The first life of Ford Madox Brown was written in 1896 by his grandson, Ford Madox Hueffer. Although William Rossetti felt that young Ford was 'by no means so deferential as he might or should have been' to his grandfather, the *Life* (long since out of print) is a record of family affection. With this new and outstanding biography we have a record not only of affection but of knowledge and scholarship.

In their introduction the authors describe Brown as 'the most underrated figure in British art in the nineteenth century.' They show him as a great original, a battler against adversity, and a realist of a very particular kind. This is made clear in their chapter on Brown's masterpiece, *Work*, which they call 'a seminal document of British socialism.' In progress throughout Brown's early association with Morris (1856-63), the painting must have had a formative influence on the latter — not least for its identification of the artist with the manual labourer.' They relate this, in turn, to Brown's second marriage to Emma Hill, the daughter of a bricklayer. Certainly Brown himself, although a 'slow praiser' would have praised the insight of this biography.

He was the son of a half-pay ship's purser. The family lived abroad because it was cheaper. Brown himself would have liked to go to sea, but at 14 he began to train as an artist, and after that was never distracted for a moment. He lived a life 'wholly dedicated to art.' This book makes it possible, in fact, to see his life in terms of his pictures. From nearly 200 illustrations you can follow him from his Belgian apprenticeship, through the golden period of *Work* and *The Last of England* and the superb small landscapes which treat the English earth and light and the 'wonderful emerald tints' of the turnip fields exactly as he saw them, on to the last grand and strange designs for the public buildings of Manchester. The time and expert care taken over these illustrations can be guessed at from a note which tells us that many of Brown's works have disappeared completely, others exist in several versions, and 'in addition, after he threw in his lot with the Pre-Raphaelite avant-garde in 1850 he
retouched or repainted some early paintings... The result was partially to obscure the record, and we have therefore tried to include as many unretouched early works as possible.' The authors’ general feeling is that the French taste for romantic melodrama in the 1840’s held back Brown’s pursuit of truth to reality until he moved to England. On the other hand, his early experience of Flemish art (Dieric Bouts and Pieter Bruegel in particular) stayed with him all his life and appears as ‘the Brunonian grotesque’ – the sardonic gravedigger in The Prisoner of Chillon, the crazy herb-seller in Work, the frightened pig in The Expulsion of the Danes, the bizarre colossal figures for the Jubilee Hall. ‘Beauty [for Brown] is secondary, arising from the intensity of the painting rather than any preconceived ideal’, and the grotesque is another aspect of this intensity. It caused Manchester’s councillors to hesitate over his commission. ‘They were afraid of his work being outré’, said Brown’s loyal patron, Charles Rowley, who managed to persuade them, however, that it would be ‘grand stuff to live with.’

In his lecture to the Society in April, Ray Watkinson called Madox Brown ‘splendidly’ – or was it ‘gloriously’? – ‘cantankerous’, although, as poor Burne-Jones pointed out, it was more fun for those he loved than for those he hated. He was a character on broad lines, almost heroic in his independence and generosity. ‘Every unlucky man is my brother’, he said. Yet this remark in itself suggests the growing bitterness of loss and disappointment which combined with his natural obstinacy to bring him almost to the point of paranoia. The dispute with Ruskin was a serious setback to his career, so too was his resolute defiance of the Academy. The breach with Morris lasted for eleven years. Brown, however, never gives the impression of a divided personality, rather of someone majestically all of a piece, weathering the worst that life can do.

This book gives a calm and authoritative account of the reorganisation of the Firm in 1874-5 and of Brown’s fury and suspicion when Morris bought the partners out. In spite of this, there was an affinity between the two of them. ‘Of all the circle, Morris and Brown were the most alike temperamentally – vigorous, independent characters both... Ideals of social justice also drew the two together, forming a bond strong enough to survive their later estrangement.’ And yet the much more unlikely affinity with Rossetti, as the authors sympathetically show, went deeper still.

A new perspective for most readers will be the story of Brown’s luckless passion for Marie Spartali. ‘The Greeks’, wealthy and cultured refugees from Stamboul, alighted in London from the 1820’s onwards like a flock of exotic birds. Their women were almost irresistible. Morris managed to fend off Aglaia Coronio, Burne-Jones was overwhelmed by Mary Zambaco, the sturdy, cautious Brown went over like a ninepin before his pupil, Marie Spartali. It was ‘a silent obsession’, which helped to drive the placid Emma to drink. ‘Emma] tried to get Cherry Brandy at pastry-cook’s. I just in time. E. very unhappy because failed,’ Brown wrote in October 1865 in his wonderfully honest diaries. When at the end of 1869 Marie became engaged to Stillman it was Rossetti who brought the news to Brown, and sat up with him all night.

After Emma’s death Brown seems to have felt irreversibly lonely, in spite of his houseful of descendants in St Edmund’s Terrace. His last panel for the Manchester commission was never finished, although he was working on it almost until he died. His story ends with human dignity, and something like peace.

Evidently this biography will become a classic book of reference for anyone who
cares about English painting. It will also be loved, as some books are, for its own sake. Brown (said his grandson) was ‘rather a down-to-the-ground person’, who could reduce even Oscar Wilde to talking sensibly. This book is also down-to-the-ground, but from the first page to the last it is deeply felt. It suggests, or reflects (both, I think) all that William Morris meant by fellowship.

Penelope Fitzgerald

Muriel Whitaker, The Legends of King Arthur in Art

In The Legends of King Arthur in Art Muriel Whitaker deals with all aspects of illustration of the legends in all media from the earliest illuminated manuscripts of the twelfth century to a feminist interpretation by an artist of the 1980s. Her research has been extremely thorough. The result is a book both difficult to read and to review fairly: its chief value lies in its wide range and painstaking accumulation of material, yet this can also be counted its chief failing. It is exhaustively descriptive, but leaves the reader with no sense of an overview of the subject. Although it is suggested on the dust-jacket that the writer’s ‘emphasis on content, rather than form, offers an original perspective, different from that of the art historian’, too often this lack of art historical background seems to result not in fresh perceptions, but in a tendency to describe works of art rather than to analyse them. On a related point of presentation, it is inconvenient that no plate numbers are given in the text. It would also have helpful if art historical convention had been followed in giving the size of works of art in the list of illustrations.

Again, according to the dust-jacket the book’s purpose is ‘to explain the social, political, religious and aesthetic conditions which influenced the form and content of representations of Arthurian legends in various historical periods’. This is a daunting task but a very worthwhile one: a more readable and a more satisfactory work of scholarship would have resulted if the author had kept this aim firmly in mind and ruthlessly excluded material not immediately relevant. As it is, there seems to have been little selection. This is a pity because some excellent ideas remain undeveloped, and are almost lost in an accumulation of detail. The services of a ruthless editor to excise and to encourage the author towards a tighter organization of her material would have been invaluable.

This proliferation of detail may partially result from a failure to decide whom this work is meant to address: other academics and students in the field or more general readership? At first, it seems that Whitaker assumes little, if any, knowledge on the part of the reader. In the first chapter the development of Arthurian romance is dealt with in detail which is unnecessary if a specialist readership is assumed, yet terms such as topos (p. 5) locus amoenus (p. 6), likely to be unfamiliar to the general reader, go unexplained. This criticism is valid throughout the book: the work of T. S. Eliot, for example, is described in terms which are condescending even to the general reader, who surely does not need to be told that the image of the waste-land symbolizes ‘modern man’s physical, intellectual, moral, spiritual and aesthetic impoverishment’ (p. 315).

Where Whitaker attempts an interpretation of the social and political conditions which influenced representation of the legends, her judgements are too often
superficial. The neglect of the legends both as literature and as the subject of illustration during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is not accounted for; the subsequent revival of interest in the nineteenth century and the problems which the Victorians had in accommodating the legends is inadequately explained. For example, Whitaker seems largely unaware of the precise nature of the difficulties faced by William Dyce when in 1847 he was commissioned to paint frescoes illustrating Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* in the new Palace of Westminster. She refers simply to 'the difficulties of adapting a literary subject to a fixed architectural theme and at the same time satisfying the commissioners and their royal chairman' (p. 179). It was adapting this particular literary subject for this particular setting which was more specifically a serious problem: Dyce had to adapt for the decoration of Queen Victoria's Robing Room a story in which an adulterous queen plays a central role. Similarly Whitaker fails to make any reference to the background of intense religious controversy over the Oxford Movement at the time when Dyce, himself a High Churchman, had to decide how to treat the Grail Quest. She shows little awareness of what is one of the most fascinating aspects of her subject: the tremendous gulf between medieval and nineteenth century responses to, and perceptions of, the legends as reflected in the visual arts.

The sections which deal with Morris and his circle are equally disappointing and share the weaknesses of the rest of the book. Morris's interest in the Tristram legends is described in great detail, but only a superficial explanation for this preference is offered. This is a book for reference rather than for reading.

Christine Poulson

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This year's centenary of the establishment of Morris's Press has been marked by exhibitions and reappraisals of the Kelmscott books, the most comprehensive, memorable, and enduring of which will be this book by William Peterson. It is advertised as the first full-length account of the Press since Henry Halliday Sparling's in 1924 (a book which has long been due a successor), and pulls together the phenomenal research covered by Peterson in the last few years, producing the cream of his three books on Morris. Peterson's impressive contribution to Morris studies now comprises a selection of Morris's lectures on book manufacture, *The Ideal Book*, a comprehensive *Bibliography of the Kelmscott Press*, and the history of the Press itself. His is a remarkable and dedicated achievement, as anyone will know who has ploughed through the scattered volumes of Kelmscott Press proof pages and ephemera which survive in England and the States. Notwithstanding Cockerell's, Walker's and Procter's annotations on many of these proofs, and the attempts of Morris's executors to maintain some form of order in the disposal of the great man's papers, this vast and complicated subject required extraordinary patience and attention to detail, as well as a keen knowledge of the workings of small private presses within the Victorian publishing industry. It is difficult to see how anyone else could have written this book.
There are, however, several different facets to this book not all of which are satisfactorily treated. If we categorize these as, broadly, the social and historical context of the Press, the biographical context of the Press, the narrative of the Press’s conception, operation, and production, the technical accomplishment of the Press, and the aesthetic achievements of the Press, we can see how complicated is the task of generating the right balance, and observe that Peterson is excellent on the first, third and fourth, lacking in the second and somewhat subjective in the last.

Peterson sets out to locate Morris’s Press within the framework of Victorian printing ideology. He describes not only early adventures in the use of, for instance, Caslon’s Old Face type (at Longmans, the Chiswick Press, and in Joseph Cundall’s children’s books), or the adoption of Caxton’s lettering for styles of linen labels (!), but also well-known Victorian attitudes to publishing (Charles Knight’s demand for cheap printing to disseminate news to the masses, for example). Peterson’s technical knowledge is at its best in discussing the physical aspects of the industry: iron-presses and wooden-presses, inks sharpened with soap, paper produced using chemicals which have caused the leaves to disintegrate faster than eighteenth-century paper and made hard work for today’s conservationists, methods of reproducing illustrations, techniques of type-design, and so on. In their context, Morris’s ‘almost oppressively dark types’ and exacting requirement for the best materials, he suggests, contrast starkly with the Victorian preference for the nostalgic charm of light, grey and delicate typefaces and the shoddiness of mass book manufacture. The first two chapters thus provide an erudite overview of the circumstance of Morris’s Press.

In chapter 3, Peterson covers the biographical minutiae of Morris’s mounting interest in what constitutes a beautiful book, concentrating on Morris as a collector of manuscripts and early printed books. He analyses those few volumes gathered unsystematically after University, and then describes the building up of a superb collection of illuminated manuscripts and incunabula during the 1890s. He also places Morris’s interest in calligraphy against the background of a nineteenth-century revival in illuminating, which was stimulated by Pugin and which, by 1861, even had its own magazine (the Victorians had magazines for everything, it seems), The Amateur Illuminator’s Magazine, and Journal of Miniature Painting. To extend the narrative, we are given a biographical sketch of Emery Walker (as we later have sketches of Cockerell, Sparling, Edward Prince, F.S. Ellis, and Wilfrid Scawen Blunt) and an account of the designing of the Golden, Troy, and Chaucer types used at Morris’s Press. What we do not have here is much sense of Morris’s other projects at the time and how these paved the way for the Press: the literary successes of the House of the Wolfings and the Roots of the Mountains, the marginalization of the Hammersmith Socialist Society, and the re-organization and continuing prestige of Morris & Co. But by the end of this section, the premises have been rented in Upper Mall, the paper (Batchelor’s hand-made, with Daisy and Perch watermarks drawn by Morris) is ordered, the problems over the black ink are mostly resolved, the type-face cut and set, and the Albion presses ready.

The account of the workings of the Press is both illuminating and somewhat controversial. Chapters 4-6 are a mine of information, ranging from the composition of the inks, the layout of the margins of the pages, the growth and flowering of the decorative borders, the daily business of the Press, advertising circulars, and dealings with other publishing firms, down to the curious details which enliven Peterson’s
story (such as Morris’s partiality for ‘the occasionally darker vellum binding with untrimmed hairs’ which he reserved for his own collection). The picture is vivid and enjoyably entertaining.

However, these chapters also offer Peterson’s assessment of Morris’s achievement, and this angle of the book is not without critical problems. Peterson asks whether Morris’s publishing adventure was regressive or progressive. The emphasis on identifying sources suggests Morris’s harking back to the Fifteenth century of Gunther Zainer and Wynkyn de Worde, but balanced against this is Morris’s acceptance of modern technology (such as the use of electrotypes) where it could enhance the performance of the firm without a loss of quality. Peterson slightly recasts the conventional view of Morris as reacting ‘against’ Victorian ‘taste’ by positing the argument that Morris saw his Press as a tool for social reform, the last of the Victorian era’s projects to set straight a world socially (as Peterson puts it, quoting Dickens’s Stephen Blackpool) “aw in a muddle”. In attempting to excuse Morris’s ‘capitalist’ enterprises, critics often fall into the trap of setting him up as a Cheeryble Brother. Peterson also comments that Morris had little truck with the Arts and Crafts Movement because its aims had nothing to do with the improvement of the position of the working classes, but does not extend this to Morris & Co., and only mentions the ‘paradox’ of Morris threatening his Kelmscott printers with the sack if they refused to use the stiff German ink. It seems illogical to criticize a Marxist for not living the life of a Communist in a Capitalist society. Morris, like Marx, did not believe in the need for personal ‘examples’. He fought for a change in society which would deprive him of the capital which enabled him to pursue his artistic ambitions, but such a change would create the circumstances which he longed for to make his artistic values a natural part of society. In the meantime, the Kelmscott Press and Morris & Co. were not ‘compromises’ but the only available form for his social artistic expression.

Peterson also offers an aesthetic opinion of Morris’s book designs, stating that ‘Morris as a printer was guilty of occasional artistic and technical blundering’. Whilst some qualification is doubtless necessary to weigh against Sparling’s and Cockerell’s (and other modern critics’) eulogistic praise of Morris’s Press, there remains a danger that Peterson’s view will supplant these as the definitive statement. Peterson himself admits to some differences in aesthetic taste from Morris, revealing that he, unlike Morris, admires eighteenth-century type faces. Without a more complete discussion of the critic’s own tastes, which would be out of place in such a book as this, I find Peterson’s discussion and scattered comments on Morris’s aesthetics difficult to reconcile with the clear tone of authority in which he handles the source material. It is especially confusing to attempt generalizations about Morris when only dealing with one aspect of his work in such detail and one ought to examine the fiction and poetry, Icelandic saga translations, and textile patterns from this period in order to establish a more complete argument.

Peterson chooses to focus his examination of the books themselves onto four publications: Poems by the Way, Blunt’s Love-Lyrics and The Golden Legend (in one chapter) and the Kelmscott Chaucer (to which a complete chapter is devoted). The books have been carefully selected to reflect the different aspects of Morris’s Press: the publication of his own works, works of his contemporaries, and Medieval masterpieces. Following the publishing process from start to finish with these volumes, Peterson demonstrates how ‘a certain note of improvisation’ characterizes the
functioning of the Press. Not all of the productions are as satisfactory as they might have been – Blunt, for instance, insisted that his poems should contain woodblock initials in red ink at the beginning of each verse, creating a decidedly unhappy effect. But the differences between the volumes, the idiosyncrasies which evolved in the design and printing, add to the whole achievement of the Press and are not the worse for that. The birth of the grand Chaucer, weighing in at 13lbs in its vellum form with pigskin binding, is deservedly treated as the greatest moment of the Kelmscott adventure. Peterson ends his book with a review of how the late Nineteenth and Twentieth-centuries responded to Morris, suggesting the poverty of the ‘official’ Morris successor, C.R. Ashbee’s Essex House Press, and the slightly richer endeavours of Cobden-Sanderson and Walker’s Doves Press, C.H. St John Hornby’s Ashendene Press, and Charles Ricketts’ Vale Press. Peterson’s book is itself imitative of Morris: using the same format of margins, shoulder heading in Golden type and red ink, good quality paper, and, like the Kelmscott Press books, at £50.00 is beyond the pockets of most of us. As part of the argument for cheap printing, it is to be hoped that the publishers will consider a paperback version in the future.

In summary, then, this is a book certainly well worth the purchase; it is brilliantly researched, a wealth of solid information, informative on background material, particularly valuable for its analyses of four Kelmscott Press books, enlivened by the characters who wrote the history in reality, and lavishly illustrated with seldom or unseen photographs and illustrations. Good books spark debate and this will assuredly lead to reassessments of other private presses and of Morris’s role in such craftsmanship.

Richard Pearson

Malcolm Haslam, Arts and Crafts Carpets
Published by David Black, London 1991
200pp 85 col. 115 b/w illus.
Price £45

This is a very sumptuous-looking book with photographs the envy of many modern interior design magazines. It was conceived by David Black, a well-known London dealer, at a time when carpets of this period are at their most popular and commercially successful. The author is one of the most prolific contemporary writers on antiques of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The text presents an introduction to the subject rather than an academic survey but is, nonetheless, useful because of this. Gathered mostly from secondary sources, the author has extracted specialist information from a range of contemporary nineteenth and twentieth century writings as well as more recent books on the decorative arts of this period. To have a much neglected subject considered in isolation in this way is useful and will, hopefully, encourage more scholarship in the future.

Briefly tracing carpet production in Britain from the early nineteenth century, the author goes on to describe the published views of important mid-Victorian theorist-designers such as Pugin, Owen Jones, Christopher Dresser and Matthew Digby Wyatt. Few carpets of their design have survived and it is only through later examples that their influence on this particular industry can be measured. Strangely, their advice concentrated on the improvement and use of machine woven carpeting, but it is in
the work of small workshops, producing hand-knotted carpets, that the true spirit of their ideas was carried through. Two chapters of the book are devoted to the work of William Morris and Alexander Morton, the most well-known and influential carpet producers of the Arts and Crafts Movement and the book finishes with a survey of later small workshops. These include the quaintly named Haslemere Peasant Industries and Canterbury Weavers in England and the Dun Emer Guild in Ireland. The author has endeavoured to compare this specialist field with commercial production, which, by the early twentieth century, had made a serious attempt to compete in the fashionable retail market by purchasing the work of such eminent designers as Charles Rennie Mackintosh, George Walton and Frank Brangwyn.

Despite the use of standard texts, the author is not always accurate and has made a number of factual and technical errors. Manufacturing processes are boring when constantly referred to (thank goodness, this book restricts these to the minimum) but a sound knowledge of technique is essential if one is to come to terms with the subject and, more significantly, to gain a true understanding of the work of designers and manufacturers. Unfortunately, to caption what is clearly a pile carpet as a flat weave (and therefore designed and woven quite differently and probably made in a different part of Britain than thought) suggests not only a lack of visual awareness but also plants the seed of suspicion for other attributions. Similarly, errors occur concerning the work of designers. A rather over-anxious enthusiasm to attribute as many designs as possible to William Morris and C.F.A. Voysey rather ignores the output of both J.H. Dearle and Gavin Morton who both spent most of their prolific careers beavering away respectively at Morris & Company and Alexander Morton’s design studio, producing patterns in the prevailing popular styles without recognition during their own time.

Although backed up with black and white and occasional colour illustrations from contemporary sources, the author has been badly hamstrung in his choice of glossy illustrations taken especially for the book. These rely greatly on the past and present stock of David Black’s shop, photographed in beautiful but historically unrelated settings. Although offering the opportunity to see very interesting examples not widely available, the carpets shown are not always of the finest quality. This is particularly true of the chapter concerning Morris’s work (pleasingly called “The Master”) and tends to give a false impression of the very high standards of design and workmanship attained. On the other hand, illustrations of Donegal carpets do successfully reproduce the vibrance of their characteristic greens and oranges. A very satisfying sensation normally restricted to first-hand experience.

The book looks very attractive but, for all but the myopic, needs to be read at arms’ length because of the large size of text face. Because it is also heavy, the proverbial coffee table needs to be drawn into service to ensure a comfortable read.

Linda Parry

The University of Burdwan, 1991, 261 pp; hardback, price unknown.

As someone who previously had little interest in Edward Carpenter, Dilip Kumar Barua’s book has done nothing to fire my enthusiasm, but has added to my suspicions that Carpenter was a minor and somewhat confused contributor to the political and
philosophical ideas of his time. If he was remarkable, it was for his likeable personality, his open homosexuality and the fact that he rejected a career as a priest and university don in preference for the 'simple life' of a market gardener. This book does little to tell us whether politically Carpenter ever moved beyond the liberal middle-class ideas of the academic background of his younger days, despite his adoption of a relatively unconventional lifestyle and the materialistic values of Victorian England.

Barua's book, originally written as a PhD thesis in 1963, is not so much a personal biography as a critical survey of Carpenter's ideas. The author's introduction announces his intention to refute critics such as George Orwell and A. J. P. Taylor who dismissed Carpenter's work as the 'soft-headed ramblings' of the 'socialist bourgeoisie'. Another intention of the author is to bring together the apparently disparate facets of Carpenter's ideas: his politics, his mysticism and his views on sexuality. Critics and admirers of Carpenter have tended, according to Barua, to focus on only one or two aspects of this thought and neglected or even been embarrassed by others, whereas Carpenter was concerned with wholeness.

What follows the author's introduction is a clumsily written account of Carpenter's activities in the various literary, political and social circles in which he was involved. Barua admits in his concluding chapter that aspects of the book are outdated, particularly the section on Carpenter's homosexuality which he looks at, he says, in the light of Freudian theory, much of which has been superseded by the writings coming out of the Gay Liberation movements of the Seventies. One asks oneself if this chapter should have been published at all. The author's dry, pseudo-scientific analysis, based solely on the Pelican *Homosexuality* by Dr D.J. West, of Carpenter's friendship with an older woman comes across as patronising, sexist and homophobic. He seems to assume that platonic friendship between men and women is not possible unless the woman is not particularly attractive or, as he describes Carpenter's friendship with Mrs Daubeney, a 'physical wreck'. He suggests on the basis of no stated evidence at all that there was something 'oedipal' about this friendship. Barua falls into similar insensitive use of language when he describes Carpenter's friends, the Fearnhough family, as 'clodhopping farmers'.

Barua's discussion of Carpenter's socialism, which he sometimes describes as anarchism or anarchist humanism, is particularly weak. It is indicated that Carpenter had some acquaintance with the ideas of Marx. He moved in the same circles as Kropotkin and knew William Morris. He was opposed to the state socialism promoted by Shaw, and had a vision of a society without government. Although Barua mentions frequently that Carpenter was not interested in organisations, he was sufficiently involved in the Sheffield Socialist Club for Barua to devote a whole chapter to his activities there. He also joined the Social Democratic Federation and donated considerable sums of money to the socialist cause. He was an active speaker who 'seems to have radiated charm. The historian of the Socialist Movement in Bristol, Samson Bryher, records how Carpenter's speeches made many converts in that city.' But what exactly did Carpenter say? Carpenter's transition from middle-class liberalism to socialism is described by Barua in two sentences:

Carpenter read *England For All* in 1883 and his vague socialistic ideas took shape under its influence. He joined Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation as it was then called and gave the committee £300 to start their weekly organ from 1884.
Barua’s brief description of Carpenter’s first ‘socialist’ speech suggests that he was still very much influenced by Ruskin. The influence upon his thinking of Marx is hardly touched on. His transition from liberal to socialist begs comparison with his contemporary, William Morris, who described this massive leap in political consciousness in terms of crossing a river of fire. Barua suggests that Carpenter’s view of socialism tried to reconcile ‘libertarian individualism with socialistic collectivism’ and was a source of great inspiration to the early socialists in England. We are left rather in the dark as to who these early socialists were. Barua goes on to suggest that, on the basis of a reference from the historian Dr MacCoby, Carpenter’s contribution in this respect was more important than that of Morris. But he hardly mentions Morris and fails to compare the lives and ideas of the two men, except to briefly discuss Morris’s view of Carpenter’s ‘simple life’. Morris found Carpenter’s lifestyle charming, but wondered if it were not ‘dastardly to desert’.

In view of the fact that this book is by an Indian author and published by the University of Burdwan, it contains a potentially interesting chapter on Carpenter’s relationship with India and the Indian influence upon his thought. Barua provides an interesting brief account of the extent to which Indian thought had stirred the imaginations of nineteenth-century British poets, priests and academics. Carpenter’s first contact with India was through his brother who worked there as a civil servant. He was familiar with contemporary studies of Indian history and religion and while at Cambridge he formed a lifelong friendship with the Sri Lankan Tamil, P. Arunachalam, who sent him a copy of the Bhagavad Gita shortly before he wrote Towards Democracy. Barua points to the quite extensive influence of the Hindu text upon Carpenter’s poem. In 1890 Carpenter visited India and Sri Lanka and wrote his observations in letters and a collection of essays called From Adam’s Peak To Elephanta which Barua claims, rather grandiosely, to have been ‘a pioneering work of great importance’. Contemporary critics were not so kind. At least two newspapers accused Carpenter, on the basis of a short trip to India, of pretending to know more about the country than Kipling. Barua does not deal with this criticism. A detailed comparison of the writings on India of Carpenter and Kipling would have been rewarding. Barua describes Carpenter as a mystic who connected his interest in Hindu philosophy with socialist politics. He suggests that there is an element of philosophical anarchism in Hinduism to which Carpenter responded. But he fails to develop this point, except in his description of the Hindu custom of Vanaprastha in which people renounce their worldly wealth and retire to the forest. This seemed to have made quite an impression on Carpenter; perhaps it echoed his own lifestyle. He was rather impressed by the Hindu religion and, though he returned to England depressed by ‘the dreadfully submissive spirit of the masses’, he failed, despite his enthusiasm for democracy, to connect that in any way with the thousands of years of oppression perpetrated against ‘the masses’ by that most undemocratic of institutions, the Hindu caste system.

Barua barely comments on why Carpenter failed to meet Rabindranath Tagore when he was in Calcutta and does not mention whether he came to know of his works, even at a later date when they became better known in the West. Surely any enthusiast for Indian culture would at least have known of this influential Indian poet, novelist, philosopher and educationalist who won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. We are left too wondering whether Carpenter was aware of non-Hindu
Eastern traditions of thought, such as Islam. Carpenter did meet some Indian Muslims as well as Europeans knowledgeable about the literature of Persia and Arabia. Edward Fitzgerald's translation of *The Rubayat of Omar Khayam* was first published in 1859. It is much closer to 'philosophic anarchism' than the *Bhagavad Gita* as it explicitly rejects notions of Heaven and Hell and the institutionalisation of religion and politics. Did Carpenter read it?

In the twenty-eight years between the writing and publication of this book the author has failed to produce a chapter showing the relevance of Carpenter's ideas to the present day. This is a chapter that needed to be written.

Kerima Mohideen


William Morris for all times? It's curious how in the 1960s it was William Morris the flower-power designer and Pre-Raphaelite that caught the imagination, only to be replaced in the '70s by William Morris the Socialist agitator and propagandist, and now, in the age that's seen the promotion of Thatcherite entrepreneurship as the key to personal and national success, this book by Charles Harvey and Jon Press rediscovers William Morris the small businessman.

You prefer the designer/socialist/craftsman/printer/political visionary? Does the idea of successful business, with a pragmatic and wholly material sense of profit and loss, seem in contradiction to the utopian idealism that we know and love in Morris? As the editor of this Journal recently remarked, the Bulgarian audiences who came to hear him lecture on William Morris and the idea of Englishness would probably have preferred to learn about the accounting system used by Morris & Co.

Would we really wish Morris to have been an unsuccessful businessman - a failed dreamer like C.R. Ashbee, for instance? Surely one reason for admiring Morris is that whatever he took up he did well. Nor is this book in anyway an un-Marxist enterprise, for it fills a large gap in our knowledge about the economic and financial substructure to the art and design - without which, indeed, the art and design had never been.

Its warp is money, with the actual figures so often missing from other accounts, woven into Morris's personal experience of commerce and management. Thus the key event in his youth is the sudden death of his father in 1847 and the simultaneous collapse of his bill- and stockbroking firm - a fairly spectacular failure that left the family dependent on its investments in Devon Great Consols. Otherwise, William Morris might have been groomed as his father's partner and successor.

Which in one way he became. Of all the original partners in Morris, Marshall Faulkner & Co, it was he (and his mother) who provided capital and business know-how, even if he hated maths and others had to keep the books. Strangely, no one has hitherto examined the surviving accounts and balance sheets, to show how the enterprise was far from being the casual, friendly artists' cooperative of legend. (One would love to know, incidentally, whether Rossetti did alter the costume of Mary Magdalene for the east window at Bradford in 1863, when told it was 'inappropriate', as the firm's minutes record). Taking display space at the 1862 International
Exhibition was crucial to early success, as was the hard decision in 1865 to move from Red Lion Square to Queen Square, largely in order to secure the business, long before the mining income began to fall.

Not that all went well. Economic recession and less church building in the later 1860s led to decline in income. In 1867 for instance Burne-Jones earned only £55 from the firm, and Philip Webb £64. Faulkner, Marshall and Rossetti by now contributed little, and as Morris's personal income from DGC dividends dropped from over £1000 a year to less than £100 he badly needed to expand the business. In 1868 the firm's net profit was £300 on a turnover of £2000 - too small to sustain seven partners.

The solution was financial reorganisation, with Morris as owner, and expansion into new markets, especially that of domestic decoration and furnishing. Morris & Co was the Laura Ashley of its day, except that 'house style' in this sense was a new concept in the 1870s.

I think there were additional reasons for the dissolution of the firm, notably Rossetti's increasingly unstable mental condition. In 1874, in circumstances never fully detailed, he was obliged to leave the seclusion of Kelmscott Manor for that of Cheyne Walk, from which he seldom ventured, and there was a real risk he would have to be certified insane - an evident liability in a business partner. Wholesale reorganisation enabled him to be ousted without drawing attention to his state.

Further, as Harvey and Press intriguingly reveal in a footnote, in the same year Marshall, who had a drink problem, began operating on his own account as MM & Co - or at least placing orders from an address in Fenchurch St, thus rendering the others liable for his debts. No wonder Morris sought sole control.

He also pushed through product and market expansion in wallpapers, fabrics, carpets, using outside manufacturers where possible (to minimise risk carried by the firm) and insisting on quality control equal to that of Marks & Spencer. Morris & Co, with its showroom in Oxford Street, was more of a design and retailing business than a true manufacturer at this date. Later, investment at Merton Abbey involved extra marketing and advertising, by which time the proprietor was well into his Socialist phase. His PR skills were considerable, however, and journalists were invited to visit Merton and hymn the employees' glorious working conditions - so different from your averagely satanic mill or sweatshop.

By the early 1880s, William Morris's income from the business was around £1800 p.a. And at the time of his death, his assets in it - shared now with the Smith brothers, his partners and designated successors - were over £30 000. Quite a contrast to the fortunes of, say, the Century Guild or Guild of Handicraft, with similar artistic activities.

Did Morris therefore compromise his ideals? Unreconstructed romantic socialists (who mostly earn their livings outside of utopia) may think so - especially when they read the firm's saletalk at the 1883 Boston Fair, with its sick-making promotion of William Morris the couturier:

It may be thought strange that Mr Morris should concern himself with the colours of ladies' dresses; but it is nevertheless a part of the purpose Mr Morris had before him when he undertook to give us the means of beautifying our homes... In England the calls upon him to provide something that ladies might wear, in rooms he himself had helped to make lovely, were too many to be disregarded...
Blame women or the marketing department if you like, but who is to fund artistic and design innovation if the artist/designer does not do so? What is so wonderful about state subsidy or private patronage? And why shouldn’t dresses be as attractive as drawing rooms?

Finally - for you can see I am an admirer - Harvey (director of the NatWest Centre for Management Studies) and Press (senior lecturer in history) have produced a well-written, lucid text that neatly dovetails the business matters with the rest of William Morris’s varied life, without banal recapitulation of familiar facts. There’s one criticism, however: of ignoring or forgetting that the financial success Morris so plainly demonstrated to his contemporaries was (and is) part and parcel of the idea of masculinity. Being able to make money, maintain dependents and spend in style were ‘manly’ attributes. Morris & Co was also a macho enterprise.

Jan Marsh

Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, The Arts and Crafts Movement

Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan are to be congratulated on having written the most useful and comprehensive account of the arts and crafts movement for the non-specialist reader which is currently available. The book is divided into two parts with Dr Cumming providing the section on the British Arts and Crafts Movement and Ms Kaplan writing on Arts and Crafts in the United States and on the Continent. In a general survey of this kind it is inevitable that to the informed British reader, much of the British material will be very familiar; the success of the writer must be judged according to the skill with which this material is ordered and her capacity to seize and hold the attention of the reader. Dr Cumming succeeds in producing a very sound and thorough account; here, as throughout the book, the emphasis on architecture as the bedrock of the movement is welcome. This is the kind of concise and comprehensive survey which undergraduates will find invaluable as an introduction; indeed I have referred my own students to it already.

The second part of the book, covering all the rest of Europe, including Ireland, as well as the United States, contains much that is new to me. Ms Kaplan has ordered a great variety of material with much skill, the breadth of her knowledge is considerable, and she writes in a lively and engaging style. In spite of the range of her material this is not a mere recitation of facts, but succeeds in establishing connections and in offering interesting insights into the subject; and example of this is a point which she makes about the political dimension of Arts and Crafts in Austria, Hungary, Germany. There the movement’s emphasis on vernacular style and its idealization of folk art could be put to the service of fascist endorsement of nationalism as well as of socialist respect for the proletariat.

A wide and interesting range of illustrations with good colour reproductions adds to the value of a book which, priced very cheaply, provides an excellent and affordable introduction to the Arts and Crafts movement.

Christine Poulson
Studies in Medievalism

The recent issue of volume III Nos 3 & 4, Winter and Spring 1991, published by D.S. Brewer in Cambridge at £25.00, contains two items of Morris interest. In No. 3, Marjorie J. Burns’ ‘Echoes of William Morris’s Icelandic Journals in J.R.R. Tolkien’ discusses the possibility that the Journals had an effect on Tolkien’s account of ‘Middle-Earth’ in *The Hobbit*. In No. 4, Rosalind Dépas’ illustrated ‘Medievalism in the Art of the Book in Germany in the Jugendstil Period’ brings out the influence of Morris’s Kelmscott Press, particularly in the books of Melchior Lechter (1865–1937), and of a more diffuse Pre-Raphaelitism on the designs of Heinrich Vogeter (1872–1942), and draws attention to the “finely printed and decorated” journal *Pan* (1895–1900) as having “a number of examples of English work” and an article on English book design in its first volume.

*Studies in Medievalism* is a specialised journal of high scholarly quality, which will in future be published annually. Details may be obtained from Boydell and Brewer Ltd., P.O. Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk.

Peter Faulkner