Reviews


These fifteen essays were first presented as lectures at a symposium held at the Delaware Art Museum during the exhibition – Visions of Love and Life – of Pre-Raphaelite paintings from Birmingham City Art Gallery. The title is therefore somewhat misleading, ‘Collecting’, I assume, referring to compilation rather than acquisition, as only three of the articles are directly concerned with public and private patrons. Like most similar compilations edited from scripts, the essays are of uneven quality and lack the passion and inflexion which can only be achieved by personal, spoken, delivery. This is not to suggest that they are uninteresting. Some at least explore little known aspects of Pre-Raphaelitism, but most are aimed at the knowledgeable and are somewhat arcane for the general reader, notable exceptions being the useful, fluently written essay on the Birmingham collections, by the exhibition’s curator Stephen Wildman, and a fascinating piece on Samuel Bancroft by the late Rowland Elzea, to whom the book is justly dedicated. Bancroft’s interest in Pre-Raphaelitism seems to have had a strong vein of sensuality not entirely confined to the works. In a revealing letter to Fairfax Murray of 1893 he looks forward to visiting Kelmscott House in order to see Fanny (sic) who, Murray has told him, is ‘better than’ (i.e. more beautiful than) Jane. Elzea’s supposition that ‘Fanny’ is an error for Jenny Morris is not, however, entirely convincing.

The volume contains several essays written from a feminist perspective. Beverly Taylor writes interestingly on male Victorian attitudes (frequently puerile) to the educated woman and Rachel Weathers on women’s fashion, although Morrisians may be surprised to hear that ‘a dress from Morris and Co. . . . was carefully hand-crafted, often with elaborate embroidery’ and that Jane Morris participated in the Firm by ‘producing embroidery and managing textile work’. Similar small errors may be found elsewhere, forgivable in a talk, less so in a book. Thus Alison Smith, in an otherwise unremarkable piece on the Pre-Raphaelite nude, mentions ‘Fanny Cornforth, model for Venus Verticordia’, although Rossetti’s use of a cook for the figure is well recorded and the face is that of Alexa Wilding, and Alistair Wright in an original and political critique of Madox Brown’s An English Autumn Afternoon tells us that George Robertson’s 1781 View of Kenwood includes ‘a well dressed figure – in all likelihood the landowner . . . in the act of sketching the property’ – pull the other one!

It is perhaps appropriate, following his centenary year, to devote some final space to Debra N. Mancoff’s article on The Sleep of Arthur in Avalon by Edward Burne-Jones in which she claims that despite its ‘message’ being ‘enigmatic’ it ‘defined his objectives in art through a metaphor which shaped his life.’ Rejecting Penelope Fitzgerald’s persuasive thesis that, after Morris’s death, the painting came to symbolize Burne-Jones’s loss of his friend, and Mary Lago’s perceptive belief
that Burne-Jones delayed completing the painting because, 'being finished, Avalon would be [his] own ending', she claims that the 'icon of the sleeping King' became 'his own personal emblem'. This is hard to refute but equally hard to substantiate and is based, primarily, on Georgiana Burne-Jones's anecdote that in 1898 he addressed his letters to her as from 'Avalon'. In the Memorials (II, p. 340) she quotes from two letters – which Mancoff misquotes as one – 'I am at Avalon – not yet in Avalon' and 'I shall let most things pass me by. I must, if ever I want to reach Avalon.' Thus, to Mancoff, Avalon, which embodies the myth of resurrection, 'expresses Burne-Jones's desire for artistic immortality.' However, she ignores his complexity and wicked, if rather childish, sense of humour. 'I am at Avalon – not yet in Avalon', when addressed to his wife, may mean little more than 'I'm working and I'm not yet dead.' We know from Rooke how Burne-Jones's character combined idealism and worldliness, impracticality and common-sense. Whilst the author makes much of the changing 'flower iconography', Burne-Jones, according to Fitzgerald, replaced the original rocks with flowers at the suggestion of his inamorata Helen Gaskell, and there's no enigma there.

David Rodgers.


This study deals with the development of the 'ecological utopia' in literature during the last century. The concept of 'Ökotopie' ('green utopia') is distinguished by the author from other kinds of utopian writings. Hollm argues that often in designs for utopian societies natural surroundings are adapted to human needs and comforts. The 'green utopia', however, gives an impression of mankind living in harmony with nature.

William Morris's News from Nowhere is given a crucial position in the development of the 'green utopia'; of all utopian writings dealt with in this book, this one is the most extensively analyzed. News from Nowhere is considered here as the first work criticizing technological progressivism by way of a specifically literary representation of an alternative way of living. Hollm presents this as a break with existing literary traditions of depicting man and nature living harmoniously together: the concepts of Paradise, the Golden Age, Arcadia, Cockaigne, Robinson Crusoe's Island, and the countryside of pastoral idylls. In his opinion, these sometime age-old concepts were principally escapist and did not seek to design a new society. At the other end of the spectrum Hollm describes the critical utopian treatise, mainly didactic and not literary by intention, although not everybody will agree with this strict distinction. What he claims Morris achieved was a fusion between these literary and didactic utopian traditions. So News from Nowhere stands out as the prototype of the 'Ökotopie'.

The next example used by Hollm – partly intended as a supplement to Nowhere – is The Sorcery Shop by Robert Blatchford (1907). He then describes three green
utopias situated in a pre-industrial era: *Herland* by Charlotte Perkins (1915), *Islandia* by Austin Tappan Wright (1942) and Aldous Huxley’s *Island* (1962). These are followed by an analysis of three ‘post-industrial’ novels: Robert Graves’ *Seven Days in New Crete* (1949), Ernest Callenbach’s *Ecotopia* (1975) and *Woman on the Edge of Time* by Marge Piercy (1979). These books are compared with *News from Nowhere* in relation to the structure of the imagined society and the literary mode.

Hollm notes the increasing value of religion in later eco-utopian novels. Pseudo-eastern religious or animistic cults are frequently introduced, sometimes with bizarre rituals. Often a mother-goddess is worshipped as some of the societies depicted have a matriarchal hierarchy. This matriarchy often goes together with free sexuality which is much more libertarian than that advocated by Morris. In the most recent utopias, eugenics and reproductive technology are even used to realize equality between the sexes.

In the socialist society depicted in *News from Nowhere*, without the stress of competition, it is taken for granted that vice and disease will be reduced. Death, however, is passed over without comment. Ecological utopias of a later date confront this problem. All of them strive for a harmonious acceptance of death by means of education, therapy and mutual concern. Acceptance of death is made easier by an organicist, non-anthropocentric philosophy of life.

However, in my opinion Hollm devotes too little attention to the very subject that makes him label the books he is discussing as ‘Ökotopie’: the unity of human beings and nature. All these works advocate the careful use of energy sources, of joyful and non-alienated labour in the open air, and living in harmony with the environment. Most eco-utopian societies are meant as a kind of ‘Gesamtkunstwerk’; although no other writer is able to describe well-made buildings and utensils with Morris’s practical understanding.

In an introductory chapter Hollm sketches the development of the environmental movement in England and the United States from nineteenth-century colonists, through the ‘Land Act’ and the Garden city movement, to ‘Counter culture’, ecofeminism, ‘Deep Ecology’ and the New Age movement of recent times. In his opinion ecological thinking flourished during the periods 1880–1900 and 1970–1980 as indicated by the books he analyzed. However, the link between these movements and the literary works he describes is largely left to the reader to establish. To Hollm these books debt to socialism seems problematic: for him only Morris united socialist and ecological ideals. Hollm considers later ideal socialist societies to be more connected with ‘Dystopia’; a warning of the dangers of a technocratic totalitarian society. Similarly, he describes anarchism as a collection of alternative and eccentric ways of thinking and living rather than as a genuine political conviction. The result is that Hollm presents the successive eco-utopias as organic wholes rather than political statements.

On several occasions Hollm points out a specific problem that confronts the writers of utopian fiction: an ideal state, where there is no need for change, has no ‘history’. As a result utopias – while presenting an ideal world – are essentially static and therefore lack suspense and plot. Ironically, viewed in chronological order the green utopias discussed by Hollm clearly show a historical development in the genre itself and they mirror the concerns of the time in which they were
written. It is fascinating to see how the ideal of a perfect community changed within one century. Some of the later social solutions discussed in this book drift far away from the ideals advocated by William Morris.

Lieske Tibbe.


Shor's view is that the cultural identity of Americans includes an inclination towards social and political reform, evinced in such shared ideals as equality and freedom. Americans possess a folk memory of immigrant hopes and Protestant zeal and an enduring frontier spirit lives on in their consciousness. As such terms of reference are under constant reinterpretation amidst changing circumstances and manifold struggles over norms and values, however, the impetus and effects of Americans' reforming tendency are often disparate or ambivalent, seldom entirely consistent with the apparent thrust of preceding developments. In this book, Shor is mainly concerned with tracing the sturdy threads of radical socialism in this fabric. 'To the extent that the goals of the reformer constitute a critique of the dominant order and a radicalization of certain common ideals such as liberty and equality', he says, 'the struggle for the realization of those ideals becomes invested with utopianism'. Utopianism 'achieves a historical resonance at those exact moments when agents engaged in a willed transformation of reality seek to redress the imbalance between what is lacking and what they desire'. Charting his field of study, Shor refers to the S-Matrix theory of cultural currents and employs the Gramscian distinction between alternative and oppositional formations, choosing to concentrate on the former, not simply as specific ventures but as dialectical forces within wider currents of reform. This book examines the period from the year when Edward Bellamy's Utopian novel *Looking Backward* was first published, until the end of World War I, during which last years the momentum of American radicalism was severely diminished, to some degree by the willing compromise of professed radicals with an overweening patriotic fervour around them, but more through persecution of left-wing activists by the Government and other bodies of the establishment in the interest - according to their terms - of social unity.

The first section of Shor's book has four chapters which look at some of the literary influences upon, and representations of, American Utopianism in his chosen period. He rightly regards Bellamy's *Looking Backward* as a major influence upon Utopian, radical and reformist (including Evangelical Christian) initiatives. By Bellamy's death, in 1898, this novel had sold more than half a million copies. Undoubtedly, their reading of *Looking Backward* helped to shape many Americans' hopes for a more just and equitable society; and besides communal experiments such as the Ruskin Colony in Tennessee, it spawned a variety of campaigns on particular issues, a range of radical newspapers and pamphlets, further Utopian writings, and the founding of a Nationalist Party. We know that, in England very
soon after its publication, *Looking Backward* provided an important part of William Morris’s inspiration for writing his own Utopian novel.

Here seems worth considering the early US editions of *News from Nowhere*. Shortly after its first publication in instalments in *Commonweal* (1890), whilst Morris was still revising the text for book publication, *News from Nowhere* was pirated by Robert Brothers of Boston, Massachusetts, who printed 1,500 copies of the novel. Adding four subsequent US printings of *News from Nowhere*, one can safely calculate that by 1898, discounting imports of the Reeves & Turner 1891 and 1894 editions and any copies of the Kelmscott Press’s 1892 edition, the novel had sold 2,750 copies and presumably had at least that number of readers. Whilst this is only a small fraction of the readership of *Looking Backward*, it is still significant. Surely, *News from Nowhere* deserves at least a mention, even if only as a notable literary work influenced by *Looking Backward*, in an examination of texts connected with Utopianism in 1890s America, but it receives no mention from Shor. When the firm of Robert Brothers was purchased by Little, Brown in 1898, it had sold approximately 27,000 copies of works by Morris, this by itself indicating that he was fairly well known in the USA. In Shor’s book, Morris receives just one fleeting mention, as a socialist ‘yearning for an idealized past’. This is hardly adequate.

Shor’s account of the response to *Looking Backward* identifies some significant radical and reformist figures who read and were influenced by it: these included Sylvester Baxter of the Nationalist Party, the socialist newspaper editor Herbert Casson, the Christian Socialist campaigner W. D. P. Bliss, the ‘material feminists’ Mary Hinman Abel and Ellen Richards, and Eugene Debs, leader of the Railway Workers Union and of the Pullman strike of 1894. Though some of these people’s acknowledgements are quoted, Shor fails to consider why, in addition to how, *Looking Backward* affected them. Perhaps this is mainly because Shor avoids engagement with the actual text of Bellamy’s novel, and he also gives little consideration to the other likely influences upon these readers. It should be said that, despite these inadequacies in his coverage of this topic, Shor presents a convincing case for Bellamy to be rated as an author with immense influence on radical and more broadly reformist politics in the USA, and later in this book he shows the refracted light of Bellamy’s ideas in a succession of Utopian ventures, as well as in the thought of other writers and activists.

The next three chapters look at the political motivations and receptions of *Equality*, Bellamy’s sequel to *Looking Backward*, of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Women and Economics* and *Herland*, Sutton E. Griggs’s *Imperium in Imperio*, Pauline Hopkins’s *Of One Blood*, and finally *The Iron Heel* by Jack London. Shor makes many – often intriguing – assertions about the contents of these books, but as they are insufficiently supported with quotations, some of his points are insubstantive. Too often it is unclear just what in these texts their readers were responding to. The main exception is when Shor highlights the racist bias of Gilman’s writing, probably unrecognised by most readers: on this point he is both perceptive and persuasive. He also makes interesting observations about the developing issue of women’s rights reflected in most of these texts.

The second part of the book, also in four chapters, examines Utopianism and radicalism in some political and communal projects. Perhaps Shor is more
comfortable in the role of social historian than as a literary historian or critic, for his discussion is now more thorough and cogent. As at other times and in other places, communal experiments around the turn of this century in the USA tended to be engineered by determined and charismatic individuals who, despite their proclaimed ideals of collective management for such ventures, were in effect their leaders. For example, Julius A. Wayland, founder of the Ruskin Colony, himself bought the land (then ceding control of it to a cooperative association) and recruited members through the pages of the Coming Nation, a newspaper that he edited and owned. Shor points out that although the Ruskin Colony was envisioned ‘as a small-scale utopian venture in the cooperative commonwealth’, such as was advocated by many American socialists, ‘it quickly developed into something approximating a corporate business with administrative controls rather than egalitarian consensus as its operating procedures’. This colony was even ‘organized as a joint stock company that excluded women from the board of directors although wives of charter members were given equal shares’. Wayland also refused to surrender control of the Coming Nation ‘as his own investment property’.

The anarchist colony at Home, near Tacoma, Washington, was unusual in that many of its members were veterans of other communal ventures and it seems to have avoided the dominance of an individual or an emergent elite as usually occurred elsewhere. ‘Although isolated and a haven for nonconformists’, Shor tells us, ‘Home became a beacon for anarchy, gaining a reputation among anarchists and facing the outrage of the mainstream community at various points of national hysteria over anarchism and radicalism’, but it was largely the effects of ‘individualist idiosyncrasies’ and ‘internal feuding’ which eventually broke down the coherence and sense of purpose it needed to endure. After World War I, it became merely a ‘conventional rural community’. These, along with the other experiments Shor describes (particularly another anarchist community at Stelton, New Jersey, and the socialist Llano del Río experiment in Southern California), provide vivid illustration of the noble aspirations and ignoble failings which have attended the efforts of practical idealists to actuate Utopian visions. The book also has a chapter describing and assessing two remarkable pageants in 1913 which were intended to promote the status and rights of black Americans.

Shor’s study will be most useful for social historians interested in American counter-cultural formations. It also has some merit for indicating, if not always explaining, the direct and indirect early influences of Edward Bellamy’s Utopian writings. The chapter discussing Jack London’s readership is a worthwhile contribution to scholarship concerning this author, although its presence in this book seems not to be fully justified. Overall, Utopianism and Radicalism in a Reforming America may be reckoned an interesting work if not an outstanding one.

Martin Haggerty.
Christopher Wood’s square, weighty, delicious-looking book is a generously-illustrated study of Burne-Jones’s career, but it is not a biography. It only makes a half-hearted attempt to show the connection between what Burne-Jones was doing and feeling and what he was painting. This is a pity, since Ray Watkinson, in the Autumn 1998 issue of the Journal, proposed quite a new Burne-Jones. ‘The real Edward Burne-Jones’, he wrote, ‘was concentrated, tough, knew what he wanted. It was not really for feckless Phil that he cultivated the Gladstones and accepted the baronetcy which embarrassed his friends. He made a great deal of money, not accidentally; and with ten fingers, like Turner, like Holman Hunt. He was, as was Morris in his different way, a real self-made Victorian.’ Christopher Wood doesn’t brace himself to consider this interpretation, but simply follows Georgie Burne-Jones’s loyally protective version in her Memorials – that is, Edward as a youthful (and subsequently middle-aged and elderly) scorn at the world, ‘one of the nicest fellows in Dreamland’.

At the same time Wood doesn’t seem much interested in biographical fact. Burne-Jones’s father, after his wife’s death, did not ‘remain a widower for the rest of his life’. In 1882 he married his cook. Miss Sampson (here called Simpson) wasn’t one of little Edward’s nurses: she was the undislodgeable housekeeper. Burne-Jones didn’t feel ‘secure enough to take the tenancy of the Grange’ in 1867: he had to ask Wilfred Heeley to share the rent. Warington Taylor, the Firm’s book-keeper, shouldn’t be spelled ‘Warrington’, and Topsy, from Uncle Tom’s Cabin, should emphatically not be called a boy. And so on and so on. The book makes nothing of the death of Burne-Jones’s son Christopher and nothing of his passion, during his last years, for Helen Mary Gaskell. As to the entanglement with Mary Zambaco, nobody can give a clear account of it until Eileen Cassavetti has published something more than her article for The Antique Collector (March 1989) on the career and travels of the spirited Mary.

Wood takes 1855–60 as the really truly formative years. In 1855 Burne-Jones was already about ten years too old to start on an apprenticeship in Birmingham, as David Cox, for example, had done. Instead of signing on as an apprentice he followed his intuition, miraculously strengthened by Morris and confirmed by meeting the glorious Gabriel at the Working Men’s College. ‘It was Rossetti who turned Burne-Jones into an artist’ Wood quite rightly says, although Burne-Jones took the precaution of enrolling at art school and insisted that it was Watts who ‘compelled’ him to try and draw better after he had been taken in, almost as a patient, by motherly Mrs Prinsep at Holland House. It was also Rossetti who put him in the way of earning something by giving him an introduction to the Whitefriars Glass Company. ‘The importance of stained glass in his work simply cannot be exaggerated, and so great was his output that a separate book would be needed to encompass it.’

In 1859 he made his first visit to Italy. The second was in 1862, as the guest of Ruskin, who wanted, or pretended to want, copies of the Giotto frescoes in the Arena chapel. The third, much the most important, was in 1871. ‘I now care more for Michael Angelo, Luca Signorelli, Mantegna, Giotto, Botticelli, Andrea del Sarto,
Paolo Uccello and Piero della Francesca. The fourth, not such a success, was with
Morris in 1873. What neither Wood nor anyone else has tried to explain is why,
after this fourth visit, Burne-Jones never made another. Spencer Stanhope lived in
Italy, so did William de Morgan, Georgie was recommended to go to Bordighera
for her health. All begged him to come, but he remained in inconvenient Fulham
and wind swept Rottingdean.

It was in the 1870s that Burne-Jones, however melancholy, disheartened and
dishevelled he might be - what with Mary Zambaco’s reproaches and Howell’s
shady dealings - evolved his mature style. Wood calls it ‘Pre-Raphaelite Aesthetic
Italianate and Classical’, and du Maurier called it ‘the Burne-Jonesiness of
Burne-Jones’. He was working on a larger scale, and with sometimes more intense,
sometimes much paler colours, and had in hand Chant d’Amour, The Hesperides,
The Golden Stairs, the Perseus series, Laus Veneris, and The Beguiling of Merlin.
It was not that he was overwhelmed by the aesthetic ’70s, on the contrary, Gilbert’s
Patience was suggested by The Golden Stairs. Again, in the symbolist ’90s he was
an influence, rather than among the influenced. King Cophetua and the Beggarmaid
and The Depths of the Sea where shown at the Paris Exposition Universelle of
1889 and made (to the irritation of Luke Fildes, who was in charge of the hanging)
a magisterial impression. Wood has an interesting last chapter on the spirit of
Burne-Jones in Europe, although he doesn’t mention, as he surely might have done,
the modernismo of Barcelona.

Wood is fascinated, rather than disheartened, by Burne-Jones’s obsession with
his own designs and the transference of the same subjects to different media -
paintings, stained glass, tapestries, tiles, mosaic, jewellery, gold and silverwork,
theatrical costume and design, bas-relief, ladies’ slippers, as though the painter
were a magician casting a repeated spell, but over himself. He seemed, also, to
have made his own hidden pact with time. The Mill took twelve years to finish,
and Chant d’Amour almost as long. Briar Rose began with tile designs of The
Sleeping Beauty in 1862. In the 1880s he was still working on the great final
version, the face of the sleeping princess now being that of Margaret, his adored
daughter. ‘I want it to stop with the Princess asleep, and to tell no more’, he wrote.
At last, in April 1890, he declared it finished, and it was allowed to leave the
studio. He received £15,000 from Agnews for nearly thirty years of patient devotion
to a theme.

This book reproduces five of the series of pictures and tapestries in full, and
Wood is to be congratulated on this. The text and illustrations must have
been difficult to arrange chronologically, but he succeeds in showing Burne-
Jones’s multiplicity and at the same time ‘the extraordinary consistency’ of his
life. His lighter moments too, thank heavens, including a drawing of Mrs
Wilkinson, the cleaning lady, driving him into a corner of the studio with her
bucket and mop.

Penelope Fitzgerald.


Morris’s poetry has not recently attracted as much critical attention as other aspects of his work; it is therefore good to be able to welcome these two very different books, which draw attention to aspects of his poetic achievement.

McSweeney’s is the shorter (though more expensive) and more traditional in its approach. As its subtitle suggests, it looks at a range of poems from the Victorian period dealing with what the author terms ‘sexual love between men and women’, and it concentrates on ‘quality’ rather than ‘representativeness’ (p. 9) so that the material studied belongs to the already recognised canon, with the interesting exception of the nine elegiac odes that appear in Coventry Patmore’s *The Unknown Eros* of 1878. There is no consideration therefore of, say, Thomas Woolner or Wilfrid Scawen Blunt. After the Introduction, successive chapters deal with the love poetry of Browning, Tennyson, Clough, Meredith, Morris and Rossetti, and Patmore and Hardy – the book culminates, bursting its Victorian limits, with a fine account of Hardy’s ‘Poems of 1912–13’. Chapter 4 – ‘Unkissed Lips: Women and Love’ – ranges wider, taking in poems by Felicia Hemans and Letitia Elizabeth Landon as well as Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Sonnets from the Portuguese* and Christina Rossetti’s *Monna Innominata* sonnets, and concluding with Emily Dickinson, ‘unquestionably the foremost nineteenth-century woman poet in the English language (p. 77). On the whole this is criticism going with the grain of received opinion, and the argument advanced that Tennyson in particular among the male poets was adept at ‘blending male and female qualities in a love lyric’ (p. 43) might be seen as a critique of feminist purism. But this is not a polemical work, and McSweeney’s method demonstrates its validity in the perceptive accounts given of individual poems and sequences. In addition to the discussion of Hardy, I was particularly impressed by the consideration of Clough – especially his *Bothie of Toper-na-Fuoch* – and of Meredith’s dramatic and disturbing *Modern Love*. In the latter, it is well remarked, ‘marriage is the ground on which romantic love is tested’ (p. 100) and, as the sequence proceeds, is seen disturbingly to fail.

This might seem an appropriate point from which to enter a discussion of the love poetry of Morris, and it is the one adopted by McSweeney. His chapter brings Morris and Rossetti together under a title taken from Yeats: ‘The Old High Way of Love’. The discussion begins with ‘Praise of My Lady’, and then uses ‘Thunder in the Garden’ biographically to affirm, via a double negative, that there is no reason to think that Jane and Morris ‘never experienced the fulfilment of romantic sexual love’ (p. 116) as conveyed by the poem. But, not surprisingly, most of the – fairly brief – discussion focuses on less happy poems, including ‘Why Dost Thou Struggle’ and the poems for the months in *The Earthly Paradise*. The latter are described, appropriately in my view, as, with *Monna Innominata*, ‘the most fully articulated Victorian poetic expression of hopeless longing for an unrequited or lost love’ (p. 119). McSweeney nevertheless argues that these poems are both psychologically ‘demoralising’ and aesthetically monotonous, and attributes this
in Morris's case to his still being within an unhappy marriage, and to his not being intensely enough committed to poetic self-exploration: 'His creative engagement with his personal misery does not seem to have been intense enough to allow for a release from metronomic despondency for himself and a comparable lift for the reader' (p. 121). By contrast, in McSweeney's view, 'Rossetti had a deeper commitment to the creative activity of the mind' (p. 121) and so was able to produce finer poetry than Morris's in the sonnets that became The House of Life. We are given particularly positive and sensitive accounts of 'The Lovers' Walk' and 'Silent Noon'. In the latter, the 'startling temporal reversal' (p. 129) in - 'When twofold silence was the song of love' - is shown to contribute a telling sense of transience amid the apparent assurance of the conclusion. Here, as elsewhere, McSweeney shows himself to be a fine reader of poetry. Whether we accept his comparative judgment about the quality of the poems of Morris and Rossetti considered here is of course a matter for individual response, but we have certainly been given an appropriate critical challenge in a clearly formulated argument. (It should be noted that as the poems considered in this book are mainly but not exclusively those relating to love in a Victorian setting, poems like Morris's 'Defence of Guenevere' or 'The Lovers of Gudrun' or Tennyson's Idylls of the King are not considered, though there is a dismissive reference to Love is Enough as a 'compensatory fantasy' (p. 130)). The only point in the chapter at which I felt uneasy was when McSweeney remarks, in relation to Morris's 'devastation' by Jane's affair with Rossetti that he 'was further frustrated in being unsuccessful in finding emotional solace in a relationship with Georgiana Burne-Jones, the wife of his closest friend, whose marriage was also under stress owing to her husband's infidelity. Morris was in love with Georgiana, or thought he was; but she remained faithful to her husband' (p. 117). Apart from the rather odd qualification - how can one differentiate between someone's being in love and thinking he or she is? - the formulation seems to suggest that only a sexual affair can provide 'emotional solace' - a common modern assumption but a highly dubious one. Surely the enduring friendship between Morris and Georgiana did provide that solace in its own high-minded way.

Anne Janowitz's Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition - attractively produced by Cambridge University Press with a cover using a detail from Walter Crane's Work - is a more ambitious and exploratory work. Its starting-point is the view that 'we should consider romanticism to be the literary form of a struggle taking place on many levels of society between the claims of individualism and the claims of communitarianism'; between the idea of identity as 'an always already existing voluntaristic self' and as 'emerging from a fabric of social narratives, with their attendant goals and expectations' (p. 13). This struggle or dialectic is shown to have occurred throughout the romantic period, particularly in the poetry of Blake, Wordsworth and Shelley, and a detailed discussion of The Lyrical Ballads shows how that duality is a sustaining tension within many of the poems. Many would agree with this as an account of early romanticism, but would argue that in the nineteenth century we see the progressive decline of the communitarian element and the triumph of the individualistic. This on the whole is the view of E. P. Thompson, and it is one with which Janowitz conducts a consistent and
thought-provoking argument. (One of the positive features of the book is the impressive knowledge shown of the work of historians like the Thompsons, as well as recent philosophers of selfhood like Charles Taylor and Alasdair MacIntyre).

What Janowitz does is to give impressive evidence of the continuation in nineteenth century poetry of the communitarian element, which she presents as culminating in the socialist poems of William Morris. The range is wide: in the first part of the book, 'A dialectic of romanticism', our attention is drawn to such disparate material as Thomas Spence's anthology-periodical One Pennyworth of Pig's Meat; or Lessons for the Swinish Multitude in the 1790s; George Dyer's 1802 essays on poetry, in contrast to the individualistic theory of the lyric poem developed appropriately by the philosopher of liberalism, J. S. Mill; the powerful influence of Shelley on radical poetry, with a perceptive reading of 'The Mask of Anarchy'; and John Clare, tragically driven into solitude and bewilderment. The second part of the book, 'Interventionist poetics in the tradition of romanticism', moves on historically, and emphasises poets drawing on the communitarian tradition rather than those who are discussed by McSweeney. We are given interesting accounts of Allen Davenport, Thomas Cooper and Ernest Jones - for it was the Chartist movement that provided the great stimulus to this kind of poetry in the mid-century. Jones's poetry in particular comes through as powerful and committed until the late 1850s when, Chartism defeated, Jones made his peace with Liberalism.

Morris, as we know, did the opposite, and it is he who shares the last chapter with W. J. Linton (1812–97). Janowitz presents the two as 'mirror figures', both 'poets and artist-artisans' as well as 'political activists, writers, and journalists' (p. 196). She gives an illuminating account of the comparatively little-known Linton, engraver and not uncritical admirer of Blake – he called Blake's prophetic books 'literary incoherencies', a judgment not far from Morris's. Linton, a committed radical and republican, though not a socialist, wrote for some fifty years and, as we learn here, gave twenty volumes of his Prose and Verse Written and Published in the Course of Fifty Years, 1836-1886 to the British Library in 1895, where they 'have been rarely examined, except by archivists and researchers' (p. 201). More's the pity, one is inclined to say, on reading some of the poetry quoted here; I would welcome more information about the possibility of encountering Linton's work outside the British Library. (One surprising feature of this book, which does no credit to the university publisher, is the absence of an index, though the author has provided full and accurate Notes).

Morris and Linton do not seem to have been personally acquainted - Linton emigrated to the United States in 1866 - but Janowitz suggests that they were both 'shaped in the tradition of romanticism ... and between them, they were responsible for assimilating Blake to the radical poetic tradition' (p. 197). She also notes that Linton sent a letter to the Newcastle Weekly Chronicle in 1878 satirising Morris's first political poem, 'Wake London Lads', for its anti-Turkish attitude; Linton added a stanza concluding 'Down with the Turk! he is safe to die;/Give him a kick as you pass him by!' (p. 215) Nevertheless, Linton's politics usually coincided with those of Morris, particularly in the case of the Paris Commune which provides part of the subject-matter of Morris's The Pilgrims of Hope. It is Janowitz's account
of that poem which Morrisians will find of outstanding interest, and which might help to change our sense of his poetic achievement. For Janowitz, renewing her argument with Thompson, the poem is a success that proves the enduring power of a romanticism that retains its communitarian strain. She is well aware that the poem has been criticised, by Mackail and, more recently, by Norman Kelvin, Nicholas Salmon and Michael Holzman. But she shows that it has also had its enthusiasts: Buxton Forman, Bruce-Glasier, and recently Florence Boos. Her argument is that it is powered by the romantic tradition of Shelley and Blake, but also by that tradition as it passed into ‘popular radical and Chartist songs’. ‘The Pilgrims of Hope’, we are told, ‘is a fascinating text because it grew out of the popular genre of Morris’s Chants for Socialists . . .’ (p. 223) She sees the Chants as carrying on the tradition of Ernest Jones, and reads them more positively than most critics have done. This perspective leads into a thoughtful and sympathetic reading of The Pilgrims of Hope which all of those — including myself — who have been less enthusiastic about the poem should consider carefully. It certainly deserves attention along with Boos’s consideration of the poem in 1990 in Socialism and the Literary Artistry of William Morris. Does the poem, as Janowitz argues, succeed in using the ideal of the Commune to communicate a lasting sense of human possibility? I am unsure, but I am sent back to the poem with renewed interest and hope. One aspect of the poem that Janowitz does not emphasise but which has impressed me recently, is the treatment of the central woman character, Richard’s wife, who delivers a powerful denunciation of modern marriage in Part IV and is allowed autonomy when the new comrade, Arthur, falls in love with her. (Incidentally, Janowitz deplores the fact that the poem is ‘not frequently enough taught’ (p. 31); but as far as I can see she gives no indication of the availability of the text, herself quoting from Buxton Forman’s unauthorised edition of 1886. It might be appropriate to refer to A. L. Morton’s immensely useful 1968 collection Three Works by William Morris, although Morton himself judges the poem ‘Only a partial success’, seeming to share Thompson’s estimate when he remarks that ‘Morris’s poetic technique was not really suited to a narrative on a contemporary theme’ (p. 21) and that his next serial in Commonweal, A Dream of John Ball, was to be in prose).

Janowitz concludes her chapter by contrasting Morris’s poem with two of those discussed by McSweeney, Meredith’s Modern Love and Clough’s Amours de Voyage, and she argues that, unlike Meredith and Clough, Morris ‘forces the explicitation of the relationship between the communitarian version of identity as choice, and the solitary depth of modern awareness’ (p. 232). This is the language of the academy, which she uses consistently, and it may put off non-academic readers who will find McSweeney more approachable. That would certainly be a pity, as the insights offered here by Janowitz are valuable and challenging, as well as showing a strong commitment to the communitarian values that meant so much to Morris himself.

Peter Faulkner.
Marxist cultural criticism asserts that both the form and content of artistic works are profoundly influenced by socio-economic forces. This approach was pioneered most successfully by the Hungarian philosopher and literary critic Georg Lukács, whose works such as *The Theory of the Novel* (1920) and *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) were enormously influential in Eastern Europe but, for want of English translations until the 1960s and 70s, affected British criticism only by their ripples of influence strong enough to cross the Channel. By the early 1930s, a distinctive sub-school of Marxist criticism was developing in Britain. Such critics showed a much greater willingness than their Eastern European counterparts to analyse rather than prescribe. Whilst, like them, the British Marxists of the 1930s tended to distrust Surrealism and to champion social realism, they differed by being also sceptical about Symbolism (maybe a continuing reaction against late-Victorian art) and were surprisingly keen to accommodate as much canonical art as possible into their proposed new order. In literary criticism, this last tendency actually affiliated them more closely with Lukács — who was able to appreciate non-socialist writers like Sir Walter Scott and Honoré de Balzac (incidentally, Karl Marx’s favourite novelist) — than with the majority of his professed followers.

*Left Review* was a socialist periodical which ran from October 1934 until May 1938. Its proclaimed ‘purpose’ (which might more pragmatically have been called its *position*) was opposition to fascism and ‘reaction’ in Britain and overseas, and so it was closely allied to the People’s Front, the popular movement dedicated to this aim; indeed, more than a few of its contributors, along with many readers, served in the International Brigade in Spain. But the journal’s agenda was obviously more specific than this, as from the start it was principally a forum for critical discourse on the arts and, through its competitions, a vehicle for new creative writing. The editorial committee consisted of Ralph Fox, Alick West, Edgell Rickword, Douglas Garman and Amabel Williams-Ellis, all of them accomplished writers as well as active Communists. In *Writing the Revolution*, David Margolies has gathered the most innovative and distinguished pieces from *Left Review* into sections according to their subject matter. His introduction to the book assesses the role of this journal in the political and artistic climate of mid-30s Britain; and each section is prefaced with an account of the origin and significance of the pieces which follow. *Left Review* has a special importance for publishing the first Marxist literary theory in Britain. It also has considerable interest for the articles and letters by artists, writers and scholars well known to us: W.H. Auden, Bertolt Brecht, Eric Gill, Herbert Read, Anthony Blunt, Winifred Holtby, Stephen Spender and Hugh MacDiarmid all contributed to this journal.

Christopher Caudwell, author of *Illusion and Reality* (1937) and *Studies in a Dying Culture* (1938), is usually cited as the first notable British critic of the Marxist school, whilst the contributions of Ralph Fox (*The Novel and the People*, 1937) and Alick West (*Crisis and Criticism*, 1938) are barely acknowledged. The contents of *Left Review* invite a reappraisal of the origins and early characteristics
of Marxist cultural criticism in Britain. Here, Douglas Garman’s obituary of Caudwell (who was killed in the Spanish Civil War) is mainly an appreciation of his Marxist criticism, especially in *Illusion and Reality*, locating it in a fluid intellectual scene with many participants. Here too is C. Day Lewis’s little-known essay on ‘Revolutionaries and Poetry’ which was seminal in presenting a historical view of the function of poetry as a possible agent – rather than merely an indicator – of social change; it is remarkable how this piece formulates ideas developed soon afterwards by Caudwell, himself a reader of *Left Review*. Alick West concludes his ground-breaking article on the development of the detective story by asserting that this genre is ‘a sign of revolt against decaying capitalism, while endeavouring to make that revolt harmless’. Ralph Fox argues that his comrades should learn to appreciate the veracity that can be instilled in art through the quality of its execution as well as judging it by the criterion of ideological soundness. He counsels against approving of unconvincing art on the basis of its proclaimed revolutionary intention and ignoring superior – more truthful – work by other hands. A. L. Lloyd makes a similar point when reviewing Herbert Read’s *Surrealism* book. He accepts the justice of the Surrealists’ claim that ‘polemical art’, because it is all ‘exterior’, explains nothing. Art conceived and executed in a spirit of revolutionary rhetoric does not necessarily have a revolutionary effect: ‘We all know how sad it is to see politically left artists preoccupied with painting academic pictures of muscle-bound workers with a hammer and sickle appearing in the sky above them, or of *Daily Worker* canvassers in action.’

It is interesting to read the series of letters from Eric Gill, Alick West and Anthony Blunt, debating the appropriateness of Gill, as a Roman Catholic, exhibiting works in a supposedly Marxist exhibition arranged by the Artists International Society. This exhibition had received stern criticism in the *Catholic Herald* newspaper. ‘For me,’ Gill writes, ‘all art is propaganda; and it is high time that modern art became propaganda for social justice instead of propaganda for the flatulent and decadent ideals of bourgeois Capitalism.’ In response, West comments that Gill ‘seems to class both the Communist and the Catholic together as the preachers who therefore can be artists, in opposition to the aesthete who dopes himself with self-worship,’ and that in doing so Gill ‘takes up the idealistic position that it is a group emotion in the artist that is the basis of art, not the concrete social activity outside the artists, in which he takes part.’ West proceeds to argue:

Propaganda against capitalism, in the name only of religious charity, cannot rescue art from the effects of capitalism; for it means turning away from the particular social relations, which are the artist’s material. And it will fail as propaganda, for propaganda can only mobilize the masses if it is based on their particular situation.

This disagreement highlights the fundamental irreconcilability of socialists motivated primarily by Christian conviction and those motivated primarily by a secular materialist world view, the true Marxists – such as West – who are centrally concerned with the struggle of socio-economic classes rather than of the individual conscience. At the end of his letter, maybe with a little condescension, West appears to allow a fellow traveller’s role for Gill, however, for he says, ‘Eric Gill cannot
stand up against social injustice as well as a Marxian, though we believe he wants to.' When Anthony Blunt joins the debate, he limits himself to defining what is 'revolutionary art'. To be 'revolutionary' in any positive way, it must, he says, be rooted 'in the rising class' and represent its ideas: therefore it must be realistic. Both Surrealist and abstract art are thus excluded, although Blunt believes that these styles probably will exert some influence on technique among 'revolutionary' artists.

Winifred Holtby's article on 'What We Read and Why We Read It' is both insightful and entertaining. She argues that people 'living in a state of ignorance, insecurity and limitation of mental interest are cultural egotists' and such people are drawn towards horoscopes and self-help books. Such writings cater for 'that ineradicable desire for a Good Time Coming which lives in the hearts of those whose Bad Time is caused by material circumstances rather than by individual temperament.' As their interest is 'purely speculative and individual', these writings 'partake to some extent of the quality of lotteries, gambling and sweepstakes.' She also argues that the mainly separate readerships of literary and popular works are determined by economic rather than intellectual differences.

'And so Charlie Chaplin has struck his first blow in the class-war.' Thus Elizabeth Coxhead begins her review of Modern Times. She considers the film to have a 'magnificent' beginning, where the workers are overtly likened to a flock of sheep as they are herded into a factory, and she admires the ensuing sequences depicting the inhumane and greedy factory manager and Charlie as a ridiculously overdriven worker who is eventually incapacitated by this exploitation. 'So far,' Coxhead says, 'you could hardly have a more biting satire on the system whereby machines devour men', but the rest of the film, showing Charlie passing through a series of jobs and imprisonments, has sorely disappointed her. The emergent theme of the film, in so far as it has one at all, is 'a glorification of inefficiency'. 'Modern Times will shake the world', she predicts, 'but only with laughter.' In terms rather similar to Alick West's appraisal of Eric Gill, Coxhead proceeds to assert: 'Nobody could deny that Chaplin's heart is in the right place; he thinks things are unfair and upside-down and wrong. But he has no idea what is to be done about it.'

Left Review frequently featured competitions, usually set by Amabel Williams-Ellis, which invited readers to submit stories and essays on particular topics, such as a shift at work or a strike, and these always in the manner of social realism. Competitors were offered plenty of practical hints beforehand, as well as a general critique of the entries in a competition report afterwards. These competitions proved extremely popular among the journal's readers and many entries were received from ordinary workers attempting creative writing for the first time in their adult lives. This intriguing element of Left Review is represented here by only three competitions and I wish that more of them had been included in the book.

Left Review certainly helped to determine the concerns of post-war cultural criticism in Britain. Its legacy is evident in the approaches of historians such as A. L. Morton (a contributor to the review) and E. P. Thompson, as well as in the literary scholarship of Raymond Williams and Q. D. Leavis. Writing the Revolution makes available material which is crucially important for understanding the
origins of Marxist cultural criticism in Britain. It is a fascinating book which
will generously reward attention from any student of critical theory or political
ideas.

Martin Haggerty.

William S. Peterson (ed.), A Note by William Morris on His Aims in Founding the
Kelman Press Together with a Short Description of the Press by S. C. Cockerell,
and an Annotated List of the Books Printed Thereat, (New York: The Grolier Club

In celebration of the 1996 Centenary, the William Morris Society in the United
States with the Grolier Club have published a handsome new edition of this final
book of the Kelmscott Press. Compiled in 1898 by Sydney Cockerell on behalf of
the Trustees of the Morris Estate, it was originally printed in Golden type with
five additional pages illustrating Troy and Chaucer type including four ornamental
initials.

It is impeccably edited by William S. Peterson, author of the outstanding,
authoritative The Kelmscott Press: A History of William Morris’s Typographical
textual variants are shown in the margins alongside the appropriate passage.
Wrong dates, factual errors, mis-spellings are corrected. Necessary typographical
adjustments are made, replacing the roman caps of book titles by italic upper and
lower case – Golden type has no italic – and comprehensive notes added at the
end. Peterson has mined nuggets of fascinating information from nooks and corners
of libraries and private collections on both sides of the Atlantic. And in true
Morrisian spirit designed and digitally typeset the book himself.

William Morris’s own short Note on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press
(written to an American bibliophile) which makes up the first part of the book
is well known and ought to be compulsory reading for the millions of us who
have typesetting programmes on our personal computers. It is an impressive,
clear statement of typographical principle, although no way the last word. To
paraphrase, Morris writes: letters to have claim to beauty should be easy to read,
not dazzle the eye, be without eccentricity of form; spacing between letters should
avoid undue white; spacing between words should be no more than necessary to
distinguish word divisions; whites between lines should not be excessive; the unit
of a book is a pair of pages with harmonised proportional margins. Further, Morris
in the Note relates why, because of the inadequacies of typefaces available, he had
to design his own, going back to fifteenth century models. For Golden: a Roman
‘severe, without needless excrescences’; for Troy/Chaucer a black letter which
would ‘redeem the Gothic character . . . avoiding spiky ends and undue
compression’ and be as readable as a Roman letter.

The paradox of the Kelmscott Press is that it can appear to be backwood-looking
and forward-looking at the same time. One hundred years ago its techniques were
not that anachronistic. Printing on the iron platen hand-press was a common
feature in most printing workshops for proofing and short runs; type composition was still largely done by hand. Some Kelmscott pages may look monumentally ‘medieval’, others look positively modern. No wonder, compared with the insipid type-faces and poor typography of the time, Kelmscott printing stood out as a beacon; and why Morris’s experiment in type design, no matter how flawed, influenced the resurgence of well designed type-faces in the twentieth century.

Much of what is familiar today about printed letter forms goes back to the fifteenth century. The handwritten book had reached its zenith and with the invention of printing from moveable type the punch-cutter replaced the scribe as the maker of letters. Circumscribed by the process of casting individual metal letters on rectangular bodies, punch-cutters remodelled a renaissance humanist script, creating an alphabet of letters which in every permutation could be made up into words, legible and visually spaced. The masterly books of printers like Aldus Manutius and Nicholas Jenson pay tribute to the artistry and skill of the punch-cutter. And in the 500 years that followed their influence has been crucial to the typography of books and type design.

This is still largely true, even with the almost complete move from letterpress to lithographic printing, the change from ‘hot’ metal typesetting to photo-typesetting, and in the last twenty years the explosion into electronic digital setting. The type designer is no longer straight-jacketed by the metal body. Clicking on the ‘mouse’ the operator can instantly create subtle letter-spacing and type arrangement and can select from a choice of many typefaces in every weight, form and size. Paradoxically, letter formation appears to have gone full circle, back to the ‘freedom’ of the scribe, with the designer appearing to have the prime rôle. In the hands of those with respect for the disciplines of the past, modern technology can be a wondrous tool!

Peterson understands this. He has made a good-looking book; the typography is sound – the typesetting accomplished. The letterpress printing by the prestigious Stinehour Press using photo-polymer plates is first class. Yet, might it have been better to print the main text by offset litho? The typeface is Carol Twomby’s restyled Caslon, not really intended for letterpress printing (the ‘impression’ can tend to become an affectation). And to my eye, the title lines set in a different, traditional version of Caslon type, clash with the text. However, the five facsimile pages reprinted from the original Kelmscott Press edition do benefit from the ‘bite’ of the letterpress impression.

Apart from these minor reservations, this is a fine edition deserving an honoured place on every bookshelf.

Lionel Selwyn.