

Brief Notices

Albion. A romance of the twenty-first century
Brenda Vale. Spindlewood, 1982. 181 pp. £7.95

Our anxieties about the future in the nuclear age have produced a number of works of fiction trying to chart the way towards a better future. Brenda Vale's *Albion* is one of these. It envisages a post-industrial world of simple technology typified by windmills, looms and bicycles, and without laws: "Laws lead to conflict and struggle between

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people . . ." (p. 1). The author's interest in Morris is suggested by the importance of the voyage taken by the central characters, John and Annie, on the inland waterways, which gives the chance to show how the former industrial centre of England is coming to life in a new way. Although the ideas are interesting and the author obviously in earnest (we are told on the dust-jacket that she lives in a low-energy house with a windmill in Cambridgeshire), the presentation fails to bring the new world to life and the characters remain remote from the reader. This is a pity since the concerns of the book are obviously very important to us all. The format and printing – from a new publisher evidently concerned with ecology – are attractive. I hope Brenda Vale will go on to give her version of our future a more fully realised form.

Alain-Fournier: Towards the Lost Domain. Carcanet, 1986.

I am told by Penelope Fitzgerald that this book of 1905 letters from the young French novelist known now mainly for *Les Grand Meaulnes*, reveals that while trying to improve his English, he worked in a clerical position at Sandersons, and lodged with the deputy manager. He does not refer to Morris, but does describe a visit to the Tate, suggesting that the book with a lily in Rossetti's 'Ecce Ancilla Domini' reminds him of Sanderson's "large pattern album".

Peter Faulkner