

Reviews

Edited by Peter Faulkner

Denys P. Leighton, ed, *Lives of Victorian Political Figures IV. Volume 2: Thomas Hill Green and William Morris*, London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009, 486 pp. Available only with volumes on Bagehot and J.S. Mill as a set, hbk, £295. ISBN 139781851969197.

In this second volume of the series 'Lives of Victorian Political Figures', Denys Leighton has gathered much contemporary material about the Oxford neo-Hegelian philosopher and Liberal activist T.H. Green and that other, much more radical Oxford product, William Morris. I have suggested in my *William Morris in Oxford: The Campaigning Years, 1879–1895* that Morris's great socialist assault on Oxford from November 1883 to 1885, during which he lectured there five times and founded a branch of the Socialist League in the city, may have been a response to the premature deaths, in March 1882 and March 1883 respectively, of the two Oxonian Liberals, Green and Arnold Toynbee. Could socialism, we may imagine Morris asking himself, fill the intellectual and political gap amidst the dreaming spires which these two figures had left? In this review, however, I shall leave the T.H. Green materials aside and concentrate on Morris.

In the two hundred pages of fascinating Morris material collected here, Leighton mounts a sterling effort to represent a wide range of his subject's activities. J.W. Mackail, Morris's official biographer, makes two appearances. His Independent Labour Party pamphlet *William Morris* (1900) begins on a gloomy political note, since 'even the movement to which Morris devoted the best part of his life has dwindled and darkened: it has lost its high hopes' in gas-and-water municipal socialism; but Mackail none the less applauds Morris's distinctive political aim to 'make socialists', and concludes that he 'never lost the cheery courage that was willing to start over and over again, even with twelve disciples, as he said, or half a dozen'. Mackail's second piece, a 1902 address on 'The Parting of the Ways', delivered at Leek in Staffordshire, nicely evokes Morris's own energetic dyeing phase in that town between 1875 and 1877, and meditates on the shift from liberalism towards socialism which he was undergoing during those years. On the other hand, Mackail does not have things all his own way in this collection, since there

is also an extended anonymous 1899 review of a cluster of recent Morris books which gives his biography quite a drubbing.

Emma Lazarus offers us a very genial evocation of Merton Abbey and Morris's artistic and business endeavours there, though she knows that, 'to American eyes', things English may take on an old-world glow that never was on land or sea. We receive a further overseas perspective from the German 'father of revisionism', Eduard Bernstein, who fondly evokes a London socialist institution I had not previously heard of (but which we might well consider reinventing), the Socialist Supper Club in Soho, which Morris apparently attended, though Hyndman was clearly its presiding genius. There is a clipped but vivid political vignette from Samuel Hobson; for 'When I was a very young man William Morris said to me in his terse way, "Find out about value"'. Other lively documents here are the police report from *The Times* about Morris's arrest on 20 September 1885, and R.B. Cunninghame-Graham's florid but still moving account of his funeral on 6 October 1896; both of these are unfortunately reproduced from the original documents in such a shrunken format that one needs a Sherlock Holmes-style magnifying glass to read them in any comfort.

Other commentators in the collection focus on Morris's literary works. Frederic W. Myers, after a flippant remark that in *News from Nowhere* 'the future of the human race ... is to be a kind of affectionate picnic', actually proceeds to offer us a searching analysis of the tension between paradise and struggle, stasis and motion, in Morris's poetry. Oscar L. Tripp's too general account of Morris's life and works (which seems to me unscrupulously to take several phrases from Emma Lazarus's piece) none the less contains some shrewd observations on Morris's skill as a literary 'colourist' and on 'the pathos of anticipated calamity' which characterises much of his writing. Peter Kropotkin, in his moving obituary of Morris, makes the challenging observation that *News from Nowhere* is 'the most thoroughly and deeply Anarchistic conception of future society that has ever been written' – though if it was that in its own day, it has surely since been pipped at the post by Ursula Le Guin's utopian novel *The Dispossessed* (1975).

Leighton's selection of materials on Morris in this collection – which includes many other good things there is not space to note here – is always instructive and often entertaining, and many of the items gathered contain curious and memorable Morrisian details beyond their overt literary or political purposes. S.G. Hobson reports from Kelmscott House that Morris 'told me that his grandfather had caught salmon just there'; could that conceivably be true? Mackail adds to the series of recurrent Morrisian phrases he gave us in his biography, noting here another 'phrase which must have clung deep in his [Morris's] mind, for he quotes it again and again in his private letters, "he that shall endure shall be saved"'. The anonymous author of the attack on Mackail identifies himself as the original

witness of a fine anti-Oxford formulation of Morris's which I quoted in *William Morris and Oxford* from a much later source: 'after what he considered the desecration of St Mary's [Church], he could never enter the city again "unless they make me drunk at the station"'. I knew that Morris had been reading Richard Jeffries' *After London* on his visit to Edward Carpenter in Millthorpe in 1885, but not that, in Carpenter's own words, 'he read page after page of it to us with glee that evening as we sat round the fire'. Nor did I know, as Henry Salt assures us here, that Morris was fascinated by the doggerel stanza: 'See o'er the sea Flamingos flaming go,/The Lark hies high, the Swallow follows low,/The Bees are busy on their threshold old,/And Lambs lament within their threefold fold'. Denys Leighton's admirable collection thus gives us much of the necessary personal quirkiness of William Morris, as well as many fine contemporary evocations of his political, artistic and literary endeavours.

Tony Pinkney

William E. Fredeman *et alia*, *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The Last Decade, 1873–1882, Kelmscott to Birchington*. Vol. VII, 1875–1877. Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2008, £125. ISBN 9781843841340; *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The Last Decade, 1873–1882. Kelmscott to Birchington*. Vol. VIII, 1878–1879. Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2009, £125. ISBN 9781843841319.

It is a pleasure to be able to welcome the continuation of this impressive edition of D.G. Rossetti's correspondence, inaugurated by William Fredeman, carried on by a distinguished group of American scholars, and finely published by D.S. Brewer. It is inevitably the case, because of the less-than-happy shape taken by Rossetti's life, that these later volumes lack the richness and vitality found in the earlier ones, but there is still a good deal to enjoy and admire. These five years show Rossetti trying to keep his life and artistic practice going despite the health problems in which his taking of chloral played a significant part, as carefully explained by the editors in VII, 308–9. But when depression lifted, he could still give abundant evidence of his generosity to fellow artists and his concern for those suffering either financially or in spirit. Above all, we see him, particularly in his correspondence with F.J. Shields, trying to help their common friend James Smetham, who had become bedridden and uncommunicative, leaving his wife Sarah perplexed and fundless.

The letters to Sarah herself are models of tact. Rossetti writes to many friends and patrons to ask for their help in this crisis, with a good deal of success. And he also writes supportively to old friends such as William Bell Scott and Dr Gordon Hake, and to newer acquaintances such as the dealer Edmund Bates, the pitman

poet Joseph Skipsey, and the young writer Hall Caine; the letters show his admiration for the skill of the youthful James Allen in the cutting of silhouettes, and of the dramatist Charles Wells, who died in February 1879 and whom he places improbably near to Shakespeare. His generous response to the poetry of Skipsey, whose subject-matter of industrial life is so distant from his own, is attractive evidence of his range of sympathy; of Skipsey's work in comparison with his own, he writes to Thomas Dixon, 'Mine are full of work which is art-study & speaks a much less universal language than his own.' (VIII, 183)

His relations with his brother William and his old friend Ford Madox Brown went through bad periods in these years, but recovered by the end. His unfortunate choice of Howell as his agent still left difficulties, but he was helped by his young assistants Henry Treffrey Dunn, George Hake (though he forfeited the service of the latter in 1877) and latterly Hall Caine, and by his most constant friend and advisor, Theodore Watts-Dunton. Other correspondents who meant much to him in these years included his mother (with whom he and Christina shared the sad loss of his sister Maria in 1877), Mrs. Cowper-Temple (whom he describes in a letter to Watts-Dunton as 'my most womanly & most queenly hostess' [VII, 298]), and Alice Boyd, to whom he writes on 24 August 1875: 'The sight of your writing is so welcome beyond almost any other friend's that I must avail myself of a rest in my day's work & write in time for post' – although the editorial note tells us that 'AB's letter of the preceding day contained little news ...'

Jane Morris continues to occupy the most important place in his affections. The letters to Jane have been published before and so contain no surprises, but they still give striking evidence of how much she had come to mean to him. They include letters about the arrangements for the settling on Jane of the £1,000 that Rossetti received on the breakup of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Very unusually for him, he concludes a brief note to Jane, when she was setting out with the girls for Italy in November 1877, with the words 'God bless you'. A long and unusually relaxed letter of 19 December 1877 jokes about the girls, presumably following their father's enthusiasm, as possibly being 'bent on talking Icelandic in Italy'; gives affectionate news of Marie Stillman, who was sitting for him, and of her family, Lisa, Bella and 'little Effie'; tells of his selling to a new buyer, Mr. Turner, his *Proserpine* and 'the little picture of you painted at Kelmscott' (*Water Willow*); points out what he sees as the disadvantages of 'the house in Hammersmith Mall' – 'the garden is generally being overflowed by the Thames'; and concludes with a lengthy 'amusing anecdote' about Howell and Whistler.

In 1878 – the year producing most letters of these five years – Jane was written to in Italy on 10 February about his difficulty in finding a house to move to from Cheyne Walk – he was never to find one – and about Morris's political activities: 'Morris, I hear, is dealing about him on all sides, & you will see my prophecy as to his parliamentary career will come true yet'; Rossetti evidently assumes that

anyone seriously concerned about politics will end up an parliament. The next sentence expresses the concern of a man who was never financially confident: 'However I suppose the picture market will soon be nowhere'. An editorial note confirms this, referring to Gerald Reitlinger's 1961 book *The Economics of Taste*. The letter ends with a reference to a recent visit from P.P. Marshall 'in his usual condition': 'His leading opinion, as I gathered it, is that he ought to shoot down every man he ever knew if he would not be hanged for doing so.' The note tells us a little about Marshall, a founding member of the Firm who 'dropped out when the company was reconstituted in 1875', but makes no comment on his 'usual condition'. Perhaps the most moving of these letters is that of 31 May 1878 in which Rossetti responds to a letter in which Jane told him she had put off a visit because she feared that he would be distressed by her thinness and 'altered looks'. He denies strongly that her looks could have affected his desire to see her: 'The supposition would be an outrage to my deep regard for you, – a feeling far deeper (though I know you never believed me) than I have entertained towards any other living creature at any time of my life'. It comes as a relief to the reader when he goes on to suggest that Jane should take cod-liver oil.

His sense of fun is still able to show itself on occasion, as in his letter to the Morris girls at Christmas 1871 signed 'The Third Gravedigger' and announcing a Christmas Box about to be sent containing 'all Fiends, Spectres, Vampires and other persons of any interest' from 'a well-known series of the British Drama'. His response to the suggestion of F. G. Stephens in a letter of 15 April 1877 that he might consider joining the committee of the newly established SPAB is both amusing and sensible: 'As regards to Top's Society, really I feel so much of an Ancient Monument myself that to sit on a committee for my own preservation might seem like "pardonable egotism". Seriously however, I of course sympathise completely with his & your views, but would feel rather a humbug from my complete inactivity even as to attending meetings. This I wrote to him'. (VII, 376).

The editorial note comments on the foundation of the Society, but makes no reference to a letter from Rossetti to Morris on the subject; no such letter is included here. Kelvin's edition of Morris's letters shows that he wrote to Rossetti – 'My dear Gabriel' – on 3 April asking him to give his name for the committee and concluding 'Please answer', but no answer is recorded there either. We must assume that the letter has disappeared. Rossetti's humour is evident too when he comments that the Evangelicals holding a conference on the Cowper-Temples' estate treat him with 'the utmost toleration ... as an entirely foreign substance'. (VII, 298) He seems to have found in Aglaia Coronio a woman of entertainingly strong opinions; he writes to Jane on 9 October 1879, 'Aglaia's attitude when here would have amused you. The number of people she managed to be nasty about was surprising. Her hatred ... for Poynter & scorn of his works, was very marked.'

References to Morris, as is well known, lack the generosity Rossetti showed to most of his acquaintances. He implies that Morris paid too little attention to Jane's health in taking over Kelmscott House (in which he had originally been interested himself) despite the damp Rossetti attributed to its situation. On 1 August 1879 he remarks to Jane, about a collection being made on behalf of Keats's surviving sister, in terms that suggest he feels that she has been corrupted by Morris's political ideas: 'I know it is vain to try & interest you in such subjects as the sale of Smetham's pictures, or anything one is able to do for any poor unit like oneself & not for wholesale mankind. I suppose Top never gave one farthing to Keats's sister, but then he writes long epistles on every public event'. More amusingly, he writes to Jane on 15 August 1879, 'Ellis I hear has gone to Kelmscott, so I suppose Top is tugging & blaspheming in a boat with him, while he indulges in sonorous British guffaws'.

There are occasional interesting comments about artists, including Guido Reni ('in Guido & those later men I have always thought the soul to be too visibly in a minor ratio, as compared to the body', [VII, 11]) and Botticelli (Fairfax Murray brings 'a most divine Holy Family [photo] in which the Infant Christ is kissing the little St. John – really sweet beyond Words'. [VIII, 331]). Of his own art we learn a certain amount, though a good deal more about his complex relations with his various patrons, and his anxieties over the possible over-exposure of his work, as well as over the fakes that turn up on the market, probably as the result of the dubious activities of Howell, of whom Rossetti remains surprisingly protective. He turns down an invitation to exhibit at the new Grosvenor Gallery in 1877, but indicates to other correspondents later that he is not uninterested in the possibility. His attitude to Ruskin is distinctly unsympathetic, and he finds the Whistler/Ruskin case entertaining rather than deeply significant. He writes to Shields on 26 November 1878, 'What a lark the Whistler case is! I must say, he shone in the box. The fool of an Attorney General was nowhere. I am glad to see that Ruskin is not to be hauled out'. And on 27 November he writes to Marie Stillman, 'What a tremendous piece of fun is the Whistler-Ruskin trial! I forget which of the two litigants you hate the most cordially'. But he adds, more humanely, that he thinks Whistler should have had the costs, 'as I fear the poor fellow must be viewed as ruined', since the pleasure gardens by the Thames have recently been closed so that 'a Fire-King is no longer wanted at Cremorne'. He goes further in the conclusion of a letter to Jane on Xmas Eve 1879, 'I wish I had more news – for instance such tidings as that Ruskin was hanged or something equally welcome. But I haven't, so its (*sic*) no use going on'. His sense of himself as an outsider is suggested by his punning remark on the same day to Edmund Bates, who had loaned a copy of Rossetti's poems to a clergyman: 'I ... apprehend that there may be things here & there in the book which might rather ruffle the nap of "The Cloth", though not a line that is vile, by God!'

The format of the edition, with its introductory documentation for each year in the form of a list of Major Works, a Summary of the year's letters, and a Chronology, makes it easy to put the events into sequence, and the annotations are usually full and accurate, though occasionally one feels that the main point has not been addressed. For example, when Rossetti tells Scott that his brother William has been 'kicked off *The Academy* 'in the coolest way ever heard of' (VIII, 134), the note simply tells us that the editor replaced William with J.W. Comyns Carr on 14 June 1878. Although perfection is not to be expected even in scholarship of this quality, it is surprising to encounter the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings in a note on VII, 297, and Algaia Coronio, in capitals, at VIII, 52. A note on VII, 457 states, not altogether accurately, alas!, that 'Kelmscott House is now the headquarters of the William Morris Society'.

The appearance and printing of the books is a credit to the publishers; the title is printed separately and gummed attractively into the cover. Each volume contains a well-chosen coloured frontispiece, *La Bella Mano* in Vol. VII and *A Vision of Fiammetta* in Vol. VIII. The black-and-white illustrations are fewer than in Norman Kelvin's edition of Morris's letters, consisting of six in the first volume, including two of Rossetti's Fanny Cornforth Elephants, and four in the eighth, including Brown's caricature of the portly Rossetti lying back with his feet up on the back of the couch at Cheyne Walk, drawn on a visit there by Brown in August 1879 and described by the editors as 'Hogarthian'. (VIII, 330) Some three years of Rossetti's life remain to be covered by this scholarly undertaking, and although these will necessarily contain much sombre material, we nevertheless look forward to them and are grateful to all the scholars contributing to this large-scale and important work.

Peter Faulkner

Kevin Jackson *The Worlds of John Ruskin*, London: Pallas Athene & The Ruskin Foundation, 2009, 159 pp, £14.99. ISBN 9781843680444

I have been wondering, if I were given the task of 'turning someone on' to Ruskin, how I would go about it, and to be honest, I doubt that I would put this book into their hands. There are many books about Ruskin, and I have read quite a few of them. Kevin Jackson, I am sure, has read more, and I do not doubt that he has also read more of Ruskin himself than I have, though I have read a fair bit. His is a good book, I think, but reading it with the responsibility of writing a review has caused me to question the usefulness of any 'Introduction' to Ruskin's work, or at least to recognise that it does not really matter how one is persuaded to read him as long as read him one eventually does. My own starting point, for what it is worth, came in 1973 with no weighty or dignified tome but in a Shire book, *An*

Illustrated Life of John Ruskin, 1819–1900, by James S. Dearden.

Dearden did the job for me, though, and I daresay no one will come to any harm if their first acquaintance with Ruskin comes through Kevin Jackson. Appreciating Ruskin is rather like learning to swim, however, and a time comes when one has to stop faffing around in the shallows with water-wings, jump in at the deep end, and tackle the five volumes and three respectively of *Modern Painters* (1843–60) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851–53). Nothing can really prepare one for that experience, either for the effort involved (of course there are longueurs, but you have to soldier on) or for the pleasure afforded.

Reading one of the big Ruskins is like going for a very long walk with a stiff climb at the end. Your feet hurt, and so do your knees and hips. There are moments of despair when you reach the crest of a ridge and realise that you are not as close to your destination as you had imagined. At the summit, though, there is much more to be enjoyed than the mere satisfaction of having successfully endured to the end. It is only when you review the experience from that final vantage point that you can appreciate the whole shape of the thing. Different examples will occur to other people, but I remember thinking that Alain Resnais' *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* was interminably dull whilst I was watching it, and coming round to the view that it was a masterpiece from which not a frame could be removed without loss by the time the lights came up at last.

There is also a very useful comparison to be made between listening to the whole of Wagner's *Ring* cycle and ploughing through *Modern Painters* volumes one to five. In the end, albums of highlights just will not suffice. Nor is there much point in excerpting Ruskin. *Frondes Agrestes* will not do, and neither will Kenneth Clark's *John Ruskin: Selected Writings*. It is difficult to say what is the essence of the man (it is not for nothing that the title of Jackson's book refers to the 'worlds' of John Ruskin) but it is safe to say that it does not reside in brevity (Jackson notes without comment Clive Wilmer's suggestion that Ruskin's 'chronic inability to bring any of his books to a satisfactory conclusion' might be a symptom of bipolar disorder). I think that there may be something self-defeating about the very idea of a short book on John Ruskin (though clearly Jackson disagrees with me: not only has he written one, but in his recommendations for further reading at its end he lauds the biographies by Robert Hewison and Francis O'Gorman as 'refreshingly brief').

The pleasures of reading Ruskin, for me, are two-fold. His prose can be extraordinarily beautiful. Again, other people will know their own favourite passages but no-one, surely, will disagree when I cite as one example the section near the beginning of the famous chapter 'The Nature of Gothic' in volume II of *The Stones of Venice*, when he imagines the northbound migratory flight of birds:

Let us, for a moment, try to raise ourselves even above the level of their flight, and imagine the Mediterranean lying beneath us like an irregular lake, and all its ancient promontories sleeping in the sun: here and there an angry spot of thunder, a grey stain of storm, moving upon the burning field; and here and there a fixed wreath of white volcano smoke, surrounded by its circle of ashes; but for the most part a great peacefulness of light, Syria and Greece, Italy and Spain, laid like pieces of a golden pavement into the sea-blue, chased, as we stoop nearer to them, with bossy beaten work of mountain chains, and glowing softly with terraced gardens, and flowers heavy with frankincense, mixed among masses of laurel, and orange, and plummy palm, that abate with their grey-green shadows the burning of the marble rocks, and of the ledges of porphyry sloping under lucent sand.

‘There is in you something of prophet, of priest, and of poet’, gushed the young Oscar Wilde in a letter to Ruskin (Jackson quotes it), ‘and to you the gods gave eloquence such as they have given to none other, so that your message might come to us with the fire of passion, and the marvel of music, making the deaf to hear, and the blind to see’. The gods denied him other gifts, though. His love life was a notorious disaster area and his mental health was not to be relied upon.

Nonetheless (for me) the other great pleasure of reading Ruskin is the sense of contact with his mind. However elaborate the rolling periods of his prose (and some of his sentences go on for whole wonderful, fissiparous paragraphs, splitting and sub-dividing into clause after clause. Look again at the extract above – one sentence, and far from being one of his longest) and however complex his argument, one never seems quite to lose awareness of the man behind the words. Thin-skinned and uningratiating, yes, but how lucid! And there is a quality to his intelligence – alpine might almost be the best word for it – an impression of unimpeded perspectives and fresh air – that is extraordinarily attractive. But then there is the question of his ‘madness’, as Jackson calls it. ‘Ruskin’s enemies’, he suggests, ‘have always liked to say that the madness of the last years is already present in the eccentricities and quirks of the earlier writing. His admirers’, he goes on, and I begin to bridle, ‘see little if any connection, save in the sense that the savage indignation stirred in him by the vile things he saw may have been more than the most robust mind could bear’.

Hang on! First, surely, the antitheses of ‘Ruskin’s enemies’, the people who hate him, should be not merely those who admire him but those who love him (and how can one withhold love from the writer of a passage such as the one quoted above)? And second (I am sure that all members of the William Morris Society will have experienced the same reaction to Jackson’s suggestion as I did) Morris felt just as savage an indignation as Ruskin, but bore it without going

mad, and did something about it. Ruskin never possessed ‘the most robust mind’. Insofar as he was aware that he was ‘damaged’, the man himself (in a letter to his father written just before the older man died) sought an explanation in his childhood (he was coddled and indulged but simultaneously domineered over by truly appalling parents), and I am sure that most modern psychologists would agree. He was obsessive, absolutely sure that he was right, and (at least in his writing) uninterruptably garrulous. As early as 1849, his poor wife Effie wrote to her parents: ‘John excites the liveliest astonishment to all and sundry in Venice and I do not think they have made up their minds yet whether he is very mad or very wise.’ Jackson wonders whether she was quite sure herself.

I do not see why we cannot decide that he was both, and celebrate the fact. Ruskin was a strange man, in ways which were reflected both in the greatness of his writing and in the eventual disintegration of his sanity. This is not to say that he was actually ‘mad’ when he wrote *Modern Painters* or to harp on the ‘eccentricities and quirks’ of his writing, which are not its defining characteristic (and it certainly does not make me one of ‘Ruskin’s enemies’). That Ruskin was what he was turned out to be a good thing for the world, though uncomfortable for him and the people around him. As George II said when people criticised his great commander, James Wolfe, ‘Mad, is he? Then I hope he will bite some of my other generals’.

Simon Poë

Andrew Saint, *Richard Norman Shaw* (Revised Edition), New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010, 498 pp., 349 pls, £40.00. ISBN 9780300152666.

The first edition of Andrew Saint’s *Richard Norman Shaw* is now something of a classic. Published in 1976 to much critical acclaim, it set a benchmark for architectural biographies. Its success can be measured by the fact that during the intervening thirty-four years, few scholars have ventured to tackle an architect who, in his own time, was spoken of in the same breath as Wren. This apparent lack of interest is acknowledged by Saint, who in the Preface to this Revised Edition, ponders that he might have ‘killed him’. In a sense this is true, as it is difficult to see how the first edition could be bettered as the definitive work on the architect.

In terms of size, the second edition has grown in height and width (and weighs over 1 kg more). This increase is largely in order to accommodate the excellent, specially commissioned colour photographs by Martin Charles. It also allows the earlier photographs, drawings and plans to be given the space on the page they deserve. The quality of reproduction has also been upgraded, and the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art in association with Yale University Press has produced a very handsome book.

Contrary to Yale's launch publicity, revisions to the text, as the author points out in the Preface, are 'light to middling'. Since the first edition appeared, little new information about Shaw has emerged, but where it has this has been incorporated, such as in the expanded section on Cragside which concludes Chapter 2. The most notable addition to the text is the introductory essay. Here Saint re-assesses Norman Shaw's career and reputation in the context of an increased understanding of the architectural climate of the period: an exercise which would have been far more difficult during the 1970s when the subject was comparatively unstudied. Conversely, increased academic interest and consequent expansion of the pantheon of 'great' Victorian and Edwardian architects may have partially eclipsed Shaw, who no longer stands so above and apart.

In the new Introduction, Andrew Saint explores the reasons for this apparent diminution of reputation. Amongst the explanations, the author identifies the eclectic nature of Norman Shaw's work, which makes him a difficult architect to pigeonhole stylistically. The broad classifications of 'Old English' and 'Queen Anne' are convenient labels, but do not begin to do justice to just how fresh and free Norman Shaw's domestic designs appeared during the 1860s and 1870s, as the Gothic Revival began to lose momentum. Shaw did use Gothic for the handful of churches he designed, and late in his career his domestic and commercial architecture also embraced Classicism. This eclecticism, often evident within a single building, makes the study of Shaw challenging. Saint tackles this head-on, comprehensively dealing with the full breadth of Shaw's work.

Of all Norman Shaw's buildings it is perhaps his early country houses, designed for the prosperous middle-classes on their way up, which stick in the memory. Shaw instinctively understood his clients' requirements, and in order to accommodate them, he needed a new, less formal kind of house. In the picturesque, vernacular style known as 'Old English' he found the additive architectural vocabulary which gave the flexibility of plan and elevation he required. With his early commissions in and around what was to become the London commuter-belt, and in Shropshire and Northumbria, Norman Shaw redefined the English country home.

This 'Old English' style drew most heavily on the vernacular buildings of south-east England, which Shaw, with his early architectural partner W.E. Nesfield, visited on a sketching tour of the Sussex Weald in 1862. In Shaw's hands, the tall brick chimneys, tile-hanging, mullioned windows with leaded lights, and timber-framing of the Sussex Weald were, however, transported far away from their traditional heartland; in the case of the magnificent Cragside, to a rocky hillside in distant Northumbria. Neither did Shaw always use these vernacular elements in an authentic manner. In particular, the non-structural applied half-timbering remains an anathema to those, sympathetic to Morris and the SPAB, who maintain that 'truth to materials' is paramount. In terms of 'authenticity',

it is easier to justify Shaw's use of iron girders, upon which his 'half-timbered' overhangs, as well as other structural elements of his designs, depended. The disguised nature of this ironwork drew some, according to Saint, misplaced, contemporary criticism, including from Morris, who, speaking of 180 Queen's Gate, Kensington, asked 'if you will have railway architecture, why don't you show it?'

Given Shaw's strong disapproval of Morris's 'glaring wallpapers' on the grounds of their obtrusive designs and high price, it is ironic that the now demolished 180 Queen's Gate was once well known for its collection of Morris papers and furniture installed by the client. The house itself was built in the 'Queen Anne' style which Norman Shaw utilised for his town houses. Harking back to the more recent past, 'Queen Anne' drew from a different architectural palette from 'Old English', characterised by the use of red brick, rubbed brickwork, large white painted windows, and asymmetrically placed bay windows. Shaw was an undoubted master of this style and something of the range of his variations on this theme can be seen along the Chelsea Embankment where he built Swan House, Cheyne House, Clock House and Farnley House. At the time, the 'Queen Anne' style was not universally admired, however, and the Chelsea ensemble was described dismissively by Morris in his 1888 essay 'The Revival of Architecture' as 'elegantly fantastic'.

In the latter part of his career, Shaw moved away from both 'Old English' and 'Queen Anne' towards the symmetry of English classicism, termed wittily the 'Wrenaissance' style. Amongst these late buildings, the architect Reginald Blomfield, an earlier biographer, regarded Shaw's 1890 remodelling of Chesters, Northumbria, as the architect's greatest work. It is now accepted, however, that in terms of inventiveness and freedom, this final phase is one of decline, a thesis with which Saint is in broad agreement. Whilst Shaw's late classical buildings do not display the intuition of his early work, there is little doubt that this last phase of the architect's career did leave a legacy of strikingly memorable buildings. Among these is Bryanston, Dorset, the colossal country house he built for Lord Portman, which is so unlike Cragside, built early in his career, that it is almost impossible to believe the same architect could be responsible. During the 1890s, Shaw also undertook a number of commercial commissions in the city centres of Liverpool and London. Not all of these projects were devoid of difficulty, and in the final chapter Saint skilfully navigates the reader through their trials and tribulations, including the rebuilding of The Quadrant in London's Regent Street, which troubled Shaw almost until his death.

It is not surprising that it is the buildings which dominate this architectural biography. Saint skilfully weaves the biographical information throughout the text but in contrast with the architect's imaginative and free-spirited buildings, Norman Shaw, the man, cuts a rather grey figure. The portrait photograph

reproduced in the Introduction depicts Shaw aged 58, at ease, living a quiet and uneventful family life in Hampstead; tall, clean-shaven, every inch the successful and respectable professional, with the aspect, according to a contemporary journalist, of a cabinet minister. His early upbringing, however, was not easy. Of Irish-Scottish ancestry, the premature death of his father meant that from the age of three, young Richard's middle-class existence was far from secure and his education was consequently sporadic. From this background, Norman Shaw emerged as a disciplined, decent and strong-willed individual who became a dedicated architect.

Norman Shaw's sensibilities were, however, those of an artist, and he became a Royal Academician rather than a member of the R.I.B.A. His Royal Academy-sponsored European trip, sketching tour of the Sussex Weald, pupillage with William Burn and Anthony Salvin, and a stint, like Morris, in the office of G.E. Street, honed his exceptional drawing talents. It was also at the Academy where he exhibited his work, most memorably of Leyswood in 1870. Shaw was also an early adopter of photo-lithography, which allowed the accurate reduction of his large perspective drawings for publication in the building press. This proved a double-edged sword, for whilst it spread Shaw's fame, it also led to his ideas being widely copied in debased forms.

That Norman Shaw's *oeuvre* was ceaselessly copied should not devalue it, but as Saint points out, at the end of his life he felt at least partially responsible for this diffusion: but happily he did not live to see the full extent of what Osbert Lancaster later termed 'By-Pass Variegated' spreading through the inter-war suburbs of English towns. Nevertheless, it is still sad to read the extracts of his correspondence with Muthesius, reprinted in the Introduction, where Shaw denigrates his own work. Although Shaw was self-effacing, he was certainly well aware of his professional standing and was pleased by the offer of a baronetcy five years before his death in 1912, although his desire for a quiet life meant that he declined it.

Norman Shaw may have turned down this honour but he was undoubtedly, in Andrew Saint's words, 'the highest type of architectural knight errant'. Whilst enough of Shaw's buildings survive for them to 'speak for themselves', it takes a writer of real skill to make sense of their eclecticism, place them in context and present such a coherent case for Shaw's continuing place as the foremost architect of his generation. With this revised edition, Andrew Saint, with the help of the architectural photographer Martin Charles, has certainly achieved this. If you own the first edition, the superb new colour photographs, and higher production values of this revision will make it a very tempting proposition. For those who do not own it and who have an interest in what was this most inventive period of English architecture, this book is an essential acquisition.

Nigel Pratt

Laurence Davis & Ruth Kinna, eds, *Anarchism and Utopianism*. Manchester University Press, 2009, xvii + 285 pp. Hbk. £60.00, ISBN 978 07190 7934 4.

I was not looking forward to reading this book. Although I have a considerable interest in literary utopias; not because I find them – with the notable exception of *News from Nowhere* – socially plausible, or consider that they would be pleasurable to live in, but because they are most revealing of their author, or of the time and place in which they were written. As Morris himself commented, ‘the only safe way of reading a utopia is to consider it as the expression of the temperament of its author’. (quoted on p. 94 n. 14) Whilst the most widely read utopias of the twentieth century – *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – are better designated as dystopias, the classic utopias – Plato’s *Republic* and More’s *Utopia* (the work which gave us the category) – are dystopian for most of us; and it was Morris’s dislike of Edward Bellamy’s statist and authoritarian *Looking Backward* which was largely responsible for the writing of *News from Nowhere*.

Just because one person has conceived of an alternative, supposedly ideal society does not mean that it is humanly possible. And the calamities ensuing from social engineering undertaken, in particular, by Communist regimes ought to make utopianists pause for reconsideration. Anarchists have generally shared my reservations, resisting ‘blueprints’ which might be imposed on them and others. Indeed Frank and Fritzie Manuel, authors of the classic *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (1979) concluded that there was no ‘significant utopian novel or full-bodied description of a future utopian society whose author would identify himself as an anarchist.’ (quoted on p. 224)

I was therefore surprised – but delighted – to find that most of these points are repeatedly made throughout this collection deriving from papers given to meetings of Utopian Studies Societies in Colorado Springs and Tarragona. In the opening chapter, ‘Anarchy and the Dialectic of Utopia’, John P. Clark ably criticises what he calls the ‘utopia of domination’, not just of ‘the state capitalist east’ but also of the consumerist ‘corporate capitalist west’ (p. 12); ‘utopian elitism’ used for ‘purposes of power and manipulation’, of which Bakunin as well as Plato is identified as a perpetrator (p. 13); and the ‘utopia of escape’, practised by both ‘leftist sectarians’ and ‘academic utopians’ – or ‘utopologists’ – for whom ‘utopia is neurosis, a defence mechanism, a convulsive reaction against self and world.’ (pp. 15–16) Yet as Peter Marshall emphasises in an appealing preface, ‘without the utopian imagination it would be impossible to imagine a different world from the one in which we live ... Without the generous vision of a better society, there would be little hope and less change’ (p. xiv); and Clark similarly applauds utopia as ‘a critique of domination’ as well as ‘a vision of a reality beyond it’, the prefiguration of a ‘re-channelling in a liberatory direction of desires and passions’ currently tamed or repressed. (pp. 16, 20)

Clark further – and most perceptively – identifies two other kinds of utopia (not recognised by the ‘utopologists’): utopia in the present and utopia in reality. He explains the first by citing Blake’s assertion that ‘when the doors of perception are opened we perceive all things as infinite’ and Gary Snyder’s belief in the ‘truly experienced person’ who ‘delights in the ordinary’, and concludes: ‘The most liberatory utopianism affirms this existence of the eternal, the sublime, the marvellous, as a present reality and an object of present experience.’ (p. 20) The second kind refers to ‘utopian practice in the real world and in actual history’ and draws from the anthropological record, the history of social movements, revolutionary reconstruction and experiments in communalism and grassroots democracy. As Clark observes, ‘it would be a mistake to look at utopia primarily as a literary genre, as is often done today.’ (p. 23) He receives support in the otherwise very different contributions of Uri Gordon and Saul Newman. Gordon, for example, in his compelling chapter quotes a contemporary New Zealand activist, Torrance Hodgson:

The revolution is now, and we must let the desires we have about the future manifest themselves in the here and now as best we can. When we start doing that, we stop fighting for some abstract condition for the future and instead start fighting to see those desires realized in the present. (p. 270)

Newman, for his part, invokes Foucault’s concept of ‘heterotopias’, which, although ‘real places in society as it currently is’, are, because they are ‘radically different or heterogeneous to it ... actually realized utopias within the existing order.’ (p. 217)

Clark introduces Morris as ‘perhaps the one other figure who ranks with Fourier among nineteenth-century utopian imaginative geniuses’, itemising his contribution to utopianism not only as *News from Nowhere* but also his political essays and varied creative work. (p. 18) It is left to one of the collection’s editors, Laurence Davis, to focus on Morris in his ‘Everyone an Artist: Art, Labour, Anarchy, and Utopia’, in which he compares him to Oscar Wilde and Ursula Le Guin. Davis greatly admires Morris, whom he does not attempt to claim as an anarchist, instead describing him – ‘uncontroversially’ – as a ‘libertarian socialist.’ (pp. 74, 93 n. 4) He blunders by believing Ruskin to have been Morris’s ‘Oxford mentor’, (p. 75) but gives an excellent account of Morris’s thought. *News from Nowhere*, he says,

... depicts a society organized around artisan production, with its emphasis on individual initiative, responsibility, and self-imposed time-scales and rhythms set in an environment of spontaneous co-operation. In this profoundly democratic society, people are free to decide for

themselves what they need and want, balancing those desires against how much work they want to do ... The denizens of Nowhere have recovered a strong sense of place rooted in the land, and their community is bound together by the natural order of work rather than the coercive powers of the state (p. 77).

It is Morris's rejection of the artist and high art in favour of the craftsman and the 'lesser arts' which leaves Davis dissatisfied, critical of 'a thoroughly socialized world in which artistic activity is judged primarily by the gender-coded "manly" criterion of social usefulness.' (p. 82) In 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' Wilde, in contrast, gloried in artistic individualism, arguing that

... the community by means of organization of machinery will supply the useful things, and that the beautiful things will be made by the individual. This is not merely necessary, but it is the only possible way by which we can get either the one or the other (quoted on p. 88).

Yet Davis is equally unhappy with Wilde's vision. He considers that 'Morris and Wilde each glimpse a fragment of a larger truth about the relationship between art and society', believing both are 'right in part, and that what is now needed in the way of a sustainable counter-cultural challenge to capitalism is an anarchist utopian cultural politics that balances individual and society in a way that simultaneously protects the autonomy of art and firmly rejects the assumption that it must be something precious and elitist maintained by the joyless labour of an enslaved majority.' (p. 86) This synthesis he locates in Le Guin's novel, *The Dispossessed* (1974).

Le Guin is easily the most revered utopian in *Anarchism and Utopianism*. Whereas Morris is mentioned by only three of the fourteen writers, by one (Newman) erroneously as contributing to 'anarchist thought' (p. 207) – or if he did so, it was as a non-anarchist – Le Guin appears in six chapters. Several of her works are cited approvingly, but attention is centred on her portrayal in *The Dispossessed* of the anarchist society of Anarres, somewhat oddly since it is a decaying anarchist utopia, which the hero Shevek attempts to regenerate. It should be noted that whereas Huxley's dystopia, *Brave New World*, appears from time to time in *Anarchism and Utopianism*, his libertarian utopia, *Island*, upon which he placed great store and which unusually it would be enjoyable to be inhabit, is never mentioned.

What of the other chapters? John A. Rapp argues plausibly for the inherently anarchistic nature of Daoist thought, even though bamboo strips discovered in a tomb at Guodian in 1993 have been interpreted it as being 'more accommodationist toward government ...'. (p. 33) Brigitte Koenig examines four previously unknown novels published in the United States during the 1890s, all delineat-

ing – in contrast to Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* of 1888 – ‘a maternalist society in which free sexuality, voluntary motherhood, an affective relations would replace patriarchy and competition.’ (p. 182) And Ruth Kinna, the other editor, compares the attitudes to utopian thought of Kropotkin and the always interesting Gustav Landauer, while usefully bringing in Kropotkin’s neglected close associate, Waarlam Tcherkesov (or, in a more modern transliteration, Varlaam Cherkezov).

On the other hand, Brian Greenspan’s arresting study of ‘The Triumph of Freedom’, a manuscript by an Australian, John Arthur Andrews, does not really belong in this collection, since Andrews intentionally held back from describing the coming anarchist utopia, instead revelling in the breakdown of society in late-nineteenth-century Melbourne. Yet it is the two Latin American contributions which really baffle. Gisela Heffes compares three supposedly anarchist novels, two by Argentinians, the other by a Mexican. Only one of these is demonstrably anarchist, the Mexican work is definitely not, and insufficient information is given about the second Argentinian novel for the reader to decide. The late Nicholas Spencer bizarrely uses the publications of the French anthropologist Pierre Clastres, a specialist on the Indians of South America, especially Paraguay, to read B. Traven’s best-known novel, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. Spencer’s emphasis is on the white prospectors, not the Indians of Northern Mexico, with no reference to Traven’s celebration of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas in his other fiction, of which *Government* (despite its title a novel) possesses obvious correspondences with Clastres’s *Society against the State*.

To sum up: this is a typically mixed academic collection with several of the contributions well worth reading but with others which either do not belong or, I regret to say, should be shunned.

David Goodway

Grace Lees-Maffei & Rebecca Houze, eds, *The Design History Reader*, Oxford: Berg, 2010, 544 pp., 70 b&w illus. Pbk, £24.99. ISBN 9781847883896.

The Design History Reader is an anthology of writing about design aimed at ‘students coming to design history for the first time’, (p. 5) and is divided into two roughly equal parts: ‘Histories’ and ‘Methods and Themes’. Each part is then subdivided into sections, each of which contains an introduction, and a guide to further reading. Primary and secondary sources are presented alongside; thus an extract from Mary Guyatt’s essay on ‘The Wedgwood Slave Medallion’, published in 2000, follows an extract from Adam Smith’s *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776).

The general introduction signals the ambition of the editors to present design

history as a broad and eclectic discipline: 'The Design History Reader is distinguished by a concern for all fields of design history and a holistic approach to common debates.' (p. 1) This approach is conveyed by the selection of extracts, which seek to encompass broader debates within cultural history: the work of sociologists, philosophers, economists and writers associated with structuralism and post-structuralism are included. Some sections contain themes such as 'Gender and Design' and 'Consumption' which engage with the preoccupations of critical theory. It thus possesses the advantage of making the reader aware of the diverse angles from which design history can be approached, and offers a few seminal primary sources such as Thorstein Veblen on 'Conspicuous Consumption', and Walter Benjamin on 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'.

The selection and arrangement of the texts is well thought out: the editors have evidently taken care to connect the extracts. In the section on the nineteenth century, Gottfried Semper's reflections on 'Science, Industry and Art' are followed by a good lengthy extract from Ruskin's 'On The Nature of Gothic' followed by Morris's 'The Ideal Book'. Ruskin and Morris are linked by an illustration from the Kelmscott edition of Ruskin's work. The final part of the section is 'The Art and Craft of the Machine', in which Frank Lloyd Wright muses on what he has learned from Morris, and then pushes that knowledge towards a more machine-based vision of the future.

There is much discussion in *The Design History Reader* of the influence of Nikolaus Pevsner's *Pioneers of Modern Design* (1936), particularly in the interesting section 'Foundations, Debates, Historiography 1980–95'. Pevsner's book is often seen as the foundation for modernist design historiography, an approach which seeks the roots of modernism in the work of Ruskin and Morris. Although the editors of this anthology are clearly aware of the limitations of this approach, from the perspective of someone interested in Victorian design, this anthology retains a strong bias towards the twentieth century. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century design are presented as the build up to debates which dominated twentieth-century practise. The structure of the 'Histories' section makes this very clear: the long eighteenth century and long nineteenth century contain one section each, whilst the twentieth century is given four.

Extracts from earlier historical periods have been selected with reference to their pertinence towards debates important in twentieth-century design. At times this decision is acknowledged, as in the introduction to the eighteenth century: 'Section 1 therefore begins with two extracts that explore examples of localized design and production as a negotiated and complex phenomenon, feeling the effects of modernity spearheaded in Britain and the US.' (pp.13–14) Students would receive a narrow vision of nineteenth-century design history from this book; for example they would be unlikely to realise that debates about truth

to materials and the appropriate role of ornament, emerged within those about ecclesiastical design, a situation exacerbated by the decision to omit Pugin, who is mentioned in introductions and further reading but not chosen for an extract.

The extracts also fail to reflect (or perhaps deliberately avoid) the legacy of the Arts and Crafts movement. This can be a difficult task for an editor, as many strong links between Arts and Crafts designers and their later followers are primarily visual: the influence of Voysey's patterns on Art Nouveau, or the impact of the studied simplicity of certain Arts and Crafts objects, is difficult to convey *via* textual extracts. Having said this, if Viennese design during the early twentieth century had received more attention, this relationship might have been more effectively articulated.

The book is relatively cheap and as a consequence illustrated sparingly, but represents good value for a student budget. For the most part the production values are pleasing, but I could not help feeling a twinge of irony on finding that my reading Morris's section on 'The Ideal Book' was slightly impaired by an illustration on the previous page showing through the rather thin paper.

This book will be a useful text for students on studio-based courses: it gives a nice sense of the range of secondary approaches to the subject and allows glimpses of primary material which they might follow up. It is also clear why the book is biased towards twentieth-century design: design-practice students tend to be interested in recent developments, and are far more numerous than those specifically studying design history. Specialist design history students might find this anthology rather limited, and I would not recommend it to serious students of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century design, as it does not really begin to map out the necessary material. No anthology will ever be comprehensive, but the thematic and theoretical breadth of this book, although admirable in one sense, allows little room for historical breadth: I feel that this would have been a stronger publication if its bias towards twentieth-century design had been made explicit.

Jim Cheshire

Charlotte Gere, *Aesthetic Circles: Design & Decoration in the Aesthetic Movement*, London: V&A Publishing, 2010, 240 pp. 214 illustrations, many in colour. Hbk, £35.00. ISBN 9781851776023.

In this attractive and informative book, Charlotte Gere provides a wide-ranging account of what she calls 'the influence of artists' houses and households' on house decoration more generally during the late nineteenth century. This is a topic which makes good sense as soon as one thinks of it, but had been treated before once only, in Giles Walkley's *Artists' Houses in London, 1764–1914* in 1994,

which was more narrowly socio-economic in its focus. As her Preface explains, Gere was able to make use of material assembled by the late Jeremy Maas, whose son Rupert provides a graceful Foreword.

The material is presented in four substantial and very well-illustrated chapters. The first is 'Princes of Bohemia: The Art World and Victorian Society', which brings out the striking advance in wealth and social position achieved by successful artists during the later nineteenth century. Dramatic evidence of this is offered in the form of the 'large Neo-Renaissance palazzo' built by John Everett Millais in Palace Gate in 1876 – although it was not until 1896 that Millais was to become President of the Royal Academy, as well as receiving his knighthood. In building his impressive house, as Gere says, Millais, the erstwhile Pre-Raphaelite, 'pushed boundaries physically as well as socially ... challenging his new-rich and, in some cases, aristocratic neighbours with a grander house than had yet been achieved by either Leighton or the Dutch emigré classicist Lawrence Alma-Tadema'.

During the following year Leighton was to plan, with his architect George Aitchison, a spectacular 'Arab Hall' to complement his studio-house in Holland Park, Kensington; Leighton House was to be described as the Eighth Wonder of the World by Vernon Lee in 1883; Leighton was to go beyond mere knighthood, and achieve a peerage in 1896. The public interest in such artists' homes was encouraged by journalists such as Mrs. Haweis in her *Beautiful Houses; Being a Description of Certain Well-Known Artist Homes* in 1882 – a volume bound in vellum with deliberately anachronistic initials and long 's' – and Moncure Conway's *Travels in South Kensington* published in the same year. Gere shows that the spirit of these developments was thoroughly eclectic, with elements from the Gothic Revival, the Chinese, the Japanese and the Persian, but points out that 'William Morris was the Aesthetic decorator of choice; his legacy is probably the most long-lived at any time before or since'. She also suggests that, unlike many artists who encouraged the public to visit their studios as a form of advertisement, Morris and Burne-Jones 'evolved' what she engagingly terms 'a socially evasive lifestyle'.

In the second chapter, 'The Victorian Artist's House. Art and Architecture', Gere stresses the significance of the developing interest in artist's houses: 'Considered together, the houses reveal interesting architectural, decorative (as in the ubiquitous Morris wallpapers, blue-and-white china, decorative tiles and Oriental rugs) and style associations, as well as social patterns and connections.' It is indeed a strength of this book that the artistic and the social are so well integrated. The numerous illustrations include paintings like W. P. Frith's *The Private View* of 1881, H. Jamyn Brooks' *Private View of the Old Masters Exhibition at the Royal Academy* of 1889 and G. Greville Manton's *The Royal Academy Conversazione* of 1891, all reminding us of the social importance of art in the London of the time. The chapter also includes a discussion of the development of department stores

later in the century, with particular reference to Liberty's in Regent Street. As Gere puts it, 'Morris had shown how it was possible to retail the artistic look, and the new department stores made it fatally easy' – though the adverb 'fatally' seems to indicate a more critical attitude to the developing consumerism than is shown elsewhere in the book.

It is interesting to discover that the Metropolitan Board of Works was far from keen on the red-brick houses in the Queen Anne style favoured by the artists; Philip Webb and, more prolifically, Norman Shaw were prominent among the architects satisfying this demand. Gere makes an important point about the involvement of middle-class women in 'the new decorating scene', arguing that they became increasingly important 'both as arbiters of taste (and authors of ... decorating manuals) and as practitioners of interior design in either a professional or amateur capacity'. In her account of Bedford Park, built, mostly by Shaw, during the early 1880s, Gere quotes Moncure Conway to the effect that so many of the houses contain Morris & Co. wallpaper and designs that 'a branch of the Bloomsbury establishment will probably become necessary in the vicinity of Bedford Park'. The chapter ends with a section entitled 'Rural Idyll: Escape to the Country' which shows how the building of railways in the period made it possible for artistic communities to develop outside the city: 'Not long after the arrival of the railway in 1859, the area of Surrey around Guildford and Godalming saw a great influx of the art world'. Myles Birket Foster at 'The Hill', his picturesque house at Witley (of which there is an attractive illustration), was one of the first to install a complete decorative scheme provided by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., in 1862; a full account of this is provided.

The third chapter, 'Amateurs and Aesthetes', takes us into the worlds of fashion and patronage. Among the most important patrons discussed are George and Rosalind Howard, for whom Webb built 1, Palace Green in 1870, and the Wyndham family of 'Clouds' who also had a house in Belgrave Square. In this connection, attention is drawn to the excellence of the decorative output of Leighton's architect and collaborator, George Aitchison, whose work – shown in three attractive colour illustrations – surely deserves to be better known. Later, there is an account of the Ionides family, beginning with Alexander at 1 Holland Park and including Constantine's splendid donation of his collection to the V&A in 1900; this included the beautiful Broadwood grand piano decorated in gesso by Kate Faulkner to a design by Burne-Jones.

The fourth chapter focuses on a number of 'Houses and Their Owners': Watts and Leighton in Kensington, Morris at Red House and 'the two Kelmscotts', Rossetti and Whistler in Chelsea, Burne-Jones at 'The Grange', Alma-Tadema and Tissot in Regent's Park and St. John's Wood, and a number of artists in the Northern Retreat of 'Sweet Hampstead'. Here Gere's research shows itself to advantage in the detailed accounts she is able to give of the relevant houses and the

parts they played in the lives of their owners. Although all are interesting in different ways, Leighton it is who appears to have created, with Aitchison, the most remarkable of all the houses, furnished with a quite astonishing variety of works of art. When the contents were sold at Christie's soon after his death, the sale lasted for more than a week, and realised no less than £31,549. The most attractive visual material in the book is undoubtedly provided by Tissot, whose paintings *Young Women looking at Japanese Articles* (1869), *Reading the News* (1874), *Lady at a Piano* (1881), *Croquet* (1878), *In the Conservatory* (1875-8) and *Hide and Seek* (1880-2) all pleasingly convey the appeal of the aesthetic lifestyle. I was also pleased to see examples of aesthetic interiors by Atkinson Grimshaw, a painter whom I had previously associated only with uncompromising northern landscapes. The account of Morris ends with a generous assessment of his influence:

He transformed the way in which people of modest means decorated their houses, by making art available not through an elaborate process of commissioning, but from a shop. Although the full-blown Morris & Co. treatment was not affordable by any but the very wealthy, Morris's influence was pervasive, especially among cultivated professionals. The most popular of his wallpapers, 'Daisy', covered the walls of many of the little red-brick 'Queen Anne'-style houses that sprang up in garden suburbs on the fringes of London.

But it is worth remarking that this creditable achievement fell far short of what Morris had come to hope and work for in his socialist years. It was not just the lives of 'cultivated professionals' that he wished to improve, but those of all his fellow-citizens. His inability to achieve this set him inexorably apart from the aesthetic movement that he had helped to bring about.

A brief Afterword brings the story into the twenty-first century, and comments on the present condition of a number of the houses considered in the book, including The Grange – inexcusably demolished in 1957 – and Red House, in discussing which Gere remarks on the problem confronting those concerned with preservation, 'whether it is better to strive for a continuum or a specific moment, frozen in time'. She ends with three case histories. Watts's Little Holland House was demolished in 1965; Alma Tadema's house, expensively renovated, is now in private hands; and C.R. Ashbee's Magpie and Stump in Cheyne Walk was demolished in 1966, though some of the fittings were taken to the V&A. Gere's conclusion is realistic: 'Public opinion has turned against the destruction mania of the 1960s and it will probably not be repeated, but money speaks. So long as art and tourism are valuable commodities and the prices for outstandingly original or unique properties remain staggeringly high, their relics will survive'.

The book finishes with a full and informative Cast of Characters, from Maurice Bingham Adams (who published *Artists' Homes* in 1883) to Marie Zambaco

(‘model and sculptor cousin of the Ionides family’). This is followed by an unusually thorough Bibliography and an excellent index. The endpapers of Morris’s ‘Pomegranate’ are particularly attractive. My only criticism of the book is that its designers have adopted the questionable practice of providing wide left-hand margins on each right-hand page, so destroying the unity of the double spread. I hope that V&A Publishing will not repeat this unMorrisian practice.

Peter Faulkner

Donald Insall, *Living Buildings, Architectural Conservation: Philosophy, Principles and Practice*, Mulgrave, Victoria: Images Publishing Group, 2008, 272 pp, £39.50. ISBN 9781864701920.

Architectural conservation has come a long way during the last fifty years, and this book, celebrating half a century of Donald Insall’s architectural practice, admirably charts this progress. Insall, one of the leading conservation architects of his generation, is a principal driver behind the modern conservation movement. Operating from London, but with seven regional offices, his architectural practice, Donald Insall Associates, currently employs forty architects and has undertaken some of the highest-profile conservation projects in Britain and overseas. The breadth and quality of this work is highlighted throughout the book, which cites a truly impressive range of projects, illustrated with excellently reproduced photographs and exquisitely executed plans, elevations, sketches and axonometric projects by Insall and members of his practice.

Yet *Living Buildings* is far more than a glorified glossy brochure showcasing the achievements of a single architectural practise. Its central ethos is that buildings are ‘alive’ and that we must get to know and understand their individual essential character in order to allow us to make appropriate decisions to ensure their conservation. This philosophical approach is a constant theme throughout the book. In a myriad of practical examples, encompassing some the most important buildings in the country, Insall shows how it underpins the thought processes necessary before practical interventions into the fabric of historic buildings are carried out.

It is enlightening to compare this approach with Insall’s previous offering *The Care of Old Buildings Today: A Practical Guide*. Published in 1972, this was a pioneering work and one of the rare books aimed at the practitioner since A.R. Powys’s *Repair of Ancient Buildings* of 1929 first sought to ally conservation techniques with the principles embodied in Morris’s 1877 SPAB *Manifesto*. As a practical handbook, *The Care of Old Buildings Today* deals in-depth with the legal and financial aspects of a conservation project and the techniques and methods

involved in carrying out the work. The intervening thirty-eight years since it appeared has seen a proliferation of publications dealing with these issues. As a consequence, in *Living Buildings*, Insall does not need greatly to concern the reader with this fine detail, although a bibliography or further reading section referring to some of these might have been helpful for the non-specialist. It might also have been useful to include a greater acknowledgement of the legal restrictions governing work on some of country's most important historic buildings, of which, as a founder-commissioner of English Heritage, Insall is fully aware. Whilst this may have toned down the slightly swashbuckling tone which surfaces from time to time throughout the text, readers might on occasion need to be reminded that such considerations often affect the choices made, and in many cases can be an overriding factor.

Freed from the necessity of providing a detailed administrative framework and technical guidance, Insall instead offers fascinating insights into how the solutions to the buildings problems or requirements may be informed by 'understanding', or as he terms it, 'befriending', the building. In the case of Kelmscott Manor, where he carried out repairs and reordering between 1965 and 1967, a key clue to decisions was the important question 'what would Morris himself, if he lived today, have wished to do?' This essential pre-intervention assessment stage was implicit in Insall's work at the time but was seldom articulated in print before the Australian ICOMOS Burra Charter of 1981 codified the concept of 'understanding significance'. The idea that a building must be 'understood' and a conservation plan formulated before any intervention takes place, has since been adapted and enthusiastically taken up by the major heritage bodies in the UK, forming the philosophical basis for much of the intervening policy and guidance. Essential as these documents are, they often seem divorced from the first-hand experience and insights which he is able to call upon.

Insall's guiding voice comes through strongly throughout. Although not a practical handbook, *Living Buildings* does include some sections on project-management and these are instructive. As a practising architect, mindful of his client's interests, he offers valuable guidance on assessing the needs of owners, such as HRH the Prince of Wales (who contributes the Foreword) at Chevening House, Kent, as well as those of the building, and gives useful advice on report preparation, project-planning and working on-site with contractors.

The bulk of *Living Buildings*, and I suspect for many readers its main interest, lies with what Insall terms as the 'Ten Degrees of Intervention'. Here he uses his vast experience of engaging with sometimes seemingly insurmountable issues to produce a challenging and coherently argued rationale behind his conservation works. It opens with sections on daily and programmed maintenance, resonating with the prescient words of Morris to 'stave off decay with daily care'. Despite the best intentions, however, unexpected events often trigger conservation works.

One memorable example is the Lords' Chamber in the Palace of Westminster, where Insall was called in after a late-night debate was interrupted by a heavy wooden pendant falling and narrowly missing a sitting peer. The resulting remedial works involved Pugin's richly decorated ceiling being disassembled, then carefully conserved, with new elements introduced where necessary. An even more extensive project was the post-fire restoration at Windsor Castle during the 1990s, the importance of which is reflected in the extended treatment it receives in the book.

Change is the mainstay of even those architectural practices specialising in conservation, and half of Insall's 'Ten Degrees of Intervention' are concerned with alteration, improvement and adaptation of historic buildings to suit clients' needs. This is an area where the conservation movement has partially drawn back from Morris in his assertion that it is preferable to 'raise another building rather than alter or enlarge an old one'. Closer to Morris's original *Manifesto* is the section dealing with new build in an historic context. Among many examples this includes The Stephen Hawking Building at Cambridge University, where the sensitivity of the site was heightened by the presence of modern buildings by notable British architects.

The final 'degree of intervention' introduces the concept that it is not just buildings but also the built environment which can be viewed as a living organism. This section highlights Insall's long involvement with the historic city of Chester. It was here during the late 1960s that he pioneered area-based assessments, which at his instigation led to the appointment of the country's first local authority Conservation Officer. Area assessments and conservation-led regeneration and enhancement are now a mainstay of local and national planning policy and practice, but Insall's work at Chester helped the city to be among the first historic urban centres to demonstrate how the long-term prosperity of an area could be secured through conservation works.

The book concludes with an appendix containing themed casework, including a very brief synopsis of Insall's work at Kelmscott Manor. We are also presented with his wide-ranging personal views on past, present and future issues affecting conservation. With half-a-century as a pioneering conservation architect, Insall is uniquely positioned to ponder these. It is this experience and the marrying of the philosophical and practical aspects of building conservation, which has produced an inspiring and rare book in a field dominated by worthy, but often grey, government-guidance, text and reference books. With *Living Buildings*, Donald Insall has succeeded not only in putting life into the buildings but has accomplished the almost singular feat of bringing personality and colour to a building conservation publication.

Nigel Pratt

Kate Baden Fuller, *Contemporary Stained Glass Artists: a Selection of Artists Worldwide*, London, A. & C. Black, 2006, 212 pp., hbk, £45.00, ISBN 0713654287.

Contemporary Stained Glass begins from the premise that many people who see stained glass are unaware of its significance or relationship to a particular site; the book therefore seeks to provide some 'artistic interpretation' to aid people's understanding of the medium. A selection of glass painters was asked to write about some of their most important commissions; the book divides the artists by their nationality and each national section is preceded by a brief introduction.

In the general introduction, Baden Fuller proposes to reject the label 'stained glass' in favour of 'architectural glass', a policy which is not consistently applied in the book and a feature which creates more confusion than it banishes. This tactic seems linked to one of the subtexts of the book: stained glass has historically been associated with ecclesiastical design, an area which now produces relatively few commissions. In order for the medium to develop, architects and those responsible for commissioning architecture need to take the medium seriously. The introduction seems to be pitched at a non-specialist audience. Baden Fuller briefly discusses the origin of glass, how stained glass is made and some of the problems and potential that it offers to artists. It also attempts a 'brief outline of late 20th-century architectural glass' which, like most of the history in the book, is really too brief to make any but the most general assertions, a situation not helped by the absence of footnotes to direct the reader to more detailed sources.

Although emphasis is on 'contemporary' glass, examples dating from the 1950s onwards are illustrated, with many from the 1980s and 1990s and this highlights a crucial aspect of stained glass: its permanency. Whilst a painting or a sculpture can be moved or covered up, a building must develop a long-term relationship with its stained glass. In the context of installing windows in historic buildings, this initiates an interesting debate about style: anything too contemporary risks seeming dated within years and leaving the window neither in sympathy with its surroundings or recent artistic developments. When in 1877 Morris & Co. decided to cease supplying stained glass to medieval buildings, it would appear that they could find no resolution to this dilemma. And the opinion of the artists in this book would suggest this is still an issue.

One side of the argument is expressed forcefully by Jochem Poensgen, a German glass painter, who suggests that 'architectural stained glass is not an end in itself' (p. 95) and should be subordinated to the building, thoughts illustrated by his restrained, geometrical and non-figurative glass. Others, such as French artist Carole Benzaken, delight in the 'blank canvas' (p. 106) of simple Romanesque window apertures; illustrated in this book by attractive glass based on the form and colour of tulips.

Away from historic buildings, recent stained glass seems to possess less diffi-

culty fulfilling its potential, often aided by being involved in the architectural design process from an early stage. From a personal perspective I was uncomfortable with what the German artist Hella Santarossa did within the confines of gothic tracery, but liked the look of her 'Blue Obelisk' (p. 98) in Berlin, a free-standing structure cloaked in glass, which commemorates a politician. Stained glass is used in impressive architectural contexts by Alexander Beleschenko at Southwark Underground Station (p. 10) and Japanese artist Michiyo Durt-Morimoto: a photograph shows an extraordinary stained glass ceiling for an underground chapel which creates an 'underwater atmosphere' by reflecting blue light on to the walls. (p. 197)

Some of the most interesting writing comes from the older contributors. Lawrence Lee's piece is forthright and stimulating: 'The artist working in a church is the servant, he is there as a special kind of craftsman who helps people to understand about religion. I don't like the prima-donnaish attitude of some artists.' (p. 30) Lee is known for his work in a modernist manner, famously in Coventry Cathedral, but identifies himself as working within the figurative tradition. He chooses to illustrate the Beckett window from Penshurst Church in Kent (p. 31), a project which seems to enjoy quoting the economy and vigour of early medieval drawing. Lee then explains that the window was inspired by T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. He was present at the first production of the play in 1935: this is surely a unique example of modernist medievalism. He ends with the satisfied resignation of an artist who is no longer seeking commissions: 'I've said what I want to say in glass. Now I just enjoy being with my family, seeing how family traditions are handed down.' (p. 34)

Patrick Reyntiens is another glass painter with a longstanding reputation: he writes frankly about the challenges of translating John Piper's designs to stained glass and illustrates two windows at Christ Church Oxford and Southwell Minster which work comfortably within the parameters of the medieval style while retaining hints of more recent influence. (pp. 50–1) I must admit to not having seen the work of Johannes Schreiter at first hand, but the photographs of his work at St. Johannes, Kitzingen, Germany (p. 99) and other churches makes me want to remedy this. Several younger glass painters cite him as a crucial influence, and there seems to be a consensus that the German glass painters who received plentiful commissions following the second world war developed an assured twentieth-century manner, which was influential across Europe.

Asking artists to write about their own work possesses advantages and disadvantages. Some, like those cited above, write well and are able to articulate interesting ideas about their creative practice. Others, inevitably, are less interesting. It is a much safer bet to select passages from existing writing, where the editor's chances of forming the excerpts into a good shape are favourable. When contributors are invited to write a piece to the same brief, editorial control is limited

and, as a result, we read many of the same opinions expressed again and again.

This is a worthwhile book but rather like its subject it has a slightly ambiguous identity. Despite trying to promote the potential of stained glass within contemporary architecture, the contributions inevitably locate stained glass within an ecclesiastical tradition. Whether it will manage to make the transition to more fertile areas of patronage on a large scale remains to be seen.

The book is lavishly illustrated with colour photographs. Most of the photography is good, which makes the handful of poor images very disappointing. The design is quite basic, adequate but somewhat unrefined. However, it is weak in terms of scholarly apparatus. I can see the logic of omitting footnotes and a bibliography if the target is a non-academic audience but, if this is the case, the absence of a 'further reading' section seems odd. And the book is not really a survey either, despite being described as such on the jacket. Its geographical range is extremely patchy: nineteen of the artists featured (just under one third of the total) are from Britain and Ireland, whilst other large areas such as 'Eastern Europe' are covered by just two. In Britain, if someone wanted to find out about a window and its artist, they are more likely to identify it from Pevsner's Buildings of England Series than this book.

Jim Cheshire