

Thomas J. Tobin, ed., *Worldwide Pre-Raphaelitism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), 326 pp., \$65.00 hbk, 11 illustrations, ISBN 07914 6265x.

IN THIS THOUGHT-PROVOKING VOLUME, Thomas Tobin has brought together contributions by 14 international scholars to put the case for the continuing influence of the Pre-Raphaelite movement beyond the England in which it originated, and beyond the temporal limits usually set for it, in the mid- or late nineteenth century. Tobin's enthusiastic claim is that we will encounter here 'a wide-ranging, vibrant, enduring and globally significant Pre-Raphaelitism' (p. 1). He

also argues, and the book demonstrates, that the products of the movement currently engage the interest of critics with diverse critical approaches.

The volume begins with a scholarly piece by Beatrice Laurent focussing on the beginning of the movement, and arguing that ‘the primordial unity of the Brotherhood consisted in a shared admiration of the Italian and Flemish Old Masters, and a shared belief in the necessary revival of religious art’ (p. 20). She supports her case by giving details of the collections of prints at the British Museum and the Italian Renaissance paintings in the National Gallery in 1848, and by an account of the journey of Rossetti and Hunt in the autumn of 1849 seeking to extend their knowledge of the Primitives, as they were then known. They took in Paris – three visits to the Louvre – then Brussels, Antwerp, Ghent and Bruges (where Madox Brown had studied). We are shown that the journey greatly increased their range of knowledge, taking them beyond the Italian to the Flemish Renaissance. This is followed by a discussion by Francesca Vanke Altman of Holman Hunt and Orientalism, in which she demonstrates that Hunt was not the simple English racist he has often been taken to be because of some of his dismissive remarks about non-English people encountered on his travels in the Near East. Hunt was, we are shown, friendly with a number of British Jews and something of a religious relativist. The overall point is to contest the misuse of the idea of Orientalism as an absolute category. A different kind of political point is made in Christopher Keirstead’s consideration of D. G. Rossetti’s 1870 poem ‘A Last Confession’. We are reminded that the poem – in which a mentally unstable revolutionary murders his mistress – has usually been read as indifferent to politics; but a strong argument is put for seeing it as ‘a political and cultural allegory’ (p. 69).

After this, we move beyond the original PR circle (in which Millais here plays only a small role), and into considerations of influence in a wide range of countries. Linda Groen’s ‘A Dutch *Lady of Shalott*’, considers Matthijs Maris, a Dutch artist whose powerful etching of the Lady is reproduced. Although Maris was not influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite artists, we are told, ‘he lived as though he himself had been fashioned by them’ (p. 91). I was taken into even less familiar territory in Tatjana Jukic’s highly theorised – and perhaps over-long – account of Pre-Raphaelitism and Croatian Culture, in which we are shown

how three important critics, Miroslav Krleza, Antun Gustav Matos and Milan Begovic, used their interpretation of Pre-Raphaelitism in critical discussions as late as the 1920s and 1930s.

In the rest of the volume, the Pre-Raphaelite influence is shown as coming in two main forms: one derives from Rossetti and Burne-Jones, and is mainly a matter of fine art, leading towards the Symbolist movement; and the second, deriving from Ruskin and Morris, is concerned with craft production and politics, and leads towards the Arts and Crafts movement. Susan Casteras was one of those responsible for inaugurating discussion of the extension of the movement beyond England, and here she develops the argument in her account of 'Symbolist Debts to Pre-Raphaelitism: A Pan-European Phenomenon'. Her chapter emphasises the influence of Burne-Jones on the Continent, and ranges very widely, giving attention to the French painter Gustave Moreau and the occult author Josephin Peladin, to the Belgians – the group Les xx, the writer Verhaeren and the painter Fernand Khnopff – and to the Austrian Gustav Klimt, as well as to Italian and Spanish artists. She concludes by drawing attention to the 'nostalgic appeal to vast international audiences' of Pre-Raphaelite and Symbolist art, in the form of 'yet more greeting cards, refrigerator magnets, posters, books, advertisement, fashion designs and other visual phenomena' (p. 138). How pleased should we be about that? David Mabb's work, discussed in the last *Journal*, addresses that issue in interesting ways.

Florence Boos, as we might expect, brings attention to Morris, here in the argument that Morris exercised a powerful influence on the writing of Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *A Scots Quair* (1932–35), which she calls 'one of Britain's greatest modernist works' (p. 145). Boos shows clearly how much the Scots socialist Gibbon knew of Morris, and focusses on the first volume of the trilogy, *Sunset Song*, to suggest that Morris influenced Gibbon in his experimentation with language, as well as in his socialist and environmentalist concerns, and his use of female protagonists to act as 'emblems of continuity between and idealised past and a desired future' (p. 151). Margaret Stetz contributes a lively account of what she terms 'Pre-Raphaelitism's Farewell Tour', which turns out to be a work by the turn-of-the-century woman writer Gertrude Hudson, who wrote under the romantic name Israfel. In 1899 she published an account of a tour of India entitled *Ivory, Apes*

and Peacocks, which, we are shown, offered a fierce critique of British imperialism, even if it tended to romanticise the Indian culture imagined to have preceded it. Hudson wrote from an appreciatively aesthetic perspective derived from Pre-Raphaelitism, which is neatly shown to have been simultaneously sympathetic and patronising, especially to Indian women. Eva Peteri's 'Pre-Raphaelitism in Hungary' shows how appealing to Hungarian artists trying to free themselves from the German-Austrian influence were the ideas of Ruskin and Morris, which could be seen as encouraging the development of local cultures. The Arts and Crafts movement was respected for this emphasis on the local, and its impact became even greater after 1900, when Walter Crane visited the country while exhibiting his work in Budapest. This led to a British Applied Art exhibition in 1902, followed by several publications about Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites, especially by the critic Alador Korosfoi Kriesch, who also praised the work and ideas of Morris. Under these influences, Kriesch and his friend Sandor Nagy became involved in the applied arts. They found folk art surviving in the villages of Transylvania, and went on to found the Gödöllő Art Colony, in a small town near Budapest, which produced a range of products in 'almost all the crafts Morris had practiced' (p. 197), including stained glass and furniture. Hungary also produced a notable artist in the Rossetti/Burne-Jones tradition, the painter Lajos Gulacsy, whose striking *Helena* is reproduced.

The next three chapters take us respectively to Australia, the USA and Canada. Juliette Peers discusses 'Pre-Raphaelitism in Colonial Australia' in terms of the conservative art-critic James Smith in 1870 and the similar views of Max Meldrum in 1934, set against the practice of the Pre-Raphaelite Thomas Woolner, who spent three years in Australia in the 1850s; Australian artists we are shown to have been influenced by Pre-Raphaelitism include Edward LaTrobe Bateman and Blamire Young, but Peers argues that they remained outside the main tradition of Australian art. In the following chapter, Paul Hardwick investigates the influence of Morris on the work of Vida Scudder, the American Christian Socialist. Scudder wrote a number of books on social and political issues, including *Socialism and Character* in 1912. Here she presented herself as in the same ideological fellowship as Morris, and claimed that 'the curiously common union of medieval enthusiasm with social radicalism is no sentimental folly'. No indeed!

Interestingly, this followed her assertion that 'We want no dilettante Pre-Raphaelitism in ethics'. David Latham continues his exploration of Canadian poetry in the Pre-Raphaelite mode, drawing our attention to J. E. H. MacDonald, who produced some poems in a calligraphic form using the style of the Kelmscott Press (which are illustrated). Latham then provides illuminating discussions of the work of Francis Sherman, whose poetry was much influenced by *The Defence of Guenevere*, and of Phillips Thompson who, we are told, 'epitomised Morris's politics' in the Canada of his time (p. 265). This is shown to be true of both his socialist poems and his expanded work of political journalism, *The Politics of Labour* of 1925.

The book concludes with Sarah Wootton's 'Keats's Poetry as a Common Thread in English and American Pre-Raphaelitism', in which she focusses mainly on the work of the American artist John White Alexander, and in particular on his 1897 painting, *Isabella and the Pot of Basil*, based on Keats's poem of 1818. Alexander's painting is set in the context of previous paintings of the same subject, including Holman Hunt's in 1867, and Waterhouse's in 1907. Wootton's argument is that Alexander's painting is a 'fascinating reincarnation' of the spirit of what she calls 'this enduring movement' (p. 295). This brings the book to a neat conclusion by reminding us of its overall argument. It is unlikely that there will ever be complete agreement as to the limits of the term Pre-Raphaelitism, but Tobin's book will certainly help the argument to develop.

Peter Faulkner