discussed by David Berry. Castoriadis, a Greek exiled in Paris, was the leading figure in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* which published between 1949 and 1965 the journal of the same name (the phrase is Luxemburg’s). They too were moving on from Trotskyism but while to outsiders the politics of *SouB* was eventually a fusion of Marxism and anarchism, the name of anarchism was vigorously spurned (as it has frequently been by other libertarian-inclined Marxists). Later Castoriadis moved to a definitely anarchist position – as Benoît Challand explains in an able analysis – but by then he had rejected Marxism. Also impressive is Jean-Christophe Angaut’s ‘Beyond the Black and Red: The Situationists and the Legacy of the Workers’ Movement’, which concentrates on Debord at the expense of the more libertarian Raoul Vaneigem, the other principal thinker of Situationism.

The index is a disgrace. There is no entry for Morris despite a chapter on him and half-a-dozen other references. Sorel, Gramsci and Debord also fail to appear, although the authors of the chapters on the quartet do. Is this what happens when you have four editors? Otherwise Prichard, Kinna, Pinta and Berry are to be congratulated on a most successful editorial enterprise.

David Goodway

Robert Hewison, *Cultural capital; the rise and fall of creative Britain*. London, New York: Verso, 2014, 278 pp. £14.99. ISBN 9781781687512.

Robert Hewison is a cultural critic who in this book turns his sights on the ‘rise and fall of creative Britain’, charting this process from the period when Tony Blair became leader of the Labour Party in 1994 and the term ‘Cool Britannia’ was coined, more or less to the present day. It begins with an introduction entitled ‘the golden age’, but by chapter six we are ‘the age of lead’, and the book is now about the New Labour era of cultural policy from the optimism of the late 1990s to the funding crisis currently confronting culture in the UK. Unlike Hewison’s earlier book *The Heritage Industry*, this one is not about analysing cultural history so much as advancing a case. The argument is that after twenty years in the Thatcherite wilderness, the 1997 Blair Government offered the arts a Faustian pact. In exchange for an increase of £290m in the budget of the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) (whose funding was to pass £1bn by 2001) the cultural sector was expected to deliver the government’s economic and social policy agenda. Much of this was achieved by redefining the cultural sector as part of the ‘creative industries’ which consisted of commercial enterprises in a range of sectors as diverse as architecture, designer fashion, the art and antiques market, video games and television and radio (but not newspapers). Government spending to support these and about a dozen other sectors, which strangely never included either individual artists (a creative occupation) or the museums sector (a cultural enterprise), was to conform to the Treasury’s *Green Book* guidelines which required spending impacts to be measured and monetised. This process (‘contingent evaluation’) involves attempting to measure the value of the experience of visiting say, Salisbury Cathedral, in other words asking people what they would be prepared to pay for this facility, if they were not attending a service. Of course the categories employed, as well as the bureaucratic forms of management, were highly problematical, with as many as half the workforce in the creative industries not doing anything creative and as many creative people working outside the designated industries as within them.

Not surprisingly, the bargain began fairly quickly to fall apart at the seams. Hewison devotes some of the more tedious sections of the book to describing the various task forces, commissions, reorganisations, policy papers and think-tank reports involved, with some gossipy insights into what was a markedly incestuous world. I had no idea for instance that Tony Blair’s old housemaster at Fettes, Eric Anderson, was appointed Chairman of the National Heritage Memorial Fund in 1998, nor that the amateur football team formed by James Purnell, a future Minister at the DCMS (and now Director of Strategy at the BBC) contained no fewer than four future cabinet ministers, a team which, as Hewison puts it ‘typified the laddish style adopted by New Labour’s shock troops, masking fierce ambition

with demotic male bonding' Tales of back-stabbing, hissy fits, back-scratching deals and unexplained 'resignations', make what might otherwise be something of a slog through the detail of the twists and turns of government policy under New Labour readable, if not exactly inspiring.

It all had to end in tears, and it did. Probably the most spectacular disaster was the Millennium Dome. Fifteen years later it is difficult to remember just how much money was wasted on this project, but Hewison lays it all bare and it is not a pretty sight. It was not the only one. The Public in West Bromwich is more disturbing. In 2001 a quality of life survey named that town as the second worst place to live in the UK. In terms of crime, unemployment, housing and schools, West Bromwich lacked a future. If New Labour was to make 'things of quality' available 'to the many not the few', here was the kind of place to begin. The DCMS Policy Action Team 10 (there were eighteen in all charged with delivering the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal) was given as one of its basic policy aims 'sustaining cultural diversity and using the arts to combat social exclusion and promote community development'. The Public – the largest community arts development in Europe – would combine commercial outlets, theatre and exhibition spaces, catering and a high-tech interactive gallery winding through the building. Apparently, an 'iconic' development would solve the deep structural problems of life in West Bromwich.

Despite its own Lottery Panel recommending rejection of the project, the Arts Council pressed ahead. By the time The Public opened in 2009, costs had risen from a projected £35 million to £52.6 million. The architects and two successive companies responsible for running the project became bankrupt, the 'interactive technology' did not work, and after the Arts Council washed its hands of it, the local council found itself with a £30,000 a week bill to keep the building open. It finally closed in 2013. Why did this happen? Hewison argues that it was because of the Arts Council's need to show that it was willing to meet the (non-artistic) policy objectives of New Labour. The distinction he rightly makes is between the Arts Council's role being to fund the creation of arts and their enjoyment (which may lead to its meeting wider economic and social goals) and these aims becoming the policy imperatives, which cannot be its primary purpose.

The Lottery, which has become a major source of arts funding, experienced an extraordinary run of failures, arguably because the sheer quantity of money shovelled through it (over £30bn by 2013), was way in excess of the capacity of the sector to absorb. Who now recalls the National Centre for Popular Music in Sheffield, the Earth Centre in Doncaster, or the National Faith Centre in Bradford? All closed. Nonetheless, some of the 'golden age' was very golden indeed and despite the catalogue of placemen, managerial incompetence and inappropriate targets, the era saw the renewal of the Royal Shakespeare Company, the end of museum charges, and the opening of Tate Modern and The Sage, Gateshead.

The Olympics too were a triumph and the cultural Olympics saw substantial investment (in among others) the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow, to glorious effect. New Labour's cultural policy, in emphasising the social as well as the economic impact of cultural investment, took the arts into schools, prisons and hospitals. While many arts organisations, the William Morris Society among them, would have set up outreach and educational programmes whether or not their funders had told them to, the national policy encouraged and sustained its clients in that resolve.

Under the coalition, the position has deteriorated. Interviewed last year in *The Independent*, Hewison lamented the impact of austerity on the role of local government and its support for the arts. 'I think we could see the collapse of the cultural infrastructure of the country because local authorities play a key role, they are much closer to the grass roots and it's often not recognised. The arguments for them are impossible. Most local authorities in two years time will simply have enough money to fulfil their statutory duties and the arts aren't a statutory obligation'. Instead the sector has fallen back on the Lottery. 'The Lottery has had an incredible impact on the arts. But the problem is [that] the Lottery is becoming the funder of first and last resort'.

There are lessons here for the William Morris Society. Significant core funding is provided by Hammersmith and Fulham council, mainly for the Society's work in schools. The success of its partnership bid with the Emery Walker Trust to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Arts and Crafts Hammersmith project, provides a very welcome boost for its educational programmes, but also enables it to carry out vital capital and conservation works. However, there is no certainty that either source of funds will be available in five year's time. In his conclusion, Hewison reminds us that cultural capital is not an exclusive commodity which can be traded in the market. It is a public good whose value increases when *more* people possess it, not fewer. His view is that the sole purpose of public policy should be to enlarge it by making culture as freely available as possible to as many people as possible. Morrisians everywhere would subscribe to that. *Cultural capital* is timely because it reminds us that whoever is elected in 2015 will need to carry out a radical rethink of cultural policy, but in doing so the book sounds a warning. The neo-liberalism of the past thirty-five years has brought us crises in banking, in public trust in institutions, and in culture. It is not clear whether we know the way out of the last one.

Martin Stott