

# Reviews

*Edited by Peter Faulkner*

William Morris, *Poems of Protest*, edited by Michael Rosen, London: Redwords, 2013, 86 pp., pbk, £6.99. ISBN 9781909026056.

In this attractively produced small book Michael Rosen, the former Children's Laureate, believes he has collected all of Morris's socialist poetry with the exception of the long *Pilgrims of Hope*. This, oddly, has never been done before and he deserves our respect, even though he fails to fulfil his intention.

During 1884, as a member of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), Morris first brought out 'The Day is Coming' as an SDF leaflet, then publishing in *Justice*, 'The Voice of Toil', 'All for the Cause' and 'No Master'. After the formation of the Socialist League in 1885, 'The March of the Workers' and 'The Message of the March Wind' (later used as the opening of *The Pilgrims of Hope*) were printed in *Commonweal*. These six poems were gathered as *Chants for Socialists*, a Socialist League pamphlet of the same year. Later editions added 'Down among the Dead Men' and 'A Death Song', the lament for Alfred Linnell, who had died from injuries sustained on 'Bloody Sunday', 1887. The eight poems were last increased by two when *Chants for Socialists* was combined with *The Pilgrims of Hope* for the Longmans' Pocket edition of 1915, and two 'May Day' poems, first published in *Justice* during the early 1890s, were added. So there were only ten poems in total. This complex history of publication is confused further by their being divided between volume IX (1911) of the *Collected Works* – because Morris had included five in his final verse collection, *Poems by the Way* (1891) – and volume XXIV (1915), where May Morris was obliged to print the remaining five as 'Late Poems', the familiar title of *Chants for Socialists* not being used.

To the ten poems of the final edition of *Chants for Socialists* Rosen has added three. He has selected 'The Earthly Paradise: Apology' from *The Earthly Paradise* (1868) since, he argues, 'it is a fairly undisguised statement of atheism or "unbelief", a rare and subversive idea in Victorian England'. (p. 53) A less controversial choice is 'Wake, London Lads' of 1878, clearly a political song since it was written

to be performed by a choir to open the Eastern Question Association meeting protesting against Britain going to war with Russia. The third, 'Socialists at Play', was not only published in *Commonweal* during 1885, but also brought out as a leaflet.

Rosen has, though, missed two of Morris's socialist poems, both collected in *Poems by the Way*, but also included in the Independent Labour Party's *Labour's Song Book* of 1924. 'Drawing near the Light' originally appeared during 1885 in *Commonweal*:

Lo, when we wade the tangled wood,  
In haste and hurry to be there,  
Naught seems its leaves and blossoms good,  
For all that they be fashioned fair.

But looking up, at last we see  
The glimmer of the open light,  
From o'er the place where we would be:  
Then grow the very brambles bright.

So now, amidst our day of strife,  
With many a matter glad we play,  
When once we see the light of life  
Gleam through the tangle of today.

And from 1890 there is 'The Day of Days':

Each eve earth falleth down the dark,  
As though its hope were o'er;  
Yet lurks the sun when day is done  
Behind tomorrow's door.

Grey grows the dawn while men-folk sleep,  
Unseen spreads on the light,  
Till the thrush sings to the coloured things,  
And earth forgets the night.

No otherwise wends on our Hope:  
E'en as a tale that's told  
Are fair lives lost, and all the cost  
Of wise and true and bold.

We've toiled and failed; we spake the word;  
 None hearkened; dumb we lie;  
 Our Hope is dead, the seed we spread  
 Fell o'er the earth to die.

What's this? For joy our hearts stand still,  
 And life is loved and dear,  
 The lost and found the Cause hath crowned,  
 The Day of Days is here.

Lest it be thought that it is the archaic diction, inversions and exhausted romanticism which has led Rosen knowingly to exclude these items, it needs to be said these are standard for the *Poems of Protest* – as are repeated reference to 'light', 'strife', 'Hope', 'the Cause' and 'the Day'. Rosen also reprints Morris's great statement of 1894, 'How I Became a Socialist', the vigour and interest of its prose contrasting with the inertness and somnolence of his propagandist verse:

Think of it! Was it all to end in a counting-house on the top of a cinder-heap, with Podsnap's drawing-room in the offing, and a Whig committee dealing out champagne to the rich and margarine to the poor in such convenient proportions as would make all men contented together, though the pleasure of the eyes was gone from the world, and the place of Homer was to be taken by Huxley? [p. 63].

And yet Morris's socialist chants were immensely popular with – and indeed sung by – the British socialist movement of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In 1888 Edward Carpenter selected no fewer than five of the *Chants for Socialists* for his *Chants of Labour: A Song Book of the People*. No writer was represented by as many; Shelley by only three, and Burns and Whitman two each. As late as 1924, in the Independent Labour Party's *Labour's Song Book* Morris was still the most popular with seven poems, whereas Carpenter was represented by three, Blake and Burns two each, and Shelley only one. Tom Mann concluded his pamphlet of 1894, *What the ILP Is Driving At*, with 'the grand words of William Morris', the opening lines of 'The Day is Coming':

Come hither, lads, and hearken, for a tale there is to tell,  
 Of the wonderful days a-coming, when all shall be better than well.

Fred Jowett, to become a cabinet minister in the first Labour Government of 1924, recalled the Bradford and Leeds socialists singing on their summer rambles 'The March of the Workers':

What is this, the sound and rumour? What is that all men hear,  
 Like the wind in hollow valleys when the storm is drawing near,  
 Like the rolling on of the ocean in the eventide of fear?  
 'Tis the people marching on.

Rosen remembers his father, the educationalist Harold Rosen, also bursting out with these words, sung to Morris's prescribed tune of 'John Brown's Body Lies Mouldering in the Grave'. This was during the 1950s, but he is likely have picked the song up, as also 'Down among the Dead Men', while a student Communist during the late 1930s.

In contrast, the literary critics were sniffy. Reviewing *Poems by the Way*, Richard Garnett, who had responded enthusiastically to *The Defence of Guenevere* over thirty years earlier, commented: 'We can allow but little worth to Mr Morris's purely socialistic poetry'; and Oliver Elton believed that the songs 'written expressly in honour of the "Cause" are not always the happiest or strongest in the book'. Thereafter writers on Morris have almost without exception ignored *Chants for Socialists*. E.P. Thompson did take them seriously in *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (1955), although observing sadly, though not unfairly, that the 'Chants cannot be said to lay the foundations of a poetry of revolutionary realism': 'Morris rarely expresses any sense of vitality in the working class, but only in the Cause itself, the hope of the future'.

Otherwise the principal commentator has been the late Nicholas Salmon in 'The Communist Poet-Laureate: William Morris's Chants for Socialists', the fine article he published in the *Journal of the William Morris Society* in 2001, and which Rosen very usefully reprints in *Poems of Protest* (although, most regrettably, unproofed). Salmon boldly concurs that such judgments as Garnett's and Elton's are 'fair in literary terms' but argues that they 'have had the effect of greatly underestimating the impact of Chants as socialist propaganda'. (p. 77) In the context of the widespread appreciation of all kinds of music which had developed during the Victorian years, he sees Morris as consciously employing song as a political weapon – beginning with the Eastern Question Association meeting of 1878. Morris was certainly 'responding to contemporary society in a way that disproves the absurd allegations that he was some sort of romantic dreamer out of touch with his age', but Salmon goes too far in claiming that therefore he, 'without doubt, was the first Victorian modernist'. (p. 82) Who, though, is content with the words of a Richard Wagner or a Bob Dylan without the accompanying music? Similarly, it is not the texts of Morris's songs which we should be reading. What is required is a CD of their choral (and any other) settings (some by none other than Gustav Holst). Is the recovery of these a possibility?

Redwords is an imprint of the Trotskyist and obsessively agitational Socialist Workers Party, of which Rosen is a prominent member. How, one wonders,

will the SWP rank-and-file respond to Morris's poems? The following notice appeared in the SWP's *Socialist Worker* (31 December 2012):

William Morris was one of the most respected and admired decorative artists and writers in Britain in the 19th century.

He was also a committed member of the Socialist League.

Like all good socialists, he organized – speaking at over 1,000 meetings. He also wrote regularly in socialist newspapers.

His *Chants for Socialists* and other revolutionary verse make up the centrepiece of a new collection published by Redwords. They were written to be performed to gatherings.

He marked events like the death of a worker after a vicious police attack and described how a small group of revolutionaries could become a majority. 'This is the host that bears the word ... A lightning flame, a shearing sword, a storm to overthrow'.

He looked back to the traditions of equality and beauty that he saw in the Middle Ages to criticize the horrors of his times. This collection helps to keep his 'word' alive.

Morris would surely have approved.

*David Goodway*

Ingrid Hanson, *William Morris and the Uses of Violence, 1856–1890*, London: Anthem Press, 2013, £60 Hbk. ISBN 13: 9780857283191.

Has a new methodology recently emerged in Morris studies? If so, it seems to go something like this. First, take a concept which is simultaneously a major social issue of our time and a complex philosophical problem which has our best theorists and philosophers assiduously attending to it. Then apply this concept to Morris's life and writings with: 1. marvellous close reading skills which constantly open new angles on these familiar texts; 2. a superb grasp of Victorian cultural and historical realities which acts as a check on your wilder flights of textual interpretation; 3. a confident grasp of whole swathes of recent literary and cultural theory which makes sure that Victorian contextualism does not bog you down too much and allows you to remain boldly speculative in diverse ways; and 4. an iconoclastic intention to knock to pieces some pre-existing and complacently accepted orthodoxy of Morris interpretation. Thus Marcus Waithe took the concept of hospitality as the formative idea for his 2006 study *William Morris's Utopia of Strangers* – hospitality being a notion which catches up all our contemporary

hopes and anxieties about immigration into Europe and about which the philosopher Jacques Derrida had written so powerfully. In so doing, Waithe's book challenges the reigning orthodoxy of *News from Nowhere* as a uniquely open, pluralistic, decentralist, hospitable text and convincingly shows that things are a good deal more complex and problematic in Morris's utopia than that.

And now Ingrid Hanson has fastened upon the notion of violence, which is at the centre of current social thinking in so many ways – Al-Qaeda terrorism, right-wing extremism (as with Anders Breivik), domestic violence, liberal-humanitarian military intervention (Syria, most recently), child abuse, violence against animals and/or nature – and about which the 'Elvis of cultural theory', Slavoj Žižek, has written unsettlingly in *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (2009). Hanson's *William Morris and the Uses of Violence, 1856–1890* is a stunning contribution to Morris studies, no doubt about that. While Žižek himself is not present, such older theorists of violence as Georges Sorel and Hannah Arendt certainly are. But the figures here who mediate between such general accounts of violence and Hanson's own more literary concerns are Georges Bataille, with his 'energy economy' of expenditure, destruction and loss, and René Girard, whose *Violence and the Sacred* reflects on sacrificial violence as a means of community renewal. In a series of powerful readings of Morris's work, a pervasive orthodoxy – what we might term the 'green Morris', a Morris of anti-militarism and environmental sensitivity, of willow trees and floral print designs, of placid river trips (both textual and biographical) up the Thames to Kelmscott – is decisively defamiliarised. The Morris who emerges from Hanson's book is, rather, from the early gothic stories of *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* onwards, devoted to 'the generative effects of extreme, disorientating physical violence'. During the course of her book Hanson almost rewrites the Cartesian *cogito* for us. In the case of Morris, it is not so much a matter of 'I think, therefore I am', or even of 'I do craftwork, therefore I am', but rather 'I fight and kill, therefore I am'.

I do not think Morris's early gothic stories have ever been made to seem as rich, disturbing and beautiful as they are here. Hanson's subsequent account of 'The Defence of Guenevere', which construes the queen as a female warrior fighting with all the linguistic and physiological modes at her disposal against the State violence which threatens her, is a definitive reinterpretation of that central poem. The chapter on *Sigurd the Volsung* focuses on another crucial concept in Hanson's book, 'manliness', which is bound up with the practice of violence in complex ways. If Sigmund and Sinfiotli's wolfish violence verges on the monstrous, Sigurd's own valour must tread an uneasy path between this and the 'dastardly' second-hand collective violence of Siggeir or Atli (and, meantime, Brynhild and Gudrun develop some of the warrior aspects of Guenevere herself). So far, so good; but in the battles of the Germanic romances, particularly *The Roots of the Mountains*, Morris's work is seen as coming alarmingly close to imperialist or

protofascist modes of racial cleansing. And finally, in her subtle treatments of the socialist literary texts, Hanson shows that, while Morris's assessments of the necessity of violence in social change varied across the years of political commitment, his literary works remained deeply absorbed in the notion of redemptive violence. Here she challenges commentators such as Florence Boos, who have seen Morris in his later years as tending more towards pacific methods of social change.

As I have suggested, Waithe and Hanson take powerful contemporary concepts and their associated current theoretical debates to produce detailed and persuasive reinterpretations of Morris and his Victorian context. But their books also prompt the question: could one run the traffic the other way round? Could the new discoveries made about Morrisian hospitality and Morrisian violence in these two books be used as ways to think productively about early twenty-first-century issues of European immigration or military intervention and terrorism? Morris himself, after all, at fullest stretch from 1883 onwards, aspired to be a thinker of the future as well as an analyst of the present – a future which is now our present. So can there be a Morrisian hermeneutic or a Morrisian cultural studies of our present moment and its predicaments?

Let us stick to the issue of violence, since it is Hanson's book rather than Waithe's which is basically under examination here (though some reflection on the relation between hospitality, or its failure, and violence would fruitfully bring the two books together), and take a recent and deeply troubling instance of violence on our streets. Could the Morrisian imagery, narrative paradigms and thematic analysis of violence which Hanson uncovers tell us anything revealing, anything which could not be known by other means, for example, about the killing of soldier Lee Rigby in Woolwich on 22 May of this year? If they cannot, then Hanson has produced a brilliant book on William Morris and that is that – a sufficient academic achievement, by any standards. But if they can (and I suspect they can, though I do not have space to offer a detailed analysis here), then she has given us a usable Morris, a Morris for our times as well as his, a Morris who is asking, both intellectually and imaginatively, the kinds of question which also engage Slavoj Žižek in his *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*. And that is certainly the Morris we most need.

*Tony Pinkney*

*The Journal of Stained Glass*, Vol. XXXV, 2011, Burne-Jones Special Issue. The British Society of Glass Painters; fully illustrated in colour and b & w, 322 pp., £30. ISBN 13 9780956876218.

This a very attractive and informative volume, which we should have saluted much earlier. Its striking front cover features a vivid detail from the Resurrection window at Hopton-on-Sea, while the cartoon appears on the back cover. The quality of the numerous illustrations is worthy of celebration, and the contents are varied, lively and scholarly. The contributors all sing from the same hymn-sheet, but their tones vary widely and keep the reader's interest in different ways.

The Guest Editorial by Fiona MacCarthy offers, as we would expect, a clear and enthusiastic account of Burne-Jones's work in the medium, beginning with *Jesus the Good Shepherd* for James Powell & Sons in 1857, and continuing until his death of 1898, by which time he had produced no fewer than seven hundred and eighty-six designs for Morris. MacCarthy stresses that Burne-Jones's first ambition was to be a painter, but that this did not pay well enough. She quotes his letter to May Gaskell in 1893: 'I have never been able to live by my pictures – but for the designs of windows I should have lived in some poverty always. I have done many hundreds of them, and from some points they are as good work as I do – from the point of design namely'. His stained-glass work is said to have had a steadying influence on his sensitive personality. Georgiana is quoted about how, from the early days of their marriage, Burne-Jones would work during the day at the demanding art of painting, and in the evenings in a more relaxed way at his designs, even continuing when visitors were present. Windows for churches supplied much of the early work of the Firm, and these were carried out by Burne-Jones in the spirit of what he himself called 'Christmas Carol Christianity', more emotional than theological. His design work increased after the reorganization in 1875 into Morris & Co., including his impressive complete set of windows for St Martin's, Brampton. Here MacCarthy quotes from Burne-Jones's irresistible Account Book with Morris & Co., which features significantly later in the book under review: he is being (under)paid a mere £200 for 'a colossal work of fifteen subjects – a masterpiece of style, a *chef d'oeuvre* of invention, a *capo d'opera* of conception'. She follows Alan Crawford in seeing such entries not as complaints but as part of the 'easy, elusive, bantering relationship that underlay Burne-Jones and William Morris's fruitful collaboration' which survived the political differences between the two men resulting from Morris's commitment to revolutionary Socialism in 1883. For MacCarthy, Burne-Jones's late glass, seen in what is now Birmingham Cathedral, and in the Gladstone memorial at Hawarden, shows 'a new burst of stylistic confidence'. She ends on an agreeably personal note: 'The discovery, in detail, of these resplendent windows – from Darley Dale to Lynd-

hurst, from Edinburgh to Boston – has been one of the major excitements of my life'. It would be hard to imagine a more fitting way to launch this remarkable *Journal*.

Under the heading 'History' we find four articles. John Christian's 'Painter-Designer or Designer-Painter?' offers a thoughtful account of the two aspects of Burne-Jones's work. He identifies forty paintings which derive from stained-glass designs, and thinks particularly highly of *The Days of Creation* – the glass at Middleton Cheney, the *Last Judgment* – glass at Easthampstead, and the *Angeli Laudantes* and *Angeli Ministrantes* – glass in Salisbury cathedral. Burne-Jones is described challengingly as 'a natural draughtsman and designer'. Occasionally, Christian suggests, Burne-Jones produced unsatisfactorily 'hybrid work'; in this context, A.C. Sewter is quoted, arguing that the greatly admired late windows in Birmingham are excessively pictorial. (It is for readers to decide whether they judge the powerful *Last Judgment*, reproduced here, on these terms). Christian concludes that Burne-Jones was not always clear in his own mind about his aims, but came to realise that 'his enthusiasm for very diverse formal values might set up tensions in his work, putting its integrity at risk if not actually courting disaster'. I was inclined to wonder – though Christian does not do so – whether these tensions might be seen in a positive light.

Albert Tannler's 'Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris in the United States: A Study of Influence', draws attention to the seven Burne-Jones and Morris windows in the United States, three in Boston and four in New York State, and relates them to the development of stained glass there. He gives a useful account of the opalescent glass patented by John La Farge in 1880, and developed by Charles Tiffany, who introduced large-scale methods for its production. It was originally favoured by the designer Ralph Cram, but by 1907 he came to dismiss it as 'not legitimate stained glass'. Tannler discusses Donald MacDonald's Elizabeth Gregory Memorial window of 1885, the Tiffany *Our Saviour* (1896), and George Hallowell's *The Angel appearing to Mary* (1897). He concludes with a consideration of the legacy of the Arts and Crafts: drawing on research by Peter Cormack, he gives an account of the work of Charles Connick (1875–1945), who was inspired by the ideas of Christopher Whall; his work culminated in the ambitious (illustrated) transept window *All Saints* (1939) in the Church of Our Saviour, Boston. This is an illuminating piece, especially for the non-American reader, though ending modestly with the suggestion that more research needs to be undertaken on the Gothic tradition in his country.

Brian Clarke is a maker rather than an academic, and his 'Vast Acres and Fleeting Ecstasies' is written with passion and commitment as its opening sentence testifies: 'I believe it to be self-evident that on the whole stained glass practised in isolation produces at best minor and at worst catastrophically poor glass'. For him, Burne-Jones is one of the very small number of makers who have had an

adequate sense of the relationship between architecture and glass. He stresses Burne-Jones's delight in his chosen material, and his ability to bring the best out of it – with Morris's backing. He notes the frequent appearance in his glass of 'exquisite fleeting moments' deriving from his 'infatuation with material beauty' – the wonderful *Trumpeting Angels* at Cheddleton are illustrated to show this. Clarke insists on the ruthless self-control required of the glass designer, the need not to indulge in 'gratuitous beauty'. He draws attention to the striking and too often neglected 'secondary narratives' to be found in many of the windows, particularly in the predellae, as in Christ Church, Oxford and Jesus College, Cambridge. He rightly emphasises that Burne-Jones was not a solitary figure, but part of what he well describes as 'a collegiate crusade against ugliness'. In this, Clarke sees him as more fortunate than the contemporary stained-glass artist, whose relation to architects is 'little more than a cynical box-ticking exercise'; instead of a 'fecund marriage' we now have 'one-night-stands that are as barren as a brick'. Burne-Jones is celebrated for bringing 'fertile uninhibited vivacity to this ancient form of art', and is seen by Clarke, because of his closeness in time to the birth of the modern art of photography, as 'the first modern artist'. Whether we agree with this remark or not, we must surely enjoy the energy of Clarke's writing; and it is salutary to be reminded of the problems faced by the stained-glass maker today.

The History section concludes with Martin Harrison's '“Pure gold, clear as glass”: Burne-Jones in Transition and the Lyndhurst New Jerusalem'. Harrison argues convincingly that the difference between the original design for this important window and its final form should be understood as the earliest example of Burne-Jones moving from medievalism to classicism under the influence of Ruskin. In 1862 Ruskin took him to Northern Italy, encouraging him to admire the 'grandeur and grace' of Luini. Thus the window as it finally emerged had moved away from the mode of Fra Angelico towards that of Luini, whose influence could be seen in the 'more solid anatomies and rounded facial types'. Harrison also suggests that the withdrawal of Burne-Jones's design of *Christ in Majesty* for the central tracery light, and its replacement by Webb's more abstract Trinity, weakened the overall effect, and is a reminder that Morris and Burne-Jones did not always get their own way with their clients. It was interesting to read in the Notes on Contributors that Harrison has abandoned plans to revise his respected 1980 book *Victorian Stained Glass* in order to produce 'a volume of thematic essays on 19th-century stained glass' – a book to look forward to.

The 'Research and Methodology' section provides the most substantial piece of scholarship in Douglas Schoenherr's 'Edward Burne-Jones's Account Books with Morris and Company (1861–1900): An Annotated Edition'. Schoenherr reminds us that the two volumes of Account Books, now in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, have never been published in full before: Sewter quoted

effectively but not comprehensively from the Credit side of the Book when he felt it to be appropriate, while not referring, for obvious reasons, to the Debit side. The publication of the Account Books in full here is a major work of scholarship, on which Schoenherr is to be congratulated. In his introduction to what he fairly calls the ‘funniest account books in the history of book-keeping’, he draws attention to, and reproduces, the caricatures which enliven the accounts, and which have often been reproduced. In these, Schoenherr sees no evidence of tension between the two men, but only of the quality of their ‘fabled friendship’, showing ‘a day-to-day relationship full of ribald humour and fun, all at Morris’s expense’. He draws attention to the development of wit in Burne-Jones’s comments on the designs, often quoting his comments to great effect. Schoenherr also points out that Burne-Jones’s annual payments from Morris placed him securely in the middle class. He draws attention to the valuations of Burne-Jones offers of own work in the Account Books; with characteristic thoroughness, Schoenherr is able to inform us that, out of 908 designs, Burne-Jones judged forty-four to be particularly successful, and twenty-one to be failures; the successes, it is suggested, are among the windows particularly admired today, such as the Salisbury Angels and the series of windows in Birmingham cathedral – the subject of an extravagant, and often quoted, outburst by Burne-Jones.

Schoenherr also discusses the Debit side of the books, which give evidence of Burne-Jones’s purchases of wallpapers, textiles and furniture for his houses, and so throws light on their decoration – the Hollyer photographs of The Grange support this – and on the Burne-Joneses’ lack of concern for comfort, amusingly commented on later by their granddaughter Angela Thirkell. A final table shows the number of designs for each of the media in which Burne-Jones practised: 786 out of 908 for stained glass; the next largest group are sixty for tapestries and twenty-three for embroideries. The Account Books occupy pages 123 to 183, but there is more scholarship to come from Schoenherr: a checklist of Burne-Jones’s designs for Morris & Co. in chronological order, and information about the sale by Morris & Co. of Burne-Jones’s cartoons during 1901–1904. The section concludes with Tony Benyon’s very useful biographical listing of stained-glass workers employed by James Powell & Sons, by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. and by Morris & Co.

The publication concludes with some interesting material not related to Burne-Jones, in sections headed ‘Contemporary Practice’, ‘Technical Enquiry’, ‘Reviews’ and ‘Obituaries’. It is good to be reminded of the continuation of the tradition of work in stained glass by Fellows and Associates of the BSMGP, despite the difficulties that they must experience in the condition described so vividly by Brian Clarke. All in all, this is a volume to be warmly welcomed, and everyone associated with it deserves enthusiastic recognition.

*Peter Faulkner*

Rosie Miles, *Victorian Poetry in Context*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013, 195 pp., Pbk £16.99. ISBN 9780826437679.

Rosie Miles's contribution to the Bloomsbury 'Texts and Contexts' series begins by remarking on the profound influence on her life of Morris's 'The Haystack in the Floods', which she first came across as an undergraduate. She sees this as symptomatic of how important Victorian poetry can be for the modern reader. The series clearly aims to introduce students to literature that they may not have encountered before, and to encourage them to read intelligently and enjoy the experience. In this, the energy and clarity of Miles's writing enables her to succeed.

The format is that of the series: Part One offers contexts, social and cultural on the one hand, literary on the other. As we would expect today, attention is given to the political developments of the era, to the relations between the sexes the roles ascribed to women, to questions of faith and doubt, and to the importance of the expanding Empire. The literary context is that of post-Romanticism, and attention is rightly drawn to the development of the dramatic monologue and to the diminishing status of poetry during the later part of the century. This made it possible for Wilde to claim that poetry could develop more freely than prose because the general public were not interested in it.

Part Two is the most substantial; it offers some advice on reading Victorian poetry, considers the metres and rhythms used in it, and then focuses on specific texts. The choice maintains a good balance between the canonical and some less-known works. Tennyson is an unignorable introductory presence, with most attention rightly given to *In Memoriam*, a poem that offers insights into almost all the significant issues of its time, and employs a wonderfully engrossing poetic form for that purpose. Miles then discusses some of Robert Browning's monologues, bringing out well their dramatic and often disturbing qualities. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* comes next, and it is worth reflecting that this poem was little known before the coming of modern feminism. The same may be said of Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market', an extraordinary and sensuous poem which is a surprising creation of the ascetic Anglo-Catholic poet. This is followed by Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Jenny', a dramatic monologue about a man's encounter with a prostitute; its complexity is well brought out. It is linked by its subject-matter to Augusta Webster's 'A Castaway', which is shown to be a powerful poem which deserves to be better known. Miles concludes this section with an account of *fin de siècle* poetries; she makes a good case for the work of the little-known Jewish poet Amy Levy and that of Arthur Symons, who made an impact as both poet and critic.

Part Three offers some wider contexts. In discussing the criticism of Victorian poetry from the 1950s to the 1980s Miles draws attention to the expansion of the

canon, especially through growing attention to the work of women poets and other marginalised groups. 'Afterlives and adaptations' is an important section, because it gives Miles the opportunity to draw attention to the poetry of Hopkins and Hardy, two great poets who do not fit easily into chronological accounts. She then considers the modernist critique of Victorianism, arguing that Yeats, Eliot and Pound were more influenced by their Victorian predecessors than they were prepared to admit. Finally, she brings out, through citing examples, the continuing shadowy life of Victorian poetry in our contemporary culture.

This section is not one which would have appeared in earlier accounts of Victorian poetry; Neo-Victorianism, as this field is now known, is an interesting recent development. Miles is able to draw attention to a variety of contemporary works alluding to Victorian poetic sources, including Arnold's 'Dover Beach', Tennyson's 'Lady of Shalott' and Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market', and concluding with a stanza from Wendy Cope's version of Edward Fitzgerald's popular *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*:

Here with a Bag of Crisps beneath the Bough  
A Can of Beer, a Radio – and Thou  
Beside me half-asleep in Brockwell Park  
And Brockwell Park is Paradise enow.

I realise that Miles had to work on a small compass, but I regretted the absence of the peasant poet John Clare, whose Green concerns are so relevant now, of the anti-imperialist Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, and of the Yeats of the 1890s – perhaps Irish writers will appear in a separate volume. And of course I would have liked more discussion of poems by Morris, though there are allusions to several of them. It must also have been a difficult constraint for Miles, who has written so well about the relation between texts and visual material in the period, to have been denied illustrations. She discusses some of the relevant material with her customary acuteness, but the reader cannot help wishing to see some of the images referred to. However, all in all, the reader of this book will encounter a wide variety of Victorian poetry and of critical approaches to it, including feminism, queer theory and post-colonialism, and should be encouraged by it to go on to read more widely. The format of the series ends each section with some questions, aimed to concentrate student responses. There is also a useful bibliography of anthologies and critical works.

*Peter Faulkner*

Talia Schaffer, *Novel Craft*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 228 pp., 27 illus., Hbk, £40. ISBN 9780195398045

Talia Schaffer's *Novel Craft* is an original contribution to the field of Victorian studies with its focus on what the author herself acknowledges is a neglected and undervalued cultural practice of the period, 'despised domestic handicraft'. (p. 25) The book seeks to remedy this omission by offering both a detailed account of different kinds of Victorian handicraft and their significance for the literature of the period, for as Schaffer observes, 'there is scarcely a nineteenth-century novel that does not feature a craft'. (p. 5) The book is therefore part historical study of Victorian handicraft and part literary analysis of the different ways in which handicraft functions in thematic, structural and authorial terms in novels by Elizabeth Gaskell, Charlotte Yonge, Charles Dickens and Margaret Oliphant. In both contexts, Schaffer demonstrates the ways in which handicraft is crucial to our understanding of Victorian ideals and concerns in regard not only to aesthetics but also to gender, economics, methods of production and consumerism; far from being a purely nostalgic or marginal activity, she seeks to show how handicraft 'stages a tension between historicity and modernity', (p. 7) sometimes resisting but also frequently embracing some of the major social, cultural and technological changes of the period.

The Introduction provides an overview of the development of domestic handicraft with a particular focus on its changing nature and significance from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century. Its conventional association with 'middle-class women's homebound status' (p. 6) is discussed, but also its circulation in the craft bazaar which provided an alternative – and indeed in some ways subversive – form of economic transaction, leading to an insightful analysis of the ways in which handicraft interrogated anxieties about value during the nineteenth century with the shift to a new credit economy. Schaffer also refutes conventional associations of handicraft with the traditional and regressive, discussing how it 'flamboyantly embraced the latest technologies' and 'the mass-produced commodity', with practitioners purchasing factory-produced items 'to wrap, glue, spangle, or paint'. (p. 8) The Introduction also explores one of the unifying motifs of the book – the role of paper. Charting its trajectory from luxury item to ubiquitous commodity to 'debased [...] worthless waste', (p. 18) Schaffer's book provides a fascinating analysis of paper's material and symbolic function in the literature of the period and considers how the novel, as a paper as well as an intellectual construction, might itself be understood as a craft artefact.

The introductory outline of what Schaffer terms the 'craft paradigm' is supplemented in Chapter One by a more detailed consideration of the changing nature and status of domestic handicraft between the early, mid and late Victorian periods. From its late-eighteenth-century associations with the social elite,

Schaffer notes how during the early nineteenth century handicraft was ‘increasingly identified with a middle-class sensibility’ focused on thrift and ‘domestic management’. (p. 33) Its subsequent role in the Great Exhibition of 1851 is interpreted by Schaffer as its high point in Victorian culture – a moment when handicrafts aligned themselves with both the materials and the methods of production usually associated with industrial manufacture and thus became an alternative expression, rather than a rejection, of mid-Victorian values. The proliferation of craft manuals during this period consolidated the status of domestic handicraft, but it was a status soon challenged, according to Schaffer, by new aesthetic ideals and shifting gender roles, resulting in its decline during the late-Victorian period and its increasing association with ‘a retrograde past’. (p. 50)

Schaffer supports this account of the triumphs and vicissitudes of domestic handicraft through her analysis in the following chapters of four Victorian novels predominantly of the mid-Victorian period: Gaskell’s *Cranford* (1851–53), Yonge’s *The Daisy Chain* (1856), Dickens’s *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65), and Oliphant’s *Phoebe Junior* (1876). Each chapter offers an innovative and persuasive analysis of the significance of handicraft in manifesting and interpreting the novels’ broader concerns but also in understanding the authors’ own perceptions of their craft as writers and of their novels as crafted objects. In her discussion of Yonge’s *The Daisy Chain*, Schaffer imaginatively explores the extension of craft ideology to colonial practice in the novel, with an emphasis on the taming and shaping of wildness into the ornamental and the civilised, while in the chapter on *Phoebe Junior*, Schaffer claims that Oliphant ‘replaces the craft paradigm with the new consumerist ethos that ushers in modernity’ (p. 146) and aligns the eponymous heroine with newly emerging aesthetic ideals that signified the demise of handicraft.

The chapters on *Cranford* and *Our Mutual Friend* focus on novels which will no doubt be more familiar to the majority of readers, and approaching them through the concept of handicraft enables Schaffer to present some original insights and arguments. Schaffer proposes that the Cranfordians’ espousing of a craft aesthetic ‘becomes a way of expressing fidelity to powerful ideologies of femininity’ (pp. 64–65) and of rejecting contemporary economic and manufacturing systems, together with the increasing fluidity of class boundaries. This chapter also elaborates on the discussion of the role of paper introduced earlier in the book with a perceptive account of the ways in which newspapers, notes and letters are central to the plot and structure of the novel. In a fascinating extension of this argument, Schaffer notes that Gaskell’s original title for the novel was *The Cranford Papers*, the idea being that each section would constitute its own ‘paper’ – a conception intended, Schaffer claims, as a response to Dickens’s *The Pickwick Papers*. Just as the Cranford women create items out of ‘small fragments’, (p. 64) so the very structure of the novel embraces the concept of the

fragment in its episodic construction and hence provides another expression of the craft paradigm.

Many of the characters in *Our Mutual Friend* are similarly salvagers of fragments and, for Schaffer, Betty Higden is the dominant practitioner whose work 'restoring, recycling, purifying, transforming' signifies for Dickens a 'humane economy'. (p. 119) However, while the Cranford women thrive through their craft aesthetic, Schaffer claims that those who operate through a similar aesthetic in the Dickens novel – Mr Venus, Jenny Wren and Betty Higden in particular – serve ultimately to demonstrate that 'craft is no way to live', (p. 142) a point brought home poignantly by the death of the increasingly marginalised and impoverished Betty. Hence while the idea of salvaging is used by Dickens 'to critique the practices of mid-Victorian capitalism', (p. 134) the demise of handicraft is already projected in the pages of this novel, nowhere better exemplified than in the denigration of paper, a key craft material, either to representations of unstable financial transactions such as bills and shares or to mere litter.

Schaffer's book thus offers much that will be of interest to both enthusiasts of Victorian cultural history and of Victorian literary studies. However, for enthusiasts of William Morris the book will, I suspect, be less satisfying for two reasons in particular: its reductive analysis of the Arts and Crafts movement, and its problematic depiction of Morris as a key representative of that movement. Throughout her book Schaffer repeatedly places the Arts and Crafts movement in antagonistic opposition to the practitioners of handicraft, an oppositional stance which she claims was deliberately assumed by proponents of the Arts and Crafts. With its salvage ethos and accommodation of factory-produced goods, Schaffer claims that domestic handicraft 'tainted the Arts and Crafts categories, mixing the taboo with the sacred', (p. 57) and contravened the Arts and Crafts emphasis on truth to materials. While there is substance in this argument, Schaffer's interpretation of Arts and Crafts practitioners as essentially misogynistic, espousing an 'antagonistic language' which 'was often constructed against a domestic female enemy', and seeking to 'redefine the home as the exclusive space of male professional activity', (p. 153) is far less convincing and appears almost wilfully to overlook the role of women in the Arts and Crafts movement.

Furthermore, William Morris is mentioned in passing on several occasions but solely as a representative of the Arts and Crafts movement, which overlooks the far more complex vision which Morris developed in regard to the role of art in society, and the integral relationship between his aesthetic and political theories. For example, in her final chapter, which provides an interesting overview of craft ideals and practices during the twenty-first century and their Victorian inheritance, Schaffer presents Morris's ideas as an exemplar of 'Arts and Crafts dogma' which would reject such humble handicraft pursuits as knitting. (p. 179) Had Schaffer read Morris's lecture 'How We Live and How We Might Live' (1884) she

would have had to revise her claims. In that lecture, Morris claims the right of every person to possess their 'share of skill of hand which is about in the world' in which he includes handicrafts as well as the fine arts, while in his lecture 'The Society of the Future' (1888) he overtly celebrates the 'elementary arts of life', which for him include 'sewing' as well as 'smithying'.

While Morris was indisputably the enemy of shoddy materials and poor quality products, he was clearly not the enemy of handicraft itself, and deserves more considered treatment by Schaffer. That said, her book is a valuable contribution to the field of nineteenth-century cultural and literary studies and, more generally, to continuing debates about the nature, role and purpose of handicraft in contemporary society.

*Phillippa Bennett*

Glen Adamson, *The Invention of Craft*, London: Bloomsbury, 2013. 256 pp., 16 colour and 70 b & w illustrations, Pbk, £16.99. ISBN 0857850660

Glen Adamson's *The Invention of Craft* is a thought-provoking and challenging book which builds on his earlier monograph *Thinking Through Craft*. Adamson wrote this book while co-curating the V. & A.'s *Postmodernism: Style and Subversion 1970–1990* exhibition, and this fact alone should make it clear that it is not a celebration of the eternal values of the handmade object. The central thesis is clearly stated in the title: what we call 'craft' is not a discrete entity but a new category which emerged in order to describe a particular kind of labour. It is important to note that this was a negative term: craft became a category for describing types of work defined against progressive labour: 'It [craft] emerged as a coherent idea, a defined terrain, only as industry's opposite number, or "other"'. (p. xiii)

*The Invention of Craft* successfully contests a series of assertions frequently deployed in the defence of traditional craft. Using the work of economic historians such as Maxine Berg, Adamson presents a revisionist account of the industrial revolution: quite a small proportion of Victorian workers worked in factories, many industrial innovations were developed by artisans in workshops, and skill levels did not decline but increased during this period. The idea that industrialisation caused the division and specialisation of labour is countered by an account of an eighteenth-century bureau, via which Adamson points out that 'speed, separation and specialization were all driving factors in craft workshops of the eighteenth century'. (p. 10) Here the production of a craft object involved many of the aspects commonly associated with the division of labour during the industrial revolution.

In a section entitled 'The Age of the Reveal', the author suggests that the 'theatricalization of knowledge ... was a quintessential nineteenth-century pleasure', and goes on to offer an explanation as to how this period 'invented' craft: 'in the nineteenth century, craft expertise was to be a public matter. No longer would it be exchanged tacitly, bit by bit behind the closed doors of a workshop, but exhaustively, in the wide open arena of the marketplace'. (p. 57) Using Michael Oakeshott's distinction, practical (i.e. craft) knowledge was positioned against 'technical' knowledge. The former was represented as secretive, mysterious and of the past, while the latter was depicted as open, democratic and progressive. Many of the famous innovators of the eighteenth century used this rhetoric extensively, including Josiah Wedgwood 'who (whether digging canals or marketing own wares) was never shy about identifying his own private advantage with that of the public'. (p. 70) The irony here was that the published technical explanations were inadequate for anyone attempting to reproduce the innovation because the practical (or 'tacit') element of the knowledge was missing. In this sense, public representation of innovation through technical knowledge just masked the continuing importance of practical knowledge. Many innovations which were actually discovered in workshops by artisans were later publically represented as the result of technical knowledge. This process amounts to the 'erasure of craft from the story of modern invention' and marks the necessity for the invention of the negative category of craft, the necessary 'other' to technical knowledge.

Adamson points out that 'craft' could often be used in an oppressive sense: once it had been defined as traditional, retrogressive and secretive, this category served as a useful way of justifying European superiority over colonial subjects: 'intuitive craft was evidence of a preliminary stage of development, a lower rung on the ladder of civilization'. (p. 93) With craft as material evidence, curators and theorists could justify a historical narrative about the relative backwardness of the native populations in India, North America and the rest of the world, and justify 'progressive' European interventions.

Each chapter examines a thematic historical subject and then applies the resulting conceptual framework to the work of recent artists. When discussing this work Adamson adopts the phrase 'postdisciplinary practice', following the idea that ever since Marcel Duchamp's 'ready-mades', artists have relied less on skills and materials and more on the invention of new artistic processes. These new practitioners 'are more likely to function as "producers", in the sense that the word is used in the film industry. They bring about the specific conditions that make the work happen'. (p. 34) Adamson discusses the role of the maker within a number of these projects, for example Paul Ferguson's work as a wood-carver for the late fashion-designer Alexander McQueen, and Ai Weiwei's famous *Sunflower Seeds* installation at Tate Modern which used over one hundred million

hand-made ceramic seeds. Such examples do not allow the author to reach any optimistic or even clear ideas about the role of making in contemporary art, but do go some way to examining its role in a variety of contemporary contexts.

Many of Adamson's arguments are convincing, or at least plausible, but the breadth of the historical narrative is somewhat stretched in his selective interpretation of Pugin, Ruskin and Morris, whom he admits he treats as 'fundamentally reactive to earlier ideas'. (p. xxii) Adamson interprets the Arts and Crafts Movement as a simple inversion of the modern idea of craft: instead of being secretive and retrogressive, craft was recast as democratic and progressive but was 'tied down by tradition, an anchor moored in the past'. (p. 210)

The treatment of these figures is not convincing, little aided by an approach informed by a psychoanalytical understanding of the word trauma: the basic idea being that craft revivalism is a contradictory response to the 'trauma' of modernity. While acknowledging that Pugin described modern experience 'in such a way that it can be critically engaged', Adamson describes him as 'escapist' and 'blind to the fictional qualities of his ideal medieval world'. (p. 189) This is naive: surely Pugin's exaggerations in *Contrasts* are rhetorical devices (both visual and linguistic) used to emphasise his point? Little attention is paid to the pragmatic side of Pugin's career: Adamson fails to mention his remarkable success at the Great Exhibition (despite using Morris's absence as evidence of escapism) and it is unfortunate that no attempt was made to examine Pugin's pragmatic negotiations with progressive manufacturers such as Herbert Minton and John Hardman.

Ruskin comes in for similar treatment, and the suggestion that in *The Stones of Venice* 'putting back the clock is exactly what Ruskin thought he was trying to do' (p. 196) will amaze those familiar with Ruskin's career: it is difficult to think of another Victorian writer so committed to engaging with the development of contemporary art. Tellingly, Adamson uses David Pye's 1970s critique of 'The Nature of Gothic', and finds it curious that Pye's chapter is 'not very well known'. (p. 194) But his admission that Pye sometimes might seem 'myopic' provides the answer: while Ruskin discusses furnishings and carvings, his broader argument ranges across the ethics of labour and the possibility of dignity and satisfaction within work, whereas Pye is pedantic by comparison – his interests are far narrower and while he might refute Ruskin quite well on specific details, he does not even begin to engage with the broader thrust of Ruskin's work.

Adamson does not discuss any of Morris's texts or objects in detail. He claims that Morris engages in the same kind of medieval escapism as Pugin, and frequently criticises him for failing to acknowledge the progressive artisanal work which took place in workshops around the country. Again, portraying Morris in this way fails to acknowledge his pragmatic engagement with contemporary political issues, and does not recognise Morris's use of the Middle Ages as a stra-

tegitic critique of contemporary labour relations: Morris is criticised as though he was just a misleading historian. The reason that Adamson's critique of the Arts and Crafts movement seems so narrow is that there is a great difference between his approach and that of figures such as Morris. Although Adamson acknowledges that we should be concerned about 'the alienation that has resulted from separation and specialization in countless workplaces', (p. 10) he is not fundamentally concerned with the ethical aspects of labour. The book is openly presented as 'akin to intellectual history', and an attempt 'to track the development of an idea over time', (p. xiv) but this does not justify a very selective critique of figures such as Ruskin and Morris who were engaged with very different issues. At stake here is whether the craft debate is about the politics of labour, or whether 'craft' should be regarded as a term within cultural criticism. Adamson is a leading proponent of the latter, but many will still find value in the former.

I have no doubt that this book will be very influential in our understanding of craft, but have some reservations about the central claims. While many of the myths which mask an informed understanding of craft history are convincingly contested, if the author's claims are correct, how can we explain why so many people were convinced of the value of craft not only during the nineteenth but also the twentieth century? If the ideas we associate with 'craft' were so retrogressive, why did they appeal so strongly to the counter culture of the 1960s? Were all the followers of a traditionalist figure such as Bernard Leach simply misguided? The scale and loyalty of those who believed (and still believe) in 'craft' as a stance against mainstream culture simply cannot be accounted for within Adamson's narrative.

Depiction of the Arts and Crafts movement as essentially reactionary and escapist is disappointing. Personally, I find this particularly misguided in the light of a recent visit to Jeremy Deller's 'English Magic' at the Venice Biennale. Deller is just the kind of 'postdisciplinary practitioner' whom Adamson endorses, but he was happy to use the figure of William Morris in a flagrantly anti-escapist manner. Deller's image of Morris flinging Roman Abramovich's yacht into the Lagoon is clearly a fantasy but no less effective for being so. 'English Magic' shows that a creative strategy which creates a collision between past and present can still be a highly effective means of gaining insight into the contemporary world.

*Jim Cheshire*

Alec Hamilton, *Charles Spooner (1862–1938) Arts and Crafts Architect*, Donington, Lincolnshire: Shaun Tyas, 2012, xiv + 306 pp., approx. 100 illustrations, mostly in colour, £45. ISBN 9781907730214.

Charles Spooner was a disciple of Ruskin and Pugin, and greatly influenced by William Morris. He lived nearby in Chiswick Mall, and was elected to the Hammersmith Socialist Society in 1891; he joined the SPAB in 1907, and served on the committee from 1914 to 1938. He adapted 1 Ravenscourt Park as a workshop during his brief engagement in business with the firm of Elmdon & Co. In 1914 he helped organise workshops for Belgian refugees at Hampshire House in Hog Lane, behind Upper Mall. He was greatly concerned for Belgium, and designed prefabricated wooden churches to be erected there, though it is not clear how many were actually built. Although Hamilton suggests that his designs were hardly outstanding and might not be described as Arts and Crafts today, his credentials were confirmed when he was elected to the Arts Workers Guild in 1887, and in 1890 to the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society.

A considerable amount of space in this book is devoted to Spooner's churches. He was not only related to the famous Warden of New College, but also to several bishops, and this, together with his High Anglican beliefs, might seem a recipe for success as a church architect. In fact, his commissions were relatively few. He built six churches and contributed to others. The churches were mainly Anglican. I have listed these for the convenience of those who might like to visit them.

The medieval church of St Peter and St Paul, Exton, Hampshire had been rebuilt in 1847, and Spooner was commissioned to furnish and redecorate the interior in 1891. Hamilton is unable to define the exact style here, calling it Art Nouveau, but the cheerful stencilling of the walls, now restored after white-washing, as Peter Cormack pointed out to the author, 'reflects the totally English fabric patterns of William Morris'. The Row Chapel, Hadleigh, Suffolk (1891–2) is 'a timber-framed 15C chapel (rebuilt)'. This is Pevsner's description and he does not credit any of the work to Spooner who transformed it into a 'roadside mass chapel'. Much of Spooner's work has disappeared, and Hamilton has photographed what remains.

St Bartholomew, Ipswich (1894–1909) was funded by Spooner's aunt, who was very High Church. The first designs seem to show a noble building with a tower, rising above an area of the town known as 'California'. The inhabitants already possessed a Methodist Chapel, and did not welcome Mass and confessions from Fr Cobbold, who wore 'on his head the continental biretta'. Hamilton describes the church as 'large, high, spacious and full of light'. It lay unfinished for many years, and was finally completed by Munro Cautley in 1926, though there is no tower. It looks like a huge red-brick barn.

St Michael and All Angels, Little Ilford (1896–1906) was a large church for an

area where the population had considerably increased. It was demolished in 1990, and replaced by the Froud Centre i.e. a community centre. A section is set aside for worship, and a few remnants of Spooner's work are kept there. St Anselm, Hatch End, Pinner (1901–2) was built by F.E. Jones in 1894–5 and contains various examples of Arts and Crafts work. The West window is by Selwyn Image. Spooner designed the huge rood screen, which was regarded as provocative; rood screens were reintroduced into English churches only during the 1880s. According to Peter Cormack 'it is the largest piece of figural carving in the Arts and Crafts that we know of'.

St Christopher, Haslemere, Surrey (1902–3) was built for a rather special community; for example there was the Haslemere Peasant Arts Society, founded to ensure 'the revival of a true country life where handicrafts and the arts of husbandry shall exercise body and mind'. A second church was needed, and Spooner encountered no opposition to his simple 'medieval' building; it seats only two hundred and thirty people. Hamilton calls it 'cosy' and 'rather magical'. A number of craftsmanlike features were introduced. For example, small stones are placed in the mortar like the heads of nails. This is called 'galleting', and was traditional in the area. One thinks of Lutyens and the Surrey style. Spooner closely supervised every piece of furniture. The amazing reredos was painted by his wife Dinah.

His Roman Catholic Church, St Hugh of Lincoln, Letchworth, (1907–8), was considered by its priest to be 'the only church worth looking at west of Constantinople'. It has now been transformed into the church hall. In the case of Holy Spirit, Rye Harbour, Sussex (1912–13), Spooner was called in to enlarge a church by Teulon. This gave him a chance to produce a ceiling like an upturned boat, and to provide new choir-stalls.

St Gabriel, Aldersbrook, Wanstead (1912–14) is a brick church, somewhat smaller than the one at Ipswich, but this time Spooner was able to crenellate. Like Little Ilford, this was another area of London's expansion where the population had hitherto been served by a 'tin tabernacle'. They were poor and there was not much money available. The colours Spooner had envisaged for the interior seem to have disappeared. Pevsner was not impressed by this church, but the revised *Buildings of England: London 5* seems much more generous.

St Paul, East Ham (1932–3) was Spooner's last complete church. Hamilton describes its style as stripped-down Romanesque, but Spooner said: 'The design does not attempt to reproduce any so-called style of architecture, but rather to suit the brick of which the church is built'. I think Pugin might have approved this statement, but it also shows the point during the 1930s at which Gothic Revival architecture crosses over into Modernism.

In his day Spooner was better known for his carved wooden chairs and lecterns; in 1912 he produced electrical fittings. As a member of the Art Workers Guild,

Spooner specialised in Church Furniture. Among the churches to which he supplied such furnishing, besides those already mentioned, was Holy Innocents, Paddenwick Road, Hammersmith; there he installed a 'medieval' rood screen (*ca* 1901). This has been moved to the west end since 1989. There is an unusual lectern at Holy Trinity, Halstead, (1903) which is mentioned by Pevsner; the reading desk is supported by four wooden shafts and two iron candle holders project at either side. Hamilton calls this 'eccentric'; I feel that something as original as this really shows an Arts and Crafts designer experimenting in the direction of the Modern. Spooner's work in this field caught the attention of W.R. Lethaby, who appointed him to a teaching post at the Central School of Arts and Crafts in 1899. For thirty years he taught furniture design in wood and metalwork, and he seems to have been happy to do this. Among his colleagues was May Morris.

I suppose Charles Spooner, in the end, was not a great success as an architect, and he is little known today. I think he became discouraged and stopped working at projects he could have finished; but he really could not cope with the new requirements and cost-counting which changed his well-laid plans. And now, as Hamilton explains, some of his churches have been destroyed and some of his adaptations to churches, following his High Anglican beliefs, have been taken out. But this book seems to me to play down the whole context of his career. Unlike the situation during the nineteenth century there was no great will or indeed funding to see new churches built. Yet something had to be done as the built-up area of London and other cities increased. Those growing up in East London or similar districts newly built between 1890 and 1939 will remember those unlovable redbrick church buildings where we went to meetings of Scouts or Guides. The churches were both new and yet out-of-date compared to what was being built in Europe. Spooner in his own way took up the challenge, and Alec Hamilton has carefully documented what remains of his work.

*John Purkis*

Clive Aslet, *The Arts and Crafts Country House: from the archives of Country Life*, London: Aurum Press Limited, 2011, 192 pp., 150 black-and-white and colour photographs, Hbk, £40. ISBN 9781845136802.

Clive Aslet, a former editor of *Country Life*, has been able to use the photographic archive held by the magazine to compile a survey of Arts and Crafts country houses. It is a splendid visual treat and Morrisians will be pleased to see places we have often visited, such as Webb's Standen or Barnsley's 'Cotswold Idyll' of Rodmarton Manor and Sapperton Cottages. The houses are displayed

in chronological order, yet I must admit to being unable to match the title to the earliest houses shown in the book. Are Brantwood and Red House so to be described? Did Ruskin and Morris say to their architects ‘Design me an Arts and Crafts House’? In fact Aslet says that Brantwood was not really built to exemplify Ruskin’s ideals. He calls Red House ‘a Gothic Revival parsonage house’, and adds the charming detail that it ‘was – and is – penetratingly cold in winter, and roasting in summer’.

Surely the description ‘Arts and Crafts’ best fits houses fashionable and contemporaneous with the magazine itself, which was founded in 1897. Even though Morris had just died, his ideas lived on, and are everywhere displayed in the new buildings by architects such as Lutyens. Many of the gardens were designed by Gertrude Jekyll, who was the gardening editor of the new magazine. Morris’s vision of the medieval hall meant that the centre of the house was often open plan or an atrium. The feelings generated by these houses also owe something to descriptions in *News from Nowhere*. Remember that Morris said that Kelmscott Manor seemed to ‘grow out of the soil’. Therefore new houses had to appear to be not just old, but very old indeed. There were limitations to the taste exemplified by *Country Life*, as the rest of the world began to move on. There were no references to Charles Rennie Mackintosh, and, as Aslet says ‘the magazine did not do Art Nouveau’.

The essential principles of the Arts and Crafts country house may be said to derive from the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and some of the architects discussed in this book sat on the SPAB committee. If, as architect, you find that there is an original house on the site you are building on, it should be retained and incorporated into the new work. It does not matter that there are wide variations of style. No, it is a glory, even if the final house looks like a succession of higgledy-piggledy bits added on down the centuries. For a new build, the less like its own time the house looks the better, and one should use ancient methods of craftsmanship. But all this leads in practice to various kinds of creative deception, as is already to be seen at Standen – a house which looks like a medley but which was all built at the same time (1891–4). Another example: one is easily deceived by Lutyens’s treatment of Nathaniel Lloyd’s house at Great Dixter, in which a fifteenth-century building was given modern additions according to these principles, but then you must remember that its medieval hall was moved there from another site; yet against that, the hall would otherwise have been destroyed. And so people came to believe, well, kid themselves, that the houses really could be old; as Robert Lorimer said about Munstead Wood (built by Lutyens in 1896), ‘It looks so reasonable, so kindly, so perfectly beautiful, that you feel that people might have been making love and living and dying there, and dear little children running about – I was going to say 1,000 years – anyway 600’.

Health was a prime concern; the houses were often sited in open heathland

or woodland, as in Surrey. The gardens were to be integrated with the house. Aslet supports all these points with reference to Morris: 'a theme of *News from Nowhere* is the vitality of a population which spends a proportion of its time in the open air. Morris praises the sun-browned skin of the women'. Second, the utilities and services of the house should appear to be medieval; 'they were likely to be equipped with big fireplaces, with firedogs to support roaring logs, perhaps with an inglenook to take maximum benefit'. Then, as electricity became widely available, the oddest-looking 'medieval' light fittings were concealed about the rooms. Aslet has an eye for such Arts and Craft details and yet inserts the odd and unexpected witty remark about the aims and personalities of the architects. Standen is carefully described, but says Aslet, 'Webb strenuously avoids being picturesque'. Detmar Blow was discovered sketching in Abbeville Cathedral by Ruskin. 'On learning that Blow wanted to become an architect, Ruskin expressed his view of the profession. It was to be avoided'.

One of the most interesting sections of the book shows how all this led to 'New Ways of Living'. Here Aslet has room for Le Bois de Moutiers, a Lutyens house near Dieppe, which we visited on one of the Society's tours of France. Blackwell in Cumbria was built by Baillie Scott, a man of cosmopolitan tastes, who was interested in the future, not the past. He was a disciple of *The Studio*, a rival magazine, so that this house was not described in *Country Life* until 1986. Madresfield, an older house, had its extraordinary chapel completely transformed by an Arts and Crafts team from Birmingham. This became a model for a similar chapel in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*.

At the end of the book, having been given to understand that this tradition of building came to an end during the 1930s, we are given examples of later enthusiasm for the Arts and Crafts down to the present day. Some of the champions of the post-war period were associated with the William Morris Society. Examples are John Brandon-Jones, who 'stamped the values of the Arts and Crafts onto several civic buildings, including the Hampshire County Council Offices at Winchester', and Roderick Gradidge, author of *The Surrey Style*, whose legacy to the Art Workers' Guild put new life into that institution. And in our own times Aslet singles out for praise the architect Charles Morris, who designed the Orchard Room at Highgrove, where Prince Charles holds conferences. Aslet's caption to the accompanying photograph states that the extra-ordinary 'dumpy columns were inspired by the market house at nearby Tetbury' and that inside more 'companionable columns are intended to help shy guests overcome feelings of social intimidation'. Charles Morris has started a company called The English House, where you can buy examples of his Arts and Crafts fittings, including the Rodmarton Single Arm Round Base Wall Light. Think of the possibilities for the British economy that this enterprise will lead to.

*John Purkis*

Amy Woodhouse-Boulton, *Transformative Beauty. Art Museums in Industrial Britain*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012, 270 pp., 16 b & w illustrations, Hbk, £50.50. ISBN 9780804778046.

Katherine Haskins, *The Art Journal and Fine Art Publishing in Victorian England, 1850–1880*, Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012, 213 pp., 52 b & w illustrations, £65. ISBN 8781409418108.

*Transformative Beauty* is to be welcomed as a lucid and well documented account of the establishment of Art Galleries in the three major English cities of Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester during the later part of the Victorian period, with some attention to subsequent developments. Woodhouse-Boulton opens her Introduction with Whistler's 1885 *Ten O'Clock Lecture*, with its witty attack on the way people were being invited to look 'not *at* a picture, but *through* it', (quoted p.1) a challenging critique of the movement the book discusses. She shows the pervasive influence of Ruskin in this area – as in others – and argues that the two central assumptions of the movement to establish local museums were that art could offer a kind of domestic space to humanise the industrial scene, and that it could draw attention to Nature and higher values than those of the cities in which they were established. But these explicit aims, she suggests, were always likely to be modified by the inherent complexity of works of art.

The first chapter, 'Ruskin, Ruskinians and City Art Galleries', shows in detail how inspiring Ruskin was for the proponents of museums in all three cities that the book concerns. In Birmingham, with its powerful Liberal party, Nonconformist preachers of a 'civic gospel' were influential and successful. It was here that Morris delivered lectures in 1879 and 1880 (quoted in the text), and the collection contained artifacts intended to encourage workers towards better principles of design. This practical element was less prominent in Liverpool – a great port rather than a manufacturing city, where the Walker Art Gallery was the gift of a wealthy Tory brewer – and in Manchester, where it is suggested that civic pride played as large a part as the desire for social reform; it was in Manchester that the first Ruskin Society was founded as 'The Society of the Rose' in 1879. Since we tend to assume that Morris always found it necessary to go well beyond Ruskin in his politics, it is striking to be told that in all three cases Ruskin criticised the founders of the museums for not going far enough to effect radical changes in the relations between the classes; for instance, he told the Liberal councillor, James Picton, who had sent him a book about Liverpool, that he would much rather have one about Carnarvon or Conway or Flint, and that he considered Liverpool as 'the cause of the destruction of Flint, and of most of Lancashire!' (p. 37)

The second chapter deals with the debate over Sunday opening, opposed dur-

ing the mid-century by religious groups, but achieved in Liberal Birmingham in 1872, in Liverpool in 1891, and in Manchester restrictedly in 1879 and more fully in 1895; this is a cause we know Morris supported. The cities would offer the gallery as an alternative to the pub, as a quasi-domestic space for civilised behaviour. The third chapter considers the works of art bought or borrowed by the galleries, arguing that these were intended to be read by visitors as valuable experiences through the subjects represented in them. Thus most of the paintings were examples of contemporary British art, with the Pre-Raphaelites and their followers to the fore. These were the pictures also being bought by the new middle-class for their private collections. In this context, we can understand why in 1892 Manchester bought Millais' *Autumn Leaves* rather than a Rembrandt. The subject-matter of paintings had to be in some way inspiring.

Chapter 4 deals with the ways in which the museums presented their collections to the public through publications and lectures: 'narrative and literary sentiment' were emphasised rather than 'form and colour', a preference attributed to English taste by W.B. Richmond in 1898. Woodhouse-Boulton argues that the materials issued by the museums seldom showed awareness of the most recent developments in art criticism at the time – though it is surprising that she makes no reference at all to Walter Pater, who had published *The Renaissance*, with its proto-aestheticist attitude as early as 1873. The question of changing attitudes is conveyed through the accounts given at different times of three paintings from each collection: Alfred East's *Hayle, from Lelant* and Burne-Jones's *Star of Bethlehem* in Birmingham; Albert Moore's *A Summer Night* and Holman Hunt's *Triumph of the Innocents* in Liverpool; and J.C. Hook's *Under the Sea* and Millais' *Autumn Leaves* in Manchester. Woodhouse-Boulton argues that the accounts of these paintings show there were 'tensions' within Victorian attitudes to art, which is not as surprising as she seems to imply. The chapter ends with a quotation from an article about museum collections by a modern critic, Giles Waterfield, in 1995, finding that the early catalogues were a 'depressing reflection on the state of art museums and art historical knowledge in nineteenth century Britain'. (p. 145) Attractively, Woodhouse-Boulton takes a less judgmental approach, arguing that the Victorian supporters of art museums were pursuing a conscious policy which encouraged viewers to see art as 'an essential antidote to the moral and physical ugliness of nineteenth-century industrial society'. (p.146)

The final chapter deals with developments during the twentieth century, shifting the emphasis 'From Experience to Appreciation', as the chapter's subtitle puts it. This change took place in the broader context of developments in Europe and the USA, placing more stress on the innate qualities of works of art, and less on subject matter. Woodhouse-Boulton refers to the Post-Impressionist Exhibitions in London in 1910 and 1912 as beginning the process of establishing

a new artistic canon with a strong bias towards French art. Museum directors during the 1920s possessed explicitly educational aims, with a stronger sense of art history. Buildings were expanded, and social facilities such as shops and restaurants developed; experience showed, not surprisingly, that free exhibitions drew the largest crowds. As the curatorial profession expanded, local control was diminished, though differences between the three galleries remained, with Birmingham continuing to place more emphasis on craft and locality. The account given here repeats some of the earlier material, but argues convincingly that the decline of attention to the usefulness of the collections to their communities did not affect their popularity as the twentieth century moved on.

In a brief Epilogue, Woodhouse-Boulton neatly contrasts the celebration of British art in the first catalogue of the Tate Gallery in 1899, with the official guide published in 1934 declaring the French Impressionists as the painters most worthy of attention. What we now see as the anti-Victorianism of Bloomsbury is effectively represented by an essay on 'Victorian Taste' by Clive Bell in R.S. Lambert's *Art in England* in 1938, in which he castigates the Victorian tendency, shown by such figures as Ruskin and Prince Albert, to see art as occupying an indeterminate place 'somewhere between religion and hygiene'. (p. 176) She also notes that in the book admiring attention is drawn to the design of such products as aeroplanes and cars, and to patronage by companies such as Shell-Mex and B.P. (We are likely to think of Frank Pick and the London Underground in this context). The complexity of cultural history is suggested by the revival of interest in Victorian art, and particularly the Pre-Raphaelites, in recent years. The book's conclusion combines retrospect with hope: 'Although they never lived up to the hopes of their more idealistic founders, art museums always hold that potential, as art itself does, to change the way we see the world, and perhaps – as some of those Victorian reformers hoped – to thus galvanize us to change it'. This reviewer was inclined to applaud here, and to note with pleasure that the author had succeeded in handling these issues without once resorting to the phrase 'cultural industries'.

Katherine Haskins book on *The Art Journal* is in some ways a complementary work. It offers a well-researched account of the magazine which ran from 1839 to 1912, and most influentially from 1850 to 1880, during which period it published no fewer than eight hundred commercial fine-art prints, and so exercised a remarkable and little-studied influence on Victorian middle-class taste. Haskins argues that its assertive and long-serving editor, Samuel Carter Hall, spotted a gap in publishing for an expanding middle class which wanted advice on taste, which he was very happy to provide. In an article on 'The Progress of British Art' in 1848 Hall gave a clear account of the mission of the magazine; its aim was to encourage interest in:

High Art, for National purposes – as a means of Education, as the annalist of our History, as the inculcator of Moral Truths, as the promoter of Commerce; the agent towards Social Refinement – this only is worth promoting, worth struggling to promote. (p. 67)

This book is an account of Hall's success. It shows that he attracted a good deal of criticism from various quarters, but succeeded in his aim, partly through the textual material, but mainly through the numerous prints, both in the magazine and as separate products for display in the home. The textual material was mostly supplied by Hall, his wife Anna, and the assistant editor James Dafforne, supported by the critic Anna Jameson. Haskins suggests that the three-column small-type presentation (illustrated on pp. 85 and 86) helped to give authority, though it looks uncomfortably cramped to a modern reader. Attention is rightly drawn to Ruskin's important but little known ten-part article on engraving, published during 1865 and 1866 as 'Cestus of Aglaia' or 'The Girdle of the Graces'. But Ruskin was at other times critical of what he saw as the lack of idealism in *The Art Journal*, particularly in relation to religious art. The *Journal* favoured a traditional kind of Raphaelesque art, which Ruskin denounced as weakly secular and sentimental when compared to the medieval Italian painters or the modern Pre-Raphaelites.

It is of course the prints which have provided the main material for Haskins' book. These were mostly what are known as steel engravings, though Haskins illuminatingly tells us that the plates were not composed of steel, a difficult metal to work, but prepared on copper plates and faced with a thin sheet of iron in the process known as electroplating; this was a very durable medium, so that prints could be published in large numbers. (p. 49) Painters whose work we are shown include Charles Lesley, Augustus Callcott, William Collins, Marcus Stone, Thomas Webster, H. W. Pickersgill, David Wilkie, Clarkson Stanfield, Henrietta Browne, Frederick Leighton, Jean Millet, J. M. W. Turner, W. C. T. Dobson, William Dyce and, a particular favourite – Edwin Landseer, seven of whose works are shown. Landseer was perhaps the *Journal's* favourite artist, and it helped to ensure that by the end of the century Landseer prints were proudly on show in innumerable middle-class homes. In the religious category, there are prints of Old Master paintings by Domenichino, Annibale Carracci and Raphael. And Turner – seven of whose paintings are illustrated – is an unexpected presence here. *The Art Journal* supported his cause as part of its campaign on behalf of British artists, despite the severe criticism often given at the time to his innovative later works, and what seems to the modern viewer their painterly unsuitability for engraving. We are shown *The Fighting Téméraire*, *Hurrah for the Whaler*, *Erebus!*, *Rain, Steam and Speed*, and *The Snowstorm*, in engraving in which the craftsmen show enormous skill, though it is hard now to share Hall's view that in this

form the paintings are more attractive, because more comprehensible, than the originals. What would Turner have made of these prints, taken from the Turner Collection after the artist's death?

The heroes of the book are the highly skilful engravers, whose names appear in this book with the prints: R. Staines, W. Miller, G. Finden, W. Ridgway, H. Bourne, J.D. Cooper, A.T. Willmore, L. Stocks, H.S. Beckwith, W. Taylor, R. Cousen, P. Lightfoot, R. Wallis, T.A. Prior, C.W. Sharpe, L. Stocks, A. Masson, E. Goodall, J.C. Armytage, J. Cousen, R. Brandard, F. Joubert, S.S. Smith, H. Knolle, G. Levy, T. Vernon, W. Holl, P. Lightfoot, C.G. Lewis, C. Mottram, T. Landseer and C. Cousen. Many of these names are omitted – like those of many of the artists – from the shamefully inadequate index, which contrasts strikingly with the very full Bibliography. Although these men, of whom we are told there were some one hundred and sixty, (p.40) are held up for collective admiration, we learn disappointingly little of them as individuals; this is also true of most of the minor painters shown. It would have been interesting, for example, to learn more about W.C.T. Dobson, praised in the *Journal* in 1860 as offering the kind of sacred art in which the British school was deficient. Readers were told, *pace* Ruskin, that the 'PreRaphaelites of the day are not the men for such work; the mind of Dobson and his style of painting are adapted to the requirements of the time'. It is a pity that the grounds for this judgment are not spelled out. Dobson's 1853 painting *The Almsdeeds of Dorcas* from the Royal Collection was praised for its *Raffaelesque* qualities; Dobson, we are told, does not look back further than to 'him of Urbino', and 'in doing this he acts wisely and well'. (p. 159)

By around 1880 technological changes meant that the role of the craftsman in printing processes had declined; it was never to be recovered, as photographic processes took over. Hall ended his association with the *Journal* in 1880, although it survived until 1912. The skill of the reproductive engravers was no longer needed. Haskins has written their elegy, which lends a more emotional tone to her Conclusion, and in particular its section on 'The Tyranny of Rule'. This phrase is taken from William Ivens' 1969 book *Prints and Visual Communication* in which Ivens, the curator of prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, deplored the effects, on critical taste in art, from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, of a dependence on mass-produced reproductions in the form of prints. Ivens took the modernist position, praising what he saw as the superiority and authenticity of prints created by artists for themselves without the intervention of 'the engravers' shops'. (p.192) Haskins believes that this stress on the artist's autonomy is unfair to 'the unique connective qualities of fine art publishing' which have been neglected in recent criticism. She advocates a more inclusive idea of Victorian visual practice, and argues that we should not be discouraged from this undertaking by the realisation that what will be revealed is 'a *bourgeois* history'. (p.193)

My own position is closer to that of Ivens. While no aspect of history should be

ignored, and that of the master print-makers and their public is of considerable interest as a part of the history of taste, it is surely more rewarding aesthetically and critically to devote our attention to the most vital arts of their times, which the *Art Journal*'s practice did little to illuminate for our retrospective eyes. In this sense, Haskins is involved in a more limited scholarly arena than Woodhouse-Boulton, since the scope of and public for our museums remain of undeniable importance. But in relation to a significant contemporary issue, I was impressed by Haskins' reflections on her experience in researching *The Art Journal* in our age of digitisation and the internet. Modern media made the research immensely more practicable, but she does not regret the time she had spent earlier with 'the actual volumes'. This had enabled her to develop a sense of what the physical presence of the magazine might have felt like in a Victorian home. The conclusion she draws from this for researchers today and in the future is well balanced and challenging:

I make this point because I am both excited about the future of research aided by electronic resources and concerned that the digital transformation of our information spaces does not diminish our ability to comprehend, in all dimensions, the history we work to recover. (p.15)

*Peter Faulkner*

Jonathan Meades, *Museum without walls*, London: Unbound 2012, 446 pp., Hbk. £18.99. ISBN 9781908717184.

Jonathan Meades is an architectural writer and television programme-maker. *Museum without walls* is a compilation of fifty-four articles and six television scripts written over a couple of decades and loosely organised around themes including place, memory, blandness, 'edgelands' and urban regeneration. He is an architectural writer who hates architects – the feeling is heartily reciprocated – and who is really more interested in places, 'the greatest of free shows' as he calls them, than architecture as such. Meades's greatest strength as a writer is his strong opinions, quirkily expressed, what he calls 'heavy entertainment'. Take architects: 'If we want to understand the physical environment we should not ask architects about it. After all if we want to understand charcuterie we don't seek the opinion of pigs'. (p.13)

Meades can certainly be 'on point' as the Americans say, and his debunking of some of the absurdities of the regeneration and architectural industries can be hilarious, even breathtaking. This is informed by a lot of hate though, and

hate can only go so far. Reflecting the range of things he has written about – the regeneration ‘gravy train’, Letchworth’s dreary legacy, the futile vanity of ‘land-mark’ buildings, Birmingham’s beauty, why buildings are best left unfinished, shopping malls, Pevsner, Nairn and Sterling – he admits to a gamut of seldom-submerged antipathies. ‘Beaverbrook observed that his father taught him to hate, to hate. I enjoyed no such tuition. I’ve had to teach myself. It comes easily enough when you are presented with such objects as good taste, Georgian timidity and the nasty bland synthetic-modern legacy of New Labour, made in the image of the grinning Tartuffish war criminal himself – but the happy Christmas Day will come when our Christian bomber and his gurning hag magically mutate into the Ceaucescus of Connaught Square. (The house has a basement)’. (p. xv)

In a way, his writing style is the real purpose of the book, not the ideas he is trying to convey. But, for much of the time, it does not work. There is a great piece on the lower Lea Valley in East London before its sterilisation by the ‘entirely despicable, entirely pointless’ 2012 Olympics, ‘... a festival of energy-squandering, architectural bling worthy of a vain third world dictatorship’. He takes time to describe the most extensive *terrain vague* of any European capital city in ways with which connoisseurs of ‘edgelands’ writing will be familiar, ‘... greasy carpet tiles, collapsing nissen huts, pitta bread with green mould, rotting foxes, caravans and washing lines, an oasis of scrupulously tended allotments ... you get the picture’. But instead of painting it, Meades beats the reader around the head with a single sentence running to a full page, with over forty examples.

This is an example too of Meades’s obsession with lists. He begins with insight and ends up tedious. The swagger and pose in his prose is endearing because so much written in the regeneration and architectural press can be little more than uncritical boosterism of what Meades calls ‘nursery colours’, ‘toytown rustication’, and ‘a children’s entertainer’s garrulous importunacy’, the kind of thing Owen Hatherley in *A guide to the new ruins of Great Britain* so winningly sends up. But Hatherley has the measure of Meades the contrarian, or as he calls him, ‘the magic mushroom guzzling rationalist’. Self-indulgence hardly does justice to Meades’s style. Any self-respecting editor would have taken a hatchet to a lot of this prose. Novelists are frequently entreated to ‘kill their babies’ in order to make sure their work is readable. I can assure you that no babies were killed during the making of this book.

Meades likes to venture into the politics of architecture. He can be amusing and pointed. At its best, his prose is peppered with *bon mots*. Stalinist architecture is low-brow, Nazi architecture middle-brow. There is a section on architects, some of whom he likes, others whom he loathes. In discussing (and in discussion with) Zaha Hadid, he makes a number of good points about sexism in architecture, especially in the UK (much less the case in France and Switzerland apparently),

and takes an amusing sideswipe at the American (now rather old) New Urbanists, 'begetters of crass kitschy retro-developments such as Seaside, Florida', (p. 363) and their British standard-bearer Leon Krier. Krier went on from teaching Hadid at the Architectural Association to becoming the Prince of Wales's architectural advisor, and 'then the brain (if that's the word) behind such *volksisch* excrescences of the New Urbanism as Poundbury, the cottagey slum of the future disgracefully dumped on a greenfield site on the edge of Dorchester'. (p. 367)

Meades does not like 'that kind of thing' at all, so the Arts and Crafts Movement, and Garden Cities, are fair game. Letchworth is pretty much dismissed because 'the future mass-murderer Lenin went to inspect it', (p. 103) though its real failings seem to have been that it exemplified 'a generation of architects whose flock-like impetus was folksy, rustic, merry Englishish', (p.76) but his airy dismissals have a point. Nineteenth century suburbia was architecturally centripetal. It sought to join itself to the city. It used urban styles and urban planning. It acknowledged its link to the core of the city. Whether it was grand, like Bayswater, or humble, like Bow, it looked inwards. Bourneville, Port Sunlight, Letchworth did not.

Predictably, Meades cuts a swathe through the Arts and Crafts Movement. 'Never was Never Never Land more persuasively realised than by the rurally fixated, childlike luddite of the Arts and Crafts. Never was twee, cutesy, unthinking saccharine, smiley, eager-to-please, easy-on-the-eye winsomeness, carried off by a greater genius than the young Lutyens'. (p.103) Not surprisingly, Morris comes in for the full treatment, and is dismissed, along with Ruskin, Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, H.G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw, and that 'well-intentioned old fool Ebenezer Howard', as part of the 'officer-class gullible', and as someone 'who thought expensive wallpaper was going to change the world'. (p. 102) Meades likes to have a go at Morris. Interspersed among the articles and polemics are some film and television scripts. One, *Victoria died in 1901 and is still alive today*, is a glorious confection of stereotype and prejudice mixed in with insight and humour. This is Morris; 'You know the type. He was a cerebral Conran who propagated the art of living in the Middle Ages rather than the art of living in France [Meades lives in France]. He was the River Cafe with a beard', and 'Morris was forever trying to recreate his childhood which had been a prelapsarian commune with nature, baking hedgehogs in clay and riding a pony dressed in a suit of armour (*sic*) – as one does. We all had a childhood. What is peculiar about Morris was his desire to inflict his childhood on a nation. What was even more peculiar is that he succeeded'. (p. 202)

It is probably fair to say that political analysis is not one of Meades's strong points. A debate between him and, say, Jeremy Deller, on Morris's relevance in the twentieth century, would be instructive, if a bit one-sided. In the end, *Museum*

*without walls* is both an amusing and an irritating romp through some of the key issues facing architects, planners, regeneration types and anyone interested in 'place' or the built environment. But it shows its origins. What would be a hilarious article in the *Sunday Telegraph Magazine*, or a thought-provoking if wacky programme on modern architecture on More 4, when brought together at great length, really does not translate into a successful book. At half the length it might have worked, but his editors did not kill those babies.

*Martin Stott*