Reviews


Mervyn Jones has written a competent and readable account of the life, and to some extent the times, of a writer whose philosophical optimism has not proved justified in relation to his posthumous literary repute. Famously dismissed by Forster in 1927 as offering ‘the home counties posing as the universe’, Meredith has never recovered the critical reputation he had at the end of the nineteenth century – and that reputation was never really stable. Now he is little read and, it must be admitted, often hard to read. *The Egoist* certainly deserves to retain currency for its entertaining exposure of male arrogance and its celebration of female vitality – Jones’s best chapter is entitled ‘Champion of Women’; the poetic sequence *Modern Love* is a still moving account of a failed marriage, and ‘Love in the Valley’ a rhythmically appealing evocation of young love; ‘Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit’ a lightly intelligent account of a subject difficult to handle lightly; and perhaps *Richard Feverel, Beauchamp’s Career* and *Diana of the Crossways* have something to offer the modern reader. But this is hardly enough to justify high claims, and Jones hardly makes these. Indeed, the puzzling thing about this quite attractive book is why Jones thought it necessary to write it. His account does not seem to me to take us any further than Gillian Beer in *Meredith: A Change of Masks* in 1970 – or indeed Norman Kelvin in *A Troubled Eden* in 1961.

Morris and Meredith seem never to have met, although Meredith shared Tudor House in Cheyne Walk with Swinburne, William Michael and Dante Gabriel Rossetti in 1862; Meredith soon came to dislike the emotional behaviour of at least two of his fellow tenants and ‘withdrew’, we are told, ‘after six months to the peace of Cosham Cottage’. Meredith always saw himself as a Radical, and, Jones suggests, took a keen interest in the ‘contest – or race – between Radical Liberalism and Socialism’ that was played out in Germany in the 1860s, with Ferdinand Lassalle as its central protagonist. Meredith based his novel – or ‘faction’ – *The Tragic Comedians* on the memoirs of Helene von Racowitza relating to her relationship with Lassalle, who died in a duel in 1864, a year after founding the German Workers’ Association. Jones argues that Lassalle was a forerunner of ‘the so-called democratic centralism of later Communist parties’, and remarks that ‘Lassalle’s State Socialism is at the opposite pole from the English utopia sketched in William Morris’s *News from Nowhere*’. He also reminds us that Marx and Engels detested Lassalle, and denounced his proposals in their *Critique of the Gotha*.

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Programme. But there is no evidence that Meredith, who prided himself on his political realism as well as his idealism, ever took a serious interest in Socialism. And in 1878, when Morris joined the Eastern Question Association, Meredith was on the other side, in favour of British intervention in the Balkans to resist Russian imperialism; he later became an enthusiast for peace-time conscription. This is not to deny that he was radical in many ways, particularly in his respect for women and his critique of their restricted social position. But it does throw into relief the complexities and perplexities of politics at the time, perhaps thereby helping to account for Morris's purism in seeking simple solutions for complex problems.

Sonya Rudicoff completed *Ancestral Houses* shortly before her death, in 1997. It is a meticulous investigation of Virginia Woolf's relationships with members of the British aristocracy, and her complex feelings about them and it, which she herself articulated in her essay 'Am I a Snob?'. Rudicoff shows in compelling detail the extent of Woolf's involvement, and uses it in her account of this 'middle-class writer who claimed a socialist affinity even as her imagination nourished the fragments of aristocracy she had known'. This might sound like a recipe for a reductive response, but reductiveness is happily precluded by Rudicoff's sensitivity to the complexities of the case and her respect for Woolf's achievement. Though the title of the book is taken from Yeats's fine poem, which is quoted in full, no attempt is made to assimilate Woolf's politics to those of the poet; what we are shown is the extent and particularity of Woolf's experience of such houses, often as holiday lettings rather than because of any ancestral splendour of the Stephens family. The attractive cover photograph shows Blo' Norton Hall in Norfolk, where the family spent its last holiday together, in August 1906. The manor house, rebuilt after a fire in 1585, had not been subsequently modernised, and formed the setting of a Woolf story about an imagined seventeenth-century owner, Mistress Joan Martin, revealed by the research of a modern woman antiquarian. Rudicoff briefly relates this antiquarianism to the interest in the past stimulated at the time by Ruskin and Morris, and the Arts and Crafts movement. But of course what we value in Woolf is not her response to buildings but her wonderful insight into the human mind. If Blo' Norton has something in common with Kelmscott Manor as a building, that is not what Woolf was interested in. And by contrast with the complexity of her response to the aristocracy as shown in this book, Morris's breezy and apparently untroubled attitude remains attractively sane.

Alan Bacon's *The Nineteenth-Century History of English Studies* is an attractively produced anthology of writings about English Literature as it became a university subject in the nineteenth century, which is useful today as we debate the value of the subject—and indeed its definition—in the circumstances of the new millennium. Bacon provides a succinct Introduction and nineteen clearly annotated sections; these begin with Hugh Blair's Introduction to *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, originally delivered in 1783, and end with the important Newbolt Report, *The Teaching of English in England*, in 1921, a document whose fervent belief in English as providing what Bacon describes as 'an opening up to the self-expression
of great natures and to a record of spiritual experiences' contrasts strikingly with the cautious and often managerial language of any claims made today. Although the whole subject is of great general interest, the Morrisian element is to be found in chapter 17, which consists of letters sent to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in reply to questions about the desirability and possible organisation of the study of English Literature in the universities. The twenty-five replies cover almost every conceivable position, from those strongly in favour, through those weakly in favour, to those strongly opposed, either because the subject is too easy (Myers: ‘Should anything so easy and so agreeable as reading, say, of Burke and Macaulay, be classed as serious work at all?’) or because it would destroy the pleasure of reading (Grant Allen: ‘If you wish to kill a study, make it the subject of academical teaching’). As is well known, Morris was one of the most negative, fearing that the syllabus would begin with Shakespeare rather than *Beowulf*, and that the emphasis on literary criticism would mean that ‘[h]yper-refinement and paradox would be the order of the day’. Instead, Morris characteristically recommended the establishment of a chair of medieval archaeology, ‘with the definite object of teaching the dons the value of the buildings of which they ought to be the guardians’. As someone who has had the good fortune to spend his years teaching the now-so-popular if still controversial subject, I am hardly in a position to be disinterested. But I can certainly say that Bacon’s fascinating collection will provide any interested reader with many still relevant arguments – and a certain amount of entertainment.

*Peter Faulkner*


The only Victorian who can rival Morris’s incredible diversity of talents is John Ruskin whose centenary we are celebrating this year. Although best know as an influential art critic, he was also a political philosopher, botanist, artist, philanthropist, social experimenter and geologist. In addition to this, of course, there is his extraordinary life story where he was dominated by his parents as a young man, obsessed by various young women in middle and later life, suffered a number of bouts of insanity, and finally lapsed into almost complete silence during the last eleven years of his life. Yet, unlike Morris – whose bluff, no-nonsense, ‘let’s get on with it’ mentality is apparent in everything he did – Ruskin has always remained an enigmatic – almost incomprehensible – character.

If Ruskin’s elusiveness were not enough, the last century of Ruskin studies has been carried out in the shadow of E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn’s 39 vol., flawed masterpiece, *The Library Edition of the Works of John Ruskin* (1903-12). All shorter biographies seem superfluous when compared to this enormous
work of scholarship. The most influential books on Ruskin have therefore been those that limit themselves to analysing in detail events in Ruskin's life, or aspects of his work, that fall outside the scope of Cook and Wedderburn's monumental work. The work of Van Akin Burd, Robert Hewison and Virginia Surtees comes to mind in this respect.

James S. Dearden's book, *John Ruskin: A Life in Pictures*, very much falls into this category. I must say at the outset that I think Dearden would have been wiser to have chosen a rather less ambiguous title for the book. The uninitiated reader could be forgiven for assuming from the title that this is one of those carelessly assembled coffee-table books, or that Ruskin enjoyed a previously undocumented career starring in films at Brantwood ('the Hollywood of the North'). This is a pity as this is a work of fine scholarship.

What Dearden has actually done is trace the origins of 332 images of Ruskin – of which 330 are described in the text – which span the period 1822 to 1999. These range from the portrait painted by James Northcote in 1822 (when Ruskin was three) to a drawing by Tullio Pericoli in 1999. The most poignant images are undoubtedly the photographs taken in the 1890s. It is difficult to imagine that the picture of Ruskin taken by a leafy wall in Brantwood by John McClelland in the summer of 1892 is of the author of *Modern Painters, The Stones of Venice* and *Unto This Last*. In addition to the numerous illustrations the book also contains a 'catalogue raisonné' of all the Ruskin portraits. This is an impressive piece of work worthy of publication in its own right. Each image is fully described, together with details of its reproduction, its display at exhibitions, and provenance where known.

One of Dearden's aims was to use these photographs, portraits, prints and sculptures to provide the basis of a biography of Ruskin. In this respect I think he only partially succeeds. As there are long gaps between the images in Ruskin's early life, this is inevitably neglected. On the other hand, the many photographs taken in the 1890s, when Ruskin was no longer capable of anything but monosyllabic answers to questions, lead to inevitable repetition. Although the posthumous pictures enable Dearden to go some way to establishing how Ruskin's reputation fared after his death in 1900, I felt that this could have been done more effectively in rather fewer pages.

It is also a pity, especially from a Morrisian perspective, that some of the images of Ruskin are now lost. It would have been wonderful to have seen the caricature of Ruskin that accompanied the letter Burne-Jones wrote to Cormell Price in 1856, or, indeed, the unfinished sketches he made for Ruskin's portrait in 1866. Another lost treasure is the portrait of Ruskin in stained glass dating from c.1889 which apparently used to be in the hall at Whitelands Training College in Chelsea.

Despite the close affinity between Ruskin and Morris no contemporary photograph ever seems to have been taken of them. However, Dearden has unearthed a number of pictures painted after their death in which they both appear. The most interesting of these is a reworking of Raphael's 'Death of Ananias' painted by Frank R. Dickinson in 1946. In this Morris and Ruskin appear alongside Plato, Sir Thomas More, Shaw, Marx and Lenin (amongst others). The painting was accepted for the Royal Academy Exhibition in 1946 but was never hung.

There are – as one would expect in a book of this nature – occasional minor
errors: we are told that Rose La Touche died ‘on 25 or 26 May 1875’ (p. 99) when it has long been established that she died at 7.00am on the 26 May 1875; the ex-president of our Society appears not as Ray Watkinson but Raymond Wilkinson (p. 53); and the notation goes awry on p. 148. But these are minor quibbles.

However, I don’t want to give the reader the wrong impression about this book. Dearden, who is Director for Ruskin Affairs in the Guild of St George, has done some very impressive research. He has unearthed images of Ruskin that I have never seen before and his text is always illuminating. This is certainly the definitive pictorial biography of Ruskin. Both Dearden, and the Sheffield Academic Press, are to be congratulated for producing such a fine book.

One of the strange things about Morrisian studies is that the relationship between Morris and Ruskin has never been satisfactorily explored. Morris consistently cited Ruskin as a seminal influence on his artistic and political ideas, he and Burne-Jones were Ruskin’s friends, he republished Ruskin’s work at the Kelmscott Press, and on one famous occasion he said of Ruskin’s arguments in The Stones of Venice that ‘people have been afraid of them, lest they should find the truth they expressed sticking so fast in their minds that it would either compel them to act on it or express them slothful and cowardly’. Yet the link between the two men still remains rather hazy. When I received this book I checked back through the almost forty year run of the Journal to see what contributions we had made to the subject. I was amazed to discover that there has never been an article in the Journal which has specifically considered the relationship between Morris and Ruskin.

Given the title of this book – Ruskin and the Dawn of the Modern – one might have been forgiven for thinking that Morris would at last be acknowledged as the single most important disciple of Ruskin. I at least thought that he would play an important part on the stage. After all, it was Ruskin who had inspired Morris to question the basis of capitalist society, to found the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and to revolutionise Victorian handicrafts. Nobody could be more at the dawn of the ‘modern’ than Morris.

Unfortunately, Morris’s stocky frame does not appear on stage at all. He is left to pull the hairs out of his beard back-stage. There are only four references to him in the whole book. The first occurs in Lawrence Goldman’s essay on ‘Ruskin and the Labour Movement’. Here we learn that of the 51 Labour or Lib-Lab MPs that W. T. Stead contacted for an article in the Review of Reviews in 1906, 17 cited Ruskin as an important influence on their decision to enter politics, while only three mentioned Morris. All the other references to Morris appear in Nicholas Shrimpton’s essay on ‘Ruskin and the Aesthetes’ where, sadly and predictably, Morris is specifically associated with the aesthetic movement.

In this respect I thought Dinah Birch’s essay ‘Ruskin’s Multiple Writing: Fors Clavigera’ was the most disappointing from a Morrisian perspective. Surely this was an ideal opportunity to compare and contrast Ruskin’s letters to the ‘workingmen of England’ with Morris’s journalism in Justice and Commonweal. Ruskin started Fors Clavigera in 1871 when he was 52 – Morris began writing for Justice in 1884 when he was 50. The parallels are so obvious that they cried
out to be explored. Instead, Birch concentrates on the parallels between Fors Clavigera and the political writings of Coleridge, Carlyle and Matthew Arnold.

However, leaving aside parochial concerns, this is an interesting collection of essays. Ruskin has always been something of a conundrum for critics due to his self-adopted role as a literary chameleon. The various contributors to this book do some useful work in reestablishing Ruskin’s reputation as one of the most pervasive influences on the cultural milieu of the Victorian age. Indeed, one begins to wonder if Ruskin was not more important than Marx in influencing the early years of the British socialist movement. In the article in which Ruskin was cited 17 times by MPs it is interesting to note that Marx was only mentioned twice.

Nicholas Salmon


Chris Brooks’s The Gothic Revival is an outstanding contribution to Phaidon’s handsome and important Art and Ideas series. In thirteen substantial and powerfully articulated chapters we are taken from the birth of the style to its nineteenth century apotheosis, and the Epilogue carries us further, into the twentieth century of the horror film and the Internet. It is a remarkable achievement, made all the more convincing by the quality of the 223 colour illustrations, and 38 in black-and-white. For we range not only chronologically through the whole period of the Revival, but also geographically to include all the countries affected by it, and formally to include literature (and even film) as well as architecture, which nevertheless remains the central and controlling focus of investigation. This is the most impressive work of cultural history that I read in 1999.

As there is not room to do justice to the whole book here, I will concentrate on a single chapter to show something of its quality. Chapter 11 is called ‘Sermons in Stones: Readings in High Victorian Gothic’. Its central argument is that in England, where ‘the bourgeoisie’ had long since ‘felled feudalism to the ground’, in the language of the Communist Manifesto of 1848, ‘bourgeois culture was assiduously helping feudalism to get on its feet again’ in the ‘pervasive medievalism’ of the times. This insight leads on to a consideration of medievalist literature and painting, and to the rich and complex architectural thought of Ruskin up to Stones of Venice, and on to Gothic elements in Victorian fiction, and to important developments in architecture, seen particularly in the work of Butterfield at All Saints’, Margaret Street (with excellent illustrations giving force to the text), and then in Woodward, Street and Gilbert Scott (whose chapel at Exeter College, Oxford, which Brooks finds ‘exotic’, was built immediately after Morris and
Burne-Jones had left, and whose Midland Grand Hotel at St Pancras and Albert Memorial represent secular triumphs of the style), and beyond them in William White, Frederick Pilkington (whose work for the Scots Presbyterians was unknown to me), Pearson, Brooks and, most extraordinary, Burges at Cardiff Castle. Brooks then discusses the growth of craft firms supplying appropriate fittings, which of course include Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.; he refers to the Firm’s stained glass positively, though arguing that the glass of some other firms was ‘equally impressive’. The chapter ends with a picture of Burges’s extraordinary painted bookcase now at Knightshayes Court in Devon, and with the statement that in ‘political terms, High Victorian Gothic proposes and exemplifies a democracy of dynamic equals’. The reader may feel impelled to argue with a summarising phrase of this kind, but has to admit that strong evidence has been provided for it, and that its definiteness of declaration – characteristic of Brooks – challenges and stimulates in equal measure.

Morris figures, as one would expect, in the later chapters of this book, especially as in the Ruskinian tradition described as ‘gothic radicalism’. There is also a thoughtful account of the challenge to the Revival embodied in the principles of the SPAB, which, in Brooks’s words, ‘confronted the Gothic Revival with its own contradictions’ and so led to the differently inflected anti-capitalism of the Arts & Crafts movement. (Brooks declares his difference from Ruskin and Morris here in describing the human labour manifested in High Victorian gothic as ‘heroic’). In the conclusion of the final chapter, there is a consideration of News from Nowhere, which is strikingly described as ‘the visionary gothic world . . . pitched against the enemy’; in Nowhere, we are told, ‘the Gothic Revival consumes itself in order dramatically to recover gothic as a site of alternativism [is there such a word?] and resistance’. And the chapter closes with Morris in Commonweal declaring: ‘we shall be our own Goths, and at whatever cost break up again the new tyrannous Empire of Capitalism’. When we turn over the page, to the Epilogue, we see a wonderfully romantic castle against a brilliant blue sky – Disney World, Orlando, Florida. However much Brooks’s heart may be with the Goths, he has to admit that the twentieth century has been closer to Bellamy than to Morris, and that gothic may now be seen as either ‘a neutered counter-culture’ or ‘a market leader in the heritage industry’. But he remains positive and even hopeful, in a very Morrisian spirit, arguing in his final sentence that in the aftermath of the Cold War it may be possible to ‘discover again a gothic politics of primitive liberty that will reconnect the present to Germania’s free gothic folk two millennia ago’. The book ends, less headily, with an architectural Glossary, Brief Biographies of the principal figures discussed, a list of key Dates, maps showing Gothic sites in the British Isles, Europe, and North America, and a thorough list of works for Further Reading, as well as a good index. The publishers, as well as the author, are to be congratulated on offering such a substantial work of unifying scholarship so finely produced and illustrated at such a reasonable price. I look forward to works in the same series on the Pre-Raphaelites and on the Arts and Crafts Movement.

After a work of investigative scholarship, a handsome coffee-table book from Taschen. No new ideas about Morris appear here, but a large number of excellent
new photographs of places associated with Morris, including the Red House, Kelmscott Manor and Standen, taken by Anthony Oliver, whose important contribution surely deserves better than to appear merely among the Acknowledgements. The other unusual feature of the book is the fact that its English text appears also in German and French translations, evidence one hopes of Morris’s international appeal. It is unfortunate that the text contains a number of inaccuracies, and the historical grasp is uncertain, as in the suggestion that the ‘success of Britain’s manufacturing industries’ led to ‘the urbanization of the working classes’, that the Pre-Raphaelites popularised ‘romantic escapism’, that the Oxford Movement sought a ‘renewal of Roman [sic] Catholic theology within the Church of England’, or that Kingsley in the 1850s was a supporter of Charles Darwin’. Worst still is the claim that the Hunting Lodge at Chingford Hatch was to Morris ‘an embodiment of “Ye Olde England”’, and it was the mythology surrounding this romantic notion of English history that he was to pursue... throughout his life’, or later that ‘Morris came to view the Cotswolds as the mystic centre of England’s beautiful verdant countryside’. A reading of Nicholas Salmon’s William Morris on History would show how far Morris was from such romantic falsities. Many more examples could be given from the introductory account; fortunately the commentary on specific areas of production is generally more accurate, though I was disturbed by the total absence of information about the sizes of the products – someone new to Morris might well think that the ‘Pomona’ tapestry was of less than postcard size, and Webb’s drawing of the hare much larger than ‘The Forest’ tapestry for which it was made. Some of the illustrations in the early left-hand margins are so small as to be almost unreadable, and the new photograph of the coachhouse is unfortunately labelled as Kelmscott Manor. The Bibliography contains a number of errors, including the confusion of Paul with E. P. Thompson and the ascription of Norman Kelvin’s Collected Letters to ‘London, 1896’. On the other hand, there is a useful list of ‘Places of Interest’ – including the Society’s premises at Kelmscott House. And the book is very nice to look at, thanks mainly to its photographer, but also to the quality of all the illustrations. Perhaps it is unreasonable to be so critical of a book aimed to appeal primarily to the eye? But we need look no further than David Rodgers’ William Morris at Home for evidence that a book can combine the pictorial and the scholarly – as well as the elegant and witty – in a way that this book unfortunately fails to do.

David Gerard’s Walter Crane also appeals to the eye, though in a different way, through its fine typography. It is the sixth, and regrettably the last, in the series on the Arts and Crafts Movement issued by Harold Smith from the Nine Elms Press and attractively bound in different coloured versions of the Willow pattern design – this one in Indian red. It is a feast for the lover of fine printing. As far as its subject is concerned, David Gerard has had a hard task, because Walter Crane, for all his achievements, is not a charismatic figure – no entertaining stories seem to have accrued around him. His contribution to the Arts and Crafts cannot be doubted, but it is very hard to evaluate. Gerard begins by making very high claims: Crane’s ‘use of line’, we are told, ‘is matchless’, and his draughtsmanship – the foundation of all his work – ‘inspired’. But the account we are given of Crane’s
life and development hardly provides confirmation for this assessment. We learn
of his father’s encouragement, of his apprenticeship to W. J. Linton, his early
success working in illustrating children’s stories for Edmund Evans, and of his
paintings in the 1860s and 70s. But we are told that Crane’s work often showed
‘escapist impulses’, and that the effect of an ambitious painting like ‘Ormuzd
and Ahrima’ is ‘curiously lifeless, complacent’. Gerard emphasises the importance
in his development of Crane’s meeting with Morris in 1870, leading to the ‘new
crusading zeal’ of his politically inflected work from the 1880s onwards. Crane’s
two main commitments were to Socialism and to ‘the liberation of art from the
grip of establishment institutions like the Royal Academy’, aims widely shared in
the Arts and Crafts movement. Crane was active in both the Art Workers’ Guild
and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, and contributed graphic work
energetically to several groups on the Left. Gerard claims that his gift for ‘figurative
symbolism’ led him to become ‘the key name in the iconography of Socialism’ at
the time – the collection Cartoons for the Cause was issued to commemorate the
International Socialist Workers and the Trade Union Congress of 1896. There can
be no doubt of Crane’s dedication to the cause, though it would be interesting to
know how far his idealised figures appealed to the workers themselves.

Crane was well enough known in the 1890s to be made Director of Design
at the Manchester School of Art in 1893 (he resigned in 1895), and Principal of the
Royal College of Art in 1898 (he resigned in 1899). Gerard suggests that the quick
resignations were due to the fact that ‘for this free spirit, official posts were a
restraint’, which makes one wonder why he accepted them in the first place. Crane’s
enlightened ideas about art education, and his books The Basis of Design (1898)
and Line and Form (1900), were nevertheless influential, and his later career
apparently highly successful – we are told he was ‘loaded with honours’. But instead
of reinforcing his initial claims for Crane’s achievement, or showing exactly where
that achievement is to be located, Gerard ends by stressing his contradictions. These
included being a revolutionary socialist who enjoyed ‘association with the most
privileged members of society, and the approval of royalty and the aristocracy at
home and abroad’ – a marked contrast with Morris in this! I felt that Crane
remained elusive at the end of my reading of this essay, but grateful to David
Gerard for paving the way towards a revaluation of the man and his work. And
to Harold Smith for offering us the essay in this attractive form; can he not be
persuaded to think again about discontinuing the series?

Peter Faulkner

Janis and Richard Londraville (eds.), Too Long a Sacrifice: The Letters of Maud
Gonne and John Quinn, (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press/London: 

This book is in many respects a companion volume to Janis Londraville’s earlier
book On Poetry, Painting, and Politics: The Letters of May Morris and John
Quinn. It contains the letters that the lawyer John Quinn, and the Irish nationalist
Maud Gonne, exchanged between 1906 and 1921. Much of this was written at
the same time as the John Quinn/May Morris correspondence in Janis Londraville’s previous book.

The Foreword to the book – which I found very interesting – was written by Anna MacBride White who is the granddaughter of Maud Gonne. However, I have to say, having read the letters, that I think that Richard Londraville in his Introduction is rather too generous to John Quinn. From these letters – and from those he wrote to May Morris – Quinn appears to have been a cynical and opportunist womaniser. His critical sensibilities are suspect, and I have serious doubts about his political motivation.

On the other hand, Maud Gonne is the kind of spirited, passionate, Irish girl you really wish you had known. Her dedication to the cause of Irish nationalism, her support for political prisoners, and her sheer self-motivation are difficult to believe. Virtually every letter in this collection is a spirited endorsement of the Irish cause. You can almost hear her speaking as she writes. This is an inspired woman. No wonder W. B. Yeats fell so completely in love with her. I suspect that the only reason that she wrote to Quinn was to take advantage of his wealth and influence. Forget what Quinn writes – it is the sort of miserable, formal stuff you expect from a lawyer. However, Maud Gonne’s letters are a revelation. There is a film to be made out of her life.

All Yeats enthusiasts will be fascinated by this book. After all it was Maud Gonne that inspired some of his best poetry. Janis and Richard Londraville are to be congratulated for bringing this fascinating correspondence to light.

Nicholas Salmon