

amply piles up valuable details about London's numerous newspapers or of the implications called up by "morbidity," a favorite designation in periodical columns, on to more centralized analyses of Wilde, Shaw, and Henry James, the author never flags in gracefulness nor in the setting forth of illuminating information. London's music halls, with their impact on literary and visual arts (the names of Symons and Beardsley, as well as motifs of the dance, immediately come to mind), legacies from Pre-Raphaelitism, New Woman questions, John Lane's Keynotes series, political issues, social reforms, masking, death-orientation and suicide (with brief, but telling, comments on Crackanthorpe), religious matters: all are fitted deftly into the greater mosaic of "the 1890s." Reminding one of Holbrook Jackson's work, Stokes's book is another "must" for students of the period. Mark Samuels Lasner expands our knowledge of authorship in "'Where There's a Will There's a Way': Identifying the Authors of the Biographical Notices in William Rothenstein's *English Portraits* (1897-8)" (*N&Q* 235:428-432). Lasner's identifications were made possible by recent editions of letters and by consultation of manuscripts at Harvard. *cp*

## The Pre-Raphaelites

*Florence S. Boos*

Recent studies of William Morris' writings have largely been guided by two primary desires: to develop underlying unities in Morris' disparate achievements, and to reconsider and reevaluate his utopian beliefs in the light of twentieth-century political thought. Few critics now dismiss Morris' political ideals as "escapist," and more ask how his poetry and romances expressed or embodied these ideals. Much Victorian poetic criticism has been at play in other fields, of course—studies of ironic self-erasure, parody, or paradox, among them—but Morris' writings continue to appeal to critics interested in a blend of thematic analysis, gender studies, psychobiography, audience response(s), and Victorian anticipations of recent ecological and communitarian concerns.

Sabine Foisner's *The Redeemed Loser: Art World and Real World in William Morris* (Salzburg Studies in English Literature, 1989) carefully cites critical work from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, and her interests in dialectic, romance, pastoral, and thematic presentations of love and heroism recall the works of Blue Calhoun (1975), Charlotte Oberg (1978), and Carole Silver

(1982). Foisner's ability to see persuasive comparisons between all periods of Morris' writings sometimes borders on anachronism, but her analytical summaries and conclusions provide useful insights into Morris' work. Her language, moreover, is indebted to Northrop Frye's categories, but is otherwise essentially jargon-free: "Drawing upon the *analogy of innocence*, which characterizes the mode of romance, and upon the *analogy of nature and reason*, the organizing imagery of the high mimetic mode, Morris produces no surrogate worlds, but tries to anchor his tale-visions in human experience. Thus while resorting to romance, the poet, like many of his heroes, paradoxically acquires a sharpened sensibility to his own time" (p. 346). Her generally appreciative observations occasionally parallel those of J.M.S. Tompkins' *The Poetry of William Morris* (1988), and would sometimes benefit from more comparative examinations of other poets and social/historical issues of the time, but they convey a genuine sense of the brilliance and heroic breadth of Morris' life-work and sensibility.

Frederick Kirchhoff's *William Morris: The Construction of a Male Self, 1856-1872* extrapolates and reinterprets conclusions of his earlier *William Morris* (1982), and also sets them in a somewhat different critical frame. As the title suggests, Kirchhoff offers a psychobiographical reading, but takes as his model not the Freudian paradigms applied in Jack Lindsay's *William Morris* (1972), or his own earlier work, but rather the "self psychology" of Heinz Kohut and Harry Stack Sullivan, who construed this "self" as an evolving set of self-images and relationships. Many who wished to apply Freudian ideas in Victorian poetic criticism have tried to rework Freud's saturninely repressive fascination with masculine ego formation—male competition, repression of homoerotic impulses, suppression of "instinct," and the like—but these notions have done little to explain Morris' eclectic and affiliative personality. More plausibly, Kirchhoff now emphasizes the integrative aspects of his "self psychology": "Morris' human successes evidence more than his ability to overcome a malfunction in psychic development. They demonstrate the transformation of weakness into strength—of adolescent discomfort into a mature reevaluation of his society and the notion of self, grounded in male dominance and capitalist economics, it presupposes" (p. 8).

Like all such "strong" (and in literal senses doctrinaire) psychobiographical interpretations, this one treads narrow boundaries between what is apparent (and therefore uninteresting) and what is unverifiable (but potentially novel). The puzzles Kirchhoff approaches are real, but no one will ever adduce evidence to confirm or deny his contention (for example) that when Morris expressed his admiration for Canterbury Cathedral, he was responding to his industrialist father, who "must have thought that the gothic monuments of England were appropriate places to bring a child, and thus

implied to his son that appreciation of such buildings was a route to paternal affection" (p. 18). Or that the "fits of narcissistic rage that characterized Morris as a boy and man can also be traced to the desertion of the mother" (p. 11). Or that "[Morris'] fascination with armor embodies a fantasy of hiding the body beneath an impervious shell of metal" (pp. 12-13). My own view is that a materially privileged but emotionally isolated childhood distanced Morris both from his remote and acquisitive father, whose speculative wealth testified to little more than the volatility of capital, and from his blandly pious mother, whose principal social role seems to have been to inculcate convention in the name of virtue. It is quite true, as Kirchhoff points out, that Morris pointedly disregarded his mother's preferences in all the major decisions of his life. His letters to her in later years are brief but affectionate, however, and offer limited support for Kirchhoff's remarks about "narcissistic rage."

Kirchhoff also outlines a general progression of Morris' aesthetic from the early prose tales through "Love Is Enough," and finds analogues, in this evolution, of changes in Morris' attitudes toward the possibility of romantic fulfillment and active achievement. This seems to me the most useful and persuasive aspect of Kirchhoff's book, which concludes with the following characterization of the relation(s) between Morris' sexuality and political views: "It is clear from Morris' writings, early and late, that women never ceased to play a role in the life of his imagination. These remarks would seem therefore to tell us that Morris did not use a vocabulary of male sexual dominance to demarcate his relationships with other men—that he stood, at least in conversation, outside the system of sexual politics. Freed of the needs both for self-assertive individualism and for psycho-sexual dependence, he became, in effect, a new kind of man—or, as he might have put it, recovered the tribal consciousness he was later to celebrate in his prose romances. . . . His Marxism and much else that characterized the last quarter century of Morris' life follow, I believe, from this freeing of the self. It explains in large part why Morris remains an admonition to Western society with its continued privileging of male individualism and romantic passion. It also explains, as Thompson also understands, why Morris remains 'an isolated and ill-understood figure'" (p. 809).

(At a more general psychobiographical level, something in Morris' anxious but unpossessive response to sexuality may also account in part for the relatively strong representation of women among recent students of his literary work—Blue Calhoun, Sabine Foisner, Amanda Hodgson, Jessie Kocmanová, Charlotte Oberg, Linda Richardson, Carole Silver, J.M.S. Tompkins, and me, for example.)

Two collections of essays on Morris' socialist writings appeared last year, to mark the centenary of the publication of *News From Nowhere* in 1890.

*William Morris and 'News from Nowhere': A Vision for Our Time*, is edited by Stephen Coleman and Paddy O'Sullivan (with a minimum of formal documentation, appropriately enough for a book put out by a press named "Green Books"). Of the volume's nine contributors, only one (Jan Marsh) is a woman, and she is assigned the "women's" topic "Concerning Love: *News from Nowhere* and Gender." Surely the editors could have solicited other contributions from British women who had things to say about the relevance of Morris' ideas—to ecology (say), or resource distribution, or "useful work"?

The strength of the volume is its careful location of Morris' best-known utopian work in wider traditions of British political activism. An introductory essay by Paddy O'Sullivan traces some relation between Morris' ideas and subsequent reformist movements to establish "garden cities" and "alternative" technologies. Ray Watkinson then traces the development of Morris' views on capitalism, technology, and the design of "banded workshops" in "The Obstinate Refusers: Work in *News from Nowhere*." Colin Ward, in "An Old House Amongst New Folk: Making Nowhere Somewhere," and Mark Pearson, in "The Hammersmith Guest House Again: William Morris and the Architecture of Nowhere," find traces of Morrisian spirit and influence in the history of twentieth-century European building design. Paddy O'Sullivan provides useful comparisons between the landscape and principles of *News* and those of modern ecocentric thought in "The Ending of *News from Nowhere* and Ecology." Adam Buick views Morris' future as an instance of "steady-state economics" in "A Market by the Way: The Economics of Nowhere." John Crump examines critically but sympathetically Morris' projections of revolution (e. g., his failure to consider the "Social-Revolution" in international terms), in "How the Change Came: *News from Nowhere* and the Utopian Revolution."

Jan Marsh's essay deftly examines "erotic" aspects of *News from Nowhere*, as "a literary text deeply imbued with the feeling and language of male desire," but notes its "unsatisfactory images of women's position in the supposedly free and equal society of the 21st century." Historical debates about human perfectibility inform "How Matters are Managed: Human Nature and Nowhere," in which Stephen Coleman examines Morris' views in the light of earlier and later utopian thought. In "The Feast's Beginning: *News from Nowhere* and the Utopian Tradition," finally, Christopher Hampton disjoins Morris' earlier, more romantic writings from his later socialist endeavors; his asperity recalls the early views of E. P. Thompson.

Two articles of mine consider somewhat the same issues examined in Jan Marsh's essay, mentioned above, in the context of the debates between Victorian socialists and socialist-feminists, especially Eleanor Marx. These are "An (Almost) Egalitarian Sage: William Morris and Victorian Socialist

Feminism" (in *Victorian Sages and Cultural Discourse: Renegotiating Gender and Power*, edited by Thais E. Morgan); and "News from Nowhere and Victorian Socialist-Feminism" (co-authored with William Boos, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*).

Relations between Morris' politics and later poems and romances are the focus of another collection, *Socialism and the Literary Artistry of William Morris*, edited by Carole Silver and me. Five of the volume's ten essays discuss *News*. Norman Talbot, in "A Guest in the Future: *News from Nowhere*," and Laura Donaldson, in "Boffin in Paradise, or the Artistry of Reversal in *News from Nowhere*," consider the intentions of the narrative method of *Nowhere*. Alexander MacDonald, in "Bellamy, Morris, and the Great Victorian Debate," and Darko Suvin, in "Counter-Projects: William Morris and the Science Fiction of the 1880's," examine other utopias to which Morris may have responded. In "William Morris and the Anarchist Tradition," the last of the volume's five essays on *News*, Lyman Sargent compares Morris' conjectures with desiderata of traditional anarchist theory.

In "The Encouragement and Warning of History: William Morris's *A Dream of John Ball*," Michael Holzman traces some of the political and historiographical context of Morris' great historical romance. In "Socialism Internalized: The Last Romances of William Morris," Carole Silver offers a sustained defense of these romances' political maturity and relevance, as works which "[w]ithout overtly preaching . . . clearly proclaim the worth of joyful labor, cooperation, and mutual aid, and the possibility of harmonizing personal and communal needs." In "Morris' 'Chants' and the Problems of Socialist Culture," Chris Waters examines a neglected aspect of Morris' literary work which is highly relevant to critical understanding of his later poetry. In my own essay, "Narrative Design in *The Pilgrims of Hope*," I argue that this poem is not a flawed bourgeois romance, but a well-designed expression of Morris' view of the tragic necessities of revolutionary change, and a partial but sincere effort to find common ground with late nineteenth-century feminist-socialism. In "Archaeological Socialism: Utopia and Art in William Morris," the last essay of the volume, Lawrence Lutchmansingh considers the relation of Morris' view of the history of art to some aspects of recent utopian theory.

This may be an appropriate place to mention an excellent reevaluation which has appeared this year of Morris' place in neo-Marxist political theory, a chapter of *The Concept of Utopia*, by Ruth Levitas, entitled "The Education of Desire: The Rediscovery of William Morris." Levitas observes sympathetically that "the problem of Marxism versus utopia manifests as a problem of utilitarianism versus Romanticism, knowledge versus desire, thought versus feeling. In the form of Romanticism versus utilitarianism, Lowy and Anderson argue that Marx overcomes this antithesis, Thompson that Morris

does so, Anderson that Bahro does so. . . . If some writers manage to synthesise the two it is a fragile synthesis, constantly in danger of disintegrating into its component parts" (p. 130). Her informative comparisons between Morris' ideas and those of Marx, Mannheim, Bloch, Anderson, Abensour, and recent feminist thought provide one of the most extensive and insightful discussions of these subjects now in print.

A significant recent contribution to Rossetti studies has been provided by Roger W. Peattie's recent edition of *The Selected Letters of William Michael Rossetti*, whose 725 pages include less than one-sixth of the extant letters, chosen according to "their documentary value, and the extent to which they enlarge our understanding of Rossetti's outlook and character." The edition is supplemented with an interpretive introduction and full and interesting annotations, and it includes a generous forty-seven page index. Together with WMR's *Some Reminiscences* (1906), *Pre-Raphaelite Diaries and Letters* (1900), and *The Diary of W. M. Rossetti, 1870-1873* (ed. Odette Bornand, 1977), this selection provides a very useful overview of the activities of a gifted person of letters, and a significant observer of nineteenth-century literary history.

Among other things, William Michael Rossetti was the Pre-Raphaelite movement's chief memoirist, and his allusions in these selected letters range widely, from enthusiastic literary responses (to *Aurora Leigh*, "It is a most wonderful thing. One scarcely knows at what point to stop one's enthusiasm, the wealth of poetic thought and sympathy is so magnificent, and yet one feels that there is a certain excess in it. Ruskin calls it the most splendid thing in the English language") (p. 77), to stoic acceptance of personal failure and disappointment. His wife, for example, left him altogether shortly before her death, for no clear reason, and bequeathed all her property to their children. Dutifully, William wrote to Christina that "I find (knew nothing of it hitherto) that Lucy made a will . . . leaving practically all her separate property to the children. . . and the house etc. goes to Barraud *in trust* for the children. My position thus becomes a matter of some embarrassment and speculation to myself, as I seem to have no personal right in the house—not even to live there, were Barraud to decree otherwise. . . . But one must meet one's troubles" (p. 573). He also commented in some detail on the aesthetic and commercial history of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Of Morris, Marshall and Company's display at the South Kensington Exhibition of 1862, for example, he dryly observed that: "The Morris & Marshall firm have come out stronger than the issue of a circular—they have sent in a requisition for 900 superficial feet of space at the Great Exhibition!! Of course a 20th of the space will satisfy them. They think also of manufacturing their own painted glass throughout. I am looking out for a smash unless they are content with very moderate operations at starting" (p. 115). (The "smash," fortunately, did not occur.)

Katherine Mayberry's *Christina Rossetti and the Poetry of Discovery* (1989) briefly considers "why [Christina Rossetti] was a poet, and how she used her art to reconcile her choice of career with the social norms of her day" (p. 3). In an introductory chapter, Mayberry reviews Christina Rossetti's indebtedness to her father and other mentors, and in chapters entitled "Widening the Narrow Way" and "Reparative Strategies," discusses some of the aims behind her poetic vocation: "For Rossetti, poetry was doubly magic: it transformed the mediocre into the wonderful, and more personally, it was the creative restitution born of a deprivation (whether chosen or imposed) that clearly represented a significant loss." In a separate chapter on *Goblin Market*, Mayberry further observes that "in the little matriarchy at the end of 'Goblin Market,' Laura, the poet figure, is given what would have been for Rossetti an ideal combination: children (whose father's identity is not revealed), security, independence, and the ability to create poetry. Clearly, such an arrangement was not possible in Rossetti's own society, but one of the great virtues of poetry for Rossetti was its ability to create, if only in fantasy, what was denied in reality" (p. 107). A final chapter is devoted to the relations between Christina Rossetti's poetry and Tractarian beliefs.

Three different interpretations of *Goblin Market* appeared in journal articles this year, and each draws on feminist arguments and assumptions in some form. David Morrill's "Twilight is not good for maidens: Uncle Polidori and the Psychodynamics of Vampirism in *Goblin Market*," (*VP* 28: 1-16) argues for the influence of John Polidori's 1819 novel *The Vampyre*: "Christina Rossetti uses certain details of the vampire myth—acts of biting and sucking, enervation, and death without grace—in her own lurid tale of young maidens threatened by the sensual possibilities of an evil, seductive brotherhood" (p. 11). She suggests, says Morrill, that "men can be put in their place, the submerged force of Victorian sexuality can be suppressed, and the fashionable vices of the world can be replaced with sisterly love and spirituality" (pp. 13-14).

In "'Men sell not such in any town': Exchange in *Goblin Market*" (*VP* 28:51-67), Terrence Holt interprets the goblins as projections of the male-dominated literary market place, and construes the final scene of the poem as an allegory of women's alienation: "The goblins are the husbands, of course, and in that relation to these 'wives' they overcome the sisters' attempt to escape them. Through their progeny, the goblins supply the audience for the literary creations of the women. . . . To be in [Laura's position as story-teller to another generation] is not necessarily a position of authority: perhaps, the ending suggests, to achieve a voice as a woman is no escape from the gendering of representation" (p. 63).

In "Of Mothers and Merchants: Female Economics in Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market'" (*VS*, Spring), by contrast, Elizabeth Campbell

argues that "Laura may have lost herself momentarily by venturing into the marketplace, but the risk she took allowed both sisters to recognize this womanly value; and this is the female economic force that they can pass on to their children. . . . In this small female circle where the women join hands with their children, the folk tradition continues its rhythmic reproduction to save the values implied by this female economics, until such time as women can enlarge their sphere, invest in futures, and turn the world around." Campbell's celebratory gloss seems to me slightly more persuasive, but I suspect it might have bemused Rossetti to see such diametrically opposed applications of post-feminist exegesis to her work.

Three other recent articles discussed other aspects of Christina Rossetti's work. Christopher Ricks's "Christina Rossetti and *Commonplace Books*" (*Grand Street* 9, no. 3) reflects on the gentle humor of *Commonplace* and *Maude*. Diane D'Amico's "'Choose the stairs that mount above': Christina Rossetti and the Anglican Sisterhoods" (*Essays in Literature*, Western Illinois University) notes resemblances between the moral codes of contemporary Anglican sisterhoods and Rossetti's "convent poems": "For [Rossetti], the nun, whose soul was fire, might offer an image of promised equality and power to come . . . an image of the soul renouncing the emptiness and powerlessness of earthly life for a crown in Paradise." Angela Leighton's "'When I am dead, my dearest': The Secret of Christina Rossetti" (*MP*, May) offers another interpretation of the elusive tone of her poetry: "The other side of her self-denial as a woman is an imaginative self-sufficiency as cool as winter and as indifferent as death. In the end, the secret of Rossetti's poetry, like all the tantalizing secrets of her life, is one which she playfully, loquaciously, and inventively kept."

It is a pleasure, finally, to note that serious consideration has recently been given by recent critics to two figures long relegated to "minor" status at the margins of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The Glaswegian working-class poet Alexander Smith was not a Pre-Raphaelite, but Dante Rossetti and William Morris both admired his work; Richard Cronin's "Alexander Smith and the Poetry of Displacement" (*VP* 28:129-145) traces an undertone of political discontent beneath the rapidly shifting images of Smith's "spasmodic" style, and observes that "the energy with which he expresses [a sense of himself as displaced] . . . creates the odd emotional complex that makes *A Life Drama* so distinctive" (p. 141).

William Allingham was a Pre-Raphaelite, but few have read his verse epic which forms the subject of Linda Hughes' "The Poetics of Empire and Resistance: William Allingham's *Lawrence Bloomfield in Ireland*." Like the Scottish Smith, it appears, the Irish Allingham may have been another muted political messenger from the geographical margins of Victorian Great Britain. Hughes notes that "in the completed poem published in 1864 the suggestions



of Irish radicalism were quickly countered, and quelled, by the end point of the poem. But in the 1862–63 version the poem could linger, without mediation, on the suggestion that the major problem in Ireland was an entrenched history of British brutality, . . . or on the passivity of even well-intentioned Anglo-Irish landlords while peasants actively suffered” (p. 114). Hughes answers the obvious question—which was the “real” *Lawrence Bloomfield*—with a careful suggestion that we “attend to the meaning of both publication formats Allingham pursued in bringing his poem before his Irish and British publics” (p. 115).

These two articles jointly suggest that much good work can be done in the boundary-waters of traditional Pre-Raphaelitism, and that some of the more oblique and latent political meanings of the movement may well have been unjustly ignored. *cp*

## Swinburne

*Margot K. Louis*

The primary achievement of Swinburne studies in 1990 has been to recontextualize Swinburne, within the history of religion, politics, linguistics, and sexuality. Close studies of the language or structure of specific texts, *pace* Adam Roberts’ “A Note on the Intrinsic Structure of Swinburne’s ‘*Laus Veneris*’” (*VP* 28: 89–92), have been few; there is much uncharted ground here. My own book, *Swinburne and His Gods: The Roots and Growth of an Agnostic Poetry* (to be discussed at the end of this article), attempts through detailed readings in the major poems and plays to trace Swinburne’s manipulation of diverse traditions—Anglican sacramentalism, anticlerical polemic, and, above all, English and French Romanticism. Several of the items to be reviewed here also focus on the fertile golden triangle of Swinburne studies—religion, language, literary tradition—but I should like to begin by discussing some critics who have explored less familiar territory.

Rikky Rooksby’s “The Case of Commoner Swinburne” (*RES* n.s. 41: 510–520) is a gratifyingly solid piece of scholarship which contributes to our knowledge of the poet’s erratic career as an Oxford student. Rooksby describes what is known of Swinburne’s various contributions to the Oxford Union debates, and, on the basis of research in the Balliol Archives, illuminates his scholastic achievements and failures. After initially earning such comments from the Master as “industrious but eccentric” and “very respectable