

## The Pre-Raphaelites

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Christina and Dante Rossetti, William Morris, and his friend Edward Burne-Jones were well represented in this year's offerings.

### The Rossettis

In *Christina Rossetti: A Descriptive Bibliography* (Oak Knoll Press), Martha Ives has prepared a remarkably broad palette of information about Rossetti's revisions, adaptations, and publication history. In accordance with bibliographic principles set forth by Fredson Bowers and G. Thomas Tanselle in *Principles of Bibliographical Description*, Ives offers a list of musical settings of Rossetti's works; a catalogue of her poems and articles; a partial bibliography of later editions and reproductions; an overview of her efforts to cooperate with publishers; a bibliography of her translations and printed ephemera; and a study of her many afterthoughts and revisions in the margins of her published works. The result of this work is a trove which students of Rossetti will explore for years to come.

In "Laura's Laurels: Christina Rossetti's 'Monna Innominata' 1 and 8 and Petrarch's *Rime sparse* 85 and 1" (VP 49, no. 4), Mary Moore sets aside Rossetti's indebtedness to Dante to consider the ways in which she reversed Petrarchan tropes and prototypes. In careful analyses of the opening sonnet and sonnet eight, in which Esther's seduction of King Ahasuerus inspires the poet's desire "to take my life so into my hand," Moore suggests that the prevalence of aural imagery in Rossetti's sequence reflected a view of the "field of vision" as an "arena of female objectification" (p. 505), and that her use of elision, replacement, and appropriation confronted "the ideology of gender implicit in Petrarch's poems."

In "Home one and all": Redeeming the Whore of Babylon in Christina Rossetti's Religious Poetry" (VP 49, no. 1), Stephanie Johnson argues persuasively that Rossetti's assertion in "The Holy City, New Jerusalem" that God will bring both "strangers. . . [h]ome . . . one and all," as well as her use of imagery applied to the "Whore of Babylon" in Revelations to describe the consort of Christ in "She Shall Be Brought Unto the King" (1898), were expressions of her evolving conviction that all may be redeemed.

In "Dante Gabriel Rossetti's 'Inner Standing-Point' and 'Jenny' Reconstrued" (*Univ. of Toronto Quarterly* 80, no. 3), D. M. R. Bentley argues that Rossetti's use of the "inner standing point" of a "young and thoughtful man of the world" who visits the room of a prostitute "invites the reader of the poem . . . to enter into rather than merely observe the situation . . . and . . .

participate in [its] perspectives and emotions"; and that the responses in the poem's conclusion—in which the speaker leaves coins in Jenny's hair and departs on a "dark path I can strive to clear"—are "far more complex, intricate, nuanced, and engaged than they were when he began the poem, and surely this was also Rossetti's hope for the poem's readers" (p. 713). Bentley's analysis of Rossetti's intentions is persuasive, but it does not respond to the familiar feminist criticism that Jenny herself—unlike the speaker in Augusta Webster's contemporary "A Castaway"—remains mute throughout the poem.

In "A Very Clear and Finished Piece of Writing': William Michael Rossetti's 'Mrs. Holmes Grey'" (*Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* 20, N.S., Spring), Bentley reexamines William Rossetti's 840-line dramatic monologue, originally drafted for the short-lived *Germ* in 1850 and finally published in *The Broadway* in 1868. Bentley makes a persuasive case that this neglected work of Rossetti's youth was a pioneering effort to bring a realistic tale of middle-class grief and jealousy into the range of poetic expression, and that the poem has an impartially "reportorial and forensic quality which . . . connects it to Pre-Raphaelitism and [gives it] an almost modernist coolness and impersonality" (p. 20).

In "Visible Sound and Auditory Scenes: Word, Image, and Music in Tennyson, D. G. Rossetti, and Morris" (*Media, Technology, and Literature in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Colette Colligan and Margaret Linley [Ashgate]), Linda K. Hughes canvasses mid-Victorian views of music, which ranged from Ruskin's insistence that music be subordinate to language, to Pater's concern that its complementary "resonances" be valued and retained. She also adduces two telling contrasts. In the first, in Tennyson's "The Palace of Art," St. Cecilia is represented as dormant and her instrument silent, and "the only rhythms and musicality given play in [Tennyson's] poem are those of the poet himself." In D. G. Rossetti's illustration of the scene, by contrast, an angel who resembles St. George kisses Cecilia as she plays the organ, in a visual (and in that sense independent) suggestion that "music trumps poetry." In the second pairing, Hughes observes that Rossetti's watercolor of "The Blue Closet" "seems posed as an intensely self-conscious work about art," even as its visual and tonal harmonies "suggest the complementarity of artistic media." By contrast, in his poem with the same title Morris strove to make sound and rhythm central features of his work and "to draw together painting, music, and poetry despite their competing claims of iconicity, sound, and language." In her conclusion, Hughes argues that Tennyson, Rossetti, and Morris all seek to preserve the boundaries between the arts, although Morris' and Rossetti's paired works pay more direct tribute to music's role in aestheticism.

## Morris and His Circle

*The Kelmscott Chaucer: A Census* by William S. Peterson and Sylvia Holton Peterson (280 pp.; Oak Knoll Press) is a major study of the history and provenance of the 1896 Kelmscott Press *Chaucer*, the most ambitious and original bookmaking effort of the nineteenth century. The *Chaucer's* font, initials, and borders were personally designed by Morris, its eighty-seven wood-engravings created by Edward Burne-Jones, and its ink, paper, and vellum were crafted by the Press's artisans to the highest specifications. In separate chapters devoted to vellum copies, paper copies, and unlocated copies, the Petersons have located and described as many of the work's thirteen vellum and four hundred twenty-five paper copies as they could physically find, and they have chronicled the extensive history of their wanderings and ultimate fates.

They have also conveyed aptly the unfinished and open-ended nature of their project and graced the volume with illustrated lives of many of the volume's purchasers, among them oft-mentioned but elusive figures such as Bernard Quaritch and Frederick Ellis. For them, "provenance has proven to be not a dull, technical term but a window into the fascinating human stories that lie behind nearly every copy of the *Chaucer*." This beautifully designed and produced volume is a pioneering effort and labor of love, and admirers of the Press's work will not find a better resource for their further studies.

Fiona MacCarthy's 629-page *The Last Pre-Raphaelite: Edward Burne-Jones and the Victorian Imagination* (Harvard, 2012) subsumes a myriad of dramatic details into a sweeping narrative of Burne-Jones's artistic, marital, and emotional life, and the social and artistic networks in which he lived. MacCarthy has made a sustained attempt to research Burne-Jones's early life and education; his expeditions to Italy in search of new models for his art; the extent to which the patronage of D. G. Rossetti, John Ruskin, and Ford Madox Brown aided him in his early work; and his growing appetite in later life for the cultivation and society of wealthy patrons and well-placed friends. The volume's extensive index helps readers access the work's many references to other artists, events, and personages of the time.

MacCarthy also acquaints her readers with the quirky extravagance and intermittent eloquence of Burne-Jones's letters, scattered in a bewildering maze of public and private collections. These reveal that he "lov[e]d mosaics better than anything else in the world," for example; sincerely mourned the loss of the family cat ("the beautiful hair oriental beauty [sic] that moaned, gasped and gave birth," p. 381), execrated the neo-classical monumentality of St. Paul's ("let it chill the soul of man and gently prepare him for the next glacial cataclysm," p. 359); and thought that "the best in me has been love and it brought me the most sorrow" (p. xxiv).

It also brought sorrow to others. Burne-Jones was a serial pursuer of women as well as a gifted and charming conversationalist. MacCarthy documents

his extended and extensively documented affair with Maria Zambaco, whom he pursued to Paris and perhaps Italy, as well as a series of ambiguously platonic liaisons with young, handsome, intelligent, and initially unmarried women, among them May Gaskell, Violet Maxse, and Frances Graham Horner. In MacCarthy's gentle formulation, Georgiana Burne Jones was constrained to "put up for years with her husband scribbling those discursive, entreating, intimate illustrated letters to his adored women in another room" (p. xxii).

One of the biography's major merits, in fact, is MacCarthy's attention to Georgiana Burne-Jones, a thoughtful and accomplished woman who dutifully focused her *Memorials* almost entirely on her husband. MacCarthy offers the most extensive account we are likely to have of Georgiana's upbringing, her early artistic and musical endeavors, her reactions to her husband's deceptions and infidelities, her central role in the management of his affairs, and her socialist convictions and active engagement in feminist endeavors until her death in 1920.

MacCarthy also explores in considerable depth Burne-Jones's friendship with Morris, as one would expect of the author of *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, and she throws the contrasts between the two friends' choices and convictions into critical relief. She accepts Burne-Jones's claims to be a "radical" and "bitter Republican" but makes clear that these views failed to temper his dislike of feminism and contempt for socialism, moderate his gratitude for the company of aristocratic friends, or even prevent his acceptance of a baronetcy at the ascendance of his career. He did share Georgiana's contempt for "liberal" imperialism, however, not to be taken for granted in an extended family which included Rudyard Kipling and Alfred and Louisa Baldwin.

MacCarthy's summary evaluation of the two friends is that Burne Jones "was the greater artist, though Morris was unarguably the greater man" (p. xxii), a comparison which elides (or at least diminishes) Morris' personal ideal of the "lesser" arts; widely held views that poetry is a "high" art; Morris' role in the foundation of the nascent Arts and Crafts movement; and his creation of the most influential fine-arts press of his time.

Biography too may be an example of Morris' "lesser" arts. MacCarthy's elegiacally entitled *The Last Pre-Raphaelite* is more than a study of a craftsman of uncommon painterly grace. It is a memorial of the sensibilities and contradictions of an entire generation of ardent young men (and women) who sought to formulate new ideals and challenged the verities of their often philistine "betters."

In "Trebled Beauty: William Morris's Terza Rima" (*Victorian Studies* 53, no. 3), Naomi Levine argues that the formal qualities of Morris' most famous poem subtly heightened the intensity of its content. Mindful of historical associations of *terza rima* with erotic subjects, Levine argues effectively that Morris' triplets reflected *The Defence's* asymmetries as well as its

ethical ambiguities; that his periodic enjambments of rhymes across stanzas maintained and enhanced its balance and fluidity; and that the cadences and syncopations of his poem heightened readers' responses to Guenevere's powerful but ambivalent "defence."

In "William Morris' 'Golden Wings' as a Poetic Response to the 'Delicate Sentiment' of Tennyson's 'Mariana'" (VP 49, no. 3), Benjamin Saltzman interprets Morris' 1859 poem as a contrastive foil to Tennyson's "Mariana." Unlike Tennyson's passive heroine, he argues, Morris' Jehane kills her lover as well as herself, and therefore does not "remain . . . patiently submissive to her male counterpart, but . . . proactively and dangerously seeks him out—even at the expense of the . . . happiness of the community at large." As I read "Golden Wings," Jehane interprets her lover's absence in wartime as evidence that he has been killed; she commits suicide in the hope that she will join him in the afterlife; and the poem's final image of a stiffening corpse in a "rotting leaky boat" is not evidence that she has committed a murder, but confirmation of her assessment of her lover's likely death and the wider horrors of war. Nonetheless Saltzman's interpretation offers new evidence of the wide range of readings which the lyrics of Morris' *Defence of Guenevere* may bear.

In "Redesigning the Language of Social Change: Rhetoric, Agency, and the Oneiric in William Morris's *A Dream of John Ball*" (*Victorian Studies* 53, no. 1 [2010]), Michelle Weinroth construes Morris' political parable as a subtle corrective to "masculinist" illusions of victorious revolution embedded in the doctrines of contemporary socialism. She also observes that Morris' revenant and his "hedge-priest" hero John Ball share a common commitment to "the democratic tactics and ethics of a future commonweal" which would transcend the internal conflicts and tensions of the present (p. 53), and sees his Kelmscott Press edition of *John Ball* of 1892 as an attempt to save "the seeming monetary and temporal luxuries of art . . . from the narrow epistemologies and 'administered' time of capitalist modernity" (p. 60).

In "The Living Past of William Morris's Late Romances" (*Journal of William Morris Studies* 19, no. 2), Gabriel Schenk interprets Morris' last five romances as expressions of his conviction that "the past is not dead, but is living in us, and will be alive in the future." Rejecting a false and static past of "frozen time" in these works, Morris' characters inhabit a past which is young, alive, and subject to error, and his tales (re)enact forms of "creative repetition" which embody a "romantic" "capacity for a true conception of history, a power for making the past part of the present" (p. 29).

In "Sustainable Socialism: William Morris on Waste" (*Journal of Modern Craft* 4, no. 1), Elizabeth Miller argues that Morris considered avoidance of "waste" in all its senses a significant aspect of utopian life, and she interprets his essays, *News from Nowhere*, and his work for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings as sustained attempts to reject "the neophilia,

disposability, and planned obsolescence of capitalist production." Miller's article is a response to critics of the rarity and cost of Kelmscott Press books, but her arguments apply with equal force to other artifacts of Morris' literary and decorative artwork.

In "William Morris' 'Equality': A Critical Edition," (*Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies* 20, N.S., Spring), I provide an annotated edition of a political essay left unpublished at Morris' death. In it Morris interprets oppressive employers as avatars of autocratic deities, warns that limited education might make revolutions "confused and full of suffering," and expresses his bitter but considered view that "the ordinary labourer [in capitalist Britain] is in a worse position than a savage living in a good climate." Finally, Morris observes that among the crowd who attended the funeral of Alfred Linnell (a victim of the police riot on "Bloody Sunday" in November of 1887) "were . . . many and many who might not perhaps have been made into great men, but who certainly might have been made into happy and useful ones; and I tell you plainly that we are criminals because they have not been so made, and if the consequences of our crime overtakes us, who shall pity us[?]"

In "Green Cosmopolitanism in Morris's *News from Nowhere*" (*Journal of William Morris Studies* 19, no. 3), Eddy Kent considers ways in which Morris' vision of the future imagined a secular-millenarian society in which nations would form "one great community," and humans would embrace "the only ethical response: a subsumption of politics into the natural world; a green cosmopolitanism" (p. 66). Contrasting Morris' utopia with the dystopian collective of Walter Besant's *The Inner House* (1888), in which coopted workers devote themselves to mindless consumption, Kent argues that the revolutionaries in Morris' utopia would be active caretakers of Ellen's "earth and everything in it" and practice a "green cosmopolitanism . . . predicated on each part feeling conscious of its relations to the whole." "Reach this," Kent suggests in emulation of Morris, "and politics as we know it . . . will vanish" (p. 76).

In "A Darker Shade of Green: William Morris, Richard Jeffries, and Posthumanist Ecologies" (*Journal of William Morris Studies* 19, no. 3), Jed Mayer envisions a "posthumanist" rejection of human exceptionalism and its infatuation with technological "progress." He recalls Morris' critical interest in Richard Jeffries's *After London* (1885) and its "ecogothic" account of a world in which humans defer to the "wild[ness]" of nature, and argues that whereas Jeffries viewed the vast ecological shifts he presented with "grim detachment," Morris imagined a future in which humans live "in accordance with the nonhuman" (p. 83) and understand that "brightness and beauty are inextricably tied to corruption and decay" (p. 89).

In "¡Homenaje a Aragón! *News from Nowhere*, Collectivism and the Sustainable Future" (*Journal of William Morris Studies* 19, no. 3), Patrick O'Sullivan offers a heartfelt homage to peasant-led "Nowherean" communities in Aragon