

# Reviews

William Morris, *News from Nowhere*, ed. David Leopold (Oxford University Press, 2003 [World's Classics]), 207 pp., £6.99 pbk, ISBN 01928 01775.

William Morris, *News from Nowhere*, ed. Stephen Arata (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2003 [Broadview Literary Texts]), 357pp., \$12.95 pbk, ISBN 15511 12671.

It is good to be able to report the publication of two new editions of Morris's key work in early 2003; let's hope that they encourage a new and wider readership.

Both editors have performed their task well, within the parameters of the series to which these books belong. David Leopold offers us the 1891 text, together with a sound Introduction, an extensive Select Bibliography, an excellent Chronology of William Morris (enlivened by a number of quotations), and full Explanatory Notes. For the Broadview volume, printed in an attractive larger format and on whiter paper, Stephen Arata offers the 1891 text, a vigorous Introduction, a Brief Chronology, short footnotes at the bottom of the page, and a Bibliography with a shorter list of Recommended Reading (unlike Leopold, he omits books about Morris as a designer and about Utopianism, together with this Journal, though he does include more academic articles). Where his book scores is in the extra material that the Broadview format allows, with six Appendices containing thirty seven passages, from Morris himself (extracts from 'Art and Socialism', 'How We Live and How We Might Live' and 'The Society of the Future') and from a variety of other appropriate sources: from Owen to Kropotkin under the heading 'Art, Work, and Society'; from More to Florence Dixie under 'Utopia/Dystopia'; from Marx and Engels to Shaw under 'Revolution or Reform'; from *The Times* and Queen Victoria to Margaret Harkness for 'Bloody Sunday', together with a powerful illustration from the *Illustrated London News*; and from Lionel Johnson to May Morris for 'Early Reviews and Responses'. Both editors include the frontispiece to the Kelmscott Press edition, though Arata dates it as 1892 rather than 1893, and omits any reference to C. M. Gere. Of the two Chronologies, Leopold's is fuller, though his account of Morris's contributions to the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* is seriously incomplete and he omits the two posthumously published romances; Arata states that Morris purchased (rather than rented) Kelmscott House in 1878, and that he read *Das Kapital* in 1883 (rather than 1882). The error that both will regret is the appearance of the non-existent Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, in a footnote in Arata p. 81 and in the introductory matter at the front of the Oxford volume. Leopold also introduces one Wilfrid Scawen Hunt (vice Blunt) into his notes on p. xxvii.

So much for critical nit-picking; the main thing is to welcome both these editions and to draw attention to their merits. Both Introductions are clear and enthusiastic. Leopold notes the divergent views taken of *News from Nowhere*, although I refuse to follow him in capitalising from contrasting Mackail's reservations with the enthusiasm of A. L. Morton, and he goes on to link this to

Morris's political development, with its consistent emphasis on equality and community. He argues convincingly that 'Morris used his utopian novel to intervene directly in those disputes [within the Socialist League], providing a perspective from which the inadequacies of both state socialism and anarchism might become more readily apparent to his contemporaries' (p. xi). He emphasises the importance of *Looking Backward* as a stimulus to Morris, but insists that Morris was no Luddite – a belief that he correctly describes as 'surprisingly resilient' (p. xvii); it still remains an easy slur for those who do not want to admit the importance of Morris's view of the significance of 'useful work' in human life. The novel is then discussed in relation to the utopian tradition to which it belongs, leading to the conclusion that it differs from many utopian texts in its avoidance of a 'comprehensive and static portrait of perfection' (p. xxv). Leopold stresses the location of the fiction, and its detailed account of 'How the Change Came', and finishes by showing that 'the reader is robbed of a conventional romantic ending' so that he or she may, like Guest, have achieved 'fresh insight into its [his own time's] privations, and a renewed enthusiasm for the work of building something better' (p. xxxi).

Arata begins his lengthier Introduction briskly with the assertion that '*News from Nowhere* is Morris's most important work of prose fiction and a vital document in the history of late-Victorian socialism' (p.11). He is perhaps too sweeping in stating that all Morris's poetry 'enjoyed both popular acclaim and critical esteem' (ibid.), but he succeeds in giving a sense of Morris's creative energy and his principled opposition to many aspects of Victorian Society. He devotes an informative section to 'Morris and the British Socialist Movement', acknowledging that his 'resistance to electoral politics effectively isolated him from the main movements of British socialism' at the time (p. 20). He shows that Morris wants to convey a sense of how the new world would feel, and puts the case strikingly: 'The appeal of the world Morris creates in *News from Nowhere* is sensual: a matter of touch, taste, scent, desire. It is a world filled with yearning, but yearning that knows the possibility of fulfilment' (pp. 22-3). The following section, 'Work, Art, Work of Art', shows the centrality for Morris of work as life-enhancing, and brings out his hostility to all forms of asceticism. It also shows how his view of art 'effectively eliminates "the artist" from the roster of human types' (p. 29), placing him very much at odds with others in the 1890s. More controversially, Arata discusses the negative view of the traditional novel expressed by Ellen on behalf of Morris, and the 'residual longing' felt for that vanished form by Boffin and the Grumbler. This is seen as part of the cost of replacing the complexity of the old life with the simplicity of the new, which is related to 'the diminished range and complexity of human emotional response' in *Nowhere*. As readers of the novel, it is argued, 'we are likely to feel that Guest is the only "real" character in sight'. We might feel that this is a weakness in the novel, but Arata apparently sees it as a strength: 'The psychological flattening of the other figures in the book' shows for him that desires in *Nowhere* have themselves become simpler, and the novel as a whole reveals 'the affective diminishment such simplicity may lead to' (p. 33). The next section concerns 'Eros, Gender, and Domesticity', and places Morris's views within their contemporary context. Arata follows critics like Florence and William Boos in

accepting the presence of conventional gender stereotyping in *Nowhere*, but argues that the account of marriage is genuinely radical, contrasting the 'equanimity' of the account of 'Clara's desertion of and eventual reunion with Dick' with 'the tortures Sue Bridehead is made to suffer in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*' (p. 37). Arata's final section is 'How the Change Came', stressing the importance of Bloody Sunday to Morris, and interestingly emphasising the ambivalence with which the 'historical innocence' of the people of *Nowhere* is viewed. Old Hammond's account of the May Day celebrations is quoted, as raising a difficult question about the value of historical knowledge. Arata sees it as a sign of Morris's intellectual honesty that he does not hesitate to raise these questions, and concludes that 'In Morris's view, utopia is not achieved once. It is the object of our continual quest, and for that quest a sharpened historical consciousness is requisite' (p. 44).

Leopold has produced a comparatively cheap edition with all the necessary scholarly apparatus, which will meet the needs of most students; Arata's more generous format and inclusiveness is likely to make the book more expensive (I could find a price only in dollars), but he makes excellent use of the extra space to give contextualising material of high quality. Both editions must compete with Krishan Kumar's impressively scholarly Cambridge edition at £15.95, and Clive Wilmer's Penguin Classic '*News from Nowhere*' and *Other Writings*, at £9.99. Wilmer's edition, as many readers will know from experience, is very good, and includes more of Morris's other writings than does even Arata: notably 'The Story of the Unknown Church', 'A King's Lesson', two extracts from *John Ball*, and the whole of five important lectures, together with 'How I Became a Socialist' and Morris's 'Note on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press'. The Penguin selection comes to 430 pages compared with the World's Classics 207, which would seem to make it the better bargain, despite Leopold's good editorial work. But if contextualisation is given prominence, what I think likely to be the extra expense of the Broadview edition (which is also the most attractive aesthetically) must be deemed good value too.

It is excellent that all these editions, each of which has its merits, is now in print. All three covers are interesting: Wilmer has George Jack's plaque of Morris in Kelmscott village, Leopold one of W. H. Evans' photographs, 'From a Window at Kelmscott Manor', and Arata, most surprisingly, Benjamin Stones' photograph 'Inside the Clock of Big Ben', taken in 1897. However, I regret the Broadview use of an almost invisible yellow for the title of the book and for some of the comments on the back cover.

*Peter Faulkner*

Thomas J. Tobin, *Pre-Raphaelitism in the Nineteenth-Century Press: A Bibliography* (British Columbia, CA: University of Victoria [English Literary Studies Monograph No. 87], 2002), 231 pp., \$25.00 pbk, ISBN 09206 04811.

Pre-Raphaelite scholars and Morrisians also have much to thank Thomas Tobin for. Not only is he Webmaster for the William Morris Society's much-visited website, but *Pre-Raphaelitism in the Nineteenth-Century Press* marks the arrival of a vital research tool for all scholars working on Pre-Raphaelite art and literature. Tobin acknowledges in his preface that Fredeman's *Pre-Raphaelitism: A Bibliocritical Study* (1965) is the precursor of his own bibliography, but this new work dramatically expands on Fredeman's range of references. *Pre-Raphaelitism: A Bibliocritical Study* had 500 references to periodical criticism on the Pre-Raphaelites and their associates; *Pre-Raphaelitism in the Nineteenth-Century Press* lists 2400 periodical references from 1854–1900.

The bibliography starts with an informative 25-page introduction divided into subsections: 'The Genesis of Pre-Raphaelitism'; 'An Overview of Pre-Raphaelite Bibliography'; 'Methodology and Sources'; 'The Scope of the Bibliography'. Tobin highlights how the need to define Pre-Raphaelitism was an early obsession of art critics affronted by paintings with the mysterious initials 'P.R.B.' on them. He notes the extent to which the Pre-Raphaelites and all linked with them were often vilified or ridiculed, saying 'By far the greatest number of entries in this bibliography deal with Pre-Raphaelitism as an object of derision, a deformed curiosity left over from continental Romanticism' (p. 29). Pre-Raphaelite poetry 'was defined as such only retrospectively, beginning in the 1850s' (p. 26) and entries on the writings of Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti, Swinburne and, of course, Morris, are plentiful.

One of the many strengths of this work is numerous references to smaller periodicals that often get left out of bibliographies. Tobin has scoured many limited-circulation periodicals on both sides of the Atlantic, and has also unearthed a number of responses to the Pre-Raphaelites from within mainland Europe, particularly France and Italy. As the century progresses inevitably questions were also raised about the Pre-Raphaelites' relationship to aestheticism, and entries reflect this. The Pre-Raphaelites were also closely connected with

(often very heated) debates about the morality of art, a subject which Victorian reviewers dwelt on at some length.

It is almost impossible to pick out entries of note for the sake of a review because reading through this bibliography as a whole, almost regardless of its primary function as a stimulus to further research, is fascinating in itself. It provides the most extensive account to date of how the Pre-Raphaelites were read and thought about by the culture and contexts which produced them. However, *Punch* was no doubt having its usual dig at anything culturally avant garde with 'The Exhibition as it Might Have Been in Days of Yore: by a Disciple of Retrogress' in 1851 (p. 41); *The Building News* was presumably more exciting than it sounds, with their pragmatically-disguised 'Cruel-to-be-kind Critic' reviewing 'The Winter Exhibition of Pre-Raphaelite Pictures' in 1858 (p. 55); *The Light Green: A Superior and High-Class Periodical* certainly sounds from its title like it's having some fun at the expense of aestheticism, and its first issue in 1872 featured 'Rosina Christetti's' 'Ding Dong' (a parody, no doubt, of *Sing-Song*) and a poem by Algernon Charles 'Sin-burne' called 'Octopus' (p. 82); and L. C. M. perhaps wisely chooses to stay anonymous when writing about 'An Evening with Swinburne' in *Lippincott's Magazine* in 1878 (p. 96).

For Morris scholars *Pre-Raphaelitism in the Nineteenth-Century Press* is a valuable resource indeed. Many readers of the *JWMS* will be familiar with Peter Faulkner's *William Morris: The Critical Heritage* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975) which has to date been the main collection of contemporary responses to Morris's writings. Again, Faulkner's volume isn't superseded by Tobin's - *Pre-Raphaelitism in the Nineteenth-Century Press* contains bibliographical entries only and not extracts from the works cited – but Tobin provides many more references. Where an entry on Morris has previously been cited in Faulkner then Tobin notes this (as he also does if a citation was in Fredeman). As the bibliography extends as far as 1900 then it also provides what must be the most extensive list of obituaries and tributes to Morris after his death, as well as reviews of J. W. Mackail's *The Life of William Morris* (1899).

Tobin comments in his introductory section on 'An Overview of Pre-Raphaelite Bibliography' that after the publication of *Pre-Raphaelitism: A Bibliocritical Study* most scholarship on the PRs in the 1970s was 'theoretical, little energy went into unearthing additional sources: Fredeman's bibliography, with its wealth of previously unknown material, provided ample opportunity for original research' (p. 18). We all have reason to be grateful for Tobin's energy too. No one working on Pre-Raphaelitism will fail to find new sources of information or stimuli for further research and comment in this important new work.

The University of Victoria's English Literary Studies Monograph Series webpage can be found at [www.engl.uvic.ca/els](http://www.engl.uvic.ca/els)

*Rosie Miles*

Felicity Ashbee, *Janet Ashbee: Love, Marriage, and the Arts & Crafts Movement* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2002), xxix + 245pp., \$39.95 hbk, 9 colour and 49 b&w illustrations, ISBN 08156 07318.

Felicity Ashbee's memoir of her mother, the young 'comrade wife' to the Guild of Handicraft band of brothers, is a wholly delightful book – of the rare kind that one wishes were longer. In large part, this is due to Janet's own vivacious, perceptive writing, in fiction, journals and correspondence, where the tones and timbre of the speaking voice come audibly off the page. But the author's own style – appropriately subordinate to her mother's for biographical purposes – is equally open, loving and sharp as occasion requires, and both share a robust, heart-warming good humour. And as if this were not enough, the story is more than the familiar tale of a gifted woman without whom her partner would never have achieved public renown. Though it is this as well, Janet Ashbee's life is also remarkable for the fact that her husband was consciously homosexual. To his young bride he offered no conjugal intimacy and no prospect of children. It was hardly auspicious.

'I was not educated at all, only brought up to be healthy and ornamental', Janet commented in middle life. But with only one brother and '£3000 a year at my back', as daughter to a stockbroker in the prosperous 1880s and '90s this did not much matter, and she partly sold herself short, since her education did include two challenging years in Berlin and Paris, learning, if not studying languages, literature, art and music. Back in Britain, she attended art classes and ought perhaps to have gone on to train professionally had she not caught the attention of 'CRA' (as he was universally known) – the architect Charles Robert Ashbee who in emulation of William Morris had set up the Guild of Handicraft in a fine old house off the then very unwashed Mile End Road, to pursue his twin interests in decorative art and young men. Ten years after its foundation, the Guild took over the remains of the Kelmscott Press, including chief compositor Thomas Binning, whose conservatism Janet gently mocked in rhymes ending:

Suggest anything *new* and it's 20 to 1

He will answer you gravely: 'It cannot be done!'

As frankly as he could, in proposing marriage CRA explained that his close, all-absorbing attachment and love for boys and men was 'the one guiding principle in life', which she perhaps took to mean his idealistic commitment to the comradeship of the Guild. It took some time for the message to become clear, during which time Janet turned herself into an honorary lad, joining in the social and sporty activities of the Guild, camping out in muddy fields and skinny dipping in rivers and ponds. With one difference: as Mrs A she was also responsible for all domestic arrangements, especially after the Guild's move to Chipping Campden in the Cotswolds. As her daughter observes, CRA required a reliable wife who would be like his mother, without the same emotional demands.

She also 'mothered' many of the Guild members, while stoically yearning for rare hints of husbandly affection. After a time her own warm feelings diverted themselves into a passionately platonic affair, and then into a nervous collapse,

which followed hard on the closure of the Guild. She was seen by the enlightened mad doctor Henry Head, who encouraged her to write – ‘Rachel’, the lightly fictionalized account of her loves is a main source for the present narrative – and who perhaps told CRA to solve his wife’s problems by giving her a child. Quite how that, and subsequent conceptions were managed, given CRA’s utter physical indifference, is unclear, but four daughters provided Janet’s fulfilment.

Often, however, one regrets that her literary gifts were not hailed, for her journal entries rival Jane Carlyle’s letters and Virginia Woolf’s diaries. Once, when going to call on Beatrice and Sidney Webb, she was joined by Lady Elcho and actress Mrs Patrick Campbell, who had a star’s way of compelling attention. ‘Gradually, as by a magnetism, we found we were the Gallery to which she was playing,’ Janet recorded:

‘Yes,’ she drawled, ‘it’s really delightful to be a complete lunatic – nobody expects anything of you, you have no standard to live up to’, and with a meaning glance at Mrs Webb, ‘and you can have a real good time!’

Mrs Webb drew herself up and flushed pink . . . She glanced at her notes about the room and remarked in her most Webby manner: ‘Well, if you’re writing the history of Local Government, you can’t exactly be a lunatic.’ Mrs Pat laughed, having the best of the situation. ‘Can’t you? Why, I should have thought that was just what you would be under those circumstances!’

Janet’s eye and pen were entertaining and acute. In 1920, when the family were living (in some discomfort, without bathrooms or transport) in Jerusalem, where CRA had a sort of planning brief, there was a royal visit, involving

a terrible party at Government House when we had to *curtsy* to Prince George (moi qui vous parle!) and we were all arranged around that enormous room like samples of coffee Mr Cust asked me if I would rather be a Notability of Jerusalem or an Administration Wife, so I chose the latter! . . . nothing amusing happened.

Given the choice, Janet would always prefer to be a wife rather than a notability, for although she became matriarchally bossy she retained the girlish modesty of her upbringing, and the belief handed down by her mother, that ‘husbands and wives vowed eternal love at the altar and there was an end of it. Some unspeakable persons ceased to love their husbands and wives, but one did not know them’.

This may explain the impression made by one such wife at the famous Art Workers’ Guild masque, *Beauty’s Awakening*, in 1899. The buxom Janet was cast as Venice’, Guild boys, embarrassed in short tunics, played Greek youths, ‘and there was May Morris, the Majestic, the Mournful, the Morose St Helena . . .’

In 1910, William Strang painted a striking portrait of Janet, which Felicity Ashbee reproduces, together with a handful of other colour images and many original photos. Her preface pays tribute to the encouragement and ‘hours of help’ from CRA’s biographer Alan Crawford, who also provides a supportive, but

scarcely needed, introduction. *Janet Ashbee* can stand on its own, and one hopes for a speedy paperback version.

*Jan Marsh*

John Stokes, ed., *Eleanor Marx (1855–1898): Life, Work, Contacts* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), xi + 196pp., £45.00 hbk, ISBN 07546 01137.

Karl Marx died in 1883, the year that William Morris joined the Social Democratic Federation. Marx's youngest daughter Eleanor, then aged 28, played a prominent role in the revived socialist politics of the '80s and '90s and especially in the emergence of socialist feminism. She translated works by Flaubert and Ibsen, as well as writing, with her common-law husband Edward Aveling, *The Woman Question*. Both she and Aveling worked closely with Morris – and with May Morris, seven years her junior – in the Socialist League and in sundry dramatic performances. Aveling treated Eleanor abominably, being both unfaithful and financially exploitative. In 1898, she committed suicide. Given the prominence of Eleanor Marx's role, it should be astonishing that the list of key works assessing her is so short. Chushichi Tsuzuki's 1967 biography, *The Life of Eleanor Marx 1855–98: A Socialist Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press) was followed in the 1970s by Yvonne Kapp's comprehensive and acclaimed two-volume biography, published by Virago. A collection of family correspondence, *The Daughters of Karl Marx*, was published in 1982.

The addition to the literature offered by this new collection of essays is therefore much to be welcomed. It does not attempt a comprehensive account or re-assessment of Eleanor Marx's life. It is based on papers from the Eleanor Marx Centenary Conference held at the University of London's Centre for English Studies in 1998, giving it overall a more literary than political-historical character. As always with such collections, there is a certain unevenness between the contributions. In this instance, that unevenness relates less to the intrinsic quality of individual pieces, which are all interesting and well-written, and more to the degree of immediate relevance to Marx herself. Most of the chapters have titles or subtitles 'Eleanor Marx and x', but the nature of the 'and' is variable. The three chapters '. . . and Ibsen / Shakespeare / Flaubert' are concerned with writers of undoubted centrality to Marx's work. The Ibsen essay reflects not just her own engagement with his plays, but the place of this in a wider cultural milieu.

The literary character of the collection means that it is concerned throughout with questions of representation. John Stokes' introduction considers the fictional representation of Eleanor Marx. Central here is Judith Chernaik's 1979 novel, *The Daughter*, which also features May Morris ('another troubled daughter of a formidable father'). Chernaik tells Eleanor's story as a parallel life alongside those of her sisters, May, and Olive Schreiner. Partly historical, partly based on literary sources and textual analysis, the later essays in this collection also trace parallel lives. They take figures from Eleanor Marx's personal, political or intellectual milieu – Oscar Wilde, Amy Levy, Margaret Harkness, Clara Pater, Victoria Woodhull, Mathilde Blind – and explore connections, differences, discontinuities.

Best among these is Lynne Hapgood's piece on Margaret Harkness, which expands on the brief references in Kapp. Harkness (who wrote under the pseudonym John Law) was introduced to Eleanor Marx by Engels, as a guide to show her round the East End of London – a formative experience for Eleanor. Both were also involved in the 1889 Dock Strike. Hapgood describes their relationship as 'shadowy and brief', and her discussion opens out into an exploration of the nature of female friendships made possible (or not) in socialist circles in the 1880s and '90s. It also looks at the representation of these issues, and political events more widely, in Harkness's own novels. Hapgood shows how friendships between socialist women could only temporarily escape from the divisions of class and economic hierarchy. Implicit here is that while Eleanor Marx was loved and respected because of who she was as well as how/what she was, other women had a much harder time establishing their credentials within socialist circles, even with other women. One cumulative effect of all six of these essays is to show how fragmentary our knowledge of women's role in the socialist movement remains, and how hard it is to recover the relatively poorly documented networks of connection among them. A less satisfactory effect is the sense that the selection of comparators is arbitrary (as, indeed, given the origins of the book, is probably true). On what principle might one select six figures – or five women – important to understanding Eleanor Marx as a political or literary figure? Should not such a list include Olive Schreiner, and perhaps May Morris, as in Chernaik's novel? In spite of holding my unbroken attention the book felt a little unbalanced to me, but it sent me back to other sources, especially Yvonne Kapp, and also Jan Marsh's biography of Jane and May Morris to cross check the connections. Perhaps it does make sense to explore and recover some less visible, less obvious connections, and assume that this volume will be read in conjunction with, rather than as a substitute for, the existing literature.

Finally, a theme which runs through the volume is the relationship between the personal and the political. The most impressive and challenging contribution comes from Carolyn Steedman. This piece stresses the importance of place and space, of examining the physical location in and from which lives are lived. But she also suggests that the insistence on the connection between the personal and political has in some ways been catastrophic. At the time, it led to the '[fashioning] of a bourgeois subjectivity out of the observed lives of the poor'. William Greenslade's essay on Aveling argues that Eleanor Marx was able to write about the victims of the factory system without objectification or patronage. Steedman argues that this was because she worked with a politics that did not have the space for interiority that the ILP made public. Marx's particular merit lay in the fact that her politics was free from the 'twined and muffling embrace' of the personal as political. The implication of this is that the disjunction between Eleanor Marx's private unhappiness and her public persona should be neither a surprise nor a ground for attempted reconciliation. Such a misplaced pursuit of consistency is, in any case, contradicted by the complex, fragmentary picture presented by these essays.

*Ruth Levitas*

Bevis Hillier, *Young Betjeman* (John Murray, 2002 [1988]), 477 pp., £25.00 hbk, ISBN 07195 45315.

Bevis Hillier, *John Betjeman: New Fame, New Love* (John Murray, 2002), 736 pp., £25.00 hbk, ISBN 07195 50025.

Bevis Hillier, we are told on the flap of the second volume reviewed here, 'has dedicated more than twenty-five years to writing Betjeman's life, a task entrusted to him by the poet himself'. The size of these two volumes – the first, from 1988, reissued to accompany the second in 2002 (the third is yet come) – shows how conscientiously he has gone about the task. Here is amassed a huge amount of information about the life of the Poet Laureate and his many friends and social acquaintances. The only question might be whether we need to know so much about this undoubtedly remarkable man, who contributed so entertainingly to the revival of enthusiasm for the Victorian period and its products in the mid-twentieth century.

From the Morrisian point of view, the most interesting part of the first volume is the chapter devoted to the time Betjeman spent, after leaving Oxford and teaching at prep schools, on the staff of the *Architectural Review*, at that time the leading exponent of modernist architectural aesthetics in England. At Oxford, what he saw as Betjeman's frivolity had caused his tutor, C. S. Lewis, a great deal of annoyance, but the connections Betjeman made at Oxford stood him in good stead, and led him to the architectural journal, then owned by Sir Percy Hastings and run by his brother, Hubert de Cronin Hastings. Betjeman was given a salary of £300 in 1930, and his colleagues included J. M. Richards (who had his room decorated with a Morris wallpaper), Hugh Casson, John Summerson and P. Morton Shand. Hastings directed the *Review* as the exponent of continental Modernism, making Betjeman, with his enthusiasm for the Arts & Crafts, an odd coadjutor. But the argument put forward by Shand in a series of articles 'Scenario for a Human Drama' (1934–5) – and developed by Pevsner – that Modernism derived directly from the Arts & Crafts movement, allowed for some accommodation. Betjeman visited Kelmscott Manor in 1930 and saw May Morris weaving there; at the 1939 sale at the house he 'bid for such hallowed relics as Morris's French working blouse and his initialled silk handkerchief' (p. 261). He interviewed the elderly Voysey, and found that he did not see himself as a pioneer of the modern movement and that he disliked Morris 'because he was an atheist' (p. 262). Betjeman left the *Review* in 1933, after which he no longer needed, as Hillier neatly puts it, 'to claim that the Victorian and Edwardian architects and designers he admired were "pioneers"' (p. 275). Hillier also tells us that Betjeman enjoyed 'the beautiful Kelmscott editions of the old Marlburian William Morris' he encountered in the Marlborough school library, and 'the Pre-Raphaelite's escapist medievalism and the archaic language of *The Earthly Paradise*', though he also remarks, what only a little knowledge would lead the reader to suspect, that 'Morris's socialism woke little response in him' (pp. 322-23).

The first volume ends with Betjeman's marriage to Penelope Chetwode in July 1933, despite her parents' strong opposition, inaugurating an extraordinary but real and lasting relationship. The second volume describes his years of increasing

public success, embodied in the photograph on the dust jacket of the smiling and confident figure who spent a month at the University of Cincinnati in 1957, as entertainingly described in Ch. 33. In these years – from 1934 to 1958 – Betjeman became an increasingly well-known figure. His work in the 'thirties as film critic of the *Evening Standard* and then as editor, with John Piper, of the Shell Guides to the English counties show something of the range of his enthusiasms. His reputation grew as he moved beyond journalism, first into radio and then, after the war and with great success, into television. He became increasingly known as a witty and often successful conservationist. He was a co-founder of the Victorian Society in 1957, though the reader learns nothing more here than that bare fact. He also became increasingly well known as an entertaining and accessible poet, whose *Collected Poems* achieved 'runaway sales' in 1958, something which no English poetry had done for many years.

We are assured in this volume too that Betjeman 'reverenced Morris' and that he 'bought relics of the great Socialist poet-artist at the Kelmscott Manor sale in 1939' (p. 242). (This information comes from Candida Lycett-Green's edition of Betjeman's *Collected Letters*, where, more entertainingly, she tells us that her parents could not afford the Rossetti sketches at £14 or the Morris tapestry at £350, but 'ended up with Mrs Morris's Spanish guitar for eighteen shillings'). In 1934, we learn from Hillier following the *Letters*, that the Betjemans' house at Uppingham – in Morris's White Horse country – had Morris papers in many rooms, and Candida later recalled that 'My mother even had a dressing-gown made of the "bird and anemone" design' (p. 5). In August 1935 Betjeman met the eighty-year-old Bernard Shaw and his wife at lunch with Lord Berners at Faringdon House. He recorded in his diary: 'I said, You ought to see the tithe barn at Gt Coxwell'. GBS replied: 'I remember Morris took me there'. Morris pulled hairs out of his moustache when he was angry: very painful for onlookers . . . Likes close printing as Morris did' (p. 60). When the Betjemans moved to the Old Rectory, Farnborough, in 1945, they transformed the Georgian interior into a Victorian one, and Candida could remember being able to go into the library, where her father might show her what she terms 'the illuminated pages of a Kelmscott volume' (p. 294). Betjeman discovered that the eighty-three-year-old C. M. Gere was living not far away at Painswick, and arranged for him to paint a portrait of Candida, then three; she recalled sitting 'bored and irritable, while JB talked to Mr Gere about all his Arts and Crafts friends' (p. 295). However, when life became difficult in Farnborough, Betjeman thought of renting Kelmscott Manor as what Hillier describes as 'a possible escape route' (p. 323). He wrote to his friend John Cullinan: 'Thank God there is a chance of taking Kelmscott Manor House . . . Then you, my dear Rimbaud, will be able to join Ned Jones & me & Dante Gabriel & you will write epics under the willows & I will wear (sic) tapestry & Dante Gabriel will paint pictures all to illustrate your long, Anglo-Saxon epics' (p. 323). This was never to happen because, Hillier writes, perhaps paraphrasing Betjeman's letter, 'John realised that family life at Kelmscott was likely to be interrupted by bearded Fabian pilgrims in hairy suits, knocking at the door' (p. 323). But he retained his enthusiasm for the Manor, making it the first house discussed in a series of broadcasts he gave in 1952 on 'Landscapes with Houses'. For this, he received a responsive letter from the elderly Sydney

Cockerell: 'I have just been listening to your enchanting talk on Kelmscott manor which brought tears to my eyes again and again, so dear has it been to me since I first stayed there with Morris sixty years ago' (p. 525). The Morrisian can thus find much to enjoy in these immensely detailed volumes, the Betjeman enthusiast no doubt infinitely more.

*Peter Faulkner*

Peter Trippi, *J. W. Waterhouse* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 251 pp., £29.95 hbk, 168 colour and 48 b&w illustrations, ISBN 07148 4232X.

Although he had been virtually forgotten by art critics and patrons at the time of his death, by the latter half of the twentieth century the art of John William Waterhouse (1849-1917) had experienced an amazing resurgence in popularity. Today Waterhouse has become one of the most recognisable Victorian artists, and *J. W. Waterhouse* is a critical, comprehensive exploration of the life and work of this highly enigmatic artist. As Peter Trippi admits on the opening page, we are left with 'remarkably little documentation about Waterhouse as an individual' (p. 4). Thus Trippi's monograph examines Waterhouse's career in terms of artistic and stylistic stages, the evolution of which revolves around the painter's classical heritage and Pre-Raphaelite inheritance. While Waterhouse as an individual must remain elusive, Trippi aims to analyse his oeuvre thoroughly and to situate the artist within the Victorian period.

In the introduction Trippi notes that Waterhouse 'brought to Pre-Raphaelitism a unique Symbolist sensibility', and that from both 'Greek myth and Romantic poetry, he began to paint scenes of passionate transformation, the mystery and eroticism of which fascinated English Pre-Raphaelites and continental Symbolists alike' (p. 6). Throughout his career, Waterhouse was captivated by passion, transformation, death, regeneration, and the supernatural, and although he is often considered by critics to be a third-generation Pre-Raphaelite, Trippi rightly underscores the individuality and eclecticism that he brought to the canon. His association with the Royal Academy, occultist leanings, charged figures, and development of *non finito* compositions indicate not only Waterhouse's adaptive, progressive style, but also, as Trippi rightly suggests, 'how Pre-Raphaelitism was continually redefined by late Victorian artists and critics and evolved away from the Brotherhood's meticulous detail and quaint figures' (p. 4).

Trippi provides us with a thoroughly researched account of Waterhouse's early life and artistic beginning. Born in Rome to the English painters William Waterhouse and Isabella Mackenzie, J. W. Waterhouse was educated in classical history, mythology, and literature; this was the intellectual, literary grounding that was to influence his artwork. Trippi asserts that Waterhouse viewed classical mythology 'through the Romantic lens of Homer, Ovid, Shelley and Keats' (p. 6), and his early interest in ancient Rome was blended with an attraction to spiritualism and the supernatural. In the first chapter, 'Italy and the Classical Heritage', Trippi examines Waterhouse's early works and the evident impact of

both classicism and medievalism on his style and subject matter. In the painting *Undine* (1872), Waterhouse's burgeoning interest in spirituality and eroticism is highlighted as 'the narrative's intertwining of love, sex and death' (p. 19). Also emphasised is Waterhouse's association of women with water, which, like the *femme fatale*, was a preoccupation for much of his artistic career.

Dubbed later in life as both an 'Academic Impressionist' and an 'Academic Burne-Jones', Waterhouse was not only influenced by Lawrence Alma-Tadema, John Everett Millais, and Edward Burne-Jones, but also manifested a 'fascination with the dramatic' (p. 60). The first chapter also traces his academic training and developing artistic style, a classicism that became increasingly impressionistic after his acquaintance with the work of Alma-Tadema and the French Impressionists. It is clear that Waterhouse was familiar with Morris's *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70), and he explored classical and medieval legends in paintings such as the untraced *Pygmalion and the Statue* (1873) and *Danaë* (1892).

After a thorough study of Waterhouse's early work and developing career at the Royal Academy, Trippi identifies 'the increase in dramatic temperature' (p. 59) of Waterhouse's paintings in the late 1880s. The chapter entitled 'Drama and Intensity' marks a new stage in Waterhouse's career, and the increased exoticism and intensity of *Consulting the Oracle* (1884) and *The Magic Circle* (1886) indicate the influence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Astarte Syriaca* (1877) and Burne-Jones's *The Magic Circle* (1880). It is not surprising, then, that when Waterhouse attended Millais's 1886 retrospective he experienced what Trippi terms an 'epiphany'. Given his 'ongoing interest in the affinity of women to water, the erotic undertones of martyrdom and alternative states of consciousness' (p. 87), Trippi asserts that *The Lady of Shalott* (1888) signifies both the beginning of Waterhouse's personal exploration of medieval narratives, and the modern construction of Waterhouse as a 'third-generation' Pre-Raphaelite. However, Trippi is careful not to overlook the divergence in style of Waterhouse's paintings from those of his Pre-Raphaelite contemporaries, and takes into account Ruskin's distinction between the 'Realistic Schools of Painting', in which Ruskin categorized Holman Hunt and Rossetti, and the 'Mythic School' that described the work of Burne-Jones. Trippi observes that Waterhouse 'synthesized these strands to attain what Ruskin called "truth" and Sketchley called "completeness"' (p. 90).<sup>1</sup>

In chapter three, 'Myth, Poetry, Nature', Trippi explores both the genesis of the 'Waterhouse girl', the idealised, 'instantly recognizable type' (p. 104) of woman arising from his academic training, and Waterhouse's focus on Keats, Greek myth, and Homer's *Odyssey* in his work during the 1890s. Trippi provides valuable readings of the paintings, in connection with the narratives from which they are derived, and considers the impact that Waterhouse's artwork had on Victorian viewers. This chapter provides detailed analyses of imagery and technique, focusing on surface qualities, the brushwork, and the layering of pigment. Providing photographs of magnified paint samples taken from *Ophelia* (1894) and the later *Lamia* (1905), Trippi highlights Waterhouse's meticulous build-up of colour on the canvas. Particularly in paintings such as *Saint Cecilia* (1895), the effects of his saturated colour and rich surface texture are linked by Trippi to the medieval-style tapestries of Morris, and Waterhouse's artwork is

shown to have become increasingly connected with the Arts & Crafts Movement during the 1890s.

While Waterhouse's opinion of women and his thoughts on the 'Woman Question' must remain ambiguous, in chapter three, and to a lesser extent in chapter four, Trippi emphasizes Waterhouse's enduring fascination with erotic, sensual women and their connection to the motifs of water, power, and transformation. Drawing from both classical themes and the Pre-Raphaelite visual tradition, Waterhouse continued to paint 'palpable', lush images of women and nature in the final stages of his career. Chapter four, 'A Single Body of Expression', is perhaps Trippi's most important contribution to Waterhouse scholarship. Locating a final transition in Waterhouse's style and imagery after 1901, Trippi discusses the final seventeen years of Waterhouse's life and career, a time that has been neglected by critics in favour of his more theatrically striking and erotic work of the 1880s and 1890s.

Trippi continues to trace the enduring influence of Burne-Jones on the work of Waterhouse, and close examination of the paintings in his later oeuvre indicates a sustained interest in occultism and the neo-pagan natural world. Focusing on the mythology behind Persephone, Psyche, and Medea, Waterhouse created a series of paintings that continued to celebrate women and sensuality. After a succession of paintings that perhaps evoke medieval French allegory, such as *The Soul of the Rose* (1908), Waterhouse eventually returned to Homer's *Odyssey*, Tennyson and Shakespeare. Trippi considers the last decade of Waterhouse's career within its social context, which coincided with the outbreak of World War I and a waning public interest in both classicism and medievalism. Waterhouse's work became increasingly unfashionable, and Trippi makes important connections between Waterhouse's later pictures and their specified market.

Trippi's epilogue reflects upon the career of J. W. Waterhouse and his ever-increasing, recent popularity. While I do not agree with his comparison of the 'Waterhouse girl' and her erotic allure with today's supermodels, his examination of Waterhouse's resonance in popular culture offers valuable insight into the impact the artwork has on modern viewers. This book is gorgeously produced, containing high-quality colour reproductions. Along with the colour plates, Trippi includes several of Waterhouse's existing thumbnail drawings and oil sketches, complemented by discussions of the artist's compositional development. Overall, this exploration of the artwork is both insightful and illuminating, and allows a deeper reading of Waterhouse's style and symbolism.

#### NOTE

- <sup>1</sup> Rose Sketchley wrote an article on Waterhouse in the *Art Annual* in 1909.

*Christine Whitney*

Gavin Stamp, *An Architect of Promise: George Gilbert Scott Junior (1839–1897) and the Late Gothic Revival* (Donnington: Shaun Tyas, 2002), 427 pp., £49.50 hbk, ISBN 19002 89512.

George Gilbert Scott Junior (1839–1897) was born the son of the most successful architect of the mid-Victorian period. He died insane and estranged from his family in 1897, in the painfully ironic surroundings of his father's Midland Grand Hotel at St. Pancras station in London. Scott's son, Giles Gilbert Scott, followed his grandfather's example and became a great architect of his day but his father, the 'middle Scott', has never achieved the same status.

Scott followed his father's profession, but in several significant ways did not follow his architecture, in practice or in theory. He did build in the Gothic style, but belonged to a group of progressive architects who favoured late medieval precedents and adopted the emerging 'Queen Anne' style for domestic buildings. Scott was the first architect to provide a refined and articulate response to the progressive element within Ritualism that favoured purely English precedents. This group sought to revive a liturgy based on English pre-Reformation models, and rejected the reliance of earlier Ritualists on post-Reformation Roman Catholicism. The sophistication of Scott's response to this group was significant, but this kind of ability is hard to appreciate now. In terms of visual impact his buildings are far less dramatic than those of mid-Victorian Goths such as G. E. Street, William Burges and William Butterfield. Added to this Scott was plagued by bad luck, which has helped to prevent historians from recognising his importance. He lost all his sketchbooks in a fire in 1870, his two greatest churches were bombed and subsequently demolished after the Second World War, and he lost his sanity and become estranged from his family. Scott was, at least, fortunate in his most famous pupil, Temple Moore, who faithfully completed several of his master's commissions. Without Moore we would have even less of Scott's work left for us today.

Gavin Stamp's book *An Architect of Promise* gives Scott the recognition he deserves. Stamp analyses Scott's work with admirable scholarship and thoroughness, a task no doubt aided by his longstanding interest in the Scott dynasty, which includes an edition of Scott Senior's *Recollections*. Part of the challenge facing the author was the small existing body of Scott's buildings. Stamp confronts this difficulty by presenting a comprehensive selection of contemporary photographs and descriptions; for example in his discussion of Scott's demolished masterpiece, St. Agnes Kennington, Stamp provides six interior views, a design and photograph of the exterior and an evocative picture of the bombed church in 1944. This visual information is supplemented with a wide range of commentary on Scott's buildings, both from contemporaries and from subsequent architectural historians, most of whom valued Scott's contribution to Victorian architecture more than we do today. Stamp's own ability to identify and reflect upon the use of historic sources is particularly impressive and lends his methodical analysis of Scott's major buildings much authority. This architectural analysis is complemented by a moving account of Scott's eventful life and fascinating comments about the direction of architecture and design in the 1870s.

Scott's role in the reaction against High Victorian Gothic is examined in some

detail. Stamp concedes that Bodley and Garner's churches of the later 1860s predate Scott's in their reaction to this style, but suggests that Scott's adoption of Perpendicular (as opposed to Bodley and Garner's late-Decorated) was historically significant. Stamp's general comments about the architecture of the 1870s and 1880s are revealing. In line with Michael Hall's recent work, Stamp sees Scott's reaction against High Victorian Gothic as more than just a stylistic change. He argues persuasively that Scott's churches do not represent a diluted version of the mid-Victorian style so much as a determined aesthetic and theoretical rejection of it. The leading practitioners of High Victorian Gothic believed that Gothic precedents could be 'developed' into an original architectural style that provided all that contemporary Victorian culture required. In contrast, 'it seemed to Scott and his contemporaries that Victorian architecture had "failed" . . .' (p. 4). The evolution of a new modern Gothic and the corresponding thirst for 'go', were abandoned in favour of the pursuit of refinement and timeless beauty. This led to a certain pessimism in Scott as he began to feel that even his favoured Perpendicular style could not be real art; Gothic had become a substitute for architectural creativity and not its source.

The fact that the type of Gothic created by Scott and Bodley is less spectacular than High Victorian Gothic has, as Stamp points out, led to a distorted historical perspective. Historians from Charles Eastlake onwards have tended to treat High Victorian Gothic as the pinnacle of nineteenth-century ecclesiastical design. This has led to the relative neglect of figures such as Scott and Bodley. While Stamp attributes this to the 'Biological Fallacy' this tendency has also been fuelled by the legacy of Nicklaus Pevsner and Modernist historians who tended to treat Victorian design as a build up to the Modern Movement. Following this logic, historians typically build a narrative that describes Victorian Gothic from Pugin's *Contrasts* to Butterfield's All Saints Margaret Street, and then pay attention to figures like Christopher Dresser and E. W. Godwin before turning to the Arts and Crafts Movement. Despite its age this attitude is still surprisingly pervasive and Stamp's alternative framework for understanding Scott contributes to a welcome change of direction.

In his move away from the High Victorian style, Scott was in tune with William Morris and, we are told, 'seems to have been close' to Morris and his circle in the early 1860s (p. 30). Morris's reaction against High Victorian Gothic is evident from the comparatively subdued palette of his stained glass and explicit in the published opinions of Warrington Taylor who, like Scott, valued the Perpendicular against the prevailing taste for geometric Decorated. When Morris & Co. were employed to work for Scott Senior, at Middleton Cheney church in Northamptonshire and at Findon church in Sussex, Stamp suggests that the choice was probably his son's. Scott also contributed designs to the firm, which unfortunately have not survived. Almost as interesting is the fact that Scott, in concert with Bodley, moved away from the Morris firm and founded a rival operation, Watts & Co., in the mid-1870s. While for a decade Bodley and to some extent Scott had been the link between the secular 'aesthetic' side of interior decoration and the world of ecclesiastical design, by the mid 1870s they moved away, a divide 'exacerbated by Morris's politics and religious scepticism'. Stamp interprets this change in direction as an attempt by two progressive architects to

assert even more control over their ecclesiastical interiors. It is as though Morris's products were too much like individual works of art and so likely to detract from the unity of the interior. This emphasis on the ecclesiastical interior surfaces again in Stamp's description of Scott's masterpiece, when he states, 'it was not the exterior but the interior of St. Agnes' [Kennington] which was most important . . .' (p. 76). This is one of the moments in this study where the author raises more questions than he answers. It is clear that the late-Victorian Goths designed very different interior spaces than the architects of the previous generation but it is unclear (and perhaps unlikely) that the interior was a higher priority. It seems likely that the dual influences of Aestheticism and Ritualism were at work, but exactly how remains to be examined. Academics normally ignore Religion when discussing Aestheticism; the work of Scott and his contemporaries offers us a chance to reassess this distortion, but this is not a theme that Stamp pursues in this book.

Scott, in contrast to his father, gained a reputation for sensitive architectural restorations. He was not committed to one style and this must have helped him to respect the value of historic buildings from different periods. In some ways his approach anticipated the campaigns of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Building. Scott, however, could not actually join SPAB because it was critical of his father. One of Scott's key achievements in this area was saving the chapel at Pembroke College Cambridge, originally designed by Sir Christopher Wren. Alfred Waterhouse had initially planned to demolish the building and even his revised plans substantially altered its character. After Waterhouse's scheme provoked protests, Scott was selected to replace him as college architect and the result was a series of sensitive alterations, which preserved most of the original fabric.

The reader is left with the impression of Scott as a careful and sometimes original architect: a Goth at heart but a broadminded practitioner who never sought originality for its own sake. It remains ambiguous how much of Scott's pessimism was a product of his own unstable mind but this is a fascinating portrait of the decades that followed the optimism and energy of mid-Victorian Gothic. Stamp's valuable study suggests that we have much to learn about the later Gothic revival and will be essential reading for those who go on to develop this field.

*Jim Cheshire*

Jeremy Burchardt, *Paradise Lost: Rural Idyll and Social Change since 1800* (London & New York: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 238pp., £29.50 hbk, 16 b&cw illustrations, ISBN 18606 45143.

Most readers of this journal would probably agree that many accounts of the countryside have often focussed unilaterally on its agricultural aspect, i.e. the countryside as a means of production, and the extent to which it has affected British society. However, as we can see in Jeremy Burchardt's lucid and informative book, there is also the 'other' countryside – the countryside of nature,

leisure, and artistic contemplation – that has significantly affected British society, and it is for this reason that the author concentrates primarily on the countryside as an object of consumption. A rural historian, Burchardt adopts an interdisciplinary approach (to which the allusion to Milton’s epic in the title might already point) and provides the reader with an insightful account of the socio-political and cultural history of attitudes to the countryside in Britain since the Industrial Revolution until the late 1990s.

Arguing that ‘the rural crisis at the beginning of the twenty-first century is comprehensible only in the light of the development over the last two-hundred of years of a powerful nexus of ideas, values, and aspirations centred on the countryside’, Burchardt carefully examines what people have thought and felt about rural England. Focusing, in each chapter, on a different group, movement, or other important phenomena relating to the countryside, Burchardt provides an Introduction and seventeen chapters on industrialisation and urbanisation, literary attitudes to the countryside, agrarian radicalism, allotments and parks, garden cities, the land reform movement after 1850, and the rise of rambling and preservation groups. Subsequently, chapters on the rural reconstruction between the wars, the countryside legislation of the first post-war Labour government, and the fraught post-war relation between agriculture and the environment feature, as well as chapters on recreation in the countryside since the Second World War, social change within villages in the twentieth century, and the relation between town, country and politics at the end of the twentieth century. Most importantly, Burchardt explores not only different attitudes towards the countryside, but also their consequences. In his chapter ‘The Economic Consequences of Rural Nostalgia’, for example, he brings together elements of economic and cultural history, and challenges the claim that ruralism was damaging to British economic growth. Although the title and subtitle of Burchardt’s book point to an overtly rural theme, ideas about towns and cities are as pertinent to his account, and those interested in representations of the city will not be disappointed. In fact, *Paradise Lost* is at the heart of the ‘town versus countryside’ debate, and it seems appropriate, therefore, that Morris receives a fair amount of attention. In his address to the Ancoat Brotherhood at Manchester in 1894 (not quoted by Burchardt), lecturing on the ‘Town and Country’, Morris noted:

Town and country are generally put in a kind of contrast, but we will see what kind of contrast there has been, is, and may be between them; how far that contrast is desirable or necessary, or whether it may not be possible in the long run to make the town a part of the country and the country a part of the towns.

However, while it is true that Morris receives attention in this work – he is mentioned in four of the seventeen chapters – Morrisians will read the references to Morris with mixed feelings.

The first reference to Morris is a fleeting one in the chapter ‘Model Villages and Garden Cities’: ‘The garden city derived from many influences, among them the political tradition of agrarian radicalism and the literary tradition descending from Wordsworth to Ruskin and William Morris’. Unfortunately, there is no mention of Morris’s importance for town-design and garden cities which Florence

Boos has recently written about.<sup>1</sup> The next references to Morris surface in the chapter on literary attitudes to the countryside in the later-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Not surprisingly, *News from Nowhere* is most prominent here. Although Morris is rightly given a firm place among writers such as William Cobbett, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Richard Jefferies, and Eden Phillpotts (whose name is reduced to Philpotts throughout), Burchardt refers to *News from Nowhere* as a vision of a 'rural future' in which 'London has been replaced by the countryside'. This seems to me a thoroughly distorted view which ignores the fact that in Morris's novel pastoral values are compatible with city life. Unlike in Jefferies' *After London*, London has not been replaced, but enriched, by nature, as Morris envisaged in his lecture on 'Town and Country': 'I want neither the towns to be appendages of the country, nor the country of the town; I want the town to be impregnated with the beauty of the country, and the country with the intelligence and vivid life of the town'. This chapter is also flawed by another inaccuracy. Talking about the regional novel, Burchardt claims that there was a 'one-to-one correspondence with real places that was to become characteristic of literary regionalism later in the nineteenth and in the early twentieth century'. While this is undoubtedly true for most regional novels, Burchardt seems to have overlooked that Hardy, one of the most important regional novelists, does not fit this claim.

A more accurate view of Morris can be found in the chapter on 'Preservationism, "Englishness", and the Rise of Planning, c.1880-1939', in which Burchardt argues that preservationism was one among a number of important currents which contributed to the construction of national identity in this period. He convincingly argues that, for both Ruskin and Morris, 'preservationism was only one part of the much broader social change they considered necessary. In looking to the past, preservationism sought not to escape from the present but to hold a mirror up to it in which its defects would become more apparent'. Yet again, this account is incomplete: although Burchardt rightly points out that Morris was involved in some preservationist societies, such as the Kyrle Society, the Selborne Society, and the SPAB, the latter is referred to as the Society for the Preservation, rather than the Protection, of Ancient Buildings. In this context, it is disappointing to realise that Morris's involvement in the Commons Preservation Society (Morris was a committee member between 1876 and 1886), one of the most important societies for the protection of the countryside (for example, the CPS helped to save the best part of Epping Forest), is not mentioned.

The last, and probably most interesting, references to Morris appear in 'The Organic Movement Before and During the Second World War', in which Burchardt analyses the commitment of organicists to rural traditions and the relationship between organicism and rural planning/preservationism. While it has been argued until quite recently that these two movements marched hand in hand, recent studies, such as David Matless's *Landscape and Englishness*, have sought to show that they were in fact opposites in many respects. Organicists tended to see the soil as a living entity rather than an inanimate mineral substance, and posited that it had to be treated with care if it was to bring forth benefits. Usually hostile to the city, organicists preferred the preservation of traditional regional identities and tended to be aligned with the political right. Planner-preservationists, on the

other hand, were not anti-urban. Associated with the political left, they had a more optimistic view of the future which they believed they could shape into a modernised nation-state. In spite of these contrasts, Burchardt emphasises the fact that there were certain links both of ideas and individuals between these two movements. Rightly acknowledging Guild Socialism as ‘one of the interwar derivatives’ of the tradition deriving from Ruskin and Morris, he argues that

Ruskin, Morris, and guild socialism all espoused what could easily be seen as an organic perspective, criticising industrialism for its regimentation and mutilation of the human personality, and seeking an alternative in the never failing restorative powers of nature. [. . .] Yet, as we have seen, the tradition from Ruskin to Morris also contributed significantly to preservationism.

The fact that Burchardt sees ideological organicism as a multi-faceted movement which could support a variety of ideological positions (including guild socialism) is an important aspect for ‘green’ political theory, since it emphasises the fact that there is no straightforward path from ecological consciousness to political commitment. However, in this chapter, as in the other sixteen, Burchardt’s arguments sometimes appear too too imprecise. Phrases like ‘great stress was placed’ (p. 132), ‘some have argued’ (p. 22), ‘many contemporaries’ (p. 41), ‘some industrialists’ (p. 61), ‘it has sometimes been maintained’ (p. 115) and many more such phrases render his arguments very general, and one would wish to see a more exact account for the sake of authenticity.

I do not wish, however, to end my review on a negative note. *Paradise Lost* is a compact, revealing, and accessible account of the history of cultural and socio-political attitudes to the countryside, and their consequences. Its strengths can be seen in the interdisciplinary approach, the clear structure, a smooth transition from one chapter to another, and the fact that Burchardt differentiates between several social variables such as class, age, and gender, for example. However, while the book analyses socio-political attitudes to the countryside pretty thoroughly, the discussion of literary representations of the countryside seems underdeveloped, and Morris’s role as a campaigner for the countryside remains largely unexplored. Given the historical breadth of Burchardt’s historical account this might be an unavoidable flaw, but it is to be hoped that a second edition will pay closer attention to Morris and will correct the minor flaws of the first.

NOTE

- <sup>1</sup> Florence Boos, ‘News from Nowhere and Garden Cities: Morris’s Utopia and 19th-Century Town Design’, *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* 7 (Fall 1998), pp. 5-27.

*Martin Delveaux*

Ruth Eaton, *Ideal Cities: Utopianism and the (Un)Built Environment* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 255 pp., £39.95 hbk, ISBN 05003 41869.

This is a beautiful book with stunning illustrations – 300 in all, 250 of which are in colour. It traces the history of images of the ideal city from the biblical New Jerusalem and Classical sources, through to the Megastructuralists and Situationists of the 1960s and '70s. It is explicitly confined to Western images. Although the end papers reproduce a glorious sixteenth-century map of Tenochtitlan and the Gulf of Mexico, this Aztec capital was substantially destroyed by European invaders. The new Mexico City was built on the existing grid pattern – a recurring feature of American city plans – but the colonisers razed the Aztec monuments and filled in the canals with the resulting rubble. Eaton takes us through fictional accounts of ideal cities from Atlantis to Bellamy's Boston; the architecture of utopian communities (though principally in fact model industrial estates such as Saltaire); the functionalist aspirations of Le Corbusier; the garden city plans of Ebenezer Howard and Frank Lloyd Wright; Bauhaus; Futurism; and the explosion of utopian imagining of the Russian avant-garde in the 1920s. Here, as elsewhere, we are treated not just to the relatively well-known juxtaposition of Malevich's Suprematism and Tatlin's Constructivism, but to tantalising less familiar material. Eaton suggests that 'the absence of any clear model in Marx's writings regarding the form the communist built environment would take obviously left plenty of room for invention'. This isn't an adequate explanation for the upsurge of extraordinary creativity in the pre-Stalin era, but the resultant contrast between urbanist (modernist) and disurbanist (linear or garden city) responses was new to me. So too was the competition, launched in 1929, for a plan for a Green City for 100,000 inhabitants outside Moscow. It is, surely, the mark of the success of a book such as this that it leaves you wanting to know more.

The historical scope of this book is wide. Its geographical range is limited by being confined to broadly Western visions, although extended by their colonial application (not only in the Americas, but, for example in Corbusier's Chandigarh). It is eclectic as to form, using literature and art as well as implemented and unimplemented overtly architectural plans. The risk in such a collection is two-fold. One is that the sheer range of material means that depth of understanding of individual cases is sacrificed; the other is that an overall coherence of argument is hard to sustain. Eaton is not completely successful on either count. Her interpretation of Morris's review of Bellamy's *Looking Backward* as 'condescending' to Bellamy, and 'cynical' about utopianism in general is contentious. This would be trivial if it did not point to a more general weakness in the treatment of utopianism. This partly concerns the apologetic tone around the utopian enterprise itself, which is throughout seen as implicitly dystopian/totalitarian, and partly concerns a related failure to embed the discussion of the spatial imaginary in a history of the social imaginary.

Contemporary scholarship over the last three decades or so has moved way from the assumption that the utopian imaginary is concerned with the production of blueprints. Rather, it is now seen as the construction of a virtual space for the exploration of (im)possibility and the education of desire. Architectural utopias

may appear to be closer to the blueprint than other forms, but Eaton does draw on literature and art as well. In her conclusion, she says that the problem with the ideal city has been the tendency to treat it as a mastery of nature, to require a *tabula rasa*, to straighten the rivers. Now it may be that rigidity and megalomania are characteristic of some of these plans. But Ebenezer Howard, for example, always said that *his* geometric designs were *diagrams* which would have, in practice, to be adapted to the topography of particular place (as in fact happened at Letchworth). Yet perfection is as often a quality imputed to utopian visions by their opponents as a claim made by utopians themselves. Louis Marin has described utopics as ‘spatial play’, but there is no sense that any of these images are presented other than in the deadliest of earnest. How, then, might one account for Lloyd Wright’s mile-high sky-scraper? Did Tatlin know that his tower was unbuildable, and did he care?

Moreover, the dystopian effects attributed to utopian excesses may equally occur without the utopian moment. Later visionaries in some cases, as Eaton demonstrates, insist on flexibility: the Futurists suggested that every generation should tear down its cities and build its own. But, as David Harvey has recently argued in *Spaces of Hope* (Edinburgh University Press, 2000), *capitalism* is a social system which, driven by profit, relentlessly tears down and rebuilds the infrastructure of cities. The question of the social determination of spatial forms and the spatial determination of social processes is crucial in a discussion of the ideal city, because utopianism is above all a holistic enterprise – a kind of speculative sociology. The intended transformation of social and economic relations, and the mediation of these through their spatial instantiation, needs to be given greater centrality if we are fully to appreciate the implications of utopian architecture. This, I think, would run against Eaton’s conclusion that utopians need to moderate their ambition and think on a more local scale. Indeed, the greatest weakness of some contemporary writing about the sustainable city is precisely that it stops short of questioning whether we can design our way out of the dystopia of global capitalism. Here, I must say, Eaton sells Morris short: for he, above all, understood that the reform of our cities was possible only on the basis of a root and branch transformation of our whole way of life.

Nevertheless, this is a lovely book. If it is more of an extended catalogue than a theoretical treatise, Eaton’s commentary is clear, readable, lucid, and informative. It provides a resource which can be used by other scholars to broaden and deepen our knowledge of the utopian imaginary, and by all of us to think about the kind of cities in which we want to live.

*Ruth Levitas*

Jennie Brunton, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Lake District: A Social History* (Lancaster: Centre for North-West Regional Studies, University of Lancaster, 2001), 163 pp., £10.95 pbk, 48 b&w illustrations, ISBN 18622 01110.

Ian Bruce, *The Loving Eye and Skilful Hand: The Keswick School of Industrial Arts* (Carlisle: Bookcase, 2001), 152 pp., £15.00 pbk, 111 b/w illustrations, no ISBN.

Whilst there have been numerous studies of the Arts and Crafts Movement in London and the Home Counties, and the settlements of Edward Carpenter at Millthorpe (near Sheffield), the Guild of Handicraft at Chipping Campden (Gloucestershire), and others in Scotland and Wales, relatively little attention has been given to the Lake District, despite John Ruskin's residence and obvious influence there. These books are therefore welcome publications. Of the ventures they describe and assess, only that of Arthur Simpson has been so well treated before, most notably by Eleanor Davidson in her 1978 book, *The Simpsons of Kendal: Craftsmen in Wood, 1885-1952*.

It was almost inevitable that, from the 1880s to the 1920s, the Lake District would host a significant part of the revival of traditional crafts which was initiated largely by Ruskin and William Morris and which became known as the Arts and Crafts Movement. In the Lake District, as in most other parts of Britain, crafts had been an important part of daily life and of local economies until the early nineteenth century, when they suffered a steep decline due to competition from factory-made wares and cheap imports. Those new goods only rarely matched the quality of what the cottage industries produced, but as yet the more discerning customers were too few to support them. The Arts and Crafts Movement was partly a deliberate reaction against industrialism and urban values, so accordingly it often involved moving to the countryside to lead 'the simple life'. At least as important as Ruskin's and Morris's ideas for the new craftspeople was the market they created for their work. The Lake District offered an abundance of natural resources, including wool, leather, copper, wood and minerals, which had traditionally been used in its crafts and could easily be so again. It also had a magnificent landscape, well known through the poetry of its native William Wordsworth who died there in 1850. His work certainly helped the growth of tourism in the Lake District, signified and greatly increased by the arrival of railways from 1847 onwards. The new craftspeople who settled there had to accommodate themselves to an annual deluge of visitors and their disruptive effects on the rural idyll which attracted them too; yet many of those holiday-makers were also customers of the crafts and so helped to maintain the makers in that location. Unlike the other provincial flowerings of the Arts and Crafts Movement, this one was distinctly Ruskinian, mainly because of the sage's residence at Brantwood by Coniston Water from 1872 until his death in 1900. The local work of Hardwicke Rawnsley, an Anglican clergyman and one of Ruskin's keenest acolytes, was also very important. But the geographically distant Morris, himself influenced by Ruskin's ideas, also played a crucial role because, as a practitioner of the crafts as well as a theorist recommending their pursuit to others, he provided a compelling example to follow. Jennie Brunton quotes David

Gerrard saying, 'where Ruskin sees his way into a moral world, Morris works his way into it; the first was in all senses a seer, the second a doer' (p. 6).

The sub-title of Brunton's book defines its approach. After an introductory chapter explaining the context of the Arts and Crafts Movement in the Lake District, she focuses on four successful ventures which epitomise the ethos and experience of the craftspeople who worked there, so we gain valuable insights into their motivation, inspiration, working methods and relationships, as well as their contribution to the social, cultural and economic life of their communities and the region. Makers such as Arthur Simpson, Stanley Davies, Albert Fleming, Marion Twelves and Annie Garnett all drew upon the ideas of Ruskin and Morris to revive traditional skills and produce wonderful items. In 1929, an article in the *Leeds Mercury* observed: 'Mr Arthur Simpson, of Kendal, does not make furniture, he fashions it, slowly, tenderly, and with loving care. He spends days, weeks, sometimes months on a single bureau or chair, but, as Mr Simpson says, that chair *will* be here long after he is gone' (p. 53). This encapsulates the true craftspeople's attitude towards work: making something worthwhile demands knowledge, skill and ample time to use them. It is an attitude clearly contradictory to that of industrial capitalism which prioritises efficiency, productivity and profits, and which calculates the cost of everything but knows the value of nothing. Annie Garnett 'abhorred the effects of industrialisation and the increasing urbanisation of the population' to the extent that she may be counted as part of the 'Back to the Land' movement (p. 132), but although she wrote of the need to have 'good honest ideas on all social questions; broad lines with plenty of margin for the individual conscience', she did not embrace Morris's call for revolutionary change, concurring instead with what Brunton neatly describes as 'Ruskin's call for a return to the old sense of social order', and herself idealising a vanished 'peasant class' and yearning for 'the old peaceful life, with its sufficiency of work and enough to live on' (ibid.). At the Spinnery which Garnett established at Bowness-on-Windermere, 'individuality and creativity . . . flourished in rural workrooms' (p. 148), but, along with this manifestation of Ruskin's rural craft ideal, his paternalist attitude was reflected in Garnett's autocratic management of the enterprise (pp. 148-49). Regular customers of the Langdale Linen Industry included Queen Alexandra, the Royal School of Needlework and Messrs Liberty, as well as Morris & Co., testifying to the superb quality of its products. As Brunton points out, it was 'essentially a revival of a regional tradition in keeping with Ruskin's teachings, which extolled the merits of rural crafts and vilified the outcomes of mass-production' (p. 57), and it is significant that promotional postcards for Langdale Linen not only depicted Elizabeth Pepper weaving at home but also bore a textual message including the statement 'Approved by Prof. Ruskin' (reproduced, p. 75). When what was otherwise known as 'Greek lace' began – at Ruskin's suggestion – to be produced in the Lake District, it was successfully marketed as 'Ruskin Lace' after he had gladly granted his permission for this brand name.

William Morris is mentioned on 13 pages of Brunton's book, Morris & Co. on a further five, and May Morris twice, which compares respectably with Ruskin's appearance on 42 pages, considering the latter's local residence and personal patronage of two of the craft ventures. Brunton accurately observes: 'While

Ruskin was intent on bringing cultural change to nineteenth century society by informing the individual's sense of moral consciousness and awareness, it was left to William Morris to develop a more radically collectivist social and political solution' (p. 4). Both of these influences were apparent in the Lakeland enterprises. Although none of them was overtly socialist, they were clearly radical ventures in their rejection of industrial, capitalist, urban and transiently modern values, embracing those of tradition, community and nature instead. Brunton tells us that Morris's practical example as a successful craftsperson inspired Annie Garnett's endeavours as a textile-maker (p. 18) and that, 'like William Morris', she 'studied the structure of earlier textiles' to arrive at her own method of production (p. 140). We are also told that Arthur Simpson treasured a passage from Morris's writings (part of a letter to Louisa Baldwin, 26th March, 1874; not sourced by Brunton) which he had 'printed in sepia with an embellished first letter' (p. 30). Brunton suggests that Simpson's demise, like that of Morris, was hastened by his heavy workload (p. 47).

Especially in its early years, Morris's ideas and example also influenced the Keswick School of Industrial Arts. Ian Bruce's book is a detailed account of the School's history from its foundation to its closure a century later. The plentiful illustrations enable us to appreciate the range and quality of work produced there through the various phases of its existence. Unfortunately, Bruce misrepresents Morris's teaching when, for instance, he asserts that Morris 'sought a return to Medieval craftsmanship' (p. 28), which underestimates how much the School implemented Morris's teaching on design, the use of materials, work and education. When, however, Bruce describes Blackwell – the impressive Arts-and-Crafts house at Bowness-on-Windermere – as 'A Morrisian interpretation of a living landscape' (p. 46), he is crediting Morris with too much, at the expense of its architect M. H. Baillie Scott.

During the winter of 1883-84, when many local families were suffering the hardship of seasonal unemployment, the socially committed Hardwicke Rawnsley and his wife Edith initiated free classes in metalwork and carpentry at the Crosthwaite parish hall. These were eagerly attended by their male parishioners who soon produced impressive work which people wanted to buy. In April 1889, as an extension of this successful enterprise, Marion Twelves began teaching local women how to spin and weave flax to make linen, as well as the craft of lace-making, in an old woollen mill at St Kentigern on the Penrith Road. In 1894 the School was established in its own purpose-built premises, thanks to financial contributors including William Holman Hunt, Walter Crane and G. F. Watts. Arthur Hughes, visiting the Lake District that year, recorded visiting 'some lovely new schools at Keswick for carving, metalwork & embroidery, etc., started by Canon Rawnsley there, which building I think would delight Wm Morris – it looks like the realisation of a chapter of the *News from Nowhere* – a beautiful simple hall and rooms above and about, with a beauty about it that seems quite its own, and to crown all placed beside the river in a lovely situation' (p. 38).

Reflecting Ruskin's principles, which had been zealously embraced by the Rawnsleys, Bruce tells us that the grounds of the School 'were to serve as a sketching ground and inspiration to the craftsmen and students, planted with flowers, trees and shrubs so that observation from nature would continue to be an

important influence on the School designs' (p. 37); and furthermore, 'Many of the works developed their design from the careful craftsmanship and the skill of the metalworker, realising Ruskin's ideal that the reward of hand-wrought goods, the dignity of labour, was achieved when the craftsman finished the work entirely' (p. 38). Before the end of 1890, the School's artisans had gained enough self-assurance to become true designer-craftspeople: 'Executing work of their own design was an important step, sufficiently innovative among the home industries movement to draw comment at subsequent Home Arts and Industries exhibitions. Over the same winter the design of furniture produced at the school [*sic*] moved towards greater simplicity, good workmanship and good taste, as wood carving gave way to the tenets of simplicity espoused by the leaders of the Arts and Crafts movement' (p. 33). These practices were still assiduously observed in the 1930s. Bruce comments, 'Ruskin, Hardwicke and Edith Rawnsley would have approved: here were craftsmen responsible for the realisation of the work from inception to finishing. Though machine production and attempts to compete against imported stainless steel products was [*sic*] eventually to force the closure of the School, for the present it had found a new material, a ready market, and a demand for skilled craftsmanship' (p. 105). Here he anticipates how this hitherto happy story will end.

During the 1950s, under its direction by the designer Arthur Guise, the School's products became very simple in form and typically lacked any decoration whatever. As Bruce justly observes, 'these goods were a long way from the individually designed and executed craftsman pieces envisioned by Rawnsley which brought satisfaction to the craftsman in executing the work', and instead 'they represented the tyranny of manual labour and the boredom of repetition' (pp. 115-17). Although, as hand-made and well-finished work, careful scrutiny showed them to be superior to factory-produced goods, these products were not sufficiently different to justify the time and toil of making them nor – crucially for the fate of the School – their much higher price to customers. Eleanor Rawnsley died in 1959. Thomas Hartley, who had arrived as a pupil when he was 13 and had become an outstanding craftsperson in wood and metal, working and teaching at the School for 57 years, retired on his seventieth birthday in 1962. These two events severed the last remaining direct links with the School's early history and ethos. In 1964, as part of its effort to compete with mass-produced imported goods, the School decided to 'sub-contract the donkey work, buy machine made blanks and finish by hand' (p. 121); for the trustees, 'hand craftsmanship rather than design remained the central issue' (*ibid.*). Their decision that their craftworkers would no longer produce items from conception, with raw material, abandoned a central tenet of the Arts and Crafts ethos. Many of the School's products henceforth were of plain uninteresting design, hardly different from cheaper factory-made items available elsewhere, and the hand-finishing of these goods was almost superfluous as well as contrived. Keswick metalwork became somewhat dishonest: 'the attempt to give a hand-finish to machined articles was a fake' (*ibid.*). It is hardly surprising that fewer people were willing to pay the large premium for such work. The trustees' answer was to mechanise most of the work done at the School, 'so that by the end of 1971 there was little that the School could not manufacture by machine and, with few exceptions, the work of the

school [*sic*] featured pressed metal and mechanical engraving' (p. 123); yet by the end of 1984 the School stopped producing work altogether.

One of Hardwicke Rawnsley's objectives had been to 'displace by hand-work the crude metal and wood ornaments that are now produced by steel dies and hydraulic presses' (p. 132). Bruce comments: 'It is ironic that after a century in which hand-craftsmanship predominated it was in its [i.e. the School's] attempt to embrace machine production with steel dies and presses that it failed' (*ibid.*). It is therefore strange that Bruce goes on to attribute this failure to the Arts and Crafts Movement's 'flawed' emphasis on hand-production which meant that the School could not satisfy 'the everyday needs of the consumer' and prevented it from competing successfully in the market (p. 134). 'Paradoxically,' he continues, 'industrial production methods made everyday goods of improved design, performance and manufacture widely available' (*ibid.*). I would contend that high-quality products remain rare and expensive, thus beyond the means of many people, and that hand-made goods are normally superior to their machine-made counterparts. In my view, the School failed because it ceased to meet the constant demand that exists for well-designed and well-executed, genuinely useful or genuinely beautiful, products. When the School lost touch with its reason for being, it also lost the means to be sustainable.

If there is a lesson to be learnt from what eventually happened in the Lake District, it could be that it is futile for designer-craftspeople to compete directly with factories. Their work must not only be of superior quality but also immediately distinctive for other reasons: the principle of a 'unique selling proposition' has to be adopted by small craft enterprises as earnestly as by transnational corporations. Regarding the demise of the Keswick School in particular, the importance of integrity, of adhering to one's principles, is illustrated well.

Apart from inconsistent use of capitalisation and a small number of grammatical errors, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Lake District* is a fluent and engaging book. Jennie Brunton has produced a scholarly yet concise and accessible study which contributes substantially to our knowledge and appreciation of this particular regional flowering. Ian Bruce's book has more pronounced deficiencies of style and presentation than does Brunton's. The sparse and frequently incorrect punctuation adversely affects clarity and ease of reading; and inconsistent capitalisation and typographical errors betray the lack of a proof-reader. I would challenge the author's use of masculine terminology throughout the text when inclusive language could easily have been adopted: most notably, 'craftspeople' or 'craft-workers' would more fairly describe the female spinners, weavers and lace-makers *and* the male wood-carvers and metal-workers than does Bruce's collective designation of 'craftsmen'. Along with his partial misunderstanding of Morris's and Ashbee's Arts-and-Crafts ideals, these are the only significant faults in a thorough, cogent and appreciative account of the Keswick School, which deserves the attention of anyone interested in the history of the Arts and Crafts Movement.

*Martin Haggerty*

Richard Mathews, *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination* (New York: Routledge, 2002), xx + 223 pp., £12.99 pbk, ISBN 04159 38902.

Two hundred and twenty-three pages to present the vast genre-bundle called Fantasy, to differentiate its various sub-genres and celebrate its major achievements, doesn't seem much. And Richard Mathews has been set, or set himself, a much harder job than that: by page 153 he's into the end-notes of his study! Then he gives us a 13-page Bibliographic Essay on reference works, historians and theorists of the genre, then an annotated list of anthologies, then a brief comment on texts about each of his five chosen fantasy writers, then a 17-page annotated list of Recommended Titles by other authors, and finally a scrupulous 24-page Index.

This is not very satisfactory, in practice. It means that the book's treatment of each of its five star authors – Morris, Tolkien, T. H. White, Robert E. Howard and Ursula K. Le Guin – is quite brief. As for the paraphernalia that follows, the Bibliographic comment is courteous and even disarmingly generous towards critics and theorists, some of whom are themselves savagely or stubbornly tendentious. However, the coverage will be of help to few: it runs out in the mid-1990s, with a cosy reference to a *Magill's Guide* 'expected this year', which actually appeared years ago.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, the anthologies are those of the 1970s and '80s, and only one Recommended Text is after 1990; information about texts, biographies and studies of the five authors is hopelessly out-of-date. This is especially grievous in the case of William Morris, since the extraordinary activity connected with his centenary year is too recent for Mathews to include. My comment here includes personal umbrage, because I contributed two editions of crucial Morris romances to The William Morris Library around that, quite distant, time!

It's clear what has happened. Mathews completed this study in about 1995, and it was published by Twayne in New York a couple of years later without being brought up to date. Now, six further years on, Routledge have re-issued it as a paperback, again without any attempt to update it to be of service to contemporary readers. The back cover describes it as 'this landmark survey', but the land has undergone major upheavals, and road-building and mapping have been radically reformed – especially where approaches to Morris and Le Guin are concerned – since this landmark was set up.

And a word of caution. Do not expect linguistic perceptiveness of this critic. He is no Morris – or a Tolkien or Le Guin – in his responsiveness to words and naming. Among his egregiously unscholarly guesses one curious theme is detectable: he asserts that Thiodolf, hero of *The House of the Wolfings*, contains the Greek word *Theo-*, god-, where in fact it is the Anglo-Saxon word *Theod-*, people-. Later he asserts that the name Ged, protagonist of Le Guin's *The Earthsea Trilogy*, is 'approximating God but for a vowel'. Both authors, and the roles of these characters in their stories, make impossible such misleading Christian misreadings. There are other slips: the often repeated 'Gramayre' for *Gramarye*, 'epigram' for epigraph, the claim that Wart 'is short for Art', and so on. So why devote valuable space in the Reviews pages of this Journal to this book? There are three answers.

First, Richard Mathews is a responsive reader of Morris, who served the Society as resident scholar at Kelmscott House in the 1970s; his approach here is essentially the same as in his Borgo Press pamphlet of 1978, *Worlds Beyond the World: The Fantastic Vision of William Morris*, but better written and far more accessible. Here he again focuses on *The Well at the World's End*, the longest of the Prose Romances and an admirable example of Morris' fantasy in everything except pace and economy.

Second, William Morris is in pride of place. Mathews' argument that 'English fantasy literature begins with William Morris' is nourishing, purposeful, and in essence true. 'In essence', because it applies only to alternative-world fiction, and not to (for example) *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Gulliver's Travels* or *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* – or even to *At the Back of the North Wind*. The achievement of William Morris is not properly understood even by some of his most enthusiastic admirers, because their reading responses are conditioned by the influence of modernist aesthetics, rather than by inventive story-telling.

Third, although Mathews' attempt to promote Robert E. Howard to the representative rank that Morris, Tolkien and Le Guin undoubtedly occupy (and White can be argued for) is a lost cause, it shows he is no literary snob, and takes seriously even the blood-boltered heroism of sword-and-sorcery. For him, the writer of romances deserves respect and, as Frank Kermode points out,

Romance shows the action of magical and moral laws in a version of human life so selective as to obscure, for the special purpose of concentrating attention on these laws, the fact that in reality their force is intermittent and only fitfully glimpsed.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the achievement of a reader like Mathews is to testify to the health of romance at a spiritual and ecological level (the more than human), at a social and familial level (the wholly and communally human), and at the level of self-discovery and self-achievement (the inwardly human).

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Frank C. Magill edited two American multi-volume guides to fantasy authors, texts and themes: *Magill's Guide to Science Fiction Literature* (1979) and *Magill's Guide to Fantasy Literature* (1983), both published by Englewood Cliffs, NJ. His amalgamation and updating of them appeared as *Magill's Guide to Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature* in 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Frank Kermode, introduction to his edition of *The Tempest* (Arden Shakespeare, 1972), p. liv.

*Norman Talbot*