



Reviews

Edited by Peter Faulkner

Stephen Knott, *Amateur Craft: History and Theory* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 184 pp., 14 colour & 41 b&w illustrations, £24.99 pbk, ISBN 9781472577344.

The debate about craft has been lively in recent years and Stephen Knott's *Amateur Craft* is a welcome addition that offers analysis of some unlikely subjects in order to reflect on the significance and agency of activities normally considered as 'hobbies'. The book's historical scope starts with the 'self-help' culture of the later nineteenth century, and ends with the 'DIY' culture of the mid-twentieth century. Three chapters, 'Surface', 'Space' and 'Time', divide the subject into conceptual categories, and give a sense of the book's approach: this is a theoretical account of amateur work that is more concerned with the process and experiential qualities of performing craft than the resulting product.

'Surface' puts forward a really interesting argument: during the 1870s and 1880s, materials, tools and advice (described as 'bases', 'carriers' and 'arbiters') provided amateurs with new opportunities to engage in types of work normally carried out by professional tradesmen. Knott's analysis focuses on amateur painting and drawing. Paint boxes, ready-mixed paints, and eventually 'paint-by-number' kits,

demythologised the artistry of painting to the degree that it threatened the elite status of artists and art connoisseurs. Although highly constrained types of craft might imply conformity, this was not the case: 'even if the rules are strictly adhered to, each paint-by-number cannot fail to be a unique copy due to the inherent idiosyncrasy of the hand' (p. 36). Knott demonstrates how 'paint-by-numbers' was appropriated by artists such as Jasper Johns and Andy Warhol during the 1960s, and more recently by Jeff McMillan. This evidence of how amateur activity fed back into the art establishment provides an example of how an amateur craft had an impact on 'modern paradigms of artistic production' (p. 43). According to the author, this is an ignored aspect of the historiography of modernist art, and supplies evidence that study of amateur craft can allow us to reassess modernist art from a new perspective.

'Space' proposes that the spatial context within which amateur craft took place is a valid subject for study. At this point Knott links amateur craft to the philosophy of 'everyday life' and initiates a discussion of the extent to which amateur craft allowed practitioners to escape or resist the broader structures and restrictions of capitalism. Knott contests the idea of amateur craft as 'personal self-fulfilment' and an antidote to 'mass production' (p. 45), which he considers exemplified in Matthew Crawford's book *The Case for Working with Your Hands* (2009). He goes on to describe what he sees as a tradition within philosophy most clearly articulated by Hannah Arendt's terms *animal laborens* (the oppressed labouring animal) and *homo faber* (the intelligent creative worker). He goes on to describe an 'inter-connected intellectual discourse that has built up around the adulation of the homo faber' (p. 51), which he sees as having its roots in 'the Arts and Crafts romanticism of John Ruskin and William Morris' (*ibid.*). He goes on to suggest that object-based study is one of the related problems: '[t]his elevation of the ideals of the homo faber that inherently marginalizes the imperfect configurations of amateur labour is largely dependent upon object analysis: whether the result of labour is considered an authentic addition to the material world or not' (*ibid.*). As a consequence, Knott focuses on the experiential elements of amateur activity: how the practice of performing craft might function as resistance to dominant culture. The study goes on to discuss the way that amateurs organise their tools: fold-away carpentry benches and tools arranged in an orderly manner on 'peg boards' show that amateurs exerted a form of 'quasi-control' over their labour (p. 71). His point is to minimise the significance of the end-product in favour of celebrating the context of production: 'I challenge the notion, articulated emphatically by Hannah Arendt, that things produced in free time are largely superfluous, unnecessary and unproductive. Like amateur workstations, the spaces that amateurs create are also differential: they mirror other spaces of everyday life while simultaneously stretching or quietly subverting these structures' (*ibid.*). The analysis then moves on to an

extended case study of poultry-keeping which, too, can be considered as a reprieve from normal work as it ‘performs the function of providing a space of suspension from everyday normative capitalist alienation where an individual can direct labour-power towards self-directed goals’ (p. 83). The discussion then moves on to analysis of contemporary design and art, in particular Simon Starling’s installation *Burn Time* from 2000, which involved hens using a replica of a former German prison, built in 1829, as a hen house. Knott finds a reflection of amateur production within the artist’s activity, a sense of the amateur’s ‘convoluted inefficient and superfluous processes of production that reflect their subjectivity and freedom’ (p. 86).

The final chapter, ‘Time’, examines the undeniable relationship between amateur craft and ‘free time’. Knott speculates repeatedly about whether ‘free time’ is actually free, particularly in the light of Theodor Adorno’s influential idea that the illusion of free time was one of the most effective illusory effects of a repressive capitalist system. Knott hints at some profound aspects of amateur practice but is always cautious about their agency or permanence: ‘by dictating the pace and conditions of labour’s exploitation, amateurs can create personal, miniaturized utopias and alternative worlds, for a limited time only’ (p. 90). The author goes on to relocate amateur craft within ideas of ‘play’ and ‘flow’ in order to try and define the ways in which it may function to resist dominant modes of labour. An entertaining case-study of the railway modeller closes the analysis of amateurs and describes projects or ‘layouts’, one of which has been thirty-two years in the making and is not yet finished.

This study is an erudite and a valuable contribution to an interesting debate. No single study could adequately explain the scale and range of this phenomenon, and Knott’s case studies are necessarily narrow, but this does raise the question of whether analysis of paint-by-numbers, chicken coops and railway modelling can really give us a sound basis for making generalisations about this vast subject. The book is clearly indebted to Glenn Adamson’s approach to craft. Adamson acted as Knott’s PhD supervisor, and this book is based on his thesis. Knott follows Adamson’s method: a theoretical discussion is followed by some selective case studies and the discussion is then used to generate a reading of some recent art or design. There is nothing wrong with this *per se* but we might question whether it is valid to draw broad conclusions from this selective brand of cultural analysis. Knott follows Adamson in a simplistic approach to Ruskin and Morris, really just a casual nod towards them as originators of what he sees as a false discourse about craft and labour. This is particularly disappointing considering Ruskin’s own interesting practice as an ‘amateur’ water-colourist and engraver, and Morris’s non-professional activity in areas such as calligraphy. Knott’s main target is what he considers a romanticised idea of non-alienated labour, but perhaps if he were prepared to consider Ruskin and Morris

within their historical context, a more complex idea of their attitude to labour and life would have emerged. This book has a political tone but carries the inbuilt pessimism of postmodern thought: craft is continuously represented as ‘differential’ or ‘alternative’ but the author never dares to suggest that this constitutes anything more profound or permanent. The author observes that ‘utopian impulses’ may ‘bubble through to the surface’ but apparently they do not offer meaningful or permanent resistance (p. 124).

The form of the book is unusual: it is large, thin and (the paperback at least) floppy, apparently a kind of physical commentary on the amateur instruction manual, signalled most obviously by the ‘paint-by-numbers’ design on the cover. An ‘insert’ provides some good-quality colour illustrations, and black and white illustrations provide examples and interest throughout the text.

Despite the reservations expressed above, I would recommend this book to anyone really interested in the subject. At his best, Knott provides subtle and nuanced analysis and his detailed study of the experiential aspects of craft is productive and instrumental in opening up a fertile area for future research. If we think about the sheer amount of time and effort collectively spent on amateur craft in the last century, its impact on how we perceive the relationship between work and life must have been profound, making the subject of this book all the more worthy of study.

Jim Cheshire

Ronald Sly, *A Little Job for William Morris: A Memoir of Robert Catterson-Smith* (Hertford: E. Jones and Sons, 2015), 211 pp., £40.00 hbk, ISBN 9780993467318.

This is a difficult book to review, because it combines a great deal of interesting material about an undervalued member of the Arts and Crafts movement with numerous errors of fact and oddities of presentation.

The attractive cover shows the appealing title with a reproduction of the frontispiece of *The Well at the World's End* as the skilled Catterson-Smith adapted it from Burne-Jones's drawing for William Hooper to make the printing block for the Kelmscott Press edition. Inside, we disconcertingly encounter a loose erratum slip, inviting the reader to read ‘Arts and Crafts’ for ‘Arts and Craft’ throughout, and correcting several ‘facts’ as given in the ‘Who's Who’ section, only one of which is given a page reference. After the title, we learn that the book has been published by ‘Jones and Sons Environmental Sciences Ltd’. The next page repeats the title and offers an attractive pastel portrait of Catterson-Smith by T. Murray Bernard Blydon, and the ascription of the text to Ronald Sly. Much of this information is repeated in more detail on p. iii, where we find that the book has been edited by Roger T.K. Jones

and Dr. Jennifer Jones (née Sly), with design, artwork and images by Roger T. Jones.

On p. iv, the editors dedicate the book, on behalf of Ronald, to Morag Catterson-Smith, 'who's [sic] family provided the subject-matter for this Memoir and who spent many hours supporting the production of the manuscript'. The following two pages list the Contents of the rest of the book, after which Professor Stephen Wildman, Director of the Ruskin Library and Research Centre, offers a Foreword recommending Sly's memoir: '[i]t throws open a window into a life of considerable achievement, much underestimated but deserving more than passive attention' (p. vii). In an Editors Note [sic] we are told that that they have attempted 'to keep as close as possible to Ronald's original manuscript' (p. viii), omitting nothing and retaining Sly's punctuation; they have added images from the archive to enrich the work – which they do successfully. The editors thank Wildman for his Foreword, and for providing a biographical Postscript, with footnotes and bibliography, placing the memoir in its Pre-Raphaelite context. The following brief Prologue gives some information about the Catterson-Smith family, including the odd statement that Ann and Joseph Catterson-Smith 'produced 9 children, notably in 1806 at Skipton' (p. ix). We learn that Ronald Sly and Morag met while taking part in the Adelphi Players, a small touring company offering entertainment during the Second World War. Morag apparently said little about her family to Ronald; she offered him many 'surprises', which he took in his stride, 'the last of which also amazed Morag and forms the basis of what follows' (p. x).

It is at this point that we move into the main narrative, by Sly (pp. 11-177). This is printed in a Morrisian typeface with headlines in red, in short paragraphs and odd punctuation with tiny stops taking the place of commas, and some unexpected changes of type-size. The setting is loose, a long way from the tightness and solidity that was Morris's ideal. Throughout, quotations from poems are set with spaces between every line. We learn that it was from the extensive collection of Morag's Aunt Isabel, the daughter of Robert Catterson-Smith, that the material of the book was derived. After her death, Morag and Sly, a journalist, undertook the demanding task of making this material into a coherent narrative, without themselves having any detailed knowledge of the Arts and Crafts.

We are taken in some detail (and with many helpful illustrations) from Robert's birth in Dublin in 1853 in an artistic family – both his parents were painters – and his studies at the Dublin School of Art, where he developed his talent as a sculptor. But his father died suddenly in 1872, and Robert decided to try his luck in London, where he soon managed to become apprenticed to the sculptor J.H. Foley. However, Foley died in 1874, and Catterson-Smith recorded that 'from that time I struggled pretty hard to get the wherewithal to live, trying my hand at many different things'

(p. 17). Fortunately he was both determined and talented. He took an interest in socialism, and came to know Morris through attending lectures at Kelmscott House. He gradually made his way in London as a craftsman, especially as a metal-worker; but Morris enthusiasts will particularly appreciate the detailed account of the ‘little job for William Morris’ undertaken in response to a letter from Morris of 8 January 1894. The reader is made aware of Catterson-Smith’s remarkable skill, which gave Burne-Jones’s delicate drawings the definiteness that enabled Hooper to make them so powerful a part of many Kelmscott Press books, including most memorably in the *Chaucer*. Catterson-Smith gives a full technical account of his work (pp. 51-53), which is repeated in full by Wildman (pp. 190-91).

An attractive aspect of the work with Morris and Burne-Jones as reported here is the quality of the human relationships developed among this great group of craftsman, which included Burne-Jones’s studio assistant Thomas Rooke, whose notes on their conversations were recorded, transcribed and published by Mary Lago as *Burne-Jones Talking* in 1982. Sly records that the first two copies of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* were handed to Morris on 2 June 1896. He notes: ‘[t]here does not seem to have been any particular celebration, probably because of Morris’s weakness’ (p. 69). Morris died on 3 October, and Catterson-Smith attended the funeral at Kelmscott on 6 October. Catterson-Smith’s services to Burne-Jones continued after the death of the latter in 1898, when Georgiana encouraged him to work on some designs she had found in Rottingdean to make the very attractive small book of twenty-five engravings published as *The Beginning of the World* in 1902.

Wildman refers to the book as ‘Ronald Sly’s family memoir’ (p. vii), but Sly makes every effort to include in the memoir a full account of Catterson-Smith’s public activities. He moved into a successful career in art education in 1898, teaching drawing and general design at the newly opened Central School of Arts and Crafts and becoming Assistant Inspector of Schools of Art and Art Classes for the London County Council’s Technical Education Board. He was also producing fine metalwork, exhibiting some of it at the fourth Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1893, but he was not to remain in London, and from here on the book’s title becomes irrelevant. In 1901 Catterson-Smith applied for and achieved the post of Headmaster of the Vittoria Street School for Jewellers and Silversmiths in Birmingham, where he successfully brought together the Art School and Technical Room aspects of the institution. Georgiana encouraged him to move to Birmingham if the terms offered were suitable, and had expressed her positive view of her husband’s home-city: ‘[t]here is such a nucleus of right feeling for art in Birmingham that every faithful soul who goes there will strengthen it *appreciably* – which is a very great thing’ (p. 76). Catterson-Smith continued as a skilled metalworker, cooperating with Philip Webb

in creating a ceremonial mace for the new university of Birmingham, founded in 1900. Birmingham had produced the first Municipal School of Art in England in 1877, with the dynamic E.R. Taylor as Head. Taylor had to retire in 1903, and Catterson-Smith was unanimously elected to succeed him, and proved a great success. One of his initiatives was to develop the idea of Drawing from Memory, an approach introduced in Paris by Lecoq de Boisbaudran during the mid-nineteenth century. In his *Drawing from Memory and Mind-Picturing* (1921), Catterson-Smith argued that his experience of teaching this method had convinced him that it ‘far excels the older method in developing observation, skill of hand and imitation’ (p. 199). The method continued to be employed successfully into the 1930s, but was replaced by the New Art Teaching during the 1940s.

But by then Catterson-Smith had retired. He had been Director of Art Education for Birmingham since 1911, and had his tenure extended by three years in 1917, but had to retire in 1920 (aged sixty-seven). Unfortunately, there seems to have been some acrimony over his pension arrangements; Emery Walker wrote that the municipal authorities had behaved ‘shabbily’ towards him (p. 201). Perhaps for this reason, he did not remain in Birmingham but moved to Twickenham, continuing to do some teaching in Clapham. His wife died in 1922. The tone of Sly’s account of the later part of Catterson-Smith’s life suggests something anti-climactic, although he continued to lecture, and to judge arts and crafts exhibitions. He died at Richmond in 1938. Among the many tributes he received was one from Lady Cockerell, which forms Sly’s concluding sentence: ‘[h]e was without guile and most lovable and I feel honoured to have known him’ (p. 177).

The next part of the book is a section called ‘Who’s Who’ (pp. 178-85) in which the editors try to provide background information about the artists and craftsmen associated with Catterson-Smith. Unfortunately, a number of errors occur in this section, some of them noted in the Erratum list; there are others, such as ‘Ford Maddox Ford’, ‘Rosetti’, and ‘Tennyson, Alfred’; in addition the use of italics for titles is inconsistent. All this is a pity, as any competent scholar could have sorted out all of these matters in half an hour.

We then come to a scholarly account of Catterson-Smith by Professor Wildman, in eleven brief sections, printed in a modern font; no suggestion is made as to how the reader is to relate this to Sly’s account with which it necessarily overlaps. Later in his account, Wildman quotes (on p. 192) a very interesting letter about Morris not previously known to me, written on 12 February 1906 to the furniture designer Percy Wells. Unfortunately the letter is not quoted accurately in the book under review, but Wildman has kindly provided the complete and accurate version quoted below:

As to my personal impression of Morris – One characteristic was his total indifference as to what people thought of him. To be himself completely seemed to possess him utterly. He was as guileless as a 3 year old child – And gave me the same feeling of wonderment when looking at him that one feels on looking at a lion – Guilelessness and strength combined with a faraway feeling. An intense loathing of affectation. I will spew this out of my mouth sort of a feeling to any one tainted with affectation. I[t] gave me the impression that he suffered from the idea that a vile state of society hindered him in the complete fulfillment of his being – and that he saw was the curse under which we all live. One saw now and then that he had a deep tenderness – But no fragment of sentimentalism. He hated being asked questions – especially questions which meant an effort at analysing. He appeared to be unable or unwilling to separate his feelings from anything he thought about.

The beauty of the outside of things was enough for his mind, he did not wish to probe to the unseen. Unfairness of any sort was grit in his wheels.

He was [singularly?] patient with the working men. And would say if one made a disparaging remark about them – ‘What can you expect?’

This description draws attention to aspects of Morris not frequently emphasised, but quite consistent with what we know of him, in particular his lack of interest in theoretical questions and in the unseen. There are no fewer than ninety-nine footnotes to Wildman’s piece, in contrast to their absence from Sly’s text. A Bibliography is provided in chronological order (without giving places of publication) from Fred Miller in 1898 to an unpublished Cambridge PhD thesis of 2012. Item 4 is given bizarrely as *The Collected Works of William Morris. With Introductions by His Daughter May Morris; along with William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist* (Longmans, Green and Company, 26 vols, 1910-1915). This conflates the 24 volumes of the *Collected Works* of 1910-15 with the two volumes published in 1936 by Basil Blackwood at Oxford University Press. Norman Kelvin’s *Collected Letters* is cited as 5 vols; this should read 4 vols in 5. The Bibliography includes *Robert Catterson-Smith: A Forgotten Pre-Raphaelite*, an exhibition catalogue of 1998 by Campbell Wilson, but as the Bibliography is not annotated, no indication is given of the importance of this book.

This mixed volume ends at this point, with no index to encourage the scholarly reader, for whom the volume was clearly not intended. It left this reviewer with very mixed feelings, but glad to find Catterson-Smith receiving the attention he certainly deserves.

Peter Faulkner

William E. Fredeman, ed., *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Volume X: Index, Undated Letters and Bibliography*, compiled by Roger C Lewis and Jane Cowan (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, with the Modern Humanities Research Association, 2015), 395 pp., 1 black-and-white illustration, £125.00 hbk, ISBN 9781843843955.

An index is seldom a text to read for itself, but a functional tail-piece to a non-fiction book, used like a search engine for locating references to people, places, other texts. Possibly, in the digital age, traditional published indices are redundant – any electronically-read book has an inbuilt search facility highlighting names and pages, and so saving us all the effort of either compiling or consulting.

However, this final volume of the Rossetti Letters project, initiated many moons ago by ‘Dick’ Fredeman, is no traditional index, but ‘an analytical and biographical index [...] designed to give researchers the widest possible contextual access to all names of persons, places, works of art, writings, organizations and activities both physical and intellectual mentioned in Rossetti’s letters and in the notes for the years 1835-82’ (p. 1). Moreover, it is also a subject index, with mini-descriptions and sub-headings, in chronological order. No wonder then that it fills 564 columns of small type. The remainder of the volume contains forty-three pages of undated, unpublished letters, which are also sadly unnumbered, and, as far as I can see, unindexed, though mostly of the minor ‘come to dine on Thursday’ variety.

The 125 column entry for Rossetti himself therefore reads like a summarised biography, arranged in twenty-one sections, each subdivided by year: Chronology of events, Art, Poetry & Photography, Music, Theatre, Actors & Actresses, Finances, Health, Philosophy, prejudices and idiosyncrasies; Artistic works from Juvenilia through to unexecuted or aborted works and proposals; Literary works from Juvenilia through published works, individual poems, nonsense verses and translations to reading. These sections are fairly simple to follow, though at times they suggest the need for an indexed index.

Initials refer to some eighty-six individuals listed in the prelims (the index may contain more – in the entries I spotted EES[iddal] not in the list). Lesser characters in the soap opera that was Rossetti’s life, or at least his after-life – Barbara Bodichon, say, or Vernon Lushington – are of course outlined only insofar as they interacted with Rossetti. Others have fuller treatment, notably William and Jane Morris, with five and seven columns respectively. In the latter there appears some confusion, under the listing for references in 1870, which after ‘DGR addresses love letter to her reminiscent in sentiment & even phrase of the passionate love-sonnets written during this period’, continues:

WMs visit DGR at Scalands; ‘benefitting greatly’ at Kelmscott; JM spends a longer period there, not at Scalands but an adjacent cottage, Fir Bank [...]; Kelmscott better for her than ‘all the mineral baths in Germany’; ‘wonderfully better’; ‘much better’; DGR lends rooms in Glottenham house, ‘so ill again’.
(p. 123)

In fact Kelmscott did not feature as a country residence until 1871. And amid the dense entries I daresay there are other minor errors and omissions – I confess to not having read every word – such as the unglossed references to Mike [Michelangelo] and Sandy [Botticelli] in a note to Fairfax Murray. Some readers may be disappointed that there is no visible summary of the famous affair with Janey, though Rossetti’s later letters to her are summarised in detail – thus with letter 375 in 1880:

[DGR] tries to articulate in this letter his love for JM as expressed in his sonnet ‘True Woman: Herself’: ‘if life & fate had willed to link us together, you wd have found true what you cannot think to be truth when – alas! – untried’/ FSE calls Nov 25 to discuss pub[lication] DGR’s old & new poems in 1 vol./ WBS may be forced to move because of construction on Chelsea Embankment [...].

(pp. 125-26)

The wealth of detail is really too much to cover in a review, but contains plums such as this entry, listing citations from 1849 to 1871:

Stunners & stunning (PR calorific): copy of Bonnard, stunning words for poetry, CP[atmore]’s ‘Seasons’, Notre Dame, Leonardo, & Titian’s Francis I; WMR’s ‘Mrs. Holmes Grey’/Dürer’s etchings, in RA & other museums, Creswick’s ‘scurvy style towards a poor old stunner’ like WHH, country round Sevenoaks, WBS, frame for Beatrice, ‘overwhelmingly stunning’, *King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table*, Bernhard Smith ‘first-rate old stunner’, DGR’s crib in Hastings, ‘cordial stunner’ at Belle Sauvage; JEM’s *Found* in DGR’s Folio skit, FMB calls EES ‘a stunner & no mistake’, Marchioness of Waterford, ‘stable of stunners [WEF]’, Ruth Herbert, ACS & EBJ define Heaven as ‘a rose-garden full of stunners’, Lady Ashburton ‘a regular Stunner’, painter Gérome a ‘stunner of a sort’, *The Merciless Lady* (‘stunner’), ‘I got La Pia on the canvas yesterday & the head will come stunning’, photo book by CFM ‘a real stunner’.

(p. 258)

This ought to qualify the now-generally received view that Rossetti and all Pre-Raphaelites used the term for female models, when it was chiefly a simple commendation like ‘fab’ or ‘cool’. But it probably will not: the now-popular account of the art and artists has far more power than the verifiable facts – which this volume, as culmination to a magnificent project, does much to clarify. As editors, which is a better word than compilers for this meta- and mega-index, Roger Lewis and Jane Cowan deserve the highest praise – a daunting endeavour, stunningly realised.

Jan Marsh

Gavin Stamp, *Gothic for the Steam Age: An Illustrated Biography of George Gilbert Scott* (London: Aurum Press, 2015), 208 pp., numerous colour and b&w illustrations, £30.00 hbk, ISBN 9781781311240.

P.S. Barnwell, Geoffrey Tyack and William Whyte, eds, *Sir George Gilbert Scott 1811–1878* (Donington: Sean Tyas, 2014), 248 pp., 83 b&w illustrations, £40.00 hbk, ISBN 9781907730375.

In a letter of 13 May 1889 to Georgiana Burne-Jones, William Morris described a visit to Bradford-on-Avon: ‘The church is a very big and fine one, but scraped to death by G. Scott, the (happily) dead dog’. Although Morris would not have published such an unkind remark, the jibe undoubtedly represents his considered opinion of George Gilbert Scott. It scarcely matters that Morris was wrong: Holy Trinity was restored by J. Elkington Gill of Bath (in 1865-66), and Scott never laid a finger on it. But by 1889, Scott had been dead for eleven years, and his reputation as the prime villain in the saga of Victorian church restoration was almost beyond argument. Scott was not the architect most hated by the SPAB – that title should probably be accorded to J.L. Pearson – but he has an honoured place in its pantheon of the damned because the society traces its foundation to Morris’s celebrated letter to the *Athenaeum* of 5 March 1877: ‘My eye just now caught the word “restoration” in the morning paper, and, on looking closer, I saw that this time it is nothing less than the Minster of Tewkesbury that is to be destroyed by Sir Gilbert Scott’.

As Gavin Stamp points out in his brilliant, spirited ‘illustrated biography’, Scott’s prominence as a designer of new buildings as well as a restorer of old ones made him a convenient focus for Morris’s attack. He was, as he remains, the quintessential Victorian architect, and judgments of the architecture of his age have often focused on his most prominent London buildings – the Foreign Office, the Midland Grand Hotel at St Pancras Station and, of course, the Albert Memorial, the work that won him his knighthood in 1872. He also seems characteristically Victorian in his

workaholic industry: after Scott died of heart disease, caused in part by exhaustion, his obituarist in the *Builder* listed 732 works produced by Scott's office, one of the largest in nineteenth-century Europe. Stamp tells us that this was an underestimate – 879 is a more likely number. Inevitably, not all these jobs were of equal significance or merit, and a considerable number have disappeared, so to judge Scott's achievement it is necessary to make a critical selection from his great output, demolished as well as extant.

This is the core of Stamp's achievement. His book has an unusual structure. The first half, an extended biographical essay, is especially valuable as there is no full-length biography of Scott, and there has been no monograph since David Cole's terse, underrated *The Work of Sir Gilbert Scott*, published in 1980. Scott's work is on the whole well documented, but disappointingly few personal papers have survived. The most important source for his life is his posthumous *Personal and Professional Recollections* (1879), the first published autobiography by a British architect, but in many ways it is a self-serving text that needs to be handled judiciously. Stamp has conquered these shortcomings to produce a vividly convincing account of Scott's personality, in which fierce ambition and thin-skinned prickliness were combined with gentleness of manner, kindness and a lack of either social or intellectual snobbery that made him loved by almost everybody who worked for him.

Stamp's skills are no less evident in the second half of the book, a rich selection of illustrations, historic and modern, of Scott's key buildings, arranged by genre and explained in discursive captions. Here Stamp reveals the fruits of many years of studying Scott, going back to the 1960s, when as a schoolboy he joined the Victorian Society because it was battling to save St Pancras Station. Spread over 110 well-designed pages, the combination of these illustrations with Stamp's sharp analyses resembles an outstanding lecture. It has much to offer specialist as well as amateur enthusiasts for Victorian architecture, since it ranges so widely, both in building type and geographically. Some of Scott's most impressive buildings are outside Britain, notably his spectacular Bombay University and fine cathedral in Christchurch, New Zealand, now sadly threatened with demolition after being damaged in the 2011 earthquake. The section on Scott's churches is particularly valuable, since they have rarely received much thoughtful criticism, and are so numerous that an overview is difficult.

Stamp defends Scott's reputation as a restorer, but, on the reasonable grounds that restoration is difficult to illustrate, he focuses his section on restorations on Scott's magnificent fittings for medieval cathedrals – although his illustration of the degraded state of the chapter house at Westminster Abbey before Scott got to work is telling. A fuller analysis of Scott as a restorer is a highlight of a volume of papers given at a

conference at Rewley House in Oxford to mark the bicentenary in 2011 of the architect's birth. Twelve leading scholars of nineteenth-century architecture – including Stamp, who provides an introduction – examine some of the many aspects of Scott's career, ranging from country houses (by Peter Howell) to his government buildings in Whitehall (by M.H. Port).

Although in a rather apologetic preface, one of the volume's editors, P. S. Barnwell, draws attention to the lack of essays on Scott's commercial and institutional buildings, or on any public buildings apart from his Whitehall schemes, these do not seem serious absences. That is partly because what is here is so good. Chris Miele provides a tantalising taste of the biography of Scott on which he is working, with a paper on Scott's earliest years as the child of an impoverished Evangelical parson that explains a great deal about his insecure, driven personality. Geoff Brandwood cleverly deals with Scott's churches by focusing solely on his work in London, where there are significant works from every stage of his career. G.A. Bremner draws on the wide research for his masterly study of the Gothic revival in the British empire, *Imperial Gothic* (2013), to set Scott's colonial cathedrals in their architectural and religious context. Although Simon Bradley's study of Scott's work in Cambridge is based on research for his revision of the *Buildings of England* volume on Cambridgeshire (2014), he goes well beyond that book in an absorbing analysis of the network of patronage that brought Scott such major commissions as the chapel for St John's College.

However, most readers of the book with an interest in Morris will turn first to the chapter on Scott as a restorer, written by Claudia Marx, a practising architect and author of a major but as yet unpublished 2010 PhD thesis on the restoration of cathedrals and major churches in England during the nineteenth century. She briefly analyses the development of Scott's approach to restoration and convincingly argues that it became increasingly conservative. She also explains that the debates that prompted the foundation of the SPAB during 1877 went back at least to the 1840s, when Ruskin's attacks on restoration prompted a riposte by Scott, *A Plea for the Faithful Restoration of Our Ancient Churches*, published in 1850. While urging a cautious approach, Scott argued that if medieval churches are to remain in use, they will have to be adapted for modern liturgical needs. He returned to this argument in his reply to Morris's 1877 attack on him: 'Let the Society make up their minds at once that any attempt to banish religious motives from the treatment of churches is suicidal. They were built from such motives, and must ever be treated with like aim'. This was a point that Ruskin, and after him Morris, could never quite concede.

One reason is that Morris, like Ruskin, thought that architects who specialised in church restoration were hypocrites who were doing unnecessary work just for the money. Morris must have looked at Scott's *Recollections* – or at least read reviews of it

– since he seized on Scott’s admission that he agreed to change his design for the Foreign Office from Gothic to classical after recalling that he had a family to support, and could not afford to lose such a major commission. Scott, ‘the old bird’, wrote Morris to Thomas Wardle on 13 April 1877, ‘is convicted out of his own mouth of having made an enormous fortune by doing what he well knows to be wrong, – he is a damned old thief in short’.

More subtly, Morris argued that Scott translated medieval buildings into Victorian ones. In *Concerning Westminster Abbey* (1893), Morris wrote that Scott and Pearson’s restoration of the exterior of the north transept was ‘another example of the dead-alive office work of the modern restoring architect, overflowing with surface knowledge of the medieval work in every detail, but devoid of historic sympathy and true historical knowledge’. Morris’s point is all the more telling because he was attacking not Scott’s destruction of a medieval original (an accusation that Pearson’s work invites) but his addition of new sculpture in a conjectural recreation of the transept’s portals. Marx concedes this point, writing that ‘[u]ltimately, rather than enhancing the credibility of the restoration, Scott’s consummate Victorian details have diminished it, undermining his scholarship and his efforts at achieving an accurate reconstruction of the thirteenth-century portals’ (p. 104). While we might admire the portals today as examples of Victorian art, that was not what Scott intended.

However, Morris’s hostility to Scott ignores important issues. Like Ruskin, what Morris really cared about was the surface of medieval buildings, and in particular sculpture and carving. The challenge of making a building stable was of much less interest. As the collapse in 1861 of the crossing tower and spire at Chichester cathedral revealed so dramatically, many of England’s medieval churches were in a parlous structural state by the nineteenth century. Marx enthralingly describes Scott’s approach to these problems, sometimes in collaboration with engineers, but often not. She explains, for example, how he strengthened the crossing tower of Salisbury Cathedral with ingenious metal ties, and used hydraulic presses to push the tottering south wall of the nave of St Alban’s Abbey back to vertical. ‘I do not covet such work’, wrote Scott wearily in 1877, ‘one sleeps more quietly without it’, but his achievement in ensuring that so many of Britain’s major medieval churches survived without structural failure into the twentieth century deserves far more credit than he has been given.

Scott may have won a knighthood and made a fortune, but it is hard not to feel sorry for the way posterity has treated him. Morris’s choice of target when launching the SPAB was unfair. By 1877 Scott had been at work at Tewkesbury for three years – the notice that had caught Morris’s eye was an appeal for additional funds – and

nobody now would single out Tewkesbury as an example of destructive restoration. But it scarcely matters, since even in Scott's lifetime, Morris and the SPAB had won the battle of words, as Scott himself conceded, with a generosity of spirit that his opponents rarely bothered to match. He wrote of Morris's attack that 'I feel more deeply on this subject than any other, and never lose an opportunity of protesting against barbarisms of this kind, in season and out of season. I am, therefore, willing to be sacrificed by being made the victim in a cause which I have so intensely at heart.' In 1862 he had written, in words that could almost be from the SPAB's manifesto, 'I could almost wish the word "restoration" expunged from our architectural vocabulary, and that we could be content with the more commonplace term "reparation"'. The difference was that Scott was addressing architects, and by implication the clergymen who called the shots in church restoration; the SPAB – with enduring success – addressed the court of public opinion, which long ago found Scott guilty. With Stamp's splendid book, and this valuable collection of essays, we have persuasive evidence for the defence.

Michael Hall

Annie Creswick Dawson and Paul Dawson, *Benjamin Creswick* (York: Guild of St George, 2015), 61 pp., 48 illustrations, £10.00 pbk, ISBN 9780993200939.

In this attractive little book, Annie Creswick Dawson sets out to restore the reputation of her great-grandfather, Benjamin Creswick (1853-1946), a currently undervalued member of the Arts and Crafts movement, known mainly for his work in terra cotta. In the Foreword Paul Dawson, the designer of the book, draws attention to the number of craft-workers whom Ruskin helped with money and advice. He remarks that at the time of his death, Creswick 'was possibly the last surviving craftsman with a direct link to John Ruskin' (p. 2).

Annie begins her account with an attractive chapter called 'Personal Recollections of My Great Grandfather', in which she recalls spending a good deal of time as a girl in the studios of her grandfather Charles, craftsman and artist, and his jeweller wife, both devotees of Ruskin. Indeed, '[h]e was present in their family life and Benjamin's teaching, and he was vital to the life we led in Edinburgh' (p. 8). The next chapter deals with 'The Early Years' in Sheffield, where Benjamin had the misfortune to be apprenticed in the knife-grinding trade. When it became obvious that his health could not stand this dangerous trade, it was fortunate that he had developed crafts interests that gave him the basis for a happy and successful life. He made good use of the Walkley Museum, which Ruskin opened in 1875 to 'feed the minds of the working men of Sheffield' (p. 13). The Swans, the curators of the Museum, recommended

him to Ruskin, who invited him to Brantwood to make a portrait bust. Soon after, Ruskin invited him to move with his family to Coniston, and gave him financial support for some four years while his craftsman's skills developed.

Benjamin then moved to London, where he met a number of prominent members of the Arts and Crafts movement, including Arthur Macmurdo, Selwyn Image, William de Morgan, and Frank Brangwyn, who became a lifelong friend. He began to exhibit his work successfully at exhibitions including the Arts and Crafts, and created his best-known work, the terra cotta frieze at Cutlers' Hall in Warwick Lane in 1887, which celebrates in its thirty-three figures 'the energy, vitality and sheer hard work of the workers [...]'. We can learn much about the work process without the need for words' (p. 37). By this time Birmingham had become an important centre for the Arts and Crafts. The Birmingham Municipal School of Art needed a master for its new modelling department. Benjamin was appointed to the post, and began a new career in teaching in January 1889. He taught in a Ruskinian spirit that emphasised practice over theory, and this occasioned some criticisms from the more academic. But his knowledge and enthusiasm carried the day. Annie records that Benjamin 'took great delight in teaching, which was reflected in the success of his pupils' (p. 270). But, unlike Ruskin, he was not a writer. We are told that he published only one lecture, in 1891, in which he argued for the importance of sculpture in making people aware of English history, and so 'quicken our perceptions and sympathies with all that is noble in our national life, religious, poetic, politic and domestic (pp. 30-31). This view of the public responsibility of artists was typical of Arts and Crafts practitioners, and certainly controlled Benjamin's practice. He retired from the Birmingham School of Art in 1918, but continued working until 1926, when he retired from the post of Professor of Sculpture at the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists. His last major works were the panels for the Stations of the Cross for the Roman Catholic church of Our Lady and St Bridget in Northfield, completed in 1929. He lived in happy retirement for another seventeen years, dying in 1946.

The author supports her claims for Benjamin by drawing attention to ten 'Key Works' in various media. The earliest is the frieze for Cutlers' Hall, already discussed, followed by the Bloomsbury Library in Nechells Parkway, the Dean and Pitman Building in Corporation Street, Birmingham, the Handsworth Library, two smaller-scale works, a wrought-iron bookstand of 1899 and some repoussé work, a copper casket and a panel from a scheme by the Bromsgrove Guild, several pieces of decorative stonework from Bournville, the Boldmere [War] Memorial of 1921, a large paper frieze for Crouch and Butler of Birmingham, and finally the fourteen panels of the Stations of the Cross at Northfield, described as 'Creswick's last and perhaps most dramatic project [...] the only major religious work that he produced' (p. 52).

The Conclusion reasserts the importance to Benjamin of Ruskin's early and continuing support, but argues also for the independence of mind shown in his work in many media. We feel the personal commitment of the author to her great-grandfather, whose career is summarised in a timeline at the end. It is good to learn that this modest book has the support of the Guild of St. George, and that a comprehensive illustrated catalogue of Benjamin Creswick's work is in preparation.

Peter Faulkner

Natasha Moore, *Victorian Connections: The Literary and Artistic Circles of William and Helen Allingham from the Collections of Grolier Club Members* (New York: The Grolier Club, 2015), 64 pp., 24 illustrations, 10 in colour, \$25.00 pbk, ISBN 9781605830599.

Victorian Connections is an attractive little book, showing on its front cover the poet and writer William Allingham painted in watercolour by his wife Helen, and on its back cover a pencil self-portrait by her. The frontispiece by Helen, an illustration from William's *Rhymes for the Young Folk* (1887), shows William introducing their son Henry to a leprechaun. The book, designed by Mark Samuels Lasner, is the catalogue of the exhibition at the Grolier Club from 26 March to 25 May 2015, and contains 101 entries by Natasha Moore, giving bibliographical details and information about each entry. Moore also provides a Preface about the networks of personalities within Victorian culture which produced the books and illustrations which made up the exhibition. The catalogue comes in nine parts, 'Portraits' (from one of William by Helen c.1880 to a cabinet-card photograph of Henry James by Elliott and Fry in 1890); 'Early Connections' (from a presentation copy to William Barnes of Allingham's first volume of poetry in 1850 to a *carte de visite* photograph of F.G. Stephens by Cundall & Downes in 1859); 'The PreRaphaelites' (from a presentation copy to F.G. Stephens of Allingham's *Poems* of 1850 to a presentation copy to Allingham of the 1870 translation of the *Volsunga Saga* by Eiríkr Magnússon and William Morris); 'Irish Connections' (from Allingham's *Laurence Bloomfield in Ireland* (1864) to Hugh Allingham's 1879 *Ballyshannon: Its History and Antiquities*); 'American Connections' (from the author's corrected copies of Allingham's *Poems: First American Edition* (1861) to W.M. Rossetti's 1868 selection of Whitman's *Poems*); 'Artists' (from an undated photograph of Richard Doyle to Allingham's *Songs, Ballads and Stories* of 1877); 'Writers' (from Allingham's *Ye Dirty Old Man*, 1870 or later, to a photograph of Turgenev taken in 1884); 'Family Circle' (from a presentation copy of Tennyson's *Queen Mary: A Drama* (1876?), to Allingham's *Rhymes for the Young Folk* (1887)); and 'Afterlife' (from Allingham's 1864 anthology *The Ballad Book to The Cottage Homes of England Drawn by Helen Allingham and Described by Stewart Dick* (1909)). I hope this will

give some idea of the remarkable variety of material included, although, as a catalogue, it cannot have the narrative drive of a unified story.

There are 101 entries in all, which attractively demonstrate how Victorian culture made it possible for a young man from the west coast of Ireland and his talented watercolourist wife to create what Moore calls an ‘intricate network of friendships, collaborations, marriages and families’ which left ‘a rich textual record of the larger-than-life personalities and diverse achievements of a generation’ (p. 5). The exhibition, which owed much to the scholarship and connoisseurship of Mark Samuels Lasner, must have been a great pleasure to visit, and this book makes possible a derivative pleasure for those of us unable to reach the estimable Grolier Club.

Peter Faulkner

The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Richmond: Bradford Exchange Press & Charles Winthrop and Sons, 2015), 554 pp., £395.00 hbk, no ISBN. Reproduction of the first edition of the Kelmscott Chaucer, leather-bound with golden thread.

For many years there have been no attempts to produce facsimile editions of Kelmscott Press titles, and suddenly we have three in quick succession: last year’s exquisite Folio Society edition of *The Odes of Horace*, reviewed in a recent issue of this *Journal*, and their recent *News from Nowhere*. The largest and most elaborate of all is the new *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, published by Charles Winthrop and Sons. The publisher’s stated aim is to produce ‘the most perfect replica of this acclaimed work ever attempted’ and they have certainly risen to the challenge. Sourcing a replica of the rich paper stock originally selected by Morris they have been able to reproduce the deckled edges and gilding of the original, and to recreate the width of the spine, allowing a ‘lay-flat’ binding, something that previous attempts to produce facsimiles of the work have failed to manage.

Intense study continues to the painstaking reproduction of the covers, the pigskin tinted to capture the rich colour and gilded decoration of the original, even to the accurate measurement of the clasps of the first edition. These unfortunately cut in slightly to the edges of the paper, a condition I have not been able to compare with the original.

But what of the printing, so disappointing in other facsimile versions? Here the type is sharp and the illustrations beautifully reproduced, accuracy continuing to include the exact shade of red for margins and headings used in the first printing. Authenticity continues to the stamp of the Doves Bindery on the inside back cover. All this research, painstaking sourcing of material and attention to detail does not come cheap and at £395 this is, not surprisingly, the most expensive of modern

facsimiles. In a limited edition of 1,896 (Morris produced 425 copies on paper and fifteen on vellum) it must be hoped that a market still exists for such luxury works.

Penny Lyndon

William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (London: Folio Society, 2015), 306 pp., £100.00 hbk, no ISBN. Reproduced from a copy of the Kelmscott Press edition by kind permission of the William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow; printed on Book Laid Ivory paper by Memminger Mediencentrum AG, Memmingen, Germany, and bound by Lacenmaier, Reutlingen, Germany in full leather, with a design by Neil Gower.

This facsimile of the Kelmscott Press *News from Nowhere*, which was first published in November 1892, is, as one would expect from the Folio Society, a typographical treat, with its decorated wood-engraved frontispiece of ‘the old house by the Thames’ by C.M. Gere, its numerous decorative initial letters, and its shoulder-notes in red. Unfortunately, the cover is gravely over-decorated. Whereas the original was in limp vellum with silk ties, and the title on the spine in Golden type, Neil Gower has felt entitled to cover both front and spine with weird typography in inlaid gold, departing disastrously from the restrained and Morrisian design provided by David Pearson for the fine Folio facsimile of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. Its only virtue is the pleasure given by the contrast it provides with the ordered elegance of the rest of the book.

Peter Faulkner