Reviews


With Morris’s review of *Looking Backward* in mind, it’s difficult to approach Edward Bellamy’s writing with any great objectivity, and I was disappointed not to find a corrective for my bias here. Whilst this volume taught me that Bellamy should be regarded as an important American writer it did not convince me that his contribution either to literature or to socialist politics was enduring. And one of the main purposes of this book is to discuss the relevance of Bellamy’s work. Its other main purpose is to conduct this examination through his less popular or unpublished works. Edward Bellamy, the editors admit, has been the subject of numerous studies and scholarly works – an annotated bibliography of secondary works is included here (pp. 337-68) – yet he is remembered as a utopian writer, for *Looking Backward* and *Equality*, and a significant number of works by and about Bellamy remain unknown. By presenting this volume, the editors hope to provide a new and full assessment of his ‘significance to the new millennium’ (p. 2).

As the title of the book suggests, the editors organise Bellamy’s work into a number of categories: works of fiction, journalism and notebooks. The collection then reproduces extracts from an early biography of Bellamy and recollections by his daughter and great-grandson. The volume ends with five modern assessments. The authors do not attempt to make any links between the disparate parts of the book, nor do the final assessments draw much on any of the unpublished work to make their case. Indeed, the authors’ continued interest in *Looking Backward* seems to belie the importance of these writings. Yet the failure to reinforce the editors’ message seems hardly surprising. In his introduction Toby Widdicombe admits the stylistic weaknesses and even offensiveness of Bellamy’s literature to the modern reader: Bellamy’s dialogue was ‘stiff and artificial’ (p. 6) and his ‘suppressed eroticism’ was underpinned by an unattractive puritanical streak (pp. 10-11). Although the editors argue to the contrary, his journalism doesn’t provide much more succour.

The journalism and notebooks are, in my view, the most successful part of the volume. What Bellamy has to say here about social issues, women, the environment, love and so forth is interesting, though not very palatable even by the standards of his day. His views on women are reminiscent of Ernest Belfort Bax’s. For example, his notebooks record that his was an ‘age of petticoat domination’ (p.258), that ‘Women are the Priestesses in the Temple of Sham’, the ‘natural enemies’ of ‘the philosopher’, ‘bound up with conservative ideas’. Indeed, Bellamy appears to have been a genuine misogynist, writing that ‘a man must hate [women] when he rebels’ (p. 259). The editors do not attempt to disguise any of this but seem always to want to champion Bellamy’s view. Considering Bellamy’s
critique of marriage laws they comment that he was 'unsympathetic to the point of ridicule that women are oppressed under the law as many women's political action groups would have the public believe' (p. 164). Still more alarmingly, they also endorse Bellamy's concept of 'race improvement by genetic mating'. Nazism and 'the European holocaust', the editors note, made such an idea an anathema, yet 'with the advent of genetic engineering' they conclude that 'it is becoming feasible to correct genetic defects in newborns leading to improved genetic stock for future progeny' (p. 165). Such a view is, of course, highly contentious – even more so since Bellamy seems to have considered the 'insane, fatuous, deaf, dumb and blind' as 'feeble and unsound persons' who should be encouraged to 'regard celibacy as a duty' and not leave descendants (pp. 182-83). But the editors' rendering of it appears particularly offensive because of their apparent ignorance of the ethical issues involved and their unquestioning acceptance of Bellamy's assumptions.

Widdicombe and Preiser share Bellamy's concern with inequality and the effects of the untrammelled development of the market system, which, in a very revealing foreword, Preiser ties to the events of 9/11. Their interests in this sense are deeply humane. Yet in their drive to show how relevant Bellamy is to the modern world they fail to provide a proper assessment of his work and they undermine their own case by adopting such an uncritical approach to his ideas.

Ruth Kinna

Elizabeth Crawford wonders ‘if the days were not longer in the 19th century’, and it is not difficult to see why in this impressively researched exposition of the achievements of the Garrett sisters and their friends and associates. Enterprising Women explores the social, cultural and political opportunities exploited by these women in the second half of the nineteenth century, a period in which the role of the accomplished male ‘professional’ achieved new prominence in a developing meritocracy, but in which the position of the middle-class woman was, Crawford notes, ‘particularly amorphous’.

The book focuses primarily on the careers of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, her sisters Agnes Garrett and Millicent Garrett Fawcett, their cousin Rhoda Garrett, Elizabeth’s friend Emily Davies, and a later member of their circle, Fanny Wilkinson. In charting the careers of these women, Crawford emphasises the pioneering nature of their work in ‘facilitating women’s social advancement along the paths carved out by men’. She also stresses the importance of the network of friends and associates they developed in assisting them to overcome the prejudices and assumptions which conspired to thwart their progress in their chosen fields of work. ‘Fellowship is life’, says Morris’s John Ball, and fellowship was certainly crucial to the success of these women as they confronted an establishment whose intransigence was at times breathtaking.
Crawford’s scholarship is admirable and Enterprising Women offers increasingly compelling reading. The first chapter is rather dense with biographical material relating primarily to the Garrett family of Aldeburgh, part of the ascendant middle-class whose roots were in trade. More interestingly, it describes Elizabeth Garrett’s introduction to the women who founded The English Woman’s Journal and the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women—a group which included Barbara Bodichon, Bessie Rayner Parkes and Jessie Boucherett. Crawford structures subsequent chapters thematically, identifying the contributions made by the female members of the Garrett circle to the fields of medicine, education, interior design, horticulture and women’s suffrage. She concludes by viewing the achievements of these women within their wider cultural context, providing a useful account of the developments in nineteenth-century journalism that enabled them to promote their ideas and activities to an increasingly wide audience.

Elizabeth Garrett—later Garrett Anderson—is a unifying presence throughout the book, a reflection of both the range of her activities and the extent of her influence within this circle of ambitious women and beyond. The energy and determination with which she pursued her desire to become a doctor resonates through the second chapter. Crawford charts her progress from the medical student who had to scour the country to find suitable tuition, to the confident and impeccably professional doctor who founded the New Hospital for Women and helped to establish the London School of Medicine for Women. Faced with obstructions that were based as much on economic interests as ideological dogma, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson succeeded in establishing an extensive and renowned medical practice which assisted numerous other aspiring female doctors to develop their own clinical skills.

The chapters on Education and Citizenship are fascinating as much for their revelation of the divisions within the ‘women’s movement’ as for the perseverance and determination of individuals such as Emily Davies and Millicent Garrett Fawcett. Crawford reveals how Emily Davies differed significantly in her beliefs and aspirations in founding Girton College, Cambridge, from those who established Newnham College—although both colleges were united in their pursuit of a full university education for women. Similarly, the splits Crawford illuminates in the developing women’s suffrage movement are as important as they are surprising. It is easy in the twenty-first century to interpret such movements as presenting a united front against a common enemy. Instead, the description of the gradualist versus revolutionary factions that pursued the vote for women will raise a rueful smile for those familiar with Morris’s socialist career.

Morris receives a brief mention on several occasions in the chapter on ‘The Home’, though never very satisfactorily. In exploring the social and political motivations underlying Rhoda and Agnes Garrett’s successful interior decoration firm, Crawford claims, ‘As William Morris was the decorator of socialism, so the firm of R & A Garrett was to be that of liberalism’. I remain baffled as to what a ‘decorator of socialism’ might be. But although direct references to Morris are generally vague and unhelpful, the innovation and creativity of the Garrett cousins in developing a concept of the home as both useful and beautiful space does offer interesting parallels with the work of Morris and Co. Furthermore, Rhoda Garrett
sat on the General Committee of the SPAB, and must therefore have had some direct contact with Morris; although no account is given in this book of their ‘sharing notes’, it is interesting to speculate on possible discussions.

Fanny Wilkinson has left the most visual legacy of the Garrett circle in her work for the Kyre Society and the Metropolitan Public Gardens Association. As the first professional female landscape gardener in England and, later, the first female Principal of Swanley Horticultural College, she transformed traditional notions of the relationship between women and the land. ‘Domestic gardening had long been considered a womanly pursuit’, says Crawford, ‘running a business involving design, hard landscaping, dealing with suppliers, supervising the work of male gardeners, and keeping abreast with the accounts was not.’ In an interview Fanny Wilkinson gave in 1890, the interviewer described her as ‘extremely nice looking’ with ‘a bright sunny face, which though a little tanned by exposure to the open air, has the fresh appearance of both good health and contentment’. It is a description we might readily associate with Morris’s Ellen in News from Nowhere, ‘light-haired and grey-eyed, but with her face and hands and bare feet tanned quite brown with the sun’, herself a lover of the outdoor life, ‘the earth, and the seasons, and weather, and all things that deal with it, and all that grows out of it’.

It is difficult in the space of a brief review to do justice to the scope and implications of Enterprising Women. One of its main strengths is its exposition of the vital inter-relations between the different movements dedicated to the advancement of intelligent, talented and determined women in the second half of the nineteenth century. It can appear clichéd in our century to talk of commitment, perseverance, and single-mindedness, and Crawford admits that ‘The work ethic is not an obvious basis for popular biography in the 21st century’. But whilst it is easy to scoff at the optimistic and motivational nature of the type of exhortations we associate with Samuel Smiles’s Self Help, Enterprising Women emphasises the importance of such personal application and confidence for the women who established themselves as the prominent female professionals of this period and who facilitated the progress of those who followed. For, as Crawford emphasises, ‘At a time when society had become more uncertain as to where women, particularly unmarried women, were to be located in the social structure women with determination and self-belief were able to make of themselves what they wished’.

Pippa Bennett
Mary Greensted and Sophia Wilson, eds., *Originality and Initiative: The Arts and Crafts Archives at Cheltenham* (Llwd Humphreys, 2003), 160 pp., £25.00 pbk, 54 colour and 142 b&­w illustrations, ISBN 08533 18735.


It is a pleasure to welcome and recommend these well produced books, evidence of continuing high standards in at least parts of the publishing industry.

*Originality and Initiative* follows the two previous books deriving from the Arts and Crafts collection at the Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum, and is focussed on the extensive archive of printed material at the Gallery. All of the the five excellently illustrated chapters are by experts in their fields. Mary Greensted provides the first three, ‘Emery Walker: printer, artist and “universal Samaritan”’; ‘William and May Morris: images of Kelmscott’, and ‘Ernest Gimson: the development of an Arts and Crafts architect-designer’. Then we have ‘Sydney Barnsley: a quintessential Arts and Crafts architect and craftsman’ by Mike McGrath, and ‘Paul Woodroffe, stained-glass artist’ by Peter Cormack. Not surprisingly, Morris is a pervasive presence throughout; indeed, it is suggested that his renting of Kelmscott Manor in 1871 was central in making the Cotswolds appealing to Arts and Crafts practitioners.

In the third chapter, Greensted gives a full account of the young Charles Gere’s commissioned work for *News from Nowhere*, illustrated by Gere’s pencil drawing of the Manor from the garden gate, and the ink drawing from it which provided the basis for the well known frontispiece to the book, as well as a fine pencil drawing of the Manor from the garden side, which Morris considered the wrong shape for the frontispiece, and an unfinished sketch of ‘Sheep Washing, Kelmscott’ (with Morris and a party in the distance). Greensted notes that Gere remained in touch with the family after Morris’s death, and painted three versions of a portrait of Jane in 1900, one of which is reproduced here. Greensted goes on to record May’s involvement with Kelmscott and her commissioning of two cottages in the village from Ernest Gimson in memory of her mother, who died in 1914 having recently bought the Manor. May became the first president of the Kelmscott Women’s Institute in 1916, and wrote enthusiastically in a local newspaper about the women landworkers of the time, of whom thirty were employed at Mr Hobbs’ farm in Kelmscott; she saw them as epitomising the consciousness that ‘THEY ARE DOING SERVICE FOR THE COMMONWEAL’. A fine double-page spread of four images shows the women May was referring to. Jane had originally wanted to build a village hall in Kelmscott in memory of her husband, but had been discouraged by Mr Hobbs. May returned to the idea in around 1914 and commissioned Gimson to design it. Gimson’s design is reproduced here, though the building was much delayed, being completed by Norman Jewson in time for the 1934 Morris centenary. Greensted ends her chapter with the delightful quotation of a note left by Morris for walker who was about to visit the Manor: ‘Look under the mat and you will find the house-key. Enter and be happy’.

The final section of the book consists of a Catalogue of the Arts and Crafts archival material at Cheltenham, which includes work by nearly all the major
figures in the Arts and Crafts movement, especially as they were associated with the Cotswolds: Gimson, the Barnsleys, Waals, Jewson, Ashbee, Griggs and others. As Wilson informs us, the Gallery houses two major collections of books, the Emery Walker Library, acquired in 1990, and the Max Burrough Collection, bequeathed in 1986. We are reminded that Walker leased Daneway House near Sapperton from 1922, and that his ashes were moved from London to Sapperton to lie alongside the graves of the Barnsleys and Jewson. His library amounted to over 1000 volumes. The catalogue given here covers only the 201 volumes ‘personalised by’ – wouldn’t ‘with inscriptions by’ be more elegant? – Walker, Morris or Webb. We begin unexpectedly with Judith Lytton’s Love in a Mist, from the Arden Press in 1913, and end with C Heath Wilkinson’s 1874 book on Michelangelo, left to Walker by Webb. In between there are many more obvious books, with a wide range from the Kelmscott Press and some of Morris’s works from other publisher’s. A particularly attractive page, reproduced in colour, is from the 1870 Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs, and was decorated specially by Morris for Webb. In his Foreword, George Breeze remarks that he is proud to have been at the Cheltenham Gallery while the three catalogues of its Arts and Crafts collection were produced; he has every right to be proud of this achievement. This is a book to be savoured by all of us interested in the ‘originality and initiative’ so remarkably displayed in the work that it commemorates.

Eric Gill in Ditchling, edited by Peter Holliday, has four main contributions within its 82 pages, which again include a large number of relevant illustrations. Gill moved to Ditchling in 1907, staying and working there until 1924, and his work is central to the Ditchling Museum, established in 1985 by Hilary Bourne and Holliday. In the first essay, Holliday writes about Gill’s photograph album in which he recorded his visit to Rome in 1906, arguing persuasively that the ‘images he made with his Kodak box camera of the lettering he so admired from past era’s in Rome are the trace of a guiding force in his life-long journey across the varied frontiers of letter design’. The illustrations – which include some of the 1906 photographs (necessarily blurry) and of some of the type designs, including Perpetua and Joanna (wonderfully clear) – strongly back up the argument. There is also a striking silhouette photograph of Gill himself from the album, hitherto unpublished and used as the book’s concluding image. In the second essay, Timothy J. McCann discusses Gill’s inscriptional work in Ditchling, of which he left a good deal. It consists of memorial inscriptions in the church and churchyard, private inscriptions in houses and gardens, and a few miscellaneous pieces of lettering. The illustrations include Gill’s sign for Ethel Mairet’s workshops in Ditchling and his garden roller inscriptions; his stone pedestal for a bronze sundial commemorating the coronation of George V in 1911 with inscriptions on all four sides; and his war memorial, with the names of twenty men. It concludes with an inscription, probably cut by one of his pupils, reading (in capitals): ‘Bad workmen quarrel with their tools because good workmen do not use bad tools’.

In the third essay, Jill Lingen-Watson discusses the pieces of Gill work that she and her husband Arnold discovered when they came to live at Gill’s former home on Ditchling Common in the 1950s. These included a five-foot wooden standard with seven arms, evidently a processional cross, which was found to have been
carried by Gill in his cassock through the village on saints’ days; a fine carved stone head of a young girl – identified by Joseph Cribb as Gill’s daughter Petra (of which two photographs by Holliday are included); a coloured stone plaque of St Thomas Aquinas; and a large wooden letter-box, with Gill’s inscription. Most of these items were generously donated by the Lingen-Watsons to the Ditchling Museum. The final essay, by Holliday, concerns a panel by Gill on Hoptonwood stone known as the ‘Gladys Panel’, which has remained in the extension to a house in Ditchling, formerly the studio of the artist Amy Sawyer. Gill and Sawyer were friends in the years 1911-13, and the panel was given to Sawyer for Christmas in 1913. It is an outline figure of a seated girl holding her left ankle, modelled by Gill’s younger sister Gladys. In view of Gill’s reputation, it comes as a relief that Holliday can assure that there is ‘no sign that Gill was amorous of Amy Sawyer, or, indeed, that he ever fell out with her. In fact, Ethel Mary Gill also shared their friendship’. Sawyer seems to have been a remarkable person, who wrote 24 Sussex Plays, put on from 1920 by her own troupe, the Ditchling Village Players – one wonders if she contributed in some way to Virginia Woolf’s Miss La Trobe in Between the Acts. The book as a whole reminds one of Gill’s contribution to the Arts and Crafts and makes one want to visit the Ditchling Museum. Its production is a credit to the typographical skills of Peter Holliday, who designed the volume, and of the Oak Knoll Press, which has published it in this attractive form – though the Gill self-portrait of 1908 on the dust-jacket suggests to me that he then had some way to go to become a wood-engraver.

Peter Faulkner

In her Preface, Jane Cooper tells us that her intention in writing the book was ‘to produce a straightforward, traditional biography, using all the unpublished sources I could identify, personal as well as manuscript’. In this modestly stated but demanding aim she has been highly successful. This is a very full account of the life and work of a remarkable, though by no means showy or eccentric, woman. As Cooper puts it in a reference to Mrs Molesworth’s objection to the term ‘authoress’ – ‘As well say groomess or paintress’ – ‘I am not saying that Louisa is an early feminist – she appeared to live for the most part easily within the conventions of her time’. Nevertheless she did separate from her husband, and she did succeed in earning a living as a professional writer. Indeed, one of the thorough index’s fuller sections is devoted to ‘Business methods’: her reason for ceasing to contribute to Charlotte Yonge’s high-minded and High Church *Monthly Packet*, it is suggested, was simply the poor rate of payment. But as far as politics is concerned, it may be noted that there is no index entry for Socialism.

As to her reputation, it was possible in 1887 for the critic of children’s
literature Edward Salmon to declare, in an article called ‘Literature for Little Ones’, that Mrs Molesworth was ‘the best story-teller for children England has yet known’. Something of her success is suggested by the list of her publications that Cooper provides, which shows her as having written nearly 80 children’s books, together with ten adult novels and books of short stories, and a further 17 teenage novels and stories. Now, however, however, little survives. Possibly Carrots, of 1876, more probably The Cuckoo Clock, of 1887, a Puffin classic in 1988 republished in 2002 by Jane Nissen Books. Has history been too unkind to Mrs Molesworth? It would seem so, if we accept Cooper’s view that her books ‘present children with great sympathy and insight, showing both a deep understanding of childish problems and sorrows, and a lively appreciation of fun and mischief . . . Her real-life child novels in particular broke new ground in the 1870s’. High claims are not, however, made here for the adult fiction.

Mrs Molesworth’s world overlapped very little with that of Morris. The one friend they had in common was Swinburne, who was a great admirer of her children’s stories. In the Nineteenth Century in October 1884 he wrote of her ‘bright and sweet invention’, concluding with characteristic hyperbole that ‘Any chapter of The Cuckoo Clock or the enchanting Adventures of Herr Baby is worth a shoal of the very best novels dealing with the characters and fortunes of mere adults’. The last phrase reminds us of Swinburne’s curious – and nowadays problematic – enthusiasm for babies and young children, but the friendship he developed with Mrs Molesworth was genuine and lasting. The other name from the Morris circle that connects to her is that of Walter Crane. She was introduced to Crane by G. L. Craik of Macmillan, her publishers, and the two families became friends. More professionally, Crane became the illustrator of her work for Macmillan, and she appreciated what she termed ‘his extreme care and thoughtfulness’ in reading the books that he was to illustrate. Crane was of course one of the leading illustrators of children’s books at the time, and the two scenes from Tell Me A Story reproduced here show his ability for such work – though the second, showing ‘Wee Janet’ lending her doll to a gypsy girl with scarlet fever’ is the kind of subject that will strike a reader today as very much of its time.

It is impossible to predict whether the qualities that Cooper attributes to Mrs Molesworth’s writings will enable them to reinstate themselves in children’s reading in the future. The stories seem to be some way from Harry Potter. But certainly Cooper’s scholarship and good sense have laid a firm foundation for further study.

Peter Faulkner