Reviews


Nostalgia, as they say, is not quite what it used to be. Not only has bathing in the past, imaginary and real, become something of a cultural obsession in our own confused age, but thinking about how to recall and preserve the past has given rise to heated discourse. The publication of three books, all notably products of the identity-seeking 1980s, had a major impact upon the terms in which this debate has taken place: Patrick Wright’s *On Living in an Old Country* (1985); Robert Hewison’s excellent *The Heritage Industry: Britain in a Climate of Decline* (1987) and Hobsbawm and Ranger’s co-edited anthology, *The Invention of Tradition* (which, although arising out of a 1978 *Past and Present* conference, seemed to have had its major historiographical effects in the Eighties) each iterated a thesis, only slightly caricatured by Samuel, that the concept of ‘heritage’ was becoming associated with “wanting to commodify the past and turn it into tourist kitsch.” (p.259) Britain had lost its role, destroyed its manufacturing base, converted itself into a service economy and was actively seeking theme-park status – so the argument went. Despite Hewison’s partial revision of that thesis, in his new book, *Culture and Consensus* (Methuen, 1995), and Raphael Samuel’s well-aimed assault upon what he seems to regard as an intellectuals’ backlash against accessible ‘living history’, there is much to be heeded in the dystopian accounts of those who resisted the notion of a market-friendly National Heritage.

There is much to commend this book. Firstly, its scope is encyclopaedic, with a breathtaking array of truly eclectic examples reflecting the life’s work of one of Britain’s most able active historians; that it is only the first volume in a trilogy is amazing, for one concludes reading it with a sense of having drunk the well dry. Secondly, it is important that the debate about how the past is remembered is kept heated, never simply descending into clichéd attacks on easy targets, such as the ephemeral souvenir industry. Thirdly, it is always interesting to watch a great radical thinker proceed along a path which seems rather conservative (which the defence of ‘heritage’ does), only to find that underlying the thesis is a genuine concern to protect the past from the exclusive control of an academic clique and to mount a spirited defence of popular history. The almost fifty-page introduction on ‘Unofficial Knowledge’ is both forceful and convincing, while the middle sections of the book (notably parts III and IV) possessed for this reader only the former quality.

William Morris is, of course, intimately involved in this debate. His name had been invoked both by those who would prettify the past into a tourist-consumable ‘Merrie England’ and by others motivated by Morris’s own concern to protect the authentic treasures of our shared physical and cultural heritage. The subtle distinction between realising the romance of the past and romanticising memories is at stake, with the commodifiers of popular memory more eager to invent than to preserve tradition, and more concerned with some traditions than others.

Samuel reminds us that “Historically, preservationism is a cause which owes at least as much to the Left as to the Right. The founders of the Society for the Protection
of Ancient Buildings – William Morris and Philip Webb – were socialists” (p.288) and goes on to quote Morris’s letter to Canon Rawnsley which supports the claim that Morris had a significant influence upon the establishment of the National Trust. (p.296)

The thesis that conservationism “makes utopianism feasible” because of its capacity “to invoke an idea of the common good without provoking suspicion of party interest” is simply not convincing, and jars with Morris’s recognition that there can be no common good or common artistic heritage until there is a common social interest. Raphael Samuel’s pessimism about the possibility of such a vision of real community (at a recent Ruskin College conference he declared himself a socialist who gave up the belief in socialism thirty years ago!) has perhaps led him too far towards a postmodernist assumption that fragmented campaigns to salvage bits of our past is the best that can be hoped for. Morris’s critique of people’s ‘poverty of desire’ (Bevin’s term) is seen by Samuel as precursor of a tendency of condescension towards popular culture; but surely, the distinction between sneering at what people know themselves to be and have been (real popular culture) and Morris’s quite different rejection of commodified desires and memories is both crucial and still relevant.

Stephen Coleman


Yet another edition of this ever-popular classic. Its nearest rival is the Penguin edition edited by Clive Wilmer, published in 1993. Kumar does a better job in providing 7,000 words of helpful and sometimes thought-provoking notes (including a lengthy discussion of the ‘chronology of the new life’, suggesting that Morris envisaged ‘a transition lasting about fifty years after the revolution of 1952’). Kumar’s bibliographical note on Morris’s and other relevant writings is more adequate than that of Wilmer, although the latter was introducing other writings by Morris in the same book. Kumar provides an excellent index; unfortunately, Wilmer doesn’t provide any.

Wilmer, however, scores better in his chronology of Morris. Not only does he have more entries, but they tend to be more rounded. For example, Kumar simply tells us that in 1855 “Morris came into all income of £900 a year”. Wilmer’s entry for the same year is “Begins writing poetry. Annual income of £900 on attaining majority. Second tour of French cathedrals with Burne-Jones leads to resolution to become architect.”

It is interesting to compare the introductions provided by the two editors. Both cover the same subjects in slightly different ways: Marx’s influence, the reaction by Morris to Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*, the device of dreams to tell a story and make a case. Wilmer offers a more adequate discussion of the utopian tradition; he comments on the structure of the book and gives a clear summary of it; he notes the criticisms that have been made of it; and refers to books by other commentators on it. However, Kumar has a better discussion of Morris’s medievalism, his conception of ‘how the change came’, his inspiration to Greens as well as Reds, and his ‘religion of socialism’.

Stan Parker

There is a long and distinguished list of French observers of the antics across the Channel, from Voltaire, Taine and Halévy onwards to which this book makes an honourable addition. It is a concise account of the political and economic theory of liberalism which powered Britain’s successful rise to top dog through brief discussions of the principal thinkers followed by chapters devoted to the counter-vailing theorists, logically described as anti-liberals. We are given David Ricardo, Malthus, James and John Stuart Mill, and Herbert Spencer. The “anti-liberals” are represented by the early proponent of the simple life, William Thompson — a utilitarian socialist and feminist, he should be better known — Robert Owen, Carlyle and Morris.

Morris “anti-liberal”? It does not sound like the right coat for the most generous of men but as Blanchon shows Morris was a consistent and mordant critic of the false freedom offered by the political doctrines of liberalism and laissez-faire economics which he demonstrated by showing their real effects in everyday life. His criticism of society, of commerce and of the industrial world, the ugliness of towns and the pollution which not even the rich could escape and which mutilated the life of the poor, is an attack on the liberal theories which held sway. The absence of beauty was directly due to the absence of pleasure in work and the false — liberal — economic values of the market place. The question of Morris’s Marxist orthodoxy as postulated by Meier versus Engel’s criticism of Morris as moralising and sentimental, Blanchon dismisses as beside the point: he was “not a systematic thinker but a man of conviction and action”. His doctrine was aesthetic, aroused by his indignation at the ugliness of industrial towns and the lives of the producers and the impossibility of creating beauty in such circumstances. His basic premise was the importance of beauty and creativity as human needs. And not only as needs but as the motive force in his scheme of things. It is this which makes him as original now as then. Although one can trace the diffusion of the idea of creativity, no one seems prepared to discuss beauty in our relativistic universe.

Blanchon points out that Morris provides a mirror image of the liberal position. In every respect he reverses it. He denies the liberal claims that workers make free contracts or that the free market can best meet human needs and provide equality of opportunity. Liberal theory promised liberty but delivered economic slavery, promised space for individual flowering but loosed an individualism that ended in the law of jungle, promised equality of opportunity but accepted inequality, promised peace and harmony but fostered war because of its links to laissez-faire capitalism. Laissez-faire for William Morris was an abuse of language because it required and received the active support of government. In practice it was an economic war of survival and involved active warfare when governments ‘exploded’ colonial gateways and opened the way to the destruction of other economic systems. In News from Nowhere the liberal goals of choice, individual freedom and opportunities for self-development are realised within a system based on co-operation.

The freedom of the individual was the vaunted centrepiece of the liberal philosophy. Morris shows the extent to which it is in fact circumscribed in liberal society. He
gives it considerable attention because this has always been a problem area for socialist reformers, sometimes reproached as being individualists propounding collectivist solutions. J.S. Mill in ‘On Liberty’ had recognised that the “tyranny of the majority” had to be met by an “equilibrium”, however difficult, between individual liberty and social constraint. This remains a problem in the very different society of News from Nowhere. Dissenters, who don’t want to come harvesting, are allowed to go their own way – they’ll merely miss the party. There, in the absence of the malforming pressures on the psyche of economic stress, society is designed to allow real freedom to flourish in choice of partners, work, and self-expression, although this does involve an “education of desire”. Old Hammond admits that no improvement on taking decisions by a majority vote had been found, although to avoid the tyranny of the majority any decisions which are less than unanimous are carefully scrutinised; but in the end there was no alternative. On the other hand, by devolving power to small communities it was possible to work with direct democracy.

Apart from Morris’s Utopianism, it is his discussions of productivity and of “the education of desire” which Dr. Blanchon finds most relevant today. There is a theory that the nineteenth century had all the ideas - Hegel, Marx, Darwin, Nietzsche, Ruskin, Tolstoy, even Freud – and the twentieth has been occupied with their effects. This seems to be the premise of this book, which is clearly intended to make nineteenth-century thought available to a more general but politically important public interested in social ideas. It is encouraging that the authors think there is such an audience in France, and it would be good to have this book available in English. Dr. Blanchon has set out the Morris stall in a way which should catch the attention of any discerning reader and we must be grateful to her for bringing what is so obviously to us the best of nineteenth century thought, to a wider and possibly influential audience.

Hans Brill


The joint authors of this beautifully produced and illustrated paperback are a freelance historian of the subject and a university lecturer in Architectural History. Their shared interest derives from an earlier study of Mashone architecture in Zimbabwe. They appear here as amateurs of the subject (in both senses of that word) who are addressing a potentially like-minded readership. In Chapter 3 is the declaration, “Our approach is one which is concerned about both practical and aesthetic needs and this includes both a green and a feminist stance. Underlying the whole book is our hope of extending democratic participation in architecture”.

In the course of this, readers of this Journal will be interested to know, are four references to William Morris, “poet, writer, designer and revolutionary”, who founded the S.P.A.B. and whose “influence was carried forward into modernism.” In the context of this guide to understanding architecture, that, it emerges, is tantamount to a downright condemnation. In relation to the impact of the Crystal Palace we find the observation, “The foremost critics and theorists of the day such as John Ruskin and William Morris contributed to the debate. Generally they agreed that the distinction between architecture and building could be summarised as ‘Building + Art
Architecture” Later, “Pugin’s ideas were developed by John Ruskin, William Morris and others and provided one of the inspirations for the arts and crafts and for modernism”.

An appendix gives a six-line biography of Morris which mentions the S.P.A.B. and reiterates that, “His influence was carried forward into modernism”. The source for this linkage is Nikolaus Pevsner, who “… traced the origins of modernism back to the nineteenth century in his book, Pioneers of Modern Design (1936)”. These co-authors do not recognise the distinction, in long-established architectural usage, between straightforward Modern and ‘Modernism’, with its derivatives ‘-ist’ and ‘-istic’, which they seek to re-define. One modern architect, Frederick Gibberd, in his slim book The Architecture of England (1938) categorised and castigated ‘Modernistic’ architecture, instancing cinemas which “have enormous streamline towers or similar useless features, and are decorated inside with zig-zag and other jazz ornament”. The ‘-ism’, it should be recognised, has nothing to do with the genuine ‘modern’. J. M. Richards gave his book of 1940 the title, An Introduction to Modern Architecture, and that was the established usage. The post-Modern ‘-ism’ is part of the Thatcherite pseudo-Victorian Values legacy.

An architect in another tradition is treated equally dismissively by our co-authors. Reginald Blomfield “was an advocate of the system taught at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Paris. He … was concerned with a limited range of building types and he was not interested in how buildings were constructed or why they were built.” His work actually ranged from country houses to the north-side development of the Headrow in Leeds (a city which the writers must know because they instance Cuthbert Broderick’s Corn Exchange – which, incidentally, is not circular in plan as they state, but oval) and to buildings at Piccadilly Circus; from Lincoln Library to Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, and from the exclusive Carlton Club in Pall Mall to the massive Menin Gate memorial at Ypres, through which people have passed, impressed by its monumental scale and its message, in their millions. Blomfield also published a book, The Formal Garden in England and another on architecture, The Mistress Art, from which the authors of this book under review might have benefitted. This scholarly architect would not have been careless with proper names such as ‘Goetheneum’ for Goethe’s Institute or ‘Bannister’ in Banister Fletcher, and so on.

In the third chapter, ‘What is architectural history?’, there is an account of “the first comparative history of world architecture” by J. B. Fischer von Erlach, The Design of Historic Architecture (Vienna, 1721). Entwurf einer historischen Architektur would have been better translated as Outline of Historical Architecture. On the facing page, at the head of this chapter, is an aerial photograph of Stonehenge. This was surely an occasion for mentioning that Plate XIV of von Erlach’s book was an illustration of Stonehenge and, as an example of the scope of historical knowledge almost three centuries ago, that his text also mentioned the lesser-known Great Rollright stone circle in Oxfordshire.

In Chapter 4, dealing with ‘Symbolism’, an eighteenth century French example is instanced: “Claude-Nicolas Ledoux’s house and workshop of the coopers, c. 1804, is composed of forms which look like double interlocking barrels. The form derives from the product of the resident’s [sic] occupation, that is the making of barrels.” Can there really be anything like that in Ledoux’s oeuvre? The actual salt-works complex at Arc-et-Senans, designed and built about 1775, has no such symbolic
forms. Wheelwrights, carpenters, blacksmiths and cooper were housed in four blocks of identical design, each with a central workshop and side-wings of family accommodation, in a semi-circular lay-out. The only thing faintly resembling a barrel is the congélation decorative motif, symbolising the precipitation of salt and used throughout the complex. In this same chapter, 'Understanding Architecture', we read, "The Barcelona Pavilion (now known as the German Pavilion) was designed by Mies van der Rohe for the international exhibition in Barcelona in 1929 ..." It was in fact, designed and built as the German pavilion, at the time of the Weimar Republic. It never was 'The Barcelona Pavilion'; there were several national pavilions by the nature of the event.

The last chapter deals with "the means by which architects convey their ideas to other people". The section dealing with plans explains, "A plan is a horizontal plane through a building, often drawn at waist level, so that it shows the windows." On the facing page are examples of 'Architectural drawing conventions'. The last is of plans of a half-turn stair with landings - a stairwell square in plan, drawn at ground-floor, intermediate and top-floor levels. The convention for the plane of the plan of a stair is at mid-flight, indicated by an oblique line, with a squiggle in the middle, drawn across it. From floor to floor, this stair consists of three flights, with two intermediate corner landings. All is well except for the top-floor plan. There, where the last two flights with a quarter-landing should be visible, an oblique 'cut-off' line leaves only the top half of the intermediate flight to be seen. It is illogical but - in this context - allegorical: there is no going back. The book has been published. An apparent rush into print has left too many infelicities - too many to enumerate here. Neither, within the limited scope of a review, has it been possible to present a comprehensive critique. It is a matter of regret that the scope of the project has not been matched by the achievement. In the event, that early declaration of a 'green stance' takes on another meaning. Perhaps a subsequent edition, radically revised, will remedy this.

John Hanna


Subtitled 'The Enigma of Visibility in Ruskin, Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites', this book contains one of the most interesting recent accounts of The Defence of Guenevere poems. The overall project is to emphasise - the author would say 'privilege' - the importance in nineteenth-century culture of "optical agency, particularly as characterised by a new desire to manipulate the object in the visual field and to recognise the positioning of the body of the subject in acts of visual perception". (p.5) Earlier approaches had emphasised geometrical perspective, "a mathematical system which takes no account of light"; now, in the era of the emergence of photography, an art or craft of light, the seeing eye is specific, located in a particular body in a particular position. Where the Claude glass "compressed an actual view and gave it tonal unity" (p.8), the popular Victorian stereoscope worked by presenting the brain with two images to be "resolved ... into one heightened three-dimensional image". (p.8). Ideas of vision were being complicated and made problematic.
This insight is pursued through Ruskin’s theory of the grotesque, to which attention has recently been drawn by Isobel Armstrong in her *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Politics and Poetics* (1993), a book whose influence on her Smith acknowledges. She quotes illuminatingly from Ruskin, both *Modern Painters* and *Stones of Venice*, showing his enthusiasm for Gothic ornament whose complexity challenges and confounds the eye. She goes on to show Ruskin’s influence on Morris, in particular relating Morris’s tour of Northern France in 1855 to Ruskin’s in 1848, and showing that Morris’s responses to the architecture he saw were influenced by the assumptions of *The Seven Lamps*. She gives a detailed account of Morris’s ‘Shadows of Amiens’ (published in February 1856), arguing that it shows awareness not only of Ruskin’s thought but of the new medium of photography; Morris refers explicitly to having to “look at my photographs” “for the facts of form” (qu. p.86). Smith’s discussion of these matters is clear and thought-provoking.

The book goes on to discuss ‘Photography in Pre-Raphaelitism’, concentrating largely on Hunt’s ‘The Light of the World’ and ‘The Scapegoat’ and developing Bell Scott’s remarkable suggestion, in 1898, that “the seed of the flower of Pre-Raphaelitism was photography”. The argument is not about specific cases or simple imitations; it is rather that “photographic discourse” was influencing contemporary thought about “the dichotomies of physical and metaphysical, empirical and transcendental” (p.103), previously thought of as unproblematic. Whether we find this argument totally convincing or not, it certainly serves to draw attention to the concurrence of a number of concerns that are too readily separated out in critical discussions.

Smith devotes three chapters to the reception of *The Defence of Guenevere* and to consideration of the “optical agency” revealed in specific poems. She shows convincingly how the early reviewers saw the poems as Pre-Raphaelite, and were particularly disturbed by what they saw as the strange visual effects in the poems. She draws attention to a fascinating review in *The New Englander* in 1871 by Robert K. Weeks which argued of Morris, “where he cannot see, he will not venture far”. Interestingly, she sees Weeks’s view as positive, whereas from another point of view it could be argued that he is emphasising the limitations of Morris’s achievement. But certainly Weeks does justice to the primacy of sight in the poems, which Smith demonstrates in her thoughtful accounts of ‘Rapunzel’, (which she contrasts with ‘The Lady of Shalott’ and relates helpfully to Grimm’s story), ‘Golden Wings’, ‘Concerning Geffray Teste Noire’, ‘Sir Peter Harpdon’s End’, ‘A Good Knight in Prison’, ‘In Prison’, ‘The Sailing of the Sword’ (with an interesting comparison with Burne-Jones’s drawing of 1858, ‘Going to Battle’), ‘The Defence of Guenevere’, ‘The Blue Closet’, and ‘The Tune of Seven Towers’. All the poems are illuminated by these discussions, and we are led to see the very important part played in them by optical effects. ‘Rapunzel’ receives the most detailed attention, and benefits from this. Clearly Morris’s poem is remarkable for its handling of visual effects. But I am not sure that Smith’s conclusion about the poem is completely convincing. She writes: “‘Rapunzel’ discloses a distinctive politics of sight deriving its impetus from physiological conditions. It thus demonstrates the extent to which an optical discourse directs Morris’s poetry, making the perception of phenomena infinitely problematic, as perpetually aberrant”. Thus, finally, “medievalism becomes, in larger terms in the period, a consummate vehicle for perceptual aberration” (p.153). I think my reservations simply concern the word ‘aberration’: to me that has only negative
connotations, whereas I think the implication of the discussion is that it can contribute to an enrichment of vision. If this is the case, then readers of the poems will certainly be in agreement.

Thus there is much to enjoy in and learn from this book. The author knows her subject well, and enriches our knowledge of the period. If I have reservations, they concern two matters. Firstly, the writing, using, as it consistently does, the vocabulary of today’s theoretical criticism, makes few concessions to the non-academic reader. An explanatory footnote, for instance, reads: “By a literal presence of optical mediation in the language of reviewers I mean that one can locate in the permutations of optical referents particularised and competing cultural and political positions”. (p. 222)

Secondly, the attitude to previous criticism is curiously unhistorical. Earlier critics (usually unspecified) are blamed for ignoring the optical elements emphasised in this book, but are seldom recognised as having contributed something else of positive interest or importance. Thus we read that those recent critics who have written about ‘Rapunzel’ “have tended to exercise a preference for psychological readings that have frequently taken the form of simplistic applications of Freudian models”. (p. 142)

The final clause here makes an important criticism: simplistic application of any critical approach is to be regretted. But the implication that any psychological reading must be of less importance than an optical one is surely unconvincing, and unhistorical: the preoccupations of one decade are seldom those of the next, but are not invalidated by that fact. Isn’t criticism an incremental activity in which each generation of critics builds upon its predecessors in the pursuit of a full account of the work in question? That seems to me a better way of looking at it than the competitive idea of criticism implied as an alternative. Won’t the next generation of Morris critics want to include Dr. Smith’s optical insights while advancing their own, to us unknowable, concerns? I hope so. Finally, it has to be said that the Cambridge University Press has fallen below its usual high editorial standard. There are a surprising number of spelling mistakes – ‘warefare’, ‘unnacountable’, ‘trimnes’, ‘inprisonment’ – the weirdest certainly ‘Adricatus Diaboli’ (p. 221); poetic quotations are not always set out accurately (no quotation marks for Guenever’s defence, for instance); a reference on p.169 to the Inferno must be to the Paradiso; the numbers of the references in Ch. 4 from 48 to 64 are incorrect; Morris’s Collected Works are said to consist of 12 volumes, and Longmans to have published May’s Introductions in 1936.

These are the more to be regretted because this is an original and authoritative piece of research, which will have to be taken account of by future critics of Ruskin and Morris. In particular Dr. Smith shows herself to be a perceptive reader of Ruskin, and draws attention to parts of Modern Painters that I have only the haziest memories of, but which clearly repay the most detailed attention. ‘Of Medieval Landscape’ in Modern Painters III, with its account of changing attitudes to the representation of nature, and its brilliant account of the relationship between the picturing of Paradise in fifteenth-century manuscripts as a protected garden and “the troubled and ceaseless warfare of the times” (p.158) is one striking example of Ruskin’s service to modern cultural criticism in his consistent agility in relating art to society. It is for its attentiveness to such passages as these, as well as to optical detail in Morris’s early poems and elsewhere, that this book is particularly to be welcomed.

Peter Faulkner
Yvonne Kapp, *In Search of Mr. and Mrs. Wardle*. History Workshop Pamphlet, New Series. Price £10 from Ruskin College, Oxford.

In 1977, when she had finished her superb biography of Eleanor Marx, Yvonne Kapp found that one of the minor characters in that dramatic story, a member of the Bloomsbury Branch of the Socialist League, was none other than the Madeleine Smith of a famous murder trial. The present fascinating book is the fruit of that discovery and of Ms. Kapp’s continuing research, which led her back into the world of William Morris, on whose political world, and world of work and design, it casts a fresh light.

It was by marrying George Wardle, not yet Morris’s manager and factotum, in July 1861, that Madeleine, Lena, Smith came into both worlds. From Cromer, in the course of 1865, George sent packets of his admirable architectural and decorative studies to Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., soon to move to Queen Square. There is no clear beginning to these exchanges, but the drawings had been ordered and were paid for, leading to Wardle’s employment by Morris as a draughtsman but in part also as bookkeeper/manager, replacing Charles Faulkner, now returned to his Oxford Fellowship, and, within a year virtually to replace Warington Taylor, stricken with tuberculosis and increasingly absent with that ultimately fatal illness. When in 1870 Taylor died, Wardle, now Morris’s indispensable right-hand man, became manager, and was able as Taylor had never been, to take on much of the practical work which Morris as the Firm’s chief designer, did. Now uninhibited by any ambiguity in his position, Wardle pressed Morris to develop those crafts, especially in textiles, which most brought out Morris’s genius and would increasingly extend their market. Queen Square was completely reorganised. Most significant change was the conversion of a scullery into a dyehouse. There can be no doubt that it was under Wardle’s guidance that this was done, as was the next development, which in 1875 took Morris to Leek to learn the full range of trade dyeing from George’s brother-in-law Thomas, a man of Morris’s own mould, vigorous and outgoing where George was reserved and nervous. The dyeing connection is the key to Thomas Wardle’s first contact with the Firm.

Doubt is expressed in the present book as to George Wardle’s description (on his daughter’s marriage certificate) as Decorator: but this by no means meant a man with a ladder and brushes: Morris himself, and Pugin, and Crace the chief fashionable decorator of the Regency, were all ‘decorators’; nor was there anything strange in May Morris’s describing Wardle as “artist and chemist”. Artist, if not creative, he undoubtedly was: and the knowledge of practical chemistry required, at least in the textile industry, he would have learned in his father’s business which was, like that of Cormell Price’s father, that of druggist or drysalter, supplying chemicals to the trade. This it was that enabled him to set up Morris’s little dyehouse.

Among Rossetti’s friends, and for some time his tenant, as Meredith had been, in 16 Cheyne Walk, was Frederick Sandys – until his devious money dealings and his more irksome plagiarism of paintings caused Gabriel to send him packing. It was by the brilliant satirical print of Ruskin riding a donkey with Hunt and Millais – caricaturing Millais’s ‘Sir Isumbras at the Ford’ – that he had attracted Rossetti. He was born in 1829, son of a Norwich artist who had freed himself from the dyevats to which he had been brought up, by his talents as a painter, inherited by his son, who first made his way into the art world by architectural and archaeological watercolours for local antiquaries and collectors. When not in London he worked in
his native county, and what is more likely than that he and the Wardles should have met when they moved to Cromer, George busy making a living in just the same way as Sandys had done twenty years before.

This is the working frame within which the Wardle family lived: because William Morris was not only designer but emergent socialist, Lena Wardle and her children were all drawn, as George was not, into the socialist movement of the Eighties. And the dovetailing of these seeming discrepant halves is the substance of this long-awaited book.

It has suffered oddities of editing and production, not to be attributed to the author. For instance the Contents page promises a Select Bibliography on page 71. There is no bibliography, select or otherwise, and page 71 begins with the SPAB Report of July 1888 by J. H. Middleton and George Wardle on the condition of St. Mark's Venice. Pagination does not agree with the placing of the six valuable Appendices, most important of which are Wardle’s ‘Memorials of WM’, written (in Italy, December 1897) to help Mackail in the Life, and his letter of August 1898 to Cockerell, on Morris’s way into socialism. The ‘Memorials’ is the most valuable single document we have on Morris’s work in design and crafts. A precious, well-thought inclusion is four double-spreads from Wardle’s notebooks carried with him when, after retiring, he resumed his beloved architectural studies in France and Italy.

There seem to have been two different systems of footnoting, not co-ordinated, while in one or two places footnotes do not run continuously. One serious error surviving from an earlier version is on page 12, where the famous passage is quoted which tells how Wardle in early days at Queen Square was asked to draw on the woodblock the illustrations Ned Jones was making for the projected ‘Cupid and Psyche’. Having begun this with pleasure, he was asked, could he engrave them, which he began: but had done only a few when Morris swept all away to do them himself. But the paragraph immediately following takes a few phrases from quite another place: “George Wardle drew all the ornament in the first ten pages and I coloured it; he also did all the coloured letters both big and little.” These are indeed Morris’s words, but come from his postscript to the Book of Verse he designed for Georgie Burne-Jones’s thirtieth birthday, one of his first important calligraphic volumes and nothing to do with Cupid or wood-engraving, long abandoned.

Referring to the problems created by Morris’s refusal to put new glass in ancient buildings from about 1880, there is a footnote: “There is Morris glass in some twenty parish churches in this country.” There is Morris glass in over five hundred. On page 35, the names Malot and Dardelle in Wardle’s letter to Cockerell (not Cockerill) are both footnoted ‘not traced’. But both can be found in index as well as text of Lissagary’s History of the Paris Commune. Lissagary had known during the siege and Commune both Dardelles and ‘Malot’. The book Dardelles had put in Wardle’s hand was not by Malot but by Malon, last commander in the Battignolles district, whence he escaped with Louise Michel and Dimitrievna. Michel eventually arrived in London, where she taught Madox Brown’s grandchildren in her little Free School. Malon fled to Switzerland, where he published from Neuchatel La troisième défaite du Proletariats français and a newspaper, Le Socialisme Progressif, and several socio-economic works.

None of these slips is to be laid at the door of Yvonne Kapp, whose life of Eleanor Marx is one of the classics of modern biography, deeply researched and admirably
written. They seem to be the work of hands more willing than careful. But in spite of these technical disorders, we now have a new interesting passage of the life of the London Socialist movement, and of Morris’s days in it, spelled out for us.

Ray Watkinson

CORRIGENDUM

In the Special Education Issue (Autumn 1994) a regrettable omission occurred in Ady Mineo’s article, ‘The Reverse of Salem House’. The paragraph beginning at the bottom of p.13 should read:

This personal evaluation can be extended to the intellectuals of the past who acted according to the Cartesian postulate *cogito, ergo sum*, whereas the new people behave more in the light of the Nietzschean axiom *vivo, ergo cogito*. Even Matthew Arnold, in his impassioned criticism of the mechanical “stock notions” which undermined the harmonious development of the individual, emphasised the mental powers of the human being by conceiving culture as “an inward condition of the mind and spirit”, thus neglecting the bodily dimension of human life.