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## Reviews

Edited by Peter Faulkner

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Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, *Slow Print: Literary Radicalism and Late Victorian Print Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 378 pp., £23.99 hbk, ISBN 9780804784085.

Those educated in systems structured by conventional scholarly practice and taught to value book-learning above all else might wonder about the status that Morris attaches to literature and reading in *News from Nowhere*. Elizabeth Miller confronts the issue head-on. In his later life Morris indeed lavished attention on book-production, having already spent a good part of it writing and publishing in the socialist press, but his ideal society does without both. *Nowhere's* inhabitants, she observes, are literate and the children do learn to read, but they are not academic. According to Dick, she notes, ““They don’t do much reading, except for a few story-books, till they are about fifteen years old; we don’t encourage early bookishness””. Instead of becoming expert readers, *Nowhere's* young people become expert story-tellers and ‘users of spoken language’ (p. 70). Maybe Morris was just torn between a love for past oral traditions and early Victorian literature? Perhaps, as Thorstein Veblen argued, Morris’s venture with the Kelmscott Press revealed the tension between his

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politics and his aesthetics or, as E.P. Thompson believed, that the Press was fundamentally an apolitical project (pp. 53-54).

Miller's beautifully written, richly detailed and impressively learned book provides a different, more persuasive explanation for Morris's position. His efforts to produce books on craft lines, like his commitment to fund spaces for anti-capitalist critique, were both manifestations of a consistent drive to challenge the logic of commercial exploitation. Morris published, of course, but he did so as one who longed to escape the mediations of capitalist culture and who preferred the immediacy and camaraderie of direct exchange. Thus *A Dream of John Ball* advanced the idea that Morris again captured in *News from Nowhere* by depicting 'oral exchange [...] as a highly effective political medium, much more so than print' (pp. 71-72). Morris, Miller argues, understood the public power and anti-authoritarian challenge of oral discourse and the fellowship that it fostered.

Miller's book is not about Morris but about an array of radical movements and debates that coalesce around him. Describing Morris as 'perhaps the most influential radical writer of the era' (p. 25) she builds on a perceptive and sympathetic account of his work to analyse literary culture between 1880 and 1910. *Slow Print*, the book's title, is also a short-hand term that describes the diverse, complex and interrelated experiments in publishing, literature, aesthetics, poetry and theatre that Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement stimulated. Miller's discussion is organised in a themed chronology which progresses through a critique of realism, the dramatic revival of the 1890s, an analysis of poetry in the radical press and turn-of-the-century esoteric discourses, inspired by theosophy, to finish with a consideration of free love and the emergence of sexual radicalism. The study examines a large group including Shaw, Edward Carpenter, Annie Besant and Alfred Orage, but Miller's approach is not canonical. She lovingly picks through a radical press archive, in part with the intention of recovering lost treasures and, in the other part, with a desire to challenge prevailing conceptions of literary modernism by showing how the obscure and not-so obscure Victorian literatures she uncovers infused and shaped it.

A critique of Jürgen Habermas and an appreciation of both Raymond Williams and Michael Foucault lend Miller's historical and literary criticism theoretical shape, also highlighting the contemporary resonances of the challenges with which radical Victorians wrestled. Looking at Morris and Shaw, she challenges Habermas's claims about the possibility of creating spaces within the public sphere for the exercise of communicative reason (pp.70, 127). Turning to radical poetry, she acknowledges the potential for countercultural movements to decline from alternative to marginal, but shows how this was avoided by the largely conservative and un-experimental form of Victorian writing (p. 168). Towards the end of the book, she uses the idea of

biopolitics to reflect on late nineteenth-century campaigns for free love and sexual liberation. Miller's view is that the debates about censorship and free print were reignited by these campaigns. Whereas political and economic radicals had failed to threaten the ideological dominance of the capitalist press and produced literature that could happily co-exist within the commercial mainstream, free love campaigners posed an altogether more significant challenge than this, thus signalling a shift from class to sex-based radicalism (p. 261).

Miller's anti-capitalist lens, which might have dimmed the analysis, instead produces some fine points. She considers the critique often levelled against Morris about the one-dimensionality of his characters. On her reading 'flatness and unreality [...] constitute their revolutionary quality'. Morris wanted to show by his writing that 'roundness and volume are not for us' but for 'the postrevolutionary future' (p. 79). Miller develops the theme in a discussion of Shaw and then Wilde, examining their responses to realism by using a concept of heartlessness and illuminating, in the process, some significant shifts in the terms of debate. Morris's 'socialist revolt against the illusory forms of capitalism' gives way in Wilde to an 'aesthetic revolt against realism' (p. 111). Miller also shows how the sensibilities of anti-capitalist slow print stimulated experimentation with new literary forms. Shaw's turn from the novel to the theatre was driven, she argues, by a rejection of the commercialisation of the former (p. 132). Having decided to move in this direction, Shaw discovered that his efforts to reinvigorate a debased literature too easily drew the ire of the censor. As Ibsen had already discovered, the new medium of print-drama enabled Shaw to expound radical ideas while avoiding the restrictions of the stage. Slow-print values thus led him to develop a new platform for free expression (p. 165).

One of the major themes unifying these meticulous observations is a persistent concern with democracy and elitism. Even where Miller offers judgments about the implications of the positions she examines, her careful reconstruction of context reveals the tensions in slow print that help to explain why particular activists and writers fell on one side or the other of this basic divide. The contrast between Morris and Shaw, whose motivations were in many respects similar, is striking in this respect. Both believed that capitalism was responsible for the production of a 'monolithic, impoverished literary and print culture'. Both observed the parallel rise of a mass reading public, but whereas Morris held fast to the possibility of democratic art and of reaching an audience outside the market – using pre-capitalist cultural models for inspiration – Shaw associated mass readership with the devaluation of literary culture. It was still possible to argue for anti-capitalist print, but only as an acquired taste (p. 108). Shaw toiled over the design of *Fabian Essays* because he was desperate to mount 'a formal challenge to the logic of print capitalism'. Yet whereas Morris used radical

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print to disseminate revolutionary ideas to mass audiences, Shaw used Morris's style to appeal to a privileged circle of intellectuals. Miller admits that there was probably a reputational issue behind Shaw's strategy. She notes: 'printing cheap editions might [...] diminish the Fabians' social capital, for the Society was known for attracting the cultural elite'. Nevertheless she puts Shaw's refusal to print cheap editions down to a primary concern not to 'reinforce the ideology of capitalist production' – a principle he took from Morris (p. 117).

Miller tracks the theme through to turn-of-the-century avant-garde figures like Alfred Orage, who stood on the cusp of modernism. The influence of Morris's democratic anti-capitalism is again made clear here, and although Miller does not follow his legacy, it was felt strongly in the work of Herbert Read, who also absorbed Orage's fondness for Nietzsche.

To my mind, Miller's exploration of elitism and democracy is more successful than her claim about the shift from class to sex radicalism, which she discusses at the end of the book. The argument is based on the coupling of two claims, the first about the failure of the early slow-print campaigners to destabilise commercial print and the second about the inability of the mainstream to accommodate or co-opt sex radicalism for commercial purposes. Miller's suggestion that the revival of censorship wars indicated a political refocusing risks overplaying the relationship between the anti-capitalist strategies stimulated by slow print and the ambitions or character of radical movements that experimented with it. Moreover, there appears to be a significant difference between her observation that sex radicalism provided a new site of free print activism (p. 295) and the suggestion that 'radical discourse was losing its rhetorical coherence around the issue of class' (p. 302). Miller's invocation of biopolitics seems to do a lot of work in establishing this idea and the complexities of the currents that she probes up to this point are dissolved in a dichotomy that looks too sharp.

Miller's re-assessment of the role that slow-print radicalism played in establishing the ground for modernism does not rely on an argument about the priority of free love and sex psychology in late-Victorian literary cultures. Similarly, her idea that modernist anti-realism and aesthetics were prefigured by Victorians never appears as something imposed on or read back into the earlier period. Miller not only brilliantly illuminates the revolutionary principles that infused Victorian slow print but also shows how this reading helps to qualify anti-modernist critique. When mapped on to the rejection of capitalist commercial practices, the establishment of modernist niche markets appears less like an instrumental policy than an authentic radical rejection of mass production. Similarly, the elitism of modernists looks different when refracted through the slow-print lens. The sobering lesson is that elitist elements within radical

movements serve as a ‘reminder of how easily resistance to capitalism can transmute – or be transmuted – into antipopulism and how part of capitalism’s strength is to render the anticommercial as the antidemocratic’ (p. 301).

**Ruth Kinna**

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Amelia Yeates and Serena Trowbridge, eds, *Pre-Raphaelite Masculinities: Constructions of Masculinity in Art and Literature* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 251 pp., 18 illustrations, £65.00 hbk, ISBN 9781409455585.

The majority of critical work on the Pre-Raphaelites from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has focused predominantly on what Dinah Roe describes as ‘[w]omanhood in general and female sexuality in particular’, though, as Roe notes, nineteenth-century critics were as interested in the Pre-Raphaelites’ ‘depictions of men’ as of women (p. 151). The editors of *Pre-Raphaelite Masculinities* seek to redress this critical blind-spot by providing a wide-ranging and impressively researched collection of essays that examine the complex and often contradictory representations of manhood and manliness in the work of Pre-Raphaelite artists and writers, drawing on the rich body of critical and theoretical work on gender and sexuality that has developed in recent years. As the editors and individual contributors acknowledge, they are to varying degrees indebted to the pioneering work of scholars such as Herbert Sussman (*Victorian Masculinities*, 1995) and J. B. Bullen (*The Pre-Raphaelite Body: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry and Criticism*, 1998), whose seminal studies laid the foundations for future work in this area, but they also argue convincingly for the need for a thorough reappraisal of Pre-Raphaelite conceptions and constructions of masculinity in the twenty-first century, and this book provides a series of original, thought-provoking and at times provocative essays that succeed in encouraging us to re-examine and rethink the Pre-Raphaelites.

Yeates and Trowbridge assert in the Introduction that masculinity as understood by all the contributors is ‘constructed, fluid and mobile’ (p. 3), and the book as a whole thus refutes stereotypical ‘separate spheres’ approaches to gender and sexuality in the Victorian period. The opening chapter by Jay D. Sloan develops this premise by analysing how Rossetti overtly challenges ‘prevailing Victorian gender ideologies’ through two different constructions of masculinity in his poems ‘Jenny’ and ‘On the “Vita Nuova” of Dante’, which Sloan identifies as the ‘Confessional Man’ and the ‘Pilgrim of Love’ respectively (p. 19). There is an extensive and insightful analysis of ‘Jenny’ in this chapter, the detailed textual analysis supporting Sloan’s claim that in ‘exposing the abusive nature of Victorian men’ through the contemplations of the

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poem's speaker, 'Rossetti activates potential for cultural change' (p. 31). There is a much more succinct discussion of the second poem in which Sloan argues that the Dantesque 'Pilgrim of Love' figure demonstrates Rossetti's identification with 'poetic traditions strikingly at odds with mainstream Victorian culture' (p. 32), but the relatively brief supporting analysis results in a less substantial argument and the chapter would have benefitted from a more even balance between the two poems.

In the second chapter, Gavin Budge approaches Pre-Raphaelite art in the context of 'a mid-nineteenth crisis of masculinity' (p. 55). Noting the significance of Keatsian Romanticism to Pre-Raphaelite painters, Budge suggests that just as the 'class and gender ambiguity' characteristic of Keats's work 'subverts the cultural hegemony of patriarchal aristocracy', so the 'insistence' of detail in Pre-Raphaelite paintings is itself a radical act, disrupting 'the visual hierarchy on which the aristocratic paradigm of authoritative spectatorial overview depends' (p. 57). The chapter considers Pre-Raphaelite pictorial technique in some detail, although it does take a while for the argument to get going due to the range of contextual and critical material included. Nonetheless Budge offers a considered analysis of how the Pre-Raphaelites painted, as well as what they painted, and considers their technique as a 'democratization of vision' (p. 61), critical responses to which were symptomatic of wider anxieties regarding political democracy in the mid-nineteenth century.

A similarly detailed reading of painting technique as well as subject is provided by Rosemary Mitchell in her chapter on William Bell Scott's 'Wallington Scheme', a commissioned series of paintings depicting Northumbrian history. Mitchell presents a cogent account of the eight pictures in the series and argues persuasively for the shifting conceptions of masculinity they represent, from the authoritarian and militaristic figure of the Roman centurion to the 'civilizing and sacrificial type of manhood' of Cuthbert (p. 112), and from the 'emasculated' figure of Bede (p. 115) to Bernard Gilpin's performance of masculinity through social engagement. The chapter concludes with a fascinating analysis of *Iron and Coal*, a painting which appears to celebrate the 'modern working-class masculinity' of the industrial era, but which also disturbs and complicates this interpretation through a range of motifs, including the young girl sitting on a gun in the foreground (p. 126).

Simon Cooke's chapter on Pre-Raphaelite illustration is a welcome part of this collection of essays, examining an important, if perhaps sometimes overlooked, aspect of Pre-Raphaelite work. Beginning with an examination of the type of athletic and energetic illustration exemplified in the illustrations of Henry Courtney Selous, Cooke examines how Pre-Raphaelite illustrators in contrast 'offer a reading of masculinity which is largely static' and which re-visualises men 'as creators and thinkers' (p. 128). There is a detailed consideration of the Moxon *Tennyson*, in which what Cooke

describes as ‘Tennyson’s highly ambiguous writing of Masculinity’ (p. 130) provides fertile territory for Rossetti, Hunt and Millais, who often feminise their male characters, giving them ‘small frames’ and ‘delicate hands and feet’ (p. 135). A subsequent discussion of Rossetti’s frontispiece for Christina Rossetti’s ‘Goblin Market’ notes how a rapacious male desire is indicated by ‘a dense field of suggestive signs’ (p. 143), whilst in an interesting shift of focus towards the end of the chapter Cooke discusses Millais’s illustrations for Trollope’s novels in which manliness is defined as ‘a quality of the home and only definable in relation to the household’ (p. 147).

Several chapters in the book will be of interest to Morris enthusiasts, not least Ingrid Hanson’s excellent chapter on *Sigurd the Volsung*. Hanson notes the pervasive identification with the Old North in Victorian cultural and nationalistic discourses which no doubt influenced critical appraisals of *Sigurd* as being ‘more “masculine”, or “virile”, with “greater healthfulness of tone”, than his earlier poems’ (p. 36). Hanson offers a sensitive critique of the role violence plays in constructing male identity in the poem, a topic she has focused on more widely in her book *William Morris and the Uses of Violence, 1856-1890* (2013). She also notes how fluid gender constructions are in the Norse Sagas, enabling Morris to ‘suggest a kind of manliness that is not tied to maleness and that is rather based on behaviour’ (p. 47), as the poem’s representations of Brynhild and Gudrun demonstrate; indeed Hanson suggests that it is the female characters ‘who shape the masculine world of the text’ (p. 51). Particularly interesting in this chapter however is Hanson’s observation that several years before Morris embraced Marxism he was already, in *Sigurd*, envisaging a dialectical view of history in which ‘a developing manliness transcends the individual lifespan’, being accomplished ‘over a number of generations’ (p. 44), an argument which supports her claim that Morris offers us an ‘inclusive’ and ‘communal’ vision of masculinity in this most remarkable of poems (p. 35).

Morris also receives sustained attention in Dinah Roe’s chapter on male chastity, in which she offers an astute analysis of Morris’s poem ‘Sir Galahad, A Christmas Mystery’. Morris and Burne-Jones, Roe argues, inaugurated ‘a second phase of Pre-Raphaelite medievalism which shifted its interest from monastic to chivalric masculinity’ (p. 160). Having considered representations of monasticism in the work of earlier Pre-Raphaelite artists, Roe examines how the figure of Sir Galahad becomes an altogether more complex and nuanced figure in Morris’s poem in which ‘sexual purity [...] is a decidedly mixed blessing’ (p. 163). This more ambivalent representation of Galahad, she argues, can also be seen in Burne-Jones’s 1858 drawing of the knight, in which the combination of images of ‘male sexual chastity and eroticism’ generate a certain ‘intensity’ (p. 166). The chapter concludes with a brief but pertinent discussion of Walter Pater’s review of Morris’s poetry which

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appeared in the *Westminster Review* in 1868 and the influence of Pre-Raphaelitism on Pater's Aestheticism, 'in which sacred and profane male desire can be simultaneously expressed and contained' (p. 168).

Also of interest to Morris scholars will be Amelia Yeates's chapter on Burne-Jones. Indeed, Yeates's chapter provides an interesting counterpoint to Hanson's chapter on *Sigurd*, in that whilst several contemporary critics were clearly pleased by the refreshing virility of Morris's poem, Burne-Jones's painting style was repeatedly criticised as being 'unhealthy and unmanly' (p. 81). Yeates notes the prevalence of the word 'morbid' in much of this criticism, an indictment that was linked to 'a wider complaint about pessimism and sadness in his work' (p. 89) – something seemingly unforgivable in a culture which advocated 'manly cheer' (p. 90). Yeates examines the different ways in which Burne-Jones's work was judged in the context of gender norms and conformity, and her chapter concludes with a thoughtful consideration of how we might now approach his work through the concept of 'queerness' in its broadest sense – a term used by several contemporary critics and more particularly Henry James, for whom, Yeates argues, 'the term "queer" best summed up the otherness of Burne-Jones's work, particularly with regard to its gendered qualities' (p. 99).

Sally-Anne Huxtable continues this discussion of 'queerness' in the penultimate chapter of the book, in which she argues that the story of Tannhäuser 'functions as a cipher for diverse queer practices and ideas' for nineteenth-century artists and writers (p. 167). The chapter focuses on Swinburne's 1863 poem 'Laus Veneris' and Burne-Jones's 1861 watercolour of the same name. Swinburne's 'queering of masculinity' can, Huxtable proposes, be seen as part of a wider endeavour shared by Morris and Burne-Jones 'to use the trope of medieval chivalry to redefine the notion of the male protagonist or "hero" in European literature' (p. 172). The discussion of Burne-Jones's watercolour is particularly interesting in its demonstration of how Burne-Jones alters the focus of the myth so that it is Venus, rather than Tannhäuser, who is represented as the central suffering character. A brief consideration of Morris's poem 'The Hill of Venus' from *The Earthly Paradise* prefaces a discussion of Swinburne's poem in which the emphasis is 'on the Venusberg as an occluded queer space' (p. 186), and the chapter concludes with the claim that the treatment of the Tannhäuser myth by both Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic artists and writers offers 'a new, more complex, fluid and humane perception of masculine identity' in the nineteenth century (p. 187).

The book concludes with Eleanor Fraser Stansbie's chapter on Holman Hunt's three versions of *The Light of the World*, paintings which, she argues, 'generated completely different sets of meanings, contingent upon the contexts of their production, their reception and their display' (p. 191). Hunt's original use of both

male and female models did, Stansbie argues, contribute to the achievement of a ‘somewhat insubstantial and androgynous figure’ (p. 194) in the earlier versions (the first in Keble College, Oxford, and a smaller copy in Manchester Art Gallery), whereas in the later version (St Paul’s Cathedral) the muscular physique of the model Domenico Mancini produces a ‘less ethereal’ and ‘more sensuous’ (p. 203) figure of Christ. The distinction acquires a new significance when we take into consideration the fact that this final version was taken on a tour of British colonies, its purpose apparently being to ‘uplift the masses spiritually and culturally’ (p. 206).

Stansbie’s chapter thus ends with a more overtly political consideration of the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, and in his Afterword Colin Cruise notes how the different forms of masculinity identified in the book must also be located in the context of a broader ‘struggle for political and legal justice’ (p. 217). Whilst this is often implicit in this collection, and occasionally explicit, it is an aspect that deserves greater consideration overall in the book than it receives. The book would also have benefitted from a clearer distinction between early and later versions of Pre-Raphaelitism – and indeed those familiar with the work of Morris might well challenge the unquestioning inclusion of him at all under the umbrella term ‘Pre-Raphaelite’. For example, whilst this collection would certainly be much the poorer without Ingrid Hanson’s impressive discussion of *Sigurd the Volsung*, I am probably not alone in wondering whether this most un-Pre-Raphaelite of poems has a place in a book concerned with Pre-Raphaelite art and literature. Likewise the categorisation of Burne-Jones’s work as distinctly Pre-Raphaelite – second stage or otherwise – might well be challenged. These issues aside, *Pre-Raphaelite Masculinities* is a significant and enjoyable contribution to academic studies in the field of Pre-Raphaelitism and confirms the continuing importance of this movement for scholars in the twenty-first century.

### **Phillippa Bennett**

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Michelle Weinroth and Paul Leduc Browne, eds, *To Build a Shadowy Isle of Bliss: William Morris’s Radicalism and the Embodiment of Dreams* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), 392 pp., 25 b&w photographs, £87.00 cloth, ISBN 9780773544604; £27.99 pbk, ISBN 9780773544611.

This attractively produced and substantial book came about, we are told, as a result of a conference on Morris’s aesthetics and radicalism held in Montreal in 2010, followed by a workshop at the University of Ottawa in the following year. This accounts for its continuity and coherence. In the Introduction, Michelle Weinroth tells us that the book’s two aims are ‘to delineate and define Morris’s unorthodox

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radicalism and, in so doing, to uncover the consistency and precocity of his innovative social thought' (p. 3). By doing so, she hopes to dispel the contrast often drawn between the producer of beautiful objects and the radical social critic. She argues, perhaps extravagantly, that Morris's social thought has suffered from 'widespread misprision and institutional suppression' (p. 6), his ideas not being taken seriously by students of aesthetics and his writings being 'withheld from the limelight' by the dismissive attitude of the modernists and post-modernists. Even if this is overstated, Morrisian readers must warm to the enthusiasm with which Weinroth sets about her work of reinterpretation. She finds Morris's radicalism particularly in his advocacy of the 'lesser arts', with its stress on the value of work as the area in which human beings can find fulfillment. She argues for the dialectical sophistication of the position Morris took towards revolution, accepting its necessity but dismissing the impatience of those like the anarchists who did not see the necessity for thorough political education of the workers to enable the revolution to succeed. Later she remarks that his is 'a philosophy predicated on dismantling the institutions of capitalist society, but it is also a thorough rethinking of the classic strategies of radical change itself' (p. 32). Readers of the book, she hopes, will be led to 'think differently, beyond dualism, beyond the perennial battles of desire and reason that have shaped the narratives of Western philosophy and fettered self-proclaimed "radicals" – as well as their adversaries – to the downward spiral of the status quo' (p. 34). It is a grand ambition, developed in ten substantial chapters.

Since there is not room to discuss each of these in detail, and I would like readers to have a sense of the topics discussed, I will begin by listing the chapters in the order in which they appear: 'William Morris's "Lesser Arts" and "The Commercial War"' by Forence Boos; 'Illuminating Divergences: Morris, Burne-Jones and the Two *Aeneids*' by Miles Tittle; 'Radical Tales: Rethinking the Politics of William Morris's Last Romances' by Phillippa Bennett; 'Telling Time: Song's Rhythms in Morris's Late Work' by Elizabeth Helsinger; 'The Pre-Raphaelite Tongue: The Politics of Antiquarian Poetics' by David Latham; 'Translation, Collaboration, and Reception: Editing Caxton for the Kelmscott Press' by Yuri Cowan; 'Morris's Road to *Nowhere*: New Pathways in Political Persuasion' by Michelle Weinroth; 'A Dream of William Morris: Communism, History, Revolution' by Paul Leduc Browne; '*News from Nowhere Two*: Principles of a Sequel' by Tony Pinkney; 'Redesigning the Beautiful: Morris, Mabb, and the Politics of Wallpaper' by Michelle Weinroth; the 'Conclusion' is by Michelle Weinroth and Paul Leduc Browne. The editors fairly claim to have adopted an 'expansive' outlook, in which they have 'discovered the complexity of Morris's dream of communism, his use of romance as a *Bildungsroman* for ethical radical practice, and the imperative of "place" as the conceptual ground upon which social

change can be imagined and conceived' (p. 287). In relation to that final formulation, it is surprising that attention is not paid to Morris the Green; the thorough index provides a number of entries for 'education', 'equality' and 'exchange', but none at all for 'environmentalism' or 'nature'. Treatment of this theme would have enhanced the value of the book.

Well-known Morris scholars are prominent, but it is good to encounter some new names. Of the established scholars, it is Tony Pinkney whom I found particularly challenging as he develops some of the ideas that he has formulated in recent articles, in particular the idea of writing a sequel to *News from Nowhere*, which he sees as a useful way to engage with, and reanimate, Morris's ideas in our present situation. He argues that there is 'a healthy tradition' in which literary utopias have been provided with sequels, and that the book itself provides a number of possibilities for adding to the 'some chapters' that the busy Morris himself provided. He reminds us of the development of new concepts relating to the utopian tradition, moving the genre away from the provision of detailed accounts of institutions to a freer concern with the feeling of life in the community that is shown. Pinkney's new book would not ignore the signs of dissidence in *News from Nowhere*, embodied in the old Grumblers and the Obstinate Refusers, who should perhaps be seen as serious threats to the society, rather than merely as occasions for society to show its liberal openness. It might build on some of the 'untapped narrative potential' of the book, including a number of minor characters who could be more fully developed. The final suggestion is the most radical: the new *News from Nowhere* would end with the return of Ellen, Clara and the other utopians (without Guest?) down the Thames to London to take part in a final showdown with the reactionaries. This would re-enact the circular journey motif of many of the later romances, and enforce the view that, to be a Pilgrim of Hope, 'you have to move from the country to the city' (p. 234). The end would be a confrontation in Trafalgar Square, but the means by which the radical forces might achieve success 'remain to be fully invented, just as they do in our own tricky political moment' (p. 238). The chapter ends with some reflections on what might be learned in the process of rewriting. Pinkney argues that Morris's dislike of Bellamy's version of the future led him 'too far in the direction of simplicity, pastoralism, the beautiful' (p. 239). What is needed is to bring together the pastoral and the high-technical, and to renew the intellectual life of the Left. Few readers would disagree with that.

Florence Boos continues her long-standing argument to the effect that, although Morris was a revolutionary socialist, he was always unhappy about violence. He condemned the violence of British imperialism, but also recognised, in 'Equality' (1888), that 'even revolutionary violence might bring harm' (p. 36). She quotes

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tellingly from ‘Communism, i.e. Property’, in which Morris attacked the anarchists who advocated ‘propaganda by the deed’: ‘And here I will say once and for all, what I have often wanted to say of late, to wit, that the idea of taking any human life for any reason whatsoever is horrible and abhorrent to me’ (p. 37). Morris came to see that violence, or war, was endemic to capitalism, but how was this to be ended? Boos quotes his last public lecture, ‘What We Have to Look For’, to the effect that ‘almost everyone has ceased to believe in the change coming by catastrophe’. However, Morris could not see how ‘battle’ could be ‘fought out [...] without loss and suffering’ (p. 42). This suggests to me, though not to Boos, that Morris retained his Marxist belief in the necessity of revolution to the end. In the second part of the chapter, Boos considers the tensions on this issue in Morris’s literary work. *Sigurd the Völsung* is, she admits, ‘Morris’s most obviously violent work’ because of its Northern source-material, but she argues that it expresses sympathy for all the victims of violence portrayed. Boos’s account of the late Prose Romances avoids the violence that most readers have found particularly disturbing in *The Roots of the Mountains* to concentrate on the last of them, *The Sundering Flood*, whose hero is the poet and warrior Osberne, who refuses the reward of a knighthood for his services, and goes off to seek his beloved Elfhild; as Boos observes, his renunciation has no counterpart in the earlier romances. Whatever one makes of Boos’s position here, her eloquent conclusion is one with which readers will reluctantly agree:

[a]fter two ‘world wars’, several incontestable genocides, and a long and lengthening series of ‘commercial wars’, in a time when asphyxiating oil spills and death by unseen drones are journalistic banalities, it is painfully clear, therefore, that we still search for the secular saving grace of ‘fellowship’ and its ‘lesser-artistic’ handmaidens.

(pp. 54-55)

In discussing Morris’s late romances, Phillipa Bennett makes a persuasive case for a political reading of these works. For Bennett, the romance is a form in which Morris can avoid the ‘dreary introspective nonsense’ that Ellen deplored in the Victorian novel, and counter its ‘political complacency’ (p. 87). It was not for Morris a didactic form but one in which he could explore most fully ‘what it means to be human, with all the challenges, aspirations, sufferings, and achievements that entails’ (p. 89). In the romances, personal desire becomes integrated into the social; fellowship is achieved and enjoyed. The energy of the romances, for Bennett, is intimately associated with ‘the irrepressible dynamic of hope’. Alongside Morris’s admission in ‘Communism’ that converting the majority to socialism would take a long time, we may set the

romances in which we are shown the fulfilment of hope; this is their inspiring value. Bennett insists on ‘the very real relevance that they had for Morris’s contemporaries and that they continue to have for us’ (p.104). Is this not rather overstated? Those of his contemporaries who could afford the Kelmscott Press editions were probably not socialists, and neither were later enthusiasts like C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. But Bennett certainly makes a strong case for the significance of the romances as part of Morris’s political vision.

Elizabeth Helsinger breaks new ground by showing how Morris’s late poetry, although small in quantity, embodied in its own way the radical politics of the contemporary prose romances; Morris turned from the romantic lyric form he had inherited to create a kind of poetry that could become ‘a culture’s collective voice’ (p. 107). Helsinger’s detailed account of the rhythms of the *Chants for Socialists* considers the way in which Morris transformed heroic hexameter into something like the English ballad meter. We are given a vivid description of the performance of ‘Wake, London Lads’ at the Exeter Hall meeting of January 1878, protesting against the British government’s plan to go to war with Russia. A detailed account of ‘The March of the Workers’ brings out how the rhythm creates ‘a living fellowship of voices and bodies acting together with concerted will’ (p. 110). However, Helsinger insists that Morris was aware of the dangerous possibility that communal action might tip over into violence, and so writes in a way that encourages a reflective rather than an aggressive attitude; his songs are therefore ‘pitched at a lower key’ than those of Blake and Shelley (p. 111).

It is Michelle Weinroth who is the major contributor to this book. We have already considered some ideas from her ‘Introduction’; in a later chapter she considers *News from Nowhere* ‘as a rhetorical project, beset by epistemological and aesthetic challenges, obstacles that Morris faced in projecting before his peers an alternative future’. In responding to these challenges, she argues, Morris was led to create ‘a hitherto unimagined method of political conversion’ (p. 173). She contrasts *News from Nowhere* with much nineteenth-century socialist discourse, arguing that it constitutes ‘a new political discourse’ in its questioning of easy assumptions; it offers direct political information and argument, mostly provided by Old Hammond, and it also offers romantic descriptions of the countryside. This was unlikely to appeal to activists who associated the struggle for socialism with industrial cities. The pastoral element, she argues, is not without political implications: the Lucretian idea of ataraxia, freedom from anxiety, is exactly what the Nowherians experience in their everyday lives, and which readers are being taught to value. To convey his ideas, Morris needed to create a new rhetorical form in which the writer is no single authoritative voice but can share responsibilities with a sympathetic friend and the Nowherians themselves, and which

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shows ‘the convergence of human agency and happenstance’ (p. 189). Guest must return to the present, having learnt that the desired commonweal is not so much a destination to be entered at some point as it is a state being created in efforts at human betterment in the present. (I was reminded here of the ideas of the anarchist Colin Ward, although no reference to him occurs in the book). For Weinroth, *News from Nowhere* is a bold work, persuasive to those who are prepared to read it with care. It offers an alternative to the rigidity of Bellamy, in the ‘waywardness of the dream vision with its implicit prohibition against literalist readings’ (p. 193). It is a form that enables Morris to ‘broadcast his news in ways more subtle and far-reaching than any “fact”-laden article from the contemporary press’ (p. 194). The argument is fresh and cogent. Weinroth also offers an account of the art of David Mabb, which she sees as offering an opportunity to participate in a Gramscian education through dialogue, and so fulfil Morris’s ambition ‘to enlighten contemporary social consciousness artistically’ (p. 270). In view of this, it seemed a pity that one of Mabb’s challenging works was not chosen for the cover rather than the beautiful ‘Tulip and Primrose’ fabric design, which consorts with the romantic words of the title to create a perhaps too comfortable effect.

The editors’ last words are modest:

[t]hough we will not have changed the world in this modest redemptist gesture, we may nonetheless have begun to open a space for debating and rethinking the contested meanings of ‘the political’, ‘the aesthetic’, and ‘the radical’ – categories of discussion that will inexorably haunt the question of social change.

(p. 288)

Writing in March 2012, Pinkney remarked that ‘we have the current dispersal of the Occupy movement to show us just how difficult it is to sustain and generalize [...] non-conventional radical practices’ (p. 238). Weinroth and the other contributors to this thought-provoking book are to be congratulated on their energetic work in keeping such necessary ideas alive.

**Peter Faulkner**

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Peter Cormack, *Arts & Crafts Stained Glass* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 354 pp., 200 colour & 50 b&w illustrations, £50.00 hbk, ISBN 0300209703.

Peter Cormack’s *Arts & Crafts Stained Glass* is a landmark study that opens up enquiry into a neglected subject. The author notes the persistent absence of stained glass in

the historiography of the Arts and Crafts Movement, observing that many historians of the subject ‘scarcely mention stained glass and, even less, its transformation at the hands of Arts and Crafts practitioners’ (p. 5). This comment identifies the author’s aim, to reinstate stained glass as a medium central to the Arts and Crafts Movement and to promote understanding of stained glass as a valid form of artistic practice. Cormack suggests that histories of the Arts and Crafts Movement have tended to focus on ‘what is collectible, moveable and exhibitable’ (p. 5), features not normally compatible with stained-glass windows.

The book adopts a broadly chronological approach, detecting the earliest signs of Arts and Crafts practice in the late 1870s and tracing the movement through to the dramatic windows of Douglas Strachan in the 1930s. The central character in this narrative is Christopher Whall, whom Cormack credits with influencing almost every glass-painter mentioned in the book. Whall’s influence was achieved in a variety of ways, through his windows, his stained glass classes at the Central School of Arts and Crafts, the less formal instruction to his pupils in his studio and his notable book *Stained Glass Work* (1905). The author stresses the camaraderie or ‘collegiate’ atmosphere of Whall’s *atelier*, thus linking it to other Arts and Crafts collectives, and his approach is represented as personal and vocational, the antithesis of the commercial logic that Cormack sees as dominating the large stained-glass studios formed in the 1860s.

The wonderful sequence of windows installed in the Lady Chapel of Gloucester Cathedral (surely one of the most enthralling post-medieval stained-glass experiences anywhere) is described in some detail. Cormack illustrates Whall’s commitment to his art by showing how he accepted the stingy fee of 30s per square foot for the glass (about half the commercial rate) in return for the opportunity of glazing one of the great architectural spaces in England. Assistants and pupils unanimously agreed to work for reduced wages and Whall himself worked gratis; in fact it was only when Cathedral authorities agreed to raise the price to 33s per foot that he managed to cover his expenses. This kind of commitment places Whall firmly within the type of ethically engaged maker that we associate with the Arts and Crafts Movement. Whall’s attention to materials and making processes (the other key Arts and Crafts trait) is described in some detail. In a paper of 1891 Whall posed the question: ‘[w]hich is more important, that flesh should look soft and smooth, etc., or that the window should sparkle? Of course it ought to sparkle!’ (p. 40). Whall relegated illusionistic effects in favour of demonstrating the luminous qualities of the material. He was aided in his quest for sparkling windows by the development of new types of pot-metal glass, notably ‘Prior’s Early English’. This was a mould-blown glass that was cut up into slightly convex ‘slabs’, the shape, texture and irregularity all adding

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to the visual interest of the material. Whall used this glass to great effect, celebrating the inherent properties of the material and using prominent lead-lines in an expressive manner that balanced glass, colour and linear design in a highly effective way.

Cormack argues in *Arts & Crafts Stained Glass* that the windows produced by William Morris and his firm occupy an intermediate status, not so much Arts and Crafts, as a transition between Victorian stained glass and later developments. Cormack identifies three phases in the Firm's glass: the early windows of the 1860s, the 'aesthetic' windows of the 1870s and the more stridently leaded and intensely coloured windows of the early 1880s. He argues that this latter phase was initiated by Burne-Jones's mosaic commission for the American Episcopal Church in Rome, commissioned by George Edmund Street in 1881: 'designing for the medium of mosaic brought a renewed confidence to his stylisation of figures and pictorial space. It can indeed be seen as a kind of liberation from his long enthrallment to Renaissance art' (p. 23). Burne-Jones discussed this commission with Morris at some length and Cormack sees it as a direct influence on the wonderful windows designed for what is now St. Philip's Cathedral in Birmingham during the mid-1880s. As none of the glass painting was actually done by the partners, Morris's firm can be clearly distinguished from Whall and other Arts and Crafts practitioners. Although Morris cared passionately about the glass itself, the later windows often did not use the best 'antique' glass made by James Powell and Sons, instead often opting for a cheaper variety made by Chance and Co. of Birmingham. Cormack demonstrates that Burne-Jones urged Morris to start making his own glass, and, according to William De Morgan 'very nearly set up the making of pot glass' (p. 25), but this was to be one project too many for Morris. It is clear that many later glass painters saw the Morris firm's glass as the pinnacle of Victorian achievements and many Arts and Crafts designers continued to be influenced by its windows.

Cormack analyses the work of a fascinating range of designers: some like Selwyn Image will be familiar to those interested in the period while others like Heywood Sumner are less well known. Sumner was particularly radical in pursuing the Arts and Crafts concept, often using very little painting at all in his windows. Pushed to this extreme, stained glass became a very different form of creative practice, the artistry located as much in the choice of material and the way it was configured as in the more traditionally 'artistic' act of painting.

Cormack highlights a particularly interesting relationship between stained glass and gender: 'stained glass became the one major Arts & Crafts activity where there was real gender parity in both status and achievement' (p. 253). A key figure in this development was Mary Lowndes, partner in Lowndes and Drury, established in 1897 'to meet the needs of independent artists seeking the technical facilities to carry out

their own stained glass commissions' (pp. 95-6). Artists could hire out studio space to draw cartoons and then benefit from advice on how the glass might be painted and fired from the skilled workers in the firm. By 1906 'The Glasshouse', Lowndes and Drury's purpose-built premises, was a key centre for progressive stained glass in London. Lowndes was an active suffragist, founding the Artists' Suffrage League in 1907, and co-founding the Society of Women Welders (a female trade union) during World War One.

The American boom in Gothic Revival buildings during the early twentieth century provided a fertile context for transatlantic glass painters. Ralph Adams Cram was a progressive architect who reacted against the prevailing taste for the opalescent windows of Lafarge and Tiffany, which were sophisticated in pictorial terms but did not transmit enough light to fulfil an architectural function. By 1909 Cram had met Charles Connick, who opened his own studio in 1913. Both Cram and Connick had completed research trips to Europe, both meeting Whall and the English manufactures of 'slab' glass, which Connick subsequently had imported to the USA in large quantities. Cormack suggests that the high light-levels prevalent in cities such as Boston allowed Connick to use more intense colouring than Whall, resulting in a series of spectacular windows. Connick had also toured some of the major medieval stained-glass sites in Europe but was in no way rigidly historicist, producing instead 'something authentically new and yet full of meaningful reference to the past' (p. 216).

The only negative aspect of this book is the somewhat simplistic way in which it represents Victorian stained glass. In advocating the radicalism of the Arts and Crafts makers, Cormack is too eager to criticise earlier glass. To dismiss Victorian stained glass as a 'pseudo-antiquarian industry', or as merely 'trade glass', is a caricature of a complex area of cultural activity. I would have been interested to hear more about the business side of Arts and Crafts stained glass: pricing is only mentioned once in the context of Whall's generosity during the Gloucester Cathedral commission but the reader is not told if the smaller-scale production of Arts and Crafts windows resulted in higher prices than the more commercial firms.

The production values of the book are high, photography is of consistently high quality, and reproduced photographs of studios and key personalities are fascinating. This book has clearly been informed by a large amount of new primary research and is full of information that will be fundamental to future students of this subject. The book is not cheap but given its originality, erudition and scope, this is surely a key purchase for anyone seriously interested in stained glass or the Arts and Crafts Movement.

**Jim Cheshire**

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Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune* (London: Verso, 2015), 156 pp., £16.99 hbk, ISBN 9781781688397.

The phrase ‘communal luxury’ can be found in the Manifesto of the Paris Commune’s Federation of Artists, a document written by Eugene Pottier in the thick of political struggle. ‘We will work cooperatively toward our regeneration, the birth of communal luxury, future splendours and the Universal Republic’, he wrote. Kristin Ross, a well-known cultural theorist and professor of comparative literature at New York University, has borrowed the phrase for the title of her recent book retracing the political imaginary of the Commune because it aptly signifies the Communards’ demand ‘that beauty flourish in spaces shared in common and not just in special privatised preserves’ (p. 58). The pursuit of such a struggle meant ‘reconfiguring art to be fully integrated into everyday life’ (p. 58), an endeavour which appealed to Morris because of its simultaneous aesthetic and political audacity. Morris’s thinking about art and society had already begun to be influenced by a very similar commitment to aesthetic democracy during the late 1870s, before his entry into the socialist movement led him belatedly to become ‘one of the foremost British supporters of the memory of the Paris Commune’ (p. 61).

Ross’s titular phrase – *communal* luxury – verges on the oxymoronic. If ‘luxury’ were to be communised, to what extent could it still be thought of as luxurious? In a market-driven, capitalist society, the word tends to signify that which is out of the ordinary, or desirable in some way, without being indispensable, and is, therefore, usually identified with commodities that are almost certainly expensive. Luxury goods are, almost by definition, beyond the means of the multitude. To communise ‘luxury’, then, is to make it generally available in such a way that its social function as a marker of status, or privilege, becomes redundant. This is part of the reason why the Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin included a chapter in *The Conquest of Bread* (1892) entitled ‘The need for luxury’: give us bread, but give us roses too. What remains of ‘luxury’ when everyone has access to it, or when it is reconceptualised as a need? If every house, say, were to be a ‘luxury’ house, the adjective would surely become superfluous. The struggle to achieve such a state of affairs animated Morris’s political practice, and his utopian vision of Nowhere, as much as it motivated Commune artists such as Gustave Courbet and Eugene Pottier. The aesthetic dimension of this political struggle is neatly captured by Ross: Morris, like the Communards, was interested in ‘creating and expanding the conditions for art’ (p. 61).

In another sense, though, the Commune artists were true to the etymological origins of the word, from Latin *luxuria*, or *luxus*, meaning abundance. It is perhaps no coincidence that Morris’s pattern-designs repeatedly offer images of organic

abundance – fruit ever on the vine, flowers ever in leaf. The Communards, like Morris, wanted luxury to abound. In their desire to make luxury plentiful the Communards anticipated, and stimulated, Morris's heterodox version of communism, which was always about levelling *upwards*. Why should beauty not be abundant and universally available? The same motivations had inspired Morris's youthful desire to transform the world with beauty. The oxymoronic character of Ross's titular phrase serves as a timely reminder of the historically contingent nature of capitalist society, which restricts the meaning of 'luxury' by limiting its availability to those who can pay.

Morris also shared many of the Communards' other preoccupations: overcoming the alienation between town and country; striving towards the integration of manual and mental labour; the internationalist supersession of the nation-state and national chauvinism, together with a commitment to local autonomy and particularity. These are some of the major theoretical and practical issues discussed by Ross in *Communal Luxury*, offering a clue as to why Morris appears as such a central figure in her relatively short, but admirably wide-ranging reconstruction of Commune thought. Ross's first book, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (1988), offered similarly illuminating reflections on the French revolution of 1871, interwoven with readings of the poetry of Arthur Rimbaud. Ross makes clear in the introduction to *Communal Luxury* that her return to the subject has been partly inspired by recent political events, not least the Occupy movement and the questions it has raised, including 'the problem of how to refashion an internationalist conjuncture, the future of education, labour, and the status of art, the commune-form and its relationship to ecological theory and practice' (p. 2). Ross shares with Walter Benjamin a conviction that a history such as that of the Commune should not be locked up in the museum of historicism, but should be used instead as a resource of critical insight for the present.

This is not simply a case of mining the Commune's successes and failures for the appropriate 'lessons'. In moments of political failure and defeat, the strategic mind inevitably turns to the balance sheet: what was lost and what was gained in the experience? As Ross argued in *The Emergence of Social Space*, this mindset, rational and calculating as it is, tends to overlook and ignore the desires, creative energies and imaginative forces that are released during moments of intense political struggle. In a Blochian register, we might think of the 'cold' and the 'warm' streams of Marxism. Many of the Commune's commentators, hostile or otherwise, have tended to focus on the Communards' strategic failures – their military misadventures or their tardiness in seizing the assets of the Bank of France. Morris, it must be said, lent his name to this kind of analysis, particularly in the Socialist League pamphlet *A Short Account of the Commune of Paris* (1886), co-authored with Ernest Belfort Bax and Victor Dave.

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Ross, by contrast, accentuates those aspects of Morris's celebration of the Commune in which he rescued it not only from the 'dull lies of bourgeois history' but also from the spurious "'wisdom" of the sympathetic, but after-the-fact, observer/theorist' (p. 96). This aspect of her discussion naturally focuses on *The Pilgrims of Hope* and *News from Nowhere* to a greater extent than it does on his journalism and public lectures. This is perhaps why Morris's name often appears in conjunction with Reclus and Kropotkin, but rarely if at all with that of Bax.

Ross's book is not simply another retelling of the Commune's story and neither does it engage extensively with the existing historiography. Rather, she expands 'the geographical and temporal frame of the event beyond the seventy-two Parisian days' (p. 6) by tracing its origins back into the world of clubs and associations that gathered during the final years of the Second Empire to commemorate the revolution of 1848, where veterans of '48 met with young workers involved in the Paris section of the International Workingman's Association, as well as refugees from further afield. Ross simultaneously extends the scope of her project beyond the suppression of the Commune by taking account of the activities of some of the Commune's many legatees and fellow-travellers, amongst whom she numbers Morris, Kropotkin and Marx, as well as those who had been more immediately involved, such as Elisée Reclus and Gustave Lefrançais. Some Communard exiles, such as the shoemakers Napoléon and Gustave Gaillard (père et fils) and Benoît Malon, found refuge in Switzerland after the Commune was brutally crushed, where they debated the principles of anarchist-communism with Geneva-based militants, including Reclus, Kropotkin, Lefrançais and Errico Malatesta.

These groupings formed the basis of a loose network that helped to consolidate the Communard imaginary. In Ross's formulation, theirs was no simple gesture of commemoration: '[n]ot the memory of the event or its legacy [...] but its prolongation [was] every bit as vital to the event's logic as the initial acts of insurrection in the streets of the city' (p. 6). These groupings worked at the 'intersections in thought and sociability' and devoted their energies to

mutual engagement and participation in the elaboration of the Commune's memory [and] to the generation of new political projects and debates in the 1870s and 1880s that grew out of the experience of the Commune. They took the form of journals, theoretical elaborations, debates, and shared meals. These paths taken – or better, constructed – during and after the Commune are both trajectories and the vectors of an analysis; they constitute a kind of 'globalisation from below' at the precise moment that in France, at least, a deeply conservative integralist sequence retrenching around national identity

in the wake of the Commune had begun, and that would extend at least through Vichy.

(p. 93)

The resulting cross-pollinations and transversal connections offer up a heady mix, blending Marx with the anarchist-communism of Malatesta and Kropotkin, in such a way as to guarantee that one can never quite be sure of one's theoretical footing. This is another aspect of Ross's account that speaks implicitly to our present moment. Ross notes that 'what looks to be theoretical confusion may well be an astute and well-thought-out political strategy', not least because a 'strategic position based on non-alignment [...] and on association over sectarianism, may well be worth considering today, and there are many indications that this has indeed become the case' (p. 111). These indications are, frustratingly, left unspecified, but we might assume a link to the political experiments of the Occupy movement mentioned at the outset.

In reflecting on the lasting damage caused by the rupture between Marx and Bakunin in the First International, Ross also speculates about the extent to which theoretical refinement can be, in the last instance, politically disabling. Her own interest in the Commune, she explains, 'has less to do with refining theoretical arguments or correcting theoretical error than with something like its opposite', before suggesting that the 'post-Commune period was [...] like our own, not a period of great theoretical purity'. Tellingly, her next sentence turns to Morris, who, she argues, 'was not alone in thinking that an obsession with such purity frequently gets in the way of the task of making socialists' (p. 108). In a time of widespread disorganisation of radical and revolutionary forces, this approach clearly makes political sense. In historiographical terms, though, one might question whether Morris was as theoretically rudderless as is here implied. If he were, why would he have gone to the trouble of waging numerous polemics against both the parliamentary and anarchist factions of the Socialist League (jokers to the left of him, fools to the right)? Morris certainly wanted to make socialists, but he wanted to make socialists who shared his particular strategic outlook.

Morris is a consistent presence in the book. Acknowledging the biographical significance of his concurrent visit to Iceland during the unfolding events in Paris, Ross's third chapter weaves together a deft reading of Reclus's and Morris's indebtedness to the Nordic island nation and the geographical research conducted by Kropotkin in the ridges and glacial drifts of Sweden, Finland and Siberia during the early 1870s. This research helped Kropotkin to formulate his anti-Social-Darwinist theory of mutual aid, finding in the natural environment of these countries

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an example of evolutionary cooperation rather than competition. Ross's chapter is entitled 'The Literature of the North', in a nod to Morris's lecture 'The Early Literature of the North – Iceland' (1887). As she puts it:

What is important is to recognise in Morris's and Reclus's fascination with medieval Iceland their way of going about decentralising the flow of history. [...]. It is a way of allowing other paths taken through historical time, including the time to come, to become visible. The persistence of non-growth-driven cultures in the present builds confidence in the possibility of anachronism by allowing encounters in one's own moment with actually embodied aspects of the past, stranded or land-locked, as it were, but still sporadically perceptible. Evoking communitarian or tribal societies of the past may provide clues to the free forms of whole new economic life in the future. By granting pre-capitalist societies an exemplary status or by investing them with uncommon significance they in turn offer ideas that can be appropriated [...].  
(pp. 74-75)

Ross also finds a parallel for Morris's experience of Iceland in Marx's late researches on the Russian peasant commune (*obshina* or *mir*), brought to Marx's attention by the Commune exile Elisabeth Dmitrieff and elaborated in his correspondence with Kropotkin's friend Vera Zasulich. Much like Marx's attitude to the peasant commune, Morris approached the Icelandic past in an attempt to activate it and to make it useable in the socialist movement's present tense. The historical supersession of medieval Iceland's collectivist way of life, much like the 'failure' of the Commune, was of less consequence for Morris than the fact that 'in both cases, for those who lived it, a type of liberty and a network of solidarity were realised, and out of local defeat there may well come a prototype for future social revolutions' (p. 75).

Ross reiterates a substantially similar point at the conclusion to chapter four, 'The Seeds Beneath the Snow'. After tracing the trajectories and theoretical debates of Commune exiles in London and Switzerland, she moves on to consider the three-way dialogue between Morris, Kropotkin and Paul Lafargue on the state and industrial society. Ross argues that one way of conceptualising the new, for Morris and Kropotkin, was to think about 'anachronisms land-locked in the present. Being attentive to the energies of the outmoded was one way to think oneself into the future' (p. 116). Thinking beyond the capitalist nation-state might, paradoxically, involve revisiting its pre-history. Morris's historicism was thus not a dead, sterile affair. On the contrary, in looking backwards, he looked forwards with much greater insight and imagination than, say, Edward Bellamy. Ross draws out this point in relation to

Morris's aesthetic preferences as well, pointing out that '[t]hose who continue to accuse Morris of a musty or romanticised medievalism view both the art of pre-modern times and Morris's relationship to that art very differently than he himself did. Where his critics see a nostalgic entrancement on his part with art objects from the past, Morris saw an art that was not external to the everyday or, as is supposed, elevated above it and trying vainly to enter it' (p. 63).

The Commune was short-lived and murdered in the cradle, but it represents a moment of crisis that was experienced so intensely by its participants that its duration can hardly be measured in crudely quantitative terms, as a matter of mere days and months. Many of the Communards were brutally, savagely slaughtered by the Versaillais soldiers – the 'vile dwarf's stroke', as Morris put it in *The Pilgrims of Hope*, referring to the military machinations of Adolphe Thiers. Their deeds, however, continue to resonate and draw attention from figures as diverse as the political philosopher Alain Badiou and the Yale historian John Merriman. Ross's book can properly be thought of as a continuation of the tradition, or, rather, the set of practices, which it surveys, extending the temporal frame of the Commune by making the political imaginary of its partisans live in the present. It might be worthwhile pausing to consider whether this contrapuntal attitude to the historical past represents a potentially fruitful way to approach Morris in 2015 and beyond. As Ross has so clearly shown, it would certainly be an eminently Morrisian way to approach Morris.

### **Owen Holland**

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Yoshiko Seki, *The Rhetoric of Retelling Old Romances: Medievalist Poetry by Alfred Tennyson and William Morris* (Tokyo, Japan: Eihōsha, 2015), 198 pp., 2 b&w figures, £22.00 hbk, ISBN 9784269740310.

During the mid-Victorian period there was extensive discussion of recent styles and tendencies in art, architecture and poetry. Why, in an age full of new ideas and technological changes – which cry out for inclusion in the culture of the time – were the Victorians obsessed with setting Gothic against Classical buildings? Or were these merely facades? Why did Pre-Raphaelite art present so many medieval scenes? Why could Dante Gabriel Rossetti never complete his contemporary painting called *Found?* Turning to poetry, why did Arthur Hugh Clough remonstrate so often with Matthew Arnold about the classical subject-matter of his poems? To which Arnold answered, in a letter dated February 1849: '[r]eflect too [...] how deeply *unpoetical* the age and all one's surroundings are. Not unprofound, not ungrand, not unmoving:— but *unpoetical*.'

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Usually, as Yoshiko Seki points out in her first main chapter ‘The Function of Poetry’, medievalism was contrasted not with classicism but with the social challenges of the Victorian period. Following Keats, the most important writers turned to the medieval age for the setting of their poems. To help us understand this apparent evasion of duty Seki has provided a straightforward guide to medievalist poetry, and concentrated her arguments around two prominent practitioners – Tennyson and Morris. The first source of inspiration for both poets was the work of Sir Walter Scott, and Seki reminds us that Morris claimed to have read all of Scott before reaching the age of seven. But the second source was Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*, of which nineteen editions were published between 1800 and 1900.

Despite this, there were considerable inhibitions about coming out openly as a medievalist. Seki asks us to consider how cautious Tennyson was about publishing one of his most well-known poems, the ‘Morte d’Arthur’. It was written in 1833-34, but Tennyson was wary in case his work should be ridiculed. As Edward Fitzgerald bears witness:

The ‘Morte d’Arthur’ when read to us from manuscript in 1835 had no introduction or epilogue; which was added to anticipate or excuse the ‘faint Homeric echoes’, etc. (as in the ‘Day-Dream’), to *give a reason for telling an old-world tale*.

Therefore, with this rhetorical device, Tennyson set about creating a subterfuge: when it was finally published in 1842 the main text was framed by a description of a holiday scene, actually based upon a real holiday with fellow-students in the Lake District. This both enhances the contemporaneity of the poem and distances its shocking novelty; it ceases to be an epic and becomes a kind of humorous entertainment between friends. In the main part of her book Seki explores the stages through which idea of the ‘Morte d’Arthur’ progressed as it was expanded and developed into the *Idylls of the King* (1859).

On coming to Morris she promises much with her epigraph from May Morris (which has also provided the title of this book):

A Friend was reminding me lately of what we had both heard my father say about the *right way of retelling an old romance*: ‘Read it through’, he said, ‘then shut the book and write it out again as a new story for yourself’.

Seki begins with an excellent analysis of the four Arthurian poems at the beginning of *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858). She explains how Morris was both indebted to



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preoccupation with the inevitability of death' (p. 171). It is a disappointment to find that Seki's book ducks out of discussing the hopes raised in her title by 'old romances', for one had expected some account of how, say, 'The Lovers of Gudrun' is retold, and at least a reference to the prose romances, but these are not considered at all. One final word of praise: it is worth looking at the design of the attractive blue-and-white book-cover: this is based on the title page of the Kelmscott Press edition of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Hand and Soul* (1869).

### **John Purkis**

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Joscelyn Godwin, ed., *The Starlight Years: Love & War at Kelmscott Manor 1940-1948* (Stanbridge: Dovecote Press, 2015), 192 pp., 32 colour plates, large format sewn paperback with flaps, £15.00, ISBN 9780992915117.

'[...] he has all sorts of ways so unsympathetic with the sweet simple old place, that I feel his presence there as a kind of slur on it [...]'. So wrote William Morris of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, his co-tenant of Kelmscott Manor, as their three-year lease dragged its way through November 1872. What, one wonders, would he have made of Edward and Stephani (née Allfree) Scott Snell, the subjects of *The Starlight Years*, and their tenure there?

Between 1939 and 1962 Oxford University owned the Manor, an out-of-the-way house with antiquated domestic arrangements let and sub-let to a succession of tenants as it quietly decayed around them. The first of these were the Scott Snells, who took possession of this 'most enchanted place on earth' (p. 43) in 1940. They had met five years earlier at the Byam Shaw School of Art, where the sprucely handsome and cultured Edward first exerted his Svengali-like influence over Stephani, aged seventeen and six years his junior; as she was later to recall, she expended great energy in cultivating her unguided tastes and unfinished education to make herself a fit intellectual companion for him: 'De Sade, Beardsley, Wilde, Max Ernst, Corvo, Dali, the Pre-Raphaelites [...] I absorbed them all as if I were working for a degree in decadence' (p. 13). In 1938 she entertained and overcame a moment of indecision as to whether she 'should [...] relinquish Edward into the escapist world into which he had lured me, against natural inclination' (p. 30). The escapist world was Thessyros, where the everlastingly youthful Cupid and Cherry inhabited a realm of sado-eroticism and hyper-sensation described in sentences of adjectival overload.

Thessyros, influenced most notably by Aubrey Beardsley's *Story of Venus and Tannhäuser*, evolved into Edward and Stephani's joint creation during the early years of their relationship (and clandestine marriage) when circumstance prevented them

from being together and they took refuge in voluminous correspondence and the composition and exchange of prose poems and Thessyrian writings. *The Starlight Years* is constructed from their letters and diary entries, selected and carefully framed for the reader by its editor, their younger son, Joscelyn Godwin. The text is supplemented by their drawings and paintings, which include some hitherto unpublished depictions of the Manor.

The book's Prologue sets out its stall by telling us that '[t]his is the story of how two artists fell in love with each other, with Kelmscott Manor and with William Morris' (p. 10), and herein lies its appeal to Morrisians – the Manor's interiors and gardens, surrounding landscape and village are all wonderfully evoked, made preternaturally real by two people well-practised in descriptive writing, and who wrote in a literary style with an eye to posterity.

Both Stephani and Edward were, in fact, in love with Morris before they were in love with each other and the attainment of their tenure at the Manor against circumstantial odds was, as Morris devotees, of resounding significance to both. Their absolute rejection of the real world, brought low by the Second World War (successfully sidestepped by Edward), enabled them to fashion, for a while, a fragile idyll of creativity, romance and aesthetic fulfilment in which the shade of William Morris was never far away. Despite the drawbacks of life at the Manor: its outdated facilities, the lack of domestic help, the sheer time-consuming inconvenience of it all, Edward and Stephani cleaved to it much as Morris had done before them, and with a depth, sincerity and at times desperation that cannot fail to touch the reader.

Inspired by the proximity of Morris's spirit and in an effort to supplement their meagre income the Scott Snells embarked on a round of school lecture tours – 'Tis very easy, and they pay well' (p. 101), writes Edward – speaking on Morris's life and work in the hope of spreading his ideals amongst the next generation. Then, over the summer of 1943, they worked together on a clarion call against modernism, *Warrior Bard*, a biography of Morris for which they penned alternate chapters (they also kept a joint diary and often painted at the same canvas, working methods reflecting the extremity of their creative togetherness). *Warrior Bard* was not published until several years later when Stephani, on receipt of the first volumes, noted with a sense of deflation that it 'looked rather thin and reduced in size' (p. 181) although its contents read as well as ever. By then, their days at the Manor were numbered. The outside world in its post-war ugliness had encroached to a degree that neither could tolerate, and parenthood too had taken its toll on their relationship; Edward's astounding attitude towards his two young sons, whom he wished at all costs to be free of in order to re-ignite his sexual appetite for their mother, reads like a canker at the heart of utopia. They would leave Kelmscott for America just a few months later, with

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Stephani lamenting the desolation of uprootedness and her longing to return: ‘[m]y only wish is to be put back’ (p. 186).

Reading this book is a tug-of-war affair; one is constantly pulled between an appreciation of illuminating and sensitively-observed passages that describe details now lost to us or evoke the joyousness of possession of Kelmscott’s abundant loveliness, and the uneasy recognition that, after all, everywhere the flowers are a little too dense, the fruit a little too ripe, the stage a little too opulently set. This is no doubt due in part to Edward and Stephani’s intake of alcohol and Benzedrine, which they referred to rather more poetically as ‘starlight’, and which they used to heighten their creativity. The sincerity of the couple’s devotion to both Morris and his beloved house is beyond doubt but there is more than a little mawkishness in Stephani’s yearning after him and her invitation to ‘live freely in us’ (p. 91). It is all rather claustrophobic.

What would Morris himself have made of the Scott Snells? It is certainly worth reading *The Starlight Years* in order to decide for oneself.

### **Kathy Haslam**

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Steven Parissien, *The Comfort of the Past: Building in Oxford and Beyond 1815-2015* (London: Paul Holberton publishing, 2015), 200 pp., 200 colour illustrations, £40.00 hbk., ISBN 9781907372773.

*The Comfort of the Past* gives a thorough account of architecture in Oxford over the last two hundred years, although it is stronger on individual buildings than on the general development of the city. The limited index offers only Architects, Builders and designers and Buildings, so that there is no way to check whether Parissien admits the relevance of, say, the Oxford Movement or the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, or even the Greek Revival. Readers of Tony Pinkney’s excellent *William Morris in Oxford* will recall that Morris and the SPAB fought two major campaigns in Oxford, both unsuccessful. In 1881 they opposed T.G. Jackson’s plan to replace the fourteenth-century statues on the tower of St. Mary’s with modern equivalents, eventually provided by George Frampton. In view of this, it is not surprising to find Morris becoming increasingly critical of the Oxford establishment for its failure to defend its built environment from ‘vulgarization’ as in ‘Some Hints on Pattern-Designing’ (1882), where their behaviour is denounced as ‘a disgrace’. It is disappointing that Parissien makes no reference at all to these events. There are numerous attractive illustrations, many of them photographs by Chris Andrews which show Oxford as a Mediterranean city of colourful gardens, blue sky and sunshine.

The overall account is chronological, beginning with the builder Daniel Evans, whose chapels in a classical mode (not in Oxford) asserted the significance and

authority of Methodism in the early nineteenth century. The contracting firm Symm, named after Evans's successor, became the most active agent in Oxford building thereafter. Evans built a classical chapel in New Inn Hall Street in 1817-18, but this was replaced in 1876 by a larger building in the Gothic style, a change representing the overall movement towards the Gothic in Oxford at the time. In the national building boom of the period after 1815, we are told, Oxford 'chose not to mimic the grandiose Greek Revival style then prevalent in London, Liverpool and Edinburgh, but to stick with a tried-and-tested architectural answer which reflected its own peculiar building history – a Late Gothic idiom that had first been used in the fifteenth century' (p. 21). The colleges preferred to employ 'malleable locals' or to rely on master-masons to execute their commissions. This helped to create a quietly unified architectural scene, inclined towards the bland rather than the dramatic. Several well-known architects contributed buildings in this mode, including G.F. Bodley and Thomas Garner, sometimes independently and sometimes in partnership as in the Wolsey Tower at Christ Church and St. Swithin's Quad at Magdalen (from 1881), which was admired by Morris. George Gilbert Scott's Martyrs' Memorial of 1841-43 is described as a 'properly Protestant composition' but nevertheless 'typical of Oxford's conservative medievalism' (p. 60). T.G. Jackson was Victorian Oxford's most prolific and reliable architect; the 'assured stylistic compromise' of his Jacobethan Examination Schools of 1876-82 'set the pattern of Oxford architecture for the next fifty years' (p. 65). No reference is made to Ruskin's 1884 remark about 'this black hole [...] in a style as inherently corrupt as it is unEnglish'. It is surprising to find that, although George Edmund Street established his practice in Beaumont Street in 1852 (at which Morris was to meet his lifelong friend Philip Webb) and was the Diocesan Architect, building the fine church of Sts. Philip and James on Woodstock Road, 1860-66, he was not asked to do any substantial work for the university.

Some more adventurous buildings did appear, such as what Parissien terms the 'delightfully Disneyesque' Shire Hall built by John Plowman in 1839-41, and William Wilkinson's Randolph Hotel, with its 'jaunty if somewhat incoherent Gothic facade' of 1863-66 (p. 36). The latter, it is pointed out, contrasts strongly with C.R. Cockerell's 'classical masterpiece', the University Galleries (now the Ashmolean Museum) of 1840-41 (p. 35). The University Museum of 1855-59 by Thomas Deanne and Benjamin Woodward is a technically innovative building with iron pillars, giving science the position it had come to occupy in the culture. The great Roman Catholic architect A.W. Pugin was invited by two sympathetic dons to produce plans for rebuilding at Balliol – his 'monastic' design of 1833-34 is shown – but it was rapidly dismissed by the Master as far too Catholic. Pugin's only work in Oxford was a Gothic gateway at Magdalen of 1844, which he saw as a riposte to Scott's Martyrs' Memorial;

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but it was demolished only thirty-five years later. However, the flamboyant High Churchman William Butterfield was chosen to rebuild the chapel of Balliol in 1854, and later produced the most remarkable Victorian building in Oxford, Keble College, begun 1868. Parissien offers a striking photograph of the enormous brick chapel at Keble, commenting, in one of the many incisive remarks that accompany the images:

Its unapologetically muscular polychromy represents the highwater mark of Oxford Gothic; thereafter the university recoiled from such emphatic aesthetic expressions, and took refuge instead in comforting eclecticism.

(p. 47)

This eclecticism may be seen in Basil Champney's Indian Institute of 1882-84 providing 'a fine visual termination of Broad Street (p. 71), and his Late Gothic Mansfield College of 1887-89, as well as work at New College, Merton and Somerville; in relation to the latter, more might usefully have been said about the influence of the new women's colleges in encouraging more comfortable architectural modes. It was typical that the massive Town Hall and Library complex, completed by H.T. Hare in 1893, replaced a modest Georgian building. Towards the end of the century, some attractive domestic buildings in north Oxford showed signs of Arts and Crafts and the Queen Anne revival (p. 56), as a result of the university's decision to allow dons to marry and live out of college.

The fourth chapter, 'Taste and Comfort', moves away from architecture to design, for no obvious reason. Parissien mounts a strong argument in favour of what he sees as the empowerment of middle-class householders, especially women, by the 'astonishing advances in mass-manufacturing techniques' (p. 77) – nothing is said of the working conditions of those in the factories from which these products emerged. Those who criticised the new furnishings for their supposed vulgarity are dismissed – indeed. We are told that Ruskin 'admired decrepitude, not the gleaming newness of mass-manufacture' (p. 79) – hardly an illuminating antithesis. The Design Reformers are represented as romantic reactionaries. Owen Jones is said to have inspired Morris, two of whose (unidentified) textile designs are illustrated but not commented on. Morris's preference for vegetable dyes is emphasised, a preference which was apparently motivated by a desire to restrict his colour-range, although it is gleefully noted that the popular 'Daffodil' pattern of 1891 used a bright yellow artificial dye. Parissien seems unaware that the design is by John Henry Dearle, who may well have chosen the dyes, or that by 1891 the quality of artificial dyes had improved so much that they could reasonably be used by Morris and Co. Design historians who have admired the Arts and Crafts are said to have blithely ignored the

high cost of their products: ‘for all Morris’s high-flown socialist principles, few working men and women could actually manage to pay for the sort of furniture and textiles produced by his admirably ethical workshop’ (p. 85). The sarcastic tone is regrettable, and there is no acknowledgement of how seriously Morris confronted this issue. Taking a strongly feminist position, Parissien goes on to call Design Reform a masculine position, noting that writers on design like Charles Eastlake often blamed women for the decline of taste – this he extravagantly describes as the ‘victimization of women’ (p. 87), while he makes no reference to women like Mrs. Orrinsmith and Mrs. Haweis, whose books of advice were widely read. It is therefore something of a surprise to read at the end of the chapter of ‘that American doyenne of home design, Elise de Wolfe’; her dining room at the Colony Club in New York (1907) is pleasingly illustrated (p. 89).

In the fifth chapter, wittily entitled ‘In with the Old’, the writing happily returns to a quieter tone. After the First World War there were to be no architectural adventures – the returning servicemen were to be reassured by well-established styles. The architect most successful in this mode was Sir Reginald Blomfield, ‘the ideal architect for the conservative dons of Oxford’ (p. 97). Blomfield had built the attractive Talbot building for Lady Margaret Hall in 1910 and was to supplement it with the Neo-Georgian Lodge Building in 1926. He also published the book *Modernism* in 1934, in which he ‘savaged recent Modernist architecture in a very Oxonian manner’ (p. 98), deploring in particular its cosmopolitanism. After the retirement of Blomfield, Giles Gilbert Scott built for Lady Margaret Hall the Deneke Building (1932) and an impressive chapel in brick, in an Early Romanesque style (1933). Parissien also praises the Neo-Georgian Chapel of St. Hugh’s College, by Buckland and Haywood. In contrast, he is critical of the ‘imperialist bombast and stylistic schizophrenia’ of Herbert Baker’s Rhodes House of 1926-29, although the building looks pleasant enough, with its well-treed landscape, in the accompanying photo (pp. 108-9). He also condemns Thomas Worthington, first for his monolithic Extension to the Radcliffe Science Library, and then for continuing ‘to trot out the same rubble-faced formula across the city’ (p. 111). The one building of the period showing architectural distinction is Edward Lutyens’s Champion Hall, 1935-37, ‘one of the classical masterpieces of Oxford – indeed, one of the most impressive of Britain’s inter-war buildings’ (p. 112). We are led, too, to admire a very different building, the ‘brash, confident, Hollywood classicism’ (p. 117) of the Morris Garages in St. Aldate’s built in 1932 to the designs of Henry Smith, and now thriving as Oxford Crown Court. But in general the ‘comfortable conservatism’ (p. 116) of the Twenties and Thirties did little for the look of Oxford. The New Bodleian Library (1937-40) by Scott is described as no more than ‘a vast book warehouse’ behind its massive rubble walls (p. 117).

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Chapter six is entitled 'Brave New World', and is appropriately preceded by a photo of the 'dramatic concrete fan adorning Philip Dowson's Nuclear Physics building of 1967' (p. 123). But we are soon taken back to the period immediately after the war, when architecture continued to be restrained by tradition, as in Edward Maufe's neo-Georgian Dolphin Quad at St. John's (1948-49), Albert Richardson's sedate Principal's Lodging at St. Hilda's (1954-55), Raymond Erith's new library at Lady Margaret Hall, begun in 1959 and his Provost's Lodge at the Queen's College (1958-60), and Thomas Rayson's Tudoresque new range at Mansfield (1960-62). The most ambitious building of the time was Nuffield College, discussed in the previous chapter, perhaps because the money for it was given to the university in 1937 by the motor magnate, of whom we are given a perhaps unnecessarily full account. It was designed by the deservedly little-known Austen St Barbe Harrison and built from 1949 to 1960. The design is described as 'lifeless', and we are told that in his later years Nuffield 'went out of his way to avoid driving past the loathsome building' (p. 121). After this comes Modernism, in the form of the 'Beehive Block' at St. John's by Michael Powers (1958-59), the attractive Kenyon Building at St. Hughes by David Roberts (1964-66), the controversial Florey Building at Queen's by James Stirling (completed 1971), and the Garden Building at St. Hilda's by the Smithsons (1968-70). The influence of Sir Leslie Martin, especially at the St. Cross Building 1961-64, is deplored, while the city authorities are condemned for the Westgate Centre (1970-72) and the County Council offices (1974). We then leave Oxford unexpectedly and dramatically to be given an account of the Classical style employed in some country houses in the county, including Waverton House by Quinton Terry (1978-80), and Tusmore Park by William Whitefield (2004).

The city and university remained more eclectic, and during the mid-80s found their most favoured architect in Richard MacCormack whose buildings place 'the user, and not the materials or fittings, at the heart of the design' (p. 149), to the satisfaction of many clients. His Oxford work includes the Sainsbury building at Worcester (1983) and his 'magisterial and highly effective Garden Quad for St John's, of 1993-94' (p. 151). The prevailing eclecticism made various styles possible, including Demetri Porphyrios's Gothic Grove Quad at Magdalen, 1992-95, John Simpson's Georgian Pipe Partridge Quad at Lady Margaret Hall, begun in 2010, and Robert Adam's Sacker Library of 2001 on a difficult site at the rear of the Ashmolean, making skilful use of circular forms (attractively illustrated on pp. 154, 155 and 156). We are then taken out of the city again to admire revivalist buildings by Ben Pentreath (Fawley House, after 2012), Robert Franklin (conservation work and additions to Hanwell Castle and Wychwood Manor) and Price Dinsdale Associates at Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons in Great Milton. The latter is a fifteenth-century house extended

in the early twentieth century and now ‘a major global culinary destination’ (p. 167) – is this phrase ironic? The chef Raymond Blanc restored and extended the building from 1984 to 1998, using as his builders the firm of Symm, praised throughout the book for their reliability and quality. Parissien likes the Manoir so much that he offers one beautiful double-page and two smaller photos of it. He also uses it for the front cover of the book, where I would have preferred a non-commercial building from the city itself.

Chapter eight is called ‘Exporting Oxford’, and is concerned with the appeal to American Anglophiles of what we may see as, at its best, Oxford’s tasteful traditionalism. Patrons from all parts of the United States during the 1980s – not before? – furnished commissions for work along these lines. Buildings illustrated include the library by Steven Ganbrel at the Plaza Apartments in New York City; the garden facade of Fairfax and Summerson’s house at Litchfield, Connecticut; the study at a house in Greenwich, Connecticut, and two rooms in Los Angeles, by Ferguson and Shamamian; a villa in the Hudson Valley by Gil Shafer; the library in Albemarle House, Virginia, by David Easton, completed 1983 (where, as in other places, the exported building expertise of Symm was used) and, on a larger scale, Whitman College in Washington by Demetri Porphyriac. In conclusion, Parissien observes of the Albemarle House library that it offers the ‘leather-bound assurance’ and ‘well-upholstered security’ of the Oxford tradition transplanted to Virginia (p. 183). To me it looks heavy and surprisingly masculine in the era of feminism.

The final short chapter takes us back to the locality of Oxford and is entitled ‘Full Circle’. Just as the book had begun with church buildings, those of Daniel Evans in the early nineteenth century, it ends, perhaps surprisingly in our secular society, with two ecclesiastical buildings in the early twenty-first. The Edward King Chapel for Ripon College at Cuddesdon in South Oxfordshire, 2011-13, is by Niall McLaughlin. The three photos show an attractive elliptical building with free-Gothic ribs in the ceiling and walls of yellowish Clipsham stone – a material favoured by Edwardian architects. It is said to fuse ‘the bare simplicity of the Early Christian churches with the minimalist Modernism of the 1950s and 1960s and the contemporary reinterpretations of Gothic forms’ (p. 186). At the same time, a new Roman Catholic chapel was built at Culham Court on the eastern border of Oxfordshire by Symm, and designed by Craig Hamilton, an architect admired by the Georgian Society, whose work elsewhere is – perhaps unnecessarily – illustrated. Perhaps this is to make up for the fact that the Chapel of Christ the Redeemer, begun in 2013, is shown only in the plan and elevation. The building is said to synthesise ‘a number of classical traditions and a wide range of materials, with ‘a subtle palette of limestones and woods’ in the interior (pp. 192-3). In these buildings, Parissien concludes, Oxford has

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returned to its 'comfortable revivalist axis' (p. 193), a position which he evidently finds congenial. It would be interesting to see whether an account of Cambridge would offer a similar narrative.

**Peter Faulkner**