

Reviews

Edited by Peter Faulkner

Alex Jones, *Morris in Iceland*, Glebe, NSW 2057: Puncher & Wattman, 2008, 238 pp., Pbk, US \$27.95. ISBN 9781921450020.

I have an abiding interest in William Morris's various connections to Iceland, so I began this novel with real anticipation, hoping to find something fresh on a topic I know fairly well. What I found was not only fresh, but often misleading and ultimately disappointing.

Jones presents two narratives; the first set in England and Iceland in 1871, the second in modern-day Sydney. Morris, both the real one – as he appears in the journal he kept from 6 July to 7 September 1871, on his first trek to Iceland – and hereafter the false one Jones creates (hereafter the 'false WM'). The dual Morris narrates the first of these; a verbose and ageing Australian academic is responsible for the second. The two narratives are divided into segments – thirty for Morris, forty-five for the Aussie – scattered across ten chapters. Introducing the segments, or salted within them, are ninety three quotations, often used in conventional ways, in order to support or illustrate a point, or to cast an ironic shadow, but sometimes dropped in for no apparent reason, perhaps playfully, or to test the patience of reviewers. Many of the quotations are from Morris's prose romances and from *News from Nowhere*, and also from other nineteenth century British writers; there are several from Tennyson. There are also lines from Chaucer, Dante, Malory, Shakespeare, Goethe, Milton, Longfellow, from a few moderns such as Eliot and Nabokov, as well as lyrics from Björk, the contemporary Icelandic singer-songwriter.

The seventy five narrative segments and ninety three quotations – something new (and transitions are rare) turning up every few pages – create confusion, particularly in the Sydney sections, which deal with events during a week or so one recent summer, and with the obligations of the busy academic to his students, his wife, his daughter, his grandson; obligations which jar against one another, often in ways which the academic finds amusing. He is advising several students working on an opera, or masque, or whatever, called *Morris in Iceland*. We wit-

ness rehearsals and discussions of this work in several of the Sydney segments, and the entire performance during the novel's final chapter. Before considering those rehearsals and that performance, I shall comment on the first two Morris segments, for 6 and 14 July 1871.

Those from later in the journey, when the party was out on Snaefelsnes and heading east toward Thingvellir, and then finally back in Reykjavik, often include long passages lifted directly from the *Icelandic Journal*, and are thus in Morris's own voice. The false WM is still there, with his memories and worries, only more briefly. Such is definitely not the case in the first two segments, based on the train journey from London to Scotland (6 July), and on the party in Reykjavik gearing up for the trek (14 July). Here only a few details are from the *Icelandic Journal*. All the rest, several pages in each instance, are from the false WM.

The 6 July segment opens with an apt quotation from Ruskin, on the miseries of railway travel, and then we read three pages of the maundering recollections and observations of the false WM, who follows the Ruskin paragraph with general observations on the pleasures of travel by stage-coach, behind 'hard-breathing horses'. And then this: 'One journey [by horse] is like life, it seems to me, and one is like death [by train], and a third-class railway journey in the middle of the night (for we started at 9:15 p.m.) is more like death than most'. (p. 7) The connection to death is murky, but it allows the false WM to recall his father's death and the horse-drawn carriages at his funeral, and then he remembers another stagecoach journey, this time to school at Marlborough, when he was a teenager. He tells us what he saw at an Inn where they had 'stopped to bait the horses', namely a 'labouring man' happy in his useful work, repairing a cabinet with scrap timber. He contrasts that man with a modern assembly line worker, a wage slave engaged in mere toil. And at the same Inn, he saw 'a maid not much older than myself leaning backwards and kissing hungrily at a young fellow in a reaper's smock, holding his head between both her hands the while. I had not known a young maid would do that'. (p. 8) This striking recollection, his new realisation of what young maids might do, is linked to the Angelica theme, and I shall return to it soon. But now back to the false WM and his handling of the train journey north.

'It is barely dawn as I am putting these thoughts together ... We are stopped, by a signal I suppose, somewhere short of York; Faulkner and Magnusson – lucky fellows – are snoring, almost as if trying to keep up the rhythm that the train has let drop; ... I, meanwhile, stare into the ceiling as if to find written there something I might transcribe into this new journal-book that Jenny – dear child – pressed on me as we left. I daresay 'twas D.G.R. took her to choose it, holding the child's hand in the stationer's, and pointing out what she must have in that way of his that takes no denial. She is certainly too young and too good to lose a father so; too young certainly to read a journal such as I would write in the mood that is on me: *Memoirs of a Milksop*'. (p. 9)

Morris never – the idea is laughable – had to look ‘into the ceiling’ for *Icelandic Journal* material. He looked out the window of the train, and his descriptions of hillside and shoreline, here as the train moves through northern England and into Scotland, are sharply discerning and memorable – harbingers of descriptions to come of the Faroes, and of Iceland’s glaciers, mountains, and lava-fields, descriptions unique in the large corpus of Icelandic travel books.

We note here an aggressive attitude to Rossetti, there at Kelmescott with his daughters and his wife, while he exits the scene, indeed the country, to let them decide their future – and his. Readers of the *Icelandic Journal*, and of the letters which survive from this time, know how ‘fdgity’ Morris was as the journey to Iceland began, and that he then, and at a few other times in Iceland, when he was writing or receiving letters from home, fell into a ‘mood’ when he thought of his wife and children, when he had doubts about his manhood, and the like, but he never put such thoughts into the *Journal*. And of course he never thought of Jenny as one of its readers; its intended and quite limited audience was Georgiana Burne-Jones. The image here of that ‘dear child’, and the suggestion of Rossetti’s cold control over her is, however, evocative and effective. Rossetti is never mentioned in the *Icelandic Journal*, but the false WM speaks of him frequently, and I’ll comment on a few of those appearances later.

But first, let us consider the second Iceland segment, for 14 July, when the false WM picks up the travellers in Reykjavik, ignoring the intervening 8–15 July entries, those describing queasy stomachs as the *Diana* confronts Atlantic rollers, and the wonderful descriptions of the Faroes.

Though Darwin is never mentioned in the *Icelandic Journal*, Jones – apparently inspired by brief descriptions of grassy banks bordering a stream near Reykjavik – opens the 14 July segment with the famous final paragraph, that of the ‘entangled bank’ from the *Origin of Species*, a book brought along, says the false WM, in his stuffy manner, ‘to solace the days of forced inaction that must occur on any journey’. (p. 24) Then he inveighs against Darwin’s ideas of inheritance, of social inequities which they inspire and support, all in a gassy manner which is quite non-Morrisean. There are no such disquisitions in the *Icelandic Journal* – where we find instead sharp descriptions of Reykjavik, the ships in its harbour, the mountains behind, and the wooden houses on its sandy streets; Morris had included here an interesting footnote, an aside to Georgie: ‘Lord! How that little row of wooden houses, and their gardens with the rank Angelica is wedged into my memory’. Morris’s rather fervent recollection of this plant evidently encouraged Jones to have his false WM pay particular attention to the Angelica, which ‘cures all ills, the old herbals say: hence the propitious name; I could almost think of it as a kindly spirit to guide me star to star through this new land’. This is followed by a quotation from Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, one which says of the heroine, ‘So aungelic was her natif beaute, / That lik a thing immortal semed

she'. The false WM then adds: 'Would that I might live to make a Chaucer one day'. (p. 27) This wistful wish, in the final line of this 14 July segment, cleverly reminds us that Morris's *Earthly Paradise* tales had earned him comparisons to Chaucer, while it looks ahead to 1896, when Morris would indeed 'live to make a Chaucer'.

The plant, the honorific adjective, the perfect woman, all coalesce in a country lass named 'Angelica', the most interesting addition which Jones makes to the Morris biography. He has his false WM refer to her several times, first when the Morris party is riding through *Njala* country, down some pleasant slopes near the Rang-river where 'deep flowers and grass went down right into the water on either side'. That line is from the *Icelandic Journal*, and is followed by the false WM's long recollection of a similar small river in the Wiltshire countryside, where he was known to wander when he was an unhappy schoolboy at Marlborough College. And one day he had there seen a naked girl, bathing in a river pool. She asks him if he'd been spying on her, and he replies, 'I wasn't watching you, but I saw you'. . . . 'Have a good look', she said, 'there's nought more to see than nature has given me'. . . . 'They call me Angelica', she said. 'Will you carry my basket?' This segment ends with the pair walking off together, 'side by side'. (p. 99)

Angelica's next appearance occurs when the travellers are at the Geysir site. Resting inside the tent, drinking hot chocolate, they are shocked by an eruption: 'there came a noise like muffled thunder', and then, with nary a transition, for the hot water of Geysir has reminded the false WM of hot tea brewed a dozen years earlier, we are back on that walk home with Angelica: "'Will you drink tea with us, Will?'" she had said, my new friend, as we came to the cottage gate. . . . We went in. An old woman sat in a chair by the light of the window. "Here's a friend has come to see us, Granny". They take tea, and the false WM recalls that, 'I found myself more at ease than I had been since I came to that wretched school, though I knew that had I been found in the cottage, there would follow an explosion . . . a new Geysir'. (pp. 106–7) Distinctive prose from the *Icelandic Journal*, Morris's own descriptions of the party being frightened by an eruption at the Geysir site, are thus woven into the tapestry of the false WM's boyhood, of his deep affection for the beautiful Angelica with whom he seeks solace from his troubles at the College. At their last meeting, she tells him not to lament, that she plans to escape her rural poverty by emigrating to a 'new land, [Australia, and Angelica's great granddaughter appears in some of the Sydney segments] and you will be for Oxford, Will; and you will have done great things when I hear tidings of you'. The false WM closes with this peroration: 'Friend of my youth, maid who taught me many things I was quick enough to forget and now have to learn again; would that you were now here beside me'. (p. 109)

Here are a few examples – there are several more – of the false WM's recollections of Rossetti. I commented earlier on his helping Jenny choose a journal, 'in

that way of his that takes no denial'. In a later segment, the false WM uses this same phrase: 'And if he should ask a young woman to sit for him – that took no denial'. And Janey was one such, who sat for him, famously, often, and before she was wed to Morris. Several critics have commented on Rossetti's malign influence on the young couple from the outset, and Jones is aware of this, for here is his false WM, ruefully: 'Sometimes I thought she had always preferred Rossetti; that in her way of seeming to look past you or over your shoulder, she had in her gaze the image of the more exciting lover'. (p. 48) Later, the false WM recalls that her 'father's preference was clear enough. "Painters", in his coarse way. "Painters is all fashion, and fashions come and fashions go. But Golden Billy here –" and he would chink a couple of coins. "Money is money, girl; money is always money", with which she threw me a glance of sympathy and complicity compounded'. (p. 50) The condescending appellation for Morris seems apt, and the use of 'complicity' adds a dimension to Janey's dilemma which is also interesting.

And Janey follows her father's advice and marries Morris, and the false WM recalls a passionate moment with his new bride: 'I was urgent enough with her, to be certain, and she would press herself against me . . . and she drew me on top of her, and I pulled over us the lap of the rug on which we lay, and nothing else above us but the orchard bows and the clear heavens'. (p. 63) The 'orchard bows' suggest Red House, and the first and happiest years of their marriage. But what seems more significant here is that the false WM recalls pulling a rug over them, for this act conjures up a famous scene, one that Jones is aware of, for he refers to it at least two more times. The scene occurs in the greatest of the Family Sagas, *Brennu-Njals Saga*. When the burners tell Bergthora, Njal's wife, that she is free to leave the burning house, she declines, choosing to stay and die with her husband. She lies next to him and a sheep skin is pulled over them. When the ashes cool, the bodies of the couple are found intact, unburned, under the sheep skin. On the way home, the ship back in the Faroes, the false WM asserts that Iceland has taught him that 'I must find my proper place in the world of men, and having found it might truly be at one with what I loved, and draw the one skin to cover us both'. (p. 197) Using 'skin' here, and thus evoking that scene in the *Njala*, the false WM equates the physical love, indeed the affection also, between Morris and Janey with the deep love of Njal and Bergthora. I wish there were more such moments in the novel.

The second narrative is set in Sydney, and concerns the activities and reflections of an ageing professor whose wife is abroad. She calls him frequently, and his explanations of what he is up to provide some key exposition in each of the first nine chapters of the novel; in the tenth and final chapter she returns, just in time to see *Morris in Iceland* on the stage. Here is an early exchange, when the wife asks him about a new project. He answers, 'If you must know, it's for an opera a group of young people of my acquaintance are developing'. She asks what it's about. His

retort: 'You've heard of *Nixon in China*, I suppose? ... This is along similar lines. Based on William Morris's trip to Iceland in 1871. The working title is *Morris in Iceland*. The William Morris story has all the elements, you know – gratuitous nudity, al fresco copulation – it's just a matter of how to work them in, which is where the contribution of an expert consultant such as myself can be crucial'. She asks 'Is this the same William Morris I've heard about? The wallpaper man?' 'The very same. ... My informants tell me that Morris's route may well have been identical to the one Björk followed in her tour of Icelandic churches in 1990. ... I see a lot of throat singing and weird instrumentals and electronics, and we'll have karaoke and slam poetry too, and some of Morris's own stuff. It will be huge'. Her response: 'It sounds like a postmodern nightmare'. (pp. 18–19)

I am not sure when and where nudity and 'al fresco copulation' come into the Morris story. But I am certain that Björk's tour had as little to do with Morris's 1871 route as do the lyrics of her songs which are dropped into the text a dozen or more times, and for no apparent reason. It's all very strange, and when weird music and karaoke are thrown into the mix, why then the wife's estimation of *Morris in Iceland* as 'postmodern nightmare' seems apt. But my curiosity was aroused. And when, in subsequent Sydney segments, we see these young people discussing the opera in progress, its choreography and symbolism, and the like, my curiosity deepened. I looked forward to the opera itself, destined to be presented in the final chapter.

Here is our first glimpse of the students, obviously familiar with the 1871 *Icelandic Journal*, discussing ways to transform its details into their performance: 'I think we should do something with "railroad travelling", said Michael. He held his forearms parallel to the floor, fingers pointing stiffly straight ahead, and then began to reciprocate each arm in turn, miming the motion of a piston as he circled the little stage. ... as he picked up speed and was joined by other black-clad young men, their shoulders rocking backward and forward in line, their feet meeting the boards in unison, the effect was steam train-like indeed'. (p. 10) The students pass from this strange dancing, from discussions of stage-craft and mime, to equally strange and lengthy discussions of symbolism: 'Morris keeps mentioning the flowers. And it's the urge to procreation we want to bring out ... Magnusson is power, obviously ... when they say goodbye to the Magnusson women, that means power is devalored. And then Morris sets off riding Falki—the bird of prey, i.e., the rapacity of the entrepreneur—but then that pony breaks down. That has to foreshadow the reorganization of the firm with Morris in sole charge. He turns his back on the sole apparatus of retailing; he sees that kind of life is lame. ... He gives up Falki, and now he is riding Mouse, the chestnut. He has taken his old life to pieces, and the elements have to be refecundated. ... The fat body and the long tail: a mouse is a spermic symbol; it's taking him to a place where he can grow again'. One of the students interrupts this silly discourse to

ask, 'is this an opera we're putting on or a gynaecology lesson?' (pp. 59–60) That's a good question, and the use of foreign terminology and strange compounds such as 'refecundated' raise suspicions that Jones, via his sly professor of narratology, is sending up literary critics and modernist theories in general.

Here are a few lines from a rap song by one of the students. The Morris party 'set out for the Arctic Ocean./Faulkner's spewing his guts, but hey, William Morris doesn't mind the motion. . . . He's used to it./The freeloaders, ten years they're bleedin' him white./And the big kahuna himself is hittin' on his wife./That's Dante G. Rossetti./He's comin' on heavy'. (pp. 137–38) And here are the students discussing the deeper – again satire comes to mind – meanings of Morris's companions: 'Evans and Faulkner and Magnusson are all Morris, and they all have to have their say. Evans is the real Morris, Faulkner is the symbolic Morris and Magnusson is the imaginary Morris. So Evans raps, because he's the muse of the present. Faulkner is the muse of the past, . . . So I suppose Magnusson is the muse of the future, . . . "Exactly – he sings in Icelandic, so no one can understand him. Makes sense", said Michael'. (p. 141) I was at a loss as to what sort of sense all this makes, but I continued, hoping that the full-fledged opera would explain why and how the characters are linked to past, present, future, and so forth. And so I pushed on.

But then the plot thickens, and the opera is changed. They begin calling it a masque, one which must be tailored to fit into a wedding ceremony, that of the professor's daughter, Gracie. The complexities of her wedding to a cross-dressing groom, defy simple explanation, but the narrator gives it a try, in one of his many telephone conversations with his wife who is displeased to say the least that her daughter is planning to marry this cross-dresser, a fat fellow named Dave. She hopes that she is not thinking of a traditional ceremony. Far from it, for 'Gracie wants to incorporate a dramatic presentation something along the lines of the wedding masque in *The Tempest*. And where is she going to rustle that up in less than a week?' 'Well, as you may be aware', the husband said, 'there's a group of young performers I've taken an interest in, and it seems likely they will be able to adapt their project [the opera, *Morris in Iceland*] to fit in with what Gracie has in mind'. (p. 189)

So it was with a strong sense of anticipation, mixed with dread, that I opened the final chapter, 'A Foreign Field'. Here there are descriptions of the venue itself, a park which somehow is under Canadian governance (Don't ask!), as well as descriptions of the groom, Dave, with a beer container strapped to his chest, and then there's Gracie's little boy in a mouse costume—also part of the ceremony, pageant, masque (he has quit calling it an opera). The professor's wife has arrived in the nick of time in order to witness the proceedings. There is music, there is dancing, and when one of the characters disrobes, the professor says: 'The disempowerment of Morris awakens the spirit of change'. The wife asks, 'Is that

supposed to be William Morris? I bet he never took off his clothes in a public park'. (p. 215) We see Faulkner, Evans and Magnusson making piston movements, which we, recalling the rehearsals, understand as the train the travellers head north. But the few score people who have gathered in this park, ostensibly to watch *Morris in Iceland*, must be puzzled. After some lyrics from Björk, we learn that 'the elements of the old Morris were disassembled'. The wife is surely correct when she snorts, 'what a lot of nonsense'. (p. 218) A reference is made, once again, to 'the al fresco copulation motif in Morris', and when a dancer with horns crosses the stage, we are told that this is Morris 'coming to terms with his cuckoldry'. (p. 222) Equally tenuous and silly references are made to Geysir, Bulandshofdi, and the Hill of Laws, none of them firmly attached to specific descriptions, often very fine ones, in the actual *Icelandic Journal*. Instead Morris's encounters with, and reactions to Iceland are 'embodied' in the troupe's song and dance. Disappointing to say the least, this is grand opera become masque, and then appendage to a strange wedding in a public park on a hot summer afternoon in Sydney.

And so the novel itself, as I said at the outset, is disappointing. Jones wrote an earlier novel, *Helen Garner and the Meaning of Everything*, which won critical accolades for its literary jokes and erratic and elusive allusions. Such devices are present in *Morris in Iceland*, but they do not fit in very neatly with the serious presentation in the *Icelandic Journal* of Morris's impressions of Iceland. Jones's inventions of incidents from Morris's youth, namely the Angelica encounters, offer fresh insights into Morris's problems, as do descriptions of Rossetti, and the like. And I suspect that most of Jones's readers, like the narrator's wife, would have identified Morris as 'the wallpaper man', but after reading this book, especially the unadorned passages from the *Icelandic Journal*, they will surely gain a new understanding of William Morris, a remarkable man, an intrepid traveller, a lover of all things Icelandic.

Gary L. Aho

Robert L. M. Coupe, *Illustrated Editions of the Works of William Morris in English*, 2nd Edn, Burnaby, BC, Canada: Lonsdale & Young, 2011, 306 pp. Hbk, 41 illustrations, many in colour, CDN \$100. ISBN: 978-0-9867535-0-3.

The first edition of the above volume, published in 2002, was reviewed by me in *JWMS*, Vol. XV, No. 4 (Summer 2004), pp. 158–59. So this is a relatively brief review in order to draw notice to this expanded and improved second edition. While the move to Canadian publisher Lonsdale & Young may well have put the price up, this has also led to the book being produced on better quality gloss paper, and – significantly – many of the full-page images included are now in

colour.

Coupe opens the second edition with a Preface, in which he writes ‘Since the publication of the original edition I have become dissatisfied with many aspects of it. Most importantly it lacks several entries found only after publication’. (p. xi) The new edition has also allowed Coupe to correct a few factual errors and he has on many occasions expanded his original discussions of the illustrated works considered. He is able to give more attention to how effective (or not) he finds the illustrations in relation to the text, and also discusses the effectiveness of the overall book design. This latter point is an inevitable concern of any bibliographic project which follows in the footsteps of Morris, for whom the unity of the book was so important.

Bibliographers are meticulous people. Descriptive detail and accuracy is what they are about, and there is no doubt that Coupe knows more than anyone else on the planet about illustrated responses to Morris’s works (how many people know, for example, that there are three illustrated editions of *The Story of Gretir the Strong?*). Perhaps also inevitably, then, this is a book for the enthusiastic collector and specialist rather than the general reader. But it is also potentially a prompt for those interested in the relationships of text to image to pay more attention to the many visual interpretations of Morris’s works which have been made. Some of these editions are undoubtedly more notable than others (e.g. the The Bodley Head edition of *The Defence of Guenevere* [1904], illustrated by Jessie Marion King, and the Headley Brothers edition of *The Life and Death of Jason* [1915] illustrated by Maxwell Armfield (See Rosie Miles, ‘Illustrating Morris: The Work of Jessie King and Maxwell Armfield’, *Journal of William Morris Studies*, XV, No. 4 [Summer 2004], pp. 109–34), but maybe there is more to say (for example) about the glut of cheap illustrated editions which appeared during the early twentieth century, aimed at schoolchildren.

At the other end of the scale the very last Appendix discusses ‘Unique Copies with Illustration’, such as calligrapher Graily Hewitt and artist Allan Vigers’ 1907–08 collaboration on a manuscript of ‘The Defence of Guenevere’ poem, and Julia Pocock’s marginal ink-drawn illustrations in her 1872 copy of *The Earthly Paradise*.

All in all this is a fascinating book. Its price may deter the general reader, but I hope good libraries will want to stock it as an important part of their Morris holdings.

Rosie Miles

Frank McLynn, *The Road Not Taken. How Britain Narrowly Missed a Revolution*. London: The Bodley Head, 2012, 610 pp. Twenty-one illustrations, £25.00. ISBN 9780224072939

Frank McLynn is a popular historian who writes mainly on British history. In this book, as his sub-title suggests, he considers a number of occasions when it might have been thought that a revolution would occur in this country, but this did not in fact happen. He begins with the Peasant's Revolt of 1381, and considers among other confrontations, the Pilgrimage of Grace, Cromwell and the Levellers, The Jacobite Rising of 1751, the Chartists and, most recently, the General Strike of 1926. In his chapter of Conclusions he is properly disinclined to be conclusive, but suggests that the Establishment has shown a great deal of cunning in retaining its ascendancy, and has made skilful use at different times of the Empire, the monarchy and religion in the process. Having outlined the views of four major theorists of revolution, he argues that the dominance of the Labour Party after 1919 'gave the coup de grace to any lingering hope of revolution still entertained on the Left' and ends by quoting Arthur Henderson's view that society can only avoid 'barricades in the street and blood in the gutters' by keeping to 'the path of ordered social change by constitutional methods'.

It will be seen from this account that McLynn does not consider the period in which Morris joined and was active in the Socialist movement as one during which there was any likelihood of revolution, so that his only reference to Morris is as the author of *A Dream of John Ball*. In that work, Morris is said to have followed the positive accounts of Wat Tyler given by the young, radical Robert Southey, and the author of *The Rights of Man*, Thomas Paine, in presenting Tyler as 'an egalitarian outlaw in the tradition of Robin Hood (who had himself been rescued from his medieval "placing" as a merely thuggish outlaw)'. McLynn's view of the late nineteenth century is no doubt well founded, but it is worthwhile to note how much Morris himself invested in the idea of revolution. His joining the Social Democratic Federation was due to its reputation as a Marxist party, and he retained his commitment to the end, in the Socialist League and then the Hammersmith Socialist Society. In 'Art and the People' (1883) he argued that salvation from the 'fearful recklessness' of modern society could be achieved only by 'a Social Revolution', and he therefore directed his advice to those who believed in 'the necessity of revolution, quite irrespective of any date that may be given to the event ...'. (In the *Commonweal* edition of *News from Nowhere* in 1890, Morris placed the revolution described in the chapter 'How the Change Came' at a date twenty years from publication, but in the book version published a year later he more cautiously places it in 1952). As the lecture 'How We Live and How We Might Live' (1884) indicates, Morris was well aware that the word

revolution was 'terrible' for some. But he insisted that it was essential to Socialism, as only through revolution could the necessary 'change of the basis of society' be achieved. As he put it in 'How I Became a Socialist' (1894), it was only 'the consciousness of revolution stirring amidst our hateful modern society' that had given him a focus for his later politics. This aspect of Morris's thought may raise problems for his contemporary admirers, but it is hardly a topic to be tackled in the confines of a review.

Peter Faulkner

J.B. Bullen, *Rossetti: Painter and Poet*, London: Frances Lincoln Ltd, 2011, 270 pp, illus, in colour. Hbk, £35.00/US\$50.00. ISBN 9780711232259.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's star is firmly in the ascendant. Since the millennium there have been at least eighteen different titles published which are either explicitly or in significant part about his art, poetry and life. These include the multi-volume project *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (William Fredeman, ed, 2002–10), and the catalogue to accompany the major exhibition on Rossetti at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, in 2003 (by Prettejohn, Becker & Treuherz). The recognition of Rossetti's centrality to literary and artistic understandings of the later Victorian period has also in no small part been fuelled by the pioneering digital humanities project which is *The Rossetti Archive* (2000–2008) and the work of Jerome McGann (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Game That Must Be Lost*, 2000). Practically everything Rossetti ever wrote, drew or painted, in every original format in which it exists, has been digitised and can be seen or read online. Why was Rossetti the exemplar for such a project? Because McGann regards him as *the* Victorian artist above all others who cared about the co-existence in his work of both image and word.

J. B. Bullen's *Rossetti: Painter and Poet* opens by acknowledging its debt both to McGann and to Jan Marsh's 1999 biography *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Painter and Poet*. The book announces itself as aiming to 'trac[e] the development of Rossetti's painting and poetry in the context of the drama of his life'. (p. 9) On the one hand it is a biographical work, offering a compelling and engaging narrative of Rossetti's entire life. But its coffee-table format and high-quality production convey that the presentation of Rossetti's art is also central to its purpose. Bullen's reading of Rossetti is of a man driven (and riven) by the pulsations, contradictions and ambiguities of libidinal desire. Where is this seen? Everywhere in his art and poetry. Hence the young Dante Gabriel was imbibing the romanticised sexuality of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italian poets at the same time that he was probably seeing pornography in London's Holywell Street.

Desire is one of Bullen's central themes, but he is also very good at highlighting other key factors in Rossetti's make up. His Anglo-Italian parentage made Rossetti always conscious of his outsider status and as a young painter he was drawn to the visionary irreverence of Blake (purchasing one of Blake's notebooks at eighteen). His ambition to be stretched way beyond the artistic training offered by the Royal Academy is seen by his approaching Ford Madox Brown (seven years his senior) to ask for tuition. As Rossetti begins formally to paint, he also commences writing poetry ('The Blessed Damozel' and 'Jenny'), and the book features numerous extracts from Rossetti's poems (sometimes whole sonnets) alongside discussion of them. But central as well to this story are the mythic worlds which Rossetti returns to again and again (Dante and Beatrice, the Arthurian triangle of Arthur – Guenevere – Launcelot), and the women in Rossetti's life who become their own myths (Lizzie Siddall, Fanny Cornforth, Jane Morris) and who are endlessly turned in his paintings into mythic women themselves.

Bullen rightly notes that the representation of women for Rossetti is not portraiture but the projection of a vision ('Not as she is, but as she fills his dream', as sister Christina aptly put it). 'Female approval', Bullen suggests, 'was central to [Rossetti's] psychological welfare'. (p. 57) The tortuous, obsessive and often pained relationship of Rossetti and Elizabeth Siddall is also a cornerstone of the book. Madox Brown's comment that Rossetti developed a 'monomania' (p. 73) about her seems correct in the light of the number of drawings Rossetti made during the 1850s. But Rossetti's resistance to settling down, and his attraction to other women, also made Lizzie's existence very difficult. The pen and ink drawing *A Parable of Love* (1850–52), in which a young man dressed as a knight appears to want to take over the painting of the self-portrait which his seated female lover is engaged in producing, seems (to this reader at least) to say a great deal about what Rossetti did to the women he loved.

Morris enters the story at Bullen's account of the emergence of the 'Second Brotherhood' in 1853, when the young Burne-Jones and Morris met Rossetti. Just as Arthurian legend overtakes Dante and Beatrice in Rossetti's mythic imagination, Bullen suggests (persuasively) that Rossetti's relationship with Morris was founded on a kind of competitive rivalry which was both artistic and sexual. He proposes, for example, that Rossetti was always envious of Morris's capacity to produce poetry. He also suggests that Rossetti was attracted to women who were either already attached or who were unavailable (hence Jane was shared with Morris, and Fanny Cornforth with George Boyce). In this way, the homosocial bond Rossetti made with various men is also emphasised. There has been some significant work on Rossetti's homosociality (I am thinking of Joseph Bristow here), but Bullen wears and distils his research with a light and very readable touch.

The shift from a more medieval 'ascetic' style to a more sensuous Venetian one

in Rossetti's painting, with *Bocca Baciata* (1859), is well known. Significantly the model was Fanny and not Lizzie, and it is an oil and not a watercolour. Lizzie's visual association in Rossetti's work with a sense of asceticism and renunciation becomes a painted language of Rossetti's complex and complicated feelings towards her. This culminates in Rossetti's guilty decision to marry Lizzie in May 1860, and then, after her death, in the repeated versions of *Beata Beatrix* (the most well-known is dated 1864–70). As Rossetti used actual women and men as his models for the faces in his paintings, the autobiographical dramas and love triangles which they appear to be enacting become very compelling indeed alongside Bullen's biographical account.

In many ways Lizzie's death is one of the defining events of Rossetti's life. A new chapter seems to open up after it, in that Rossetti is freed from the confines of marriage and domesticity. And in taking on the tenancy of 16 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, he creates 'an exotic and sumptuous interior' (p. 150) which is home to his collection of beautiful objects and furniture, and is also a bohemian gathering place for artists, writers and wombats. Jane Morris's significant return into Rossetti's life is marked by the series of staged photographs he has taken of her in 1865. Several examples are given of the intensification of the relationship between Rossetti and Jane in 1868, including a detail from Rossetti's notebook which *may* suggest the actual date on which they become lovers. The presentation of Jane as the model for the sumptuous *The Blue Silk Dress* (1868), and also the portrayal of her as *Mariana* (1870 – a painting of which I was completely unaware), seem to speak of not-so-coded love triangles. Bullen also regards Rossetti's letters to Jane during the late 1860s, as he was preparing to publish his first volume of poetry in 1870, as a 'sexual display rivalling Morris'. Morris may be working on to the second volume of *The Earthly Paradise*, but 'See!' says Rossetti to Morris's wife, 'I'm writing all these poems and you're the inspiration'.

Rossetti's anxiety about how his poems would be received is also well known, and as bulwark against negative reviews he primed his friends, including Morris, to publish theirs first. Bullen acknowledges that 'it took a remarkable man to write an appreciative assessment of poems that celebrated another man's physical passion for his wife'. (p. 221) If I have perhaps one minor criticism of this book it is that it makes no attempt to offer images of Rossetti's poetic works or to present visually his very clear interest in book design and illustration. In that sense the art monograph nature of the work predominates. Bullen also brings vividly to life the extraordinarily generous arrangement whereby Morris and Rossetti jointly leased Kelmscott Manor in 1871, in order to allow Rossetti to have somewhere to be alone and private with Jane. If Rossetti's very style and form of painting at any given moment is effectively a visual language of his emotional and psychic response to the women he loved, then it is possible that some of the many canvasses which overflow with Jane Morris are the nearest he ever gets to

love fulfilled. At the same time – and I vividly remember this from attending the Rossetti exhibition in Liverpool in 2003 – Rossetti's late paintings (e.g. *The Blessed Damozel* [1875–78], *Astarte Syriaca* [1877], etc.) are monumental in scale. They dwarf the human viewer completely. They depict not real, actual women, but goddesses who inspire awe, worship and terror. Bullen suggests that during the later 1870s 'the figures of Jane and Lizzie merge'. (p. 248) Whether this is a sign of artistic apotheosis, or a facet of Rossetti's increasing dependence on chloral in a life marked by bouts of mania and paranoia, is difficult to say. Quite possibly it is both.

Bullen concludes that 'Only after his death was Rossetti's influence truly felt. Both his painting and his poetry had a substantial impact on European art and literature in the late nineteenth century'. (p. 258) His painting influenced the Symbolist movement, and particularly his revival of the sonnet sequence (in *The House of Life*) was significant (see John Holmes, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Late-Victorian Sonnet Sequence*, 2005). In respect of the propulsions which fired Rossetti's personal artistic vision, Bullen says 'the whole tendency of his creative impulse was the pursuit, the examination and exploration of desire. This was a magnificent achievement, and one that was unmatched in British art'. (p. 261) *Rossetti: Painter and Poet* is a hugely enjoyable, readable and informative account of both the life and art of one of the Victorian period's major artists, and is a magnificent achievement on the part of J.B. Bullen. The book is lavishly illustrated throughout, including several paintings held in private collections and rarely seen. If it is not quite a *catalogue raisonné* of absolutely every work Rossetti drew or painted, it is the next best thing. The chronological presentation of Rossetti's art interwoven with an account of his life has never been done before so extensively or so well. By the end you will understand both differently.

Rosie Miles

Tim Barringer, Jason Rosenfeld & Alison Smith, *Pre-Raphaelites. Victorian Avant-Garde*, London: Tate Publishing, 2012, 256 pp., fully illustrated, £24.99. ISBN Hbk 978184976 0157, Pbk 978185437 9306.

This is the handsome catalogue of the recent exhibition at Tate Britain, whose organisers argued, as the book's sub-title suggests, that the Pre-Raphaelites should be recognised as a group playing an adventurous and significant part of the development of modern Western art. In this review, I will mainly be discussing the catalogue, but I will sometimes refer to the exhibition at Tate Britain whence it derives; I hope readers will not find this confusing.

The opening chapter is entitled 'Victorian Avant-Garde', and in it Barringer

and Rosenfeld argue their case with energy and conviction. They contend that the early work of the Pre-Raphaelites registered their participation in the rapidly changing world of which London was the economic centre; they rejected prevailing conventions to offer an art which was 'difficult, unruly and distinctive', while the second generation of Pre-Raphaelites offered a 'mythic visual language' for the emerging culture of the end of the century. Influenced by the emergence of photography, they employed an 'original realist idiom' that challenged expectation, as in Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience*, and Millais' *Christ in the House of his Parents*. They were prepared to extend the social range of those depicted, and they shared and contributed to the contemporary interest in natural history. The importance of Ford Madox Brown is emphasised: he was 'both leader and follower, simultaneously teaching and learning from the PRB'. Attention is also paid to the work of the sculptors in the group, Thomas Woolner and Alexander Munro.

Although the Brotherhood was all male, its influence extended to women artists such as Elizabeth Siddall and Rosa Brett, although the latter abandoned a promising career to take on 'a domestic role within her family'. Jane Morris is praised for her embroidery, and 'for collaborating in the creation of the images in which she appears as a sitter', mostly in paintings by Rossetti and photographs by John Robert Parsons. Julia Margaret Cameron is commended for responding to Rossetti's images of women 'by substituting female agency for the dominant male gaze'. Attention is drawn to the creators of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., and to the subsequent development of the Arts and Crafts movement. Morris's movement into Socialism is recognised, and *News from Nowhere* described as a 'Pre-Raphaelite vision of the future' – which perhaps underplays its Marxist insistence on the necessary precondition of revolution. In the concluding section the amount of recent scholarship devoted to the Pre-Raphaelites is demonstrated, and the reader is invited to agree that many of our own preoccupations may be found to have been 'vividly explored by the Pre-Raphaelites, the Victorian avant-garde, at the moment of inception of modern society'. The effective contrast of the implied politics of the exhibition with those of its 1984 predecessor is amusingly pointed up by a photograph of Margaret Thatcher emphatically pointing out to Leslie Parris and Peter Palumbo some qualities in one of the exhibited works. Alison Smith's succeeding chapter 'Medium and Method in Pre-Raphaelite Painting' supports the case from a technical point of view, emphasising the vividness achieved by the use of white grounds.

The main body of the book deals successively with the eight themes, each of which occupied a gallery in the exhibition. We are given detailed information about all of the one hundred and seventy five items exhibited, most of which are illustrated in colour. The first two sections, 'Origins', and 'Manifesto', deal with the early days of the movement, and the next four are more thematic. 'History'

illustrates the appeal to the Pre-Raphaelites of the past, particularly as known to them through literature, especially Dante, Shakespeare, Keats and Tennyson; Rossetti's water-colours and Burne-Jones's *Sidonia von Bork* seem to me outstanding; Morris's *La Belle Iseult* also appears here. 'Nature' was a major theme, as advocated by Ruskin and seen most attractively in Brown's two paintings, *An English Autumn Afternoon* and *The Hayfield*, while Millais' *Ophelia* floats into this category too. In 'Salvation' it is argued that the Pre-Raphaelites contributed to the religious debates of the period by making novel use of traditional Christian iconography in new contexts; there is also a stress on the democratic impulse, as seen in Brown's *Work* and Henry Wallis's *The Stonebreaker* – perhaps this is how some of Brown's simple furniture, now at Kelmscott Manor, finds itself here. Two themes are brought out in 'Beauty'; the turn towards music and suggestiveness in the art of the later part of the century, perhaps originating with Millais' *Autumn Leaves* of 1855–6, and the celebration of female beauty, especially by Rossetti, seen in *Bocca Baciata*, *Beata Beatrix*, *The Beloved*, *The Blue Bower*, *Monna Vanna* and *Lady Lilith* – though his only painting using Jane Morris as a model (*Astarte Syriaca*) appears in the final section (where it will be joined in the Washington exhibition by *La Pia*). 'Beauty' ends with Simeon Solomon's fine *Bacchus* and Burne-Jones's haunting *Maria Zambaco*.

Much is made of the extension of the idea of Pre-Raphaelitism to include the beginnings of the Arts and Crafts movement, and so Morris and his colleagues play a larger part than in previous exhibitions devoted to the Pre-Raphaelites. Their work is mostly to be found in the seventh section, strikingly but un-theologically entitled 'Paradise'. Items of craft include *The Sleeping Beauty* tile panel, textiles, calligraphy, embroideries including two from the *Holy Grail* series, the magnificent *Peacock and Bird* carpet, as well as socialist publications, the Kelmscott Press *Chaucer*, and two Burne-Jones stained-glass windows of 1890 – fewer perhaps than one might have expected. Furniture includes the *Backgammon Players' Cabinet* by Webb and Burne-Jones, the *Ladies and Animals* sideboard by Burne-Jones, a Sussex chair by Webb, a clavichord by Arnold Dolmetsch and Burne-Jones, and the great four-poster bed from Kelmscott Manor, with its pelmet and bed-curtains by May Morris and her assistants, and the 1910 bedspread embroidered by May and her mother. It was surprising and interesting to see the bed in a lofty gallery rather than a small bedroom, and one could perhaps appreciate the decorative work even better here. The catalogue pays a well-deserved tribute to May's work as designer and embroiderer. But it was odd in the exhibition to find that the painting near the bed was Burne-Jones's fine and serious portrait of Georgiana, rather than Rossetti's *Water-Willow*, which would have been more appropriate in the context. Indeed it is surprising to find that, although the book's cover offers the central image of Rossetti's *Astarte Syriaca* – not, in my view, one

of his best works – none of the other major Rossetti paintings of Jane appears, as noted above. This is no doubt due to the organisers' understandable desire to reduce the emphasis on 'stunners' and stunnery so liked by romantic writers – and many members of the public – and to show Jane as a serious person – as she appears in the valuable new edition of her letters recently published by Jan Marsh and Frank Sharp. Jane does, however, appear in Morris's early painting of her, as well as in Max Beerbohm's 1904 caricatural depiction of her, with numerous other art-folk, in Rossetti's back garden.

The final section is called 'Mythologies', and argues that from the 1870s the emphasis on detail in early Pre-Raphaelitism gave way to freer forms of treatment. This was combined with various types of realism by Brown, Hunt and Millais, but was at its most influential on the development of European painting through the proto-symbolist work of Rossetti and Burne-Jones. Some rapprochement occurred with post-Renaissance art, as the artists sought to widen the range of their appeal, using 'the new strategies for marketing works' that were becoming available through galleries such as the Grosvenor, which opened in 1877. Burne-Jones was the main figure, 'offering up his art as an imaginative alternative to the extreme materialism of Victorian Britain'; *The Golden Stairs*, *King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid*, three paintings from the Perseus cycle, and *Love among the Ruins* are there to make the case.

The book concludes – apart from the extensive bibliography and notes on the exhibited works – with an account by Elizabeth Prettejohn of 'The Pre-Raphaelite Legacy'. Prettejohn has discussed the British and French avant-gardes in her 2000 book, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites*, and so is well qualified to offer a point of view. This she does in some detail, demonstrating the falsity of the view that the Pre-Raphaelites dropped out of public attention until the revival during the 1960s. In fact, they were known and regularly discussed, if sometimes unfavourably, in the intervening period. Rossetti's 'powerful female figures' played an important part in the development of European Symbolism, as in the work of Fernand Khnopff, whose powerful *I Lock the Door upon Myself* is illustrated, as did the work of Burne-Jones, whose obituary Khnopff wrote; their influence, Prettejohn argues, is also felt in Picasso's Blue period, in Munch and in Klimt, and afterwards in Surrealism. Dali wrote an article in 1936 in which he drew attention to 'l'Éternel Féminine préraphaélite', and included among the illustrations *Ophelia*, *The Hireling Shepherd* and *Beata Beatrix*. Prettejohn agrees that the Pre-Raphaelite legacy, accepted by Dali, was repudiated by the 'mainstream modernist movements centred more exclusively on Paris', which she traces to the history of modern art given by Julius Meier-Graefe; this was translated into English in 1908, and influenced Roger Fry among others. She shows that critics in New York in 1957 could see the work of the Pre-Raphaelites as challenging 'the

standard orthodoxies of MoMA and Francocentric modernism', and concludes that it is their 'stubborn refusal to be assimilated into the modernist mainstream that accounts for the vexations and contradictions of the Pre-Raphaelite legacy, as well as its sheer persistence'.

This is a bravura argument, which cannot be ignored. Yet it still seems to me that works such as Manet's *Olympe*, Cézanne's *Mont St. Victoire*, and Van Gogh's *Cornfield* possess an authoritative modernity not challenged by any of the works in this excellent catalogue, except possibly some by Madox Brown. There was indeed one great radical painter in early nineteenth-century England, J.M.W. Turner, but, despite Ruskin, his legacy was not to be taken up in his own country.

Peter Faulkner

Paola Spinozza & Elisa Bizzotto, *The Germ: Origins and Progenies of Pre-Raphaelite Interart Aesthetics*, Cultural Interactions: Studies in the Relationship between the Arts Vol. 24, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2012, 284 pp. Thirteen b/w illustrations, £40. Pbk, ISBN 9783034302982; eBook ISBN 9783035104264.

Chaotic, wide-ranging, ambitious and formally complex, the short-lived Pre-Raphaelite magazine *The Germ* embodies all the frustrations and delights of Pre-Raphaelitism. It folded in 1850 after only four issues, when its heady combination of poems, pictures, reviews and didactic manifestos on Pre-Raphaelite art practice failed to attract enough readers to make it commercially viable. Nevertheless, as Paola Spinozzi and Elisa Bizzotto argue in *The Germ: Origins and Progenies of Pre-Raphaelite Interart Aesthetics*, the magazine's cultural significance far outlasted its brief existence. This book contends that 'it was thanks to the magazine that verbal/visual Pre-Raphaelitism gained resonance in and after the second half of the nineteenth century', and furthermore, that its influence on *fin-de-siècle* and Modernist little magazines means that it should 'be appreciated as a major cultural enterprise'. (pp. 8–9)

One of the great strengths of this book is its sensible and logical organisation, complemented by a refreshing lack of jargon. It begins by investigating the origins of the magazine and the artistic biographies of its contributors, then analyses its literary and artistic innovations. Finally, it discusses the influence of its 'interart' aesthetics on the artists' magazines of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The first chapter discusses the magazine's beginnings, placing it within its critical contexts past and present. Chapter Two, 'Biographical Perspectives on *The Germ*', rather daringly argues against the grain of much contemporary criti-

cism by suggesting that ‘Only a biographical analysis on every contributor can shut generalizations and reveal diversities’. (p. 42) Helpfully subtitled ‘Who and How’, this chapter convinces in its refusal to impose a unified project and perspective on a group characterised as much by formal and ideological diversity as any common purpose. In an effort to resist the ‘negative homogenizing effect’ of overlooking individual personalities and proclivities, the chapter points out the ways in which *The Germ* thrives on difference in terms of form, content and authorship. (p. 41) Fourteen subjects are addressed: Frederic Stephens, John Tupper, John Orchard, Coventry Patmore, William Michael, Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti, Thomas Woolner, William Bell Scott, Robert Calder Campbell, Walter Howell Deverell, James Collinson, Ford Madox Brown and William Holman Hunt. These are grouped according to their specialties: critics and prose writers first, followed by poets and visual artists. This instructive arrangement helps lay the critical groundwork for the discussion of the creative work in the following chapters, and encourages us to reappraise lesser-known figures. For instance, the section on Frederic Stephens boldly claims him as ‘the most important early historiographer of Pre-Raphaelitism after William Michael Rossetti’, preparing readers for the discussion of his *Germ* essays in Chapter Three. (p. 54)

Closely examining the essays of Tupper, Orchard and Stephens, as well as Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s short story ‘Hand and Soul’, Chapter Three defines and discusses what it calls ‘aesthetic prose’, a mode of Pre-Raphaelite writing which ‘delves into the origin and reverberations of artistic creativity, explores the endeavours of the artist, and enunciates the criteria for evaluating artworks’. (p. 99) Observing that this innovative form prefigures the vocabulary, cadences and concerns of Aesthetic and Decadent writing, it argues that *fin-de-siècle* writers such as Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, Vernon Lee, Arthur Symons and William Butler Yeats were influenced by this highly self-conscious Pre-Raphaelite mode of discussing art. Particularly persuasive is the account of Rossetti’s ‘Hand and Soul’, which examines the ways in which medieval mysticism and Neo-Platonic thought shape the painter-poet’s fictional treatment of his artistic identity. His story becomes an aesthetic space in which his English and Italian heritage can be considered alongside his dual identity as a painter-poet. The chapter suggests that this self-reflexive ‘portrait’, which blends the artistic and the biographical, resurfaces in Modernist works such as James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914–1915), and Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* (1928). Deeper analysis of this provocative suggestion is sadly not undertaken, but this comparison will hopefully stimulate further investigation of the underexplored connections between literary Modernism and Pre-Raphaelite prose.

The fourth chapter returns to the theme of diversity and difference, positing that the poetry in *The Germ* demonstrates that while ‘realism was a major pursuit, none of the contributors could achieve a unified vision of reality’. Yet their

‘poetic language’ shares a desire ‘to capture reality in its outward manifestations as well as in its innermost, concealed essence’ by exploring the ‘contrast between “realistic” and “visionary” attitudes’. (p. 137) It is in this chapter where the challenge of Pre-Raphaelite diversity becomes apparent. While providing valuable insights about each poet’s output, the range of writers and works means that that the poetry cannot always be analysed in sufficient depth, and the inclusion of minor figures here seems over-hasty at times. For instance, only one or two paragraphs are devoted to the poetry of Collinson, Orchard, William Michael Rossetti, and Campbell. The extensive literature review which opens the chapter might have been trimmed in order to accommodate a lengthier consideration of the poems. Yet this background information about the connections between Aesthetic and Symbolist literature, explored through the critical work of Walter Hamilton, John Dixon Hunt and Lothar Honnighausen, is elegantly and usefully summarised here.

Curiously, Christina Rossetti’s ‘Repining’ is also discussed in this section, rather than the more obviously Pre-Raphaelite ‘Dream-Land’, which forecasts the movement’s concentration on pure aesthetic spaces and liminal states. While it is argued that the ‘oscillation between realism and surrealism’ qualify ‘Repining’ as ‘a poem with distinctive Pre-Raphaelite features’, it might have been worth investigating the ways in which Rossetti’s Christian *Germ* poems challenge the amatory medievalism of the male Pre-Raphaelite project.

Chapter five considers *The Germ* as a prototype for later artists’ magazines, tracing a genealogy from *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* through to *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy*. The chapter begins with a thoughtful comparison with *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*. Both were concerned with ‘the pursuit of authenticity’, the ‘longing for beauty’ and ‘the idealization of the Middle Ages’, yet they originated from different ‘cultural milieus’. Founded by partially self-taught Royal Academy artists, and informed by the Anglo-Italian background of the Rossettis, *The Germ* was an urban enterprise characterised by ‘naiveté and eccentricity’. *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* had a precedent in Oxford undergraduate magazines and therefore ‘must be related to the tradition of university journalism’ which was more concerned with ‘addressing social problems’. (pp. 180–181)

Of these two Pre-Raphaelite journals, it is the more radical and experimental *Germ* which is seen as the progenitor of the Decadent little magazines. The interart aesthetics and self-conscious ambitions of *The Germ* are revived in *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy*, whose debates on art reframe questions originally raised in Orchard, Rossetti, Tupper and Stephens’s work. A review of supporting critical literature about *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* is interspersed with analysis of its co-editor Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo’s aesthetic manifesto ‘The Guild Flag’s Unfurling’. Arthur Symons’s ‘Editorial

Note' on the first issue of *The Savoy* is read as a reinterpretation of Pre-Raphaelite poetics. Aubrey Beardsley, contributor to *The Yellow Book*, and artistic editor of *The Savoy*, is this chapter's most important figure. His illustrated, unfinished novel, *Under The Hill*, is discussed at length, and finally seen as the realisation of Rossetti's 'quest for simultaneity and indissolubility in visual and verbal art'. (p. 209)

Perhaps this book's most provocative claim is that *The Germ* is not only 'proto-Decadent' but 'proto-Modernist', because its 'writings on aesthetic topics' are 'genealogically related' to 'the manifestos in the little magazines of Modernism'. (pp. 199–200) One wishes this premise were as fully explored as the earlier considerations of the Pre-Raphaelite magazine's influence on Aesthetic and Decadent publications. The chapter's closing section on 'The Germ in the Twentieth Century' regrettably does not analyse particular magazines, images or texts in depth, though it does provide a useful summary of the origins of some Modernist magazines such as *The English Review* and *the transatlantic review*, and indicates directions for further research into the connections between Pre-Raphaelitism and literary Modernism.

Another challenge in writing about Pre-Raphaelitism in general and *The Germ* in particular is that both literary and visual material must be taken into consideration, and it is a testament to the talents of Spinozzi and Bizzotto that they accomplish this task with clarity and grace. Their inclusion of marginal figures such as Coventry Patmore, John Tupper and Robert Calder Campbell will be of use to scholars of early Pre-Raphaelitism; their summary of the magazine's origins will make this a valuable reference work for future scholarship on the subject of *The Germ*. The book's serious analysis of the magazine's 'aesthetic prose' helps to address the dearth of published scholarship on prose works in *The Germ*, and presents a convincing case for taking seriously the neglected work of Pre-Raphaelitism's critical writers. Grounded in meticulous research and defended with convincing close textual analyses, this book is a valuable contribution to Pre-Raphaelite studies.

Dinah Roe

William Waters, *Angels and Icons Pre-Raphaelite Stained Glass 1850–1870*, Abbots Morton, Worcs, UK: Seraphim, 2012, 368 pp. Hbk, £50. ISBN 0780953280131.

Angels and Icons Pre-Raphaelite Stained Glass 1850–1870 is a title which will be eagerly anticipated by those interested in Victorian stained glass, as wide-ranging books on this subject are scarce and thorough research about the major High Victorian studios is badly needed. Waters' book possesses two major objectives;

to connect stained glass from the later 1850s until about 1870 with Pre-Raphaelite art, and to highlight the work of five of the most distinguished High Victorian studios: Clayton & Bell; Heaton, Butler & Bayne; Lavers Barraud & Westlake; James Powell & Sons, and Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.

The author sets out 'to present stained glass as a fine art', and to re-establish the reputation of 'some of the best windows in existence'. (p. 11) The argument basically asserts that through J.R. Clayton, Pre-Raphaelitism became a major influence on stained glass, and that his windows were essentially a translation of Pre-Raphaelite principles into another medium. Clayton's influence then spread to the other firms, until it was challenged by two factors: increasing commercial success which led to a decline in originality, and a new Classically-derived aesthetic which gave rise to a new pictorial style. Morris, Marshall, Faulker & Co. are associated with this latter development.

Waters provides some interesting material on Clayton's early career as book illustrator, ecclesiastical decorator and sculptor, and unpicks the complex early collaborations between Clayton & Bell and other firms. He does well in acknowledging the work of the little-known designers who worked for the major firms; the reader learns about the work of J. M. Allen and Alfred Hassam, and is shown the major role which they played for Lavers & Barraud, and Heaton, Butler & Bayne. A short section on James Powell & Sons outlines early work for the firm by Burne-Jones, and Madox Brown, before suggesting that Henry Holiday was a major influence in the subsequent rejection of medievalism.

The author's attitude to Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. is peculiar. He argues that the strength of the Firm's stained glass was a consequence of the fine-art background of its designers: 'As painters, the Morris's [*sic*] group was not afraid to introduce looser and wider expanses of enamel with thicker brushes. Previous experience in the studio gave them another advantage; it meant that their colour sense originated with oil and watercolour painting not reared on the range of coloured glass'. (p. 270) This passage is difficult to reconcile with the Firm's goals, and contradicts Waters's own statement that Morris chose the colours. (p. 284) Burne-Jones (styled here as 'Jones') receives most of the attention, but few will agree that he was essentially 'an autobiographical artist', or that he considered stained glass a way of giving the masses access to his art. (p. 296) The account of the Firm's stained glass ends in 1870, in line with the scope of this book and so does not attempt to engage with some of its best-known windows.

Sadly this book contains many flaws. The biggest problem is the lack of editorial control. There are many errors, some of which – such as 'Street's influence on stained glass cannot be underestimated' (p.77) – are quite confusing. The same five-line indented quote is reproduced both on page 37 and page 39, and the text is very repetitive. There is no Contents page, no List of Illustrations and no Index. To all appearances, this book is privately published.

The absence of editorial control also probably accounts for the vague terminology. Problematical words such 'realism' and 'modern' are used repeatedly and indiscriminately, allowing the reader little chance of understanding what the author is trying to say. For example: 'By making the figures occupy the whole of the picture space he [Clayton] has obviated the illusion of depth, a danger when working with this level of realism. The stories, interpreted as modern drama are retold and made accessible to a congregation in search of reassurance after the tremors created by Darwin's recent publication'. (p. 92) What is the reader to make of this? In what way is the *Annunciation*, or the *Betrayal of Christ* either 'realism' or 'modern drama'? Why throw in Darwin, and where is the author's research to show that the congregation at St Michael's Cornhill was upset by his writing? This example is rather symptomatic of the study as a whole: the author makes a statement, supplies little evidence to support it, and then carries on as though his theory had been proven beyond reasonable doubt. Much of the text is essentially an expression of the author's opinion, backed up with a few primary sources. The really frustrating part of this is that Waters clearly has some valuable insights to communicate, but the way the information is presented prevents the reader from understanding how he has reached his conclusions.

One of the fallacies which underlies the narrative is a Whiggish concept of 'Progress', seen as the driving force behind stained glass: 'Not content to stay with the progress Clayton had made, Hassam and Bayne continued to build on his advances and extend the expressiveness of the medium'. (p. 198) The author implies that it was some abstract idea of progress which determined the appearance of windows, rather than more pragmatic factors such as the demands of the patron, the context of the architecture and the manipulation of the materials.

Another consistent flaw is the lack of context applied to primary sources. For example, when discussing the west window of St Mary, Buckland St Mary, Somerset, Waters assumes that Clayton & Bell were commissioned by the architect Benjamin Ferrey, described as: 'a follower of Pugin (he later wrote his biography) whose revivalist views he shared. This, no doubt, directed the design that the window was to take'. (p. 87) Personally I doubt this assertion very much: all the windows in the church were commissioned by an assertive Tractarian priest (John Edwin Lance), and if anyone influenced Clayton's design it was Lance, not Ferrey. In a similar way, Waters seems to take the writings of Pugin and *The Ecclesiologist* at face value, often quoting their polemics as though they were straightforward descriptions of fact, rather than rhetorical attempts to further religious and aesthetic agendas.

Glass painters whom the author does not like are dismissed with simplistic statements: 'In general, with the distribution of Pre-Raphaelite ideas, stained glass was to improve. Less adventurous clients continued to patronise conservative firms who persisted with an alternative tradition that stemmed from the 18th

century. They were content to perpetuate religious platitudes'. (p. 69) This is not only a distortion, it is an irresponsible statement which might well serve to justify removal of Victorian windows. Frederick Preedy is dismissed in a patronising manner, as an example of 'Pre-Raphaelite' glass spreading to 'the provinces', despite that fact that he was producing strikingly original windows before any of the glass painters discussed in this book had made any stained glass. Medievalist historicism is consistently treated as conservative and mechanical, while Albert Moore's classicist historicism is seen as radical and artistic.

When technical issues are discussed there is little real engagement with the processes of glass painting. Picking up on the rhetoric of Pugin and the ecclesiologists, Waters asserts that 'Pre-Raphaelite' glass painters avoided brown enamel: 'This respect for the materials naturally demanded the eschewing of brown enamel that other firms used to create a bogus antiquated look'. (p. 67) All glass painters use brown enamel: this is the paint which is used to create the major outlines (it looks black when applied thickly). Here it is not the material which is significant. It is the way that it is applied. If the author has understood this issue, he has not communicated it to the reader. When the appearance of a window by one of the author's favoured firms is poor, he consistently blames this on the translation of the cartoon onto the glass, but no proof is offered to support these assertions.

The text is outshone by some wonderful photography by Alastair Carew-Cox. Some of the small images are slightly over-exposed or dark, but the large plates are as good as any published images I have seen of Victorian stained glass. This visual element is supported by extensive captions, and while some of the analysis contained within shares the faults of the main text, there is much of use here. This book will be useful to those keen to learn to attribute Victorian windows: the hand of Clayton, Grylls, Hassam, Bayne, Westlake and others are illustrated with such clarity that, in this sense at least, the book will be a valuable reference point.

Jim Cheshire

A critical edition of the private diaries of Robert Proctor: the life of a librarian at the British Museum, edited by J. H. Bowman, with a foreword by John Goldfinch. Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2010, 428 pp. Eight black-and-white and five coloured illustrations, Hbk £99.95. ISBN 0773436340

Robert Proctor, who was born in 1868, was a famous bibliographer. He began his career by pulling fragments of older books out of the early bindings in Corpus Christi library, Oxford. Then, after taking his degree, he was allowed to catalogue

the incunabula in the Bodleian. From 1893 he held a fulltime post in the British Museum, and managed to establish order among the incunabula there. His method became known as the Proctor system and is still in use today

Proctor met William Morris in 1894 and became 'a fanatical admirer'. He was devoted to Morris, and had collected Kelmscott Press books from the start. He felt he was expected to engage in a similar printing venture himself, and developed a Greek font (Otter); this was based on the type employed in the 'Complutensian Polyglot', and was used for an edition of the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus (1904). He also taught himself Icelandic, in order to translate the sagas. Following Morris's lead, he became a committee member of the SPAB, and expressed political views of a left-wing nature (e.g. he was against the Boer War). Quite unexpectedly, he died in 1903 while walking in the Austrian Alps; he was only thirty five years old.

In this book his personal diaries for the years 1899–1900, 1900–1901 and 1902–1903 – the year in which Proctor disappeared in the Tyrol – are laid out, together with extensive editorial notes by J.H. Bowman. From 1897 Proctor lived with his mother in a large new house at Oxshott near Leatherhead; it was called Midgarth. The train service enabled him to fulfil his commitments in London. He leaves early but is always back home in the evenings, when he finds time to read to his mother; on 28 October 1899 his patience ran out: 'Read Forest Lovers, which is *blasted rot*'. (*The Forest Lovers* by Maurice Hewlett is a medieval romp loosely based on Malory; his mother insisted on his finishing it. See below) It is amazing to observe the amount of time he is away from the British Museum, rushing about London and engaging with booksellers. The diaries are full of references to Morris's books, their prices at sales, and the dispersal of his library. He also kept up with some of Morris's friends.

Therefore from our point of view the diaries are a useful work of reference if you are trying to study Morris's reception and influence at the turn of the century. There is a very full index. Here is a typical entry: the brackets are my explanations.

1899 [Thursday] Nov 2

Very wet all day. I used the new pressmarks for the first time on some 'Imitations'. In aft. got out books for accession showcase. Finished draft of 'Graeco-Latin group'. [All this describes work at Museum]. Went to Hollings for Morris books, but was not very successful. The [Kelmscott] Chaucer fetched £60 at Sotheby's yesterday. In evg. finished first piece of hangings & began second. [He has received 40 yds of Morris and Co. *Brer Rabbit* fabric; he has made the curtains and is redecorating his room.] Two pheasants arrived from Mrs Cuvelje, to whom I wrote. Read Forest Lovers. Slips to 7320 [i.e. bibliographical listing]. A wild night of wind & rain.

The trustees of William Morris's estate were Jane Morris, Sydney Cockerell and F.S. Ellis. Ellis died in 1901. Here is part of the diary entry for 7 March of that year.

Worked like a horse all day in K.L. [King's Library]; did not sit down from my coming till luncheon at 2, & from 2.20 till nearly 4. Got 13 cases in all finished for Tommy [Sir Edward Maunde Thompson, Director and Principal Librarian] to see tomorrow, & set the carpenter to work on the others. ... In aft. a letter from SCC [Cockerell] offering me the Morris trusteeship in place of Ellis! Of course I must accept, tho' I feel doubtful as to my fitness, & must talk it over before deciding. To Antiscrape, where a good deal of work, mostly disheartening, was done. My letter was in today's Times. At Gatti's were Walker Lethaby SCC Firth Winmill (who announced a marriage engagement) Shirley. Walker is now going to print – Paradise Lost! Home as usual, dog tired & not a little worried.

This led to a weekend visit to Kelmscott Manor with Cockerell later in 1901:

S[aturday] May 4. Up by 8 train for which I had a very hard run of it. Felt unsettled & did little, except letterwriting. Started at 11.40, & just caught the 12.15 at Paddington. Got to Oxford at 2.18 ... [visits the Bodleian] ... at 3.45 S.C.C. came, & and at 4 we made for the station where we found Mrs Morris. Got to Kelmscott at 6 & were warmly welcomed by Jenny & her new companion Miss Strong; then walked about the garden. Dinner at 7.30; & sat in Tapestry room; Mrs M. got out the Horace [i.e. Morris's MS version of the odes of Horace] for me to look at. When SCC went to bed (in a closet off the T.R.) I went down to mine own place just underneath, the Panelled room with corresponding closet, & wrote till 11; then to bed, cold; a humblebee on the curtain, very sleepy; I put him out into the larger room. Beautiful day.

[Sunday] May 5. Up at 8 (woke at 5.30) & let my bee out, when dressed; I then found a bath put for me in the larger room. I strolled by the river & in the garden till breakfast (9.15); Mrs Morris did not appear. Quince jelly delicious. At 10.40 for a stroll over fritillary-strewn meadows with Jenny Miss S. and SCC; back at 12, and in garden (with Mrs M. now joining us) till dinner. After this I went up into the Tap. R., found SCC and Mrs M talking business; we turned out many boxes searching for the MS of the Laxdaela, in vain. I then sat me down to read the MS. (copy by Jenny) of WM's first Iceland journey; after skimming 2 chapters went into garden & sat there till 5.35, when we had tea. Then SCC & I went for a walk; first to Kelmscott ch. which we looked at well, finding it open, & then to Langford, a most wonderful ch.; we got there just as evensong ended & the old vicar took us in tow. Got back at 8, & found them sitting down to supper. Afterwards in Tap. R., more MS of Icelandic diary. Mrs M. told SCC privately that I

was to have one of the 6 sets of the Cupid & Psyche prints. Another beautiful day, warm sun, cold in shade; cloudy after 6pm. To bed at 10.30, being cold.

[Monday] May 6. Breakfast with Jenny & Miss S. at 8.30. SCC has had earache all the time & last night could not sleep for it. Off at 9 ...

I hope the reader will forgive me for including this splendid vignette of life at Kelmscott, its joys and its perils, as I do not think it has been noticed before. Though of course he is not Pepys, Proctor has his moments and this is one of them.

John Purkis