The Pre-Raphaelites

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Nineteen-ninety-six brought a small, clear stream of Christina Rossetti scholarship, a freshet of editions and commemorations of the centenary of William Morris' death, and a single study—something less than a rivulet—of a prose tale by Dante G. Rossetti.

The study is "Rossetti's 'St. Agnes of Intercession' as Metempsychic Narrative Fragment" (*JNT* 26, no.1), in which Ernest Fontana applies Marjorie Levenson's concept of "a true fragment" to D. G. Rossetti's unfinished prose tale. The nineteenth-century artist-narrator of "St. Agnes" gradually realizes that his life has recapitulated the biography of a (fictional) quattrocento painter Bucciuolo Angiolieri, and he awaits the death of his love Mary Arden—the counterpart of Bucciuolo's love Blanzifiore dall' Ambra—as the narrative ends. Fontana comments on Rossetti's interest in "the uncanny presence of a recursive pattern in disparate lives," and his discussion of such recurrences—instances of literary "metempsychosis," in his terminology—might form the basis of a wider comparative study. For these too "recur," in a variety of fin-de-siècle gothic and romance tales, among them Vernon Lee's "A Wicked Voice."

An earnest of Anthony Harrison's anticipated edition of the letters of Christina Rossetti for the University Press of Virginia appeared in his "Christina Rossetti and Caroline Gemmer: Friendship by Royal Mail" (*VIJ* 24). Rossetti's letters to a little-known poet and author of children's books offer a glimpse of her social, even conventional side, and mitigate the sense that she was wholly absorbed in literary and religious pursuits. She met Gemmer in later life, pursued the friendship chiefly through correspondence, and included a few personal accounts and political opinions she might not otherwise have committed to paper—of slavery, for example ("I cared to go no further into the rights and wrongs of the question than the one fact that the North struck at slavery,—this settled all my partisanship at once, for slavery I loathe and abhor" [1877]).

Moments of introspection and self-revelation also suggest that she came to consider Gemmer a true friend, and unburdened herself on topics too deep for conversation with her familiars. "No," she wrote for example in 1891, "I don't exactly take the *tantantalization* and *delusion* view of past years. They all have led me up to what now I am, and the whole series is leading me to my final self. I trust all I have vainly wished for here will be more than made up to me hereafter if—an all-momentous if!—I endure to the end. After all, too, life is short, and I should not immerse myself too deeply in its interests. Please note that I say 'I should not'—I dare not pretend 'I do not.'" Passages like these suggest that the completed edition of the letters will provide Rossetti's readers with many new facets of her ideas to consider.

In "'Grown Sick with Hope Deferred': Christina Rossetti's Darker Musings" (*PLL* 32, no.3), Brad Sullivan argues that the apparent calm of Rossetti's secular poems conceals troubling ideas, and reflects "profound uneasiness with [the] natural order of things; rather than offering the confident heavenly resolutions of her devotional poems, they struggle with ambiguous and troubling visions." Sullivan does not comment on his predecessors' insights into such "visions," but the article's persuasive interpretations confirm his point.

In "Christina Rossetti's Dying" (*JPRS* 5), David Kent confutes reports that Rossetti may have expressed religious doubt or resentment before she died, and strongly affirms the poet's adherence to her religious beliefs unto death. More controversially, perhaps, he also characterizes as secular bias her brother William Michael Rossetti's description of Christina's final state of mind as "gloomy rather than hopeful." To this reader, at least, Kent's painstaking account of mortal illness unrelieved by medical palliatives provides an unpleasant dose of historical reality, and Rossetti's religious constancy and avowals of faith bore impressive witness indeed to her self-possession, selflessness, and courage in the face of affliction. But these qualities and convictions seem inconsistent neither with William's account, nor with her own expressed fears that she too, like other family members, might suffer mentally as well as physically in her last travails. Well might Rossetti have felt "gloom" as well as faith in her God, and it might be a bit facile to assert that Rossetti's last thoughts were "willed," as though physical pain and anticipation of death could not be overpowering determinants of one's inner state.

Two years after a 1994 University of Leiden conference which commemorated the works of three authors who died a century earlier, the conference's proceedings have appeared as *Beauty and The Beast: Christina Rossetti, Walter Pater, R. L. Stevenson and their Contemporaries*, edited by Peter Liebregts and Wim Tigges (Amsterdam; Atlanta, Georgia), and the volume includes five essays devoted to Christina Rossetti.

In "Christina Rossetti In and Out of Grace," C. C. Barfoot praises her poetry's variety, poise, self-assurance, preoccupation with themes of delay and hope and moments of "calculated mischievous provocation." He notes Rossetti's ability to balance different moods in close temporal proximity—in the grimly bitter "Memory," cheerful "A Birthday," regretful "An Apple Gathering," and elusively teasing "Winter: My Secret," for example, all composed in November 1857. Barfoot's elegant overview of Rossetti's poems provides an excellent introduction for first-time readers of her work.

In "The Spider's Shadow: Christina Rossetti and the Dark Double Within," Rossetti's biographer Jan Marsh considers several ways in which Rossetti's fascination with death and sense of the macabre marked her relation to "Aesthetic" and "Decadent" writers of her own and succeeding generations. She notes several specific antecedent influences on Rossetti's work, among them the poems of Leopardi, and early nineteenth-century Gothic fiction such as Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Indeed, Marsh identifies the tormented aspects of Rossetti's poetry as its core: "My conviction is that this Gothic thread is not merely one aspect of her writing. . . . I think this dark side *is* Christina Rossetti, both in literary terms and in devotional terms. . . . As well as being the most powerful element in her work, it is the mainspring, the fountain, the innermost self of her creative imagination, the source of her art. . . . She is truly a poet of horror and despair, death and putrefaction."

In "Christina Rossetti's Italian Poems," Valeria Tinkler-Villani makes good a critical deficiency with a careful study of "Il Rosseggiar dell' Oriente," the manuscript cycle of twenty-one poems of unrequited love Rossetti left in her desk after her death. Tinker-Villani describes Rossetti's resolute exploration in Italian of a "single-minded self exploring its experiences and being . . . and stating obsessively its own needs," and characterizes her uses of seventeenth-century poetic models as "a surprising and exciting merging of passionate control and calculated emotion. . . . Christina Rossetti's voice is also taking up the middle of a stage to 'fly' and 'shout' and to sing her self." There is something intriguing about the speculation that Rossetti may have encoded particularly impassioned forms of literary disinhibition in her lifelong second language.

In "Christina Rossetti: Sisters, Brothers and the 'Other Woman,'" Amanda Gilroy finds male bias in the ways Dante or William Rossetti rewrote and reinterpreted Christina Rossetti's references to fellow women writers. In the case of "L.E.L.," for example, her poem of sympathy for Letitia Landon, Gilroy sees an attempt to deflect their sister's identification with a women's literary tradition. There may be benign explanations for William's comments on his sister's poem, but Gilroy's "hermeneutics of suspicion" provides an interesting and plausible interpretation of the two brothers' editorial intervention, and a sophisticated reading of Rossetti's responses to Landon's work.

In "Wrapped in a Dream: Katharine Tynan and Christina Rossetti," Peter van de Kamp traces the literary and personal interrelations between these two poets. William and Christina Rossetti praised Tynan's work and welcomed her into their circle of intimates in the 1880s, but Tynan published rather breathless and intrusive personal accounts of her visits, after which Christina later declined Tynan's requests to interview her, though she remained on friendly terms with the younger poet until her death. Afterwards, Tynan published "Some Memories of Christina Rossetti" (*The Outlook*, 1895) and "Santa Christina" (*The Bookman*, 1912), and van de Kamp includes both in an appendix. One of Tynan's remarks anticipates Marsh's and Sullivan's views of Rossetti's gothicism, cited above: "I pass by the morbidness, which, when one reads Christina en bloc give a churchyard air to her raptures."

The centenary of William Morris' death has inspired more editions, books, and articles than I can review in a single "Year's Work." To commemorate the centenary, first, the William Morris Society of the United States has also produced William Peterson's handsome edition of *A Note by William Morris on His Aims in Founding the Kelmscott Press*, with Sydney Cockerell's description of the press, and a list of Kelmscott Press publications. This attractive book offers "enlargements and [a] corrected version" of the originals, and the "enlargements" include textual notes and some lovely samples of Troy and Chaucer types.

For the rest, I will confine myself to the final volume of Norman Kelvin's *Collected Letters*, a number of Thoemmes Press reprints (with introductions) of Morris' works, a few editions and critical works, several articles, and my own centenary special issue of *Victorian Poetry*.

The final volume of *The Collected Letters* prints 406 letters between 1893 and September of 1896, less than three weeks before Morris' death on October 3. Like previous volumes of the edition, this one is wonderfully illustrated with contemporary photographs and reproductions of manuscript purchases and engravings (including those by Arthur Gaskin which Morris rejected for the Kelmscott Press). Many of the letters themselves are shorter than their counterparts in previous volumes—of necessity, perhaps—but they still give a sense of the depths and fullness of the many strands in Morris' life, and the volumes' notes gather complementary details which the reader may need.

Morris' growing allusions to ill health, doctors' regimens and his inability to keep engagements show how curtailed his life had become in his last years, but he plodded resolutely on—designing Kelmscott books, negotiating illustrations with engravers, and completing the magnificent Chaucer in the June before his death. He also continued to work for socialism, championed environmental causes, and opposed "restoration" on behalf of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, but at a reduced pace. In part as diversion and in part as investment for his heirs, he enlarged his manuscript library with sedulous zeal, bought the Huntingfield Psalter, Windmill Psalter, and Tiptoft Missal, and arranged carefully for the Fitzwilliam Library to return a missing page from his copy of the Clifford-Gray *Horae*.

In one of the volume's more reflective and informative letters, Morris answered a natural enquiry—posed, interestingly enough, by a German student: "I cannot think that I ever consciously aimed at any particular style. I by nature turn to Romance rather than Classicalism, and naturally, without effort, shrink from rhetoric. I may say that I am fairly steeped in mediaevalism generally; but the Icelandic sagas, our own border ballads, and Froissart . . . have had as much influence over me as, or more than, anything else" (November 20, 1895).

Equally deep "influences," of course, derived from Morris' powerful responses to physical and organic beauty, and his intense desires to "defend" its historical traces against every form of predation he could see. In another letter, for example, a proposed recarving of the royal tombs at Westminster aroused England's most venerable early socialist to stinging protest: "In plain words, . . . before 'restoring' them they would have to destroy them. The record of our remembered history embodied in them would be gone; almost more serious still, the unremembered history, wrought into them by the hands of the craftsmen of bygone times, would be gone also. And to what purpose? To foist a patch of bright, new work, a futile academical study at best, amidst the loveliness of the most beautiful building in Europe" (May 31, 1895).

A few letters reasserted and reargued socialist issues—in one, for example, he reproved his comrade James Tochatti for tacitly supporting anarchist violence: "For I cannot for the life of me see how [anarchist] principles, which propose the abolition of compulsion, can admit of promiscuous slaughter as a means of converting people" (December 12, 1893). Also relevant in this connection is "The Present Outlook of Socialism in England," Morris' last article, which he published in the American journal *Forum* for April 1896, and Kelvin reprints in an appendix. In it, Morris expressed guarded optimism ("No one who is conversant with working-class politics can dispute that the attitude of the workmen toward Socialism has quite altered within the last twelve years, and that a claim for a recognition as citizens has been put forward by them, to which all classes of society have been forced to pay some attention"), and makes a final appeal for a broad and eclectic Socialist party, organized for one aim—"the realization of a new society founded on the practical equality of condition for all, and general association for the satisfaction of the needs of those equals."

As always, Morris tended carefully and finally to those he loved. He wrote moving letters about his mother's death, and sent calm but solicitous messages to Georgiana Burne-Jones, Philip Webb, and his invalid daughter Jenny. He was characteristically laconic and concerned for others, as when he bade Webb farewell in June ("Now best luck to us both"), and his last preserved words were a postscript to Jenny, in which he told her that "I believe I am somewhat better."

He was not somewhat better, of course. But he was, as his comrade put it, "our best man." His urgent endeavors ceased, but the herculean editorial efforts of Norman Kelvin and his assistant editor Holly Harrison have given us an epistolary cross-section of his lifework in four richly annotated and beautifully illustrated volumes.

The "William Morris Library," edited by Peter Faulkner for the Thoemmes Press, has assembled a series of attractive and well-designed reprints of many of Morris' works. These durable, affordable, and well-introduced volumes will encourage interest in less familiar titles for many years to come, and two of the volumes, moreover—*Political Writings: Contributions to* Justice *and* Commonweal *1883-1890*, and *Journalism: Contributions to* Commonweal *1885-1890*—are wholly new editions, prepared by Nicholas Salmon, which provide the first full compendium of Morris' socialist journalism.

In his introduction to a reprint of the 1903 edition of *The Hollow Land and Other Contributions to the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, Eugene D. LeMire reviews the history of these early works Morris himself never intended to republish. He examines contemporary records and contributor lists as evidence for Morris' possible authorship of three additional tales, and firmly decides against their inclusion. I find it a bit surprising that Le Mire does not mention consideration of the disputed tales' style or content in his rationale, but his conclusion is a reasonable one. At one point in his introduction, Le Mire aptly remarks of these early tales—and could have remarked of their successors—that "by careful structuring of meaningful detail and action the stories suggest a coherence just beyond the reach of reason, but not therefore unreasonable."

In his introduction to *Poems by the Way*, David Latham characterizes the volume as Morris' "most diversified collection," as well as one which contains some of his "most disarmingly subversive" work. Latham arranges the poems in a framework of five categories—the Scandinavian, the Socialist, the Verses for Pictures, the Concrete Narratives, and the Abstract Lyrics—and gives special attention to the latter two. Noting the political implications of Morris' attempts to form a new poetic language, Latham finds in *Poems By the Way* a "mediation between the two directions of his prose" and precursor of his last poetic genre, "the prose romance as a prose poem."

In her introduction to *Sigurd the Volsung*, Jane Ennis provides little information about reception, manuscript-revisions, or publication-history, but she skillfully traces the poem's many allusions to craft and song, and surveys its varied poetic devices—metrics, patterns of repetition, *stichomythia* and *anaphora*—and its complex imagery of landscapes, trees, flowers, and harvest.

Gary Aho's scholarly introduction to *Three Northern Love Stories* provides an exemplary account of the circumstances, style, and reception of Morris' collaborative Icelandic translations, and observes that "coming out as they did at the end of the century and at a high point of Victorian interest in Vikings, they did as much to increase general knowledge of Iceland as had the translations of Sir George Webbe Dasent back in the 1860s." *The Three Northern Love Stores and Other Tales* turn out in fact to be six: "The Story of Gunnlaug the Worm-Tongue," "The Story of Frithiof the Bold," "The Story of Viglund the Fair," "The Tale of Hogni and Hedunn," "The Tale of Roi the Fool," and "The Tale of Thorstein Staff-Smitten," and Aho locates each in the corpus of late medieval saga-lore. He also assesses carefully Eiríkr Magnússon's substantial scholarly contribution to these collaborative translations, and persuasively defends Magnússon against later attempts by Morris' executors to claim that his contribution was a peripheral one.

Aho also takes the occasion to clarify the terms of a longstanding debate about Morris' and Magnússon's "artificial" diction and syntax, and reminds the reader that the early translations contain only eighteen neologisms. Aho argues that most of Morris' archaic usages derived from consistent attempts to mine Germanic roots, and evoke appropriate historic and linguistic echoes, but some Icelandic analogues—"that must betide that drew towards," for example (in "Gunnlaug," p. 40)—were notably less successful than others. Aho further analyzes Morris' 232 revisions in "The Story of Gunnlaug," the volume's first tale, which appeared in an earlier form in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1869, and explains how Morris fashioned his text to reflect the intricate prosody of the original. This introduction by a scholar of the original languages clarifies the nature of Morris' remarkable collaboration with Magnússon, and makes an important contribution to the understanding of one his most successful and least accessible literary achievements.

In his elegant introductions to *The Story of the Glittering Plain, Child Christopher* and *The Water of the Wondrous Isles*, Norman Talbot provides an overview of Morris' romances, and remarks aptly that the women at the center of seven of them "usually see through the self-deceptive facades of the social system more clearly than males" (p. xv). He then interprets *Child Christopher*—an extensive revision of the thirteenth-century *Havelok the Dane*, and Morris' "only even vaguely monarch-friendly romance"—as a quasi-democratic account of the woodman-outlaw's Christopher's rise to royal dignity (Talbot doesn't mention it, but *Christopher* also resembles the early *Earthly Paradise* tale "The Man Born to Be King").

Of *The Glittering Plain*—which Morris wrote in rapidly failing health—

Talbot comments that "its axioms are that you'd have to be a damn fool not to be tempted by the glittering legend of an Earthly Paradise of eternal youth, love and unselfish happiness—and a damneder fool to be seduced by it." Morris died in fact before he could complete revisions of *The Water of the Wondrous Isles*, and Talbot speculates on how Morris might have filled in the gaps of the unrevised portion. Of the romance's sexual politics, Talbot observes that "Birdalone was un-Victorian enough in her frequent nudity and her courageous activity, but when clear narratorial approval is given to her leadership in enthusiastic extramarital sex, she is at her most alien to public versions of Morris's contemporary audience." These interpretations harmonize well with Talbot's view that Morris' "radical analogies to inward self knowledge . . . can as readily be expressed in rhetorics derived from Freud or Jung as in the terms of social psychologists like Marx."

Nicholas Salmon's *Political Writings: Contributions to* Justice *and* Commonweal *1883-1890* (1994) and *Journalism: Contributions to* Commonweal *1885-1890* (1996), the two longest volumes in the series (nearly 700 pages each), gather together a wealth of materials, previously available only *in situ*—or on microfilm—which are essential to an understanding of Morris' political evolution. The 1884 *Justice* articles follow him through to the foundation of the Socialist League, and his short contributions to *Commonweal* wrestle with concrete and thoroughly un-"utopian" details of daily political events. Salmon's introductions furnish the reader with extensive background information about *Justice* and *Commonweal*, and his account of the major strands of Morris' writing for them provides an excellent overview of Morris' own political evolution during his years of active work for "the Social Revolution."

In *Reform and Revolution: Three Early Socialist on the Way Ahead: William Morris, John Carruthers, Fred Henderson*, Stephen Coleman reprints Morris' anarchosocialist essay "The Policy of Abstention" (1887), along with "Socialism and Radicalism" (1896) by Morris' friend and political kindred-spirit John Carruthers, and "The ABC of Socialism" (1915) by Fred Henderson, which Coleman includes as an extension of the League's anti-reformist revolutionary ideology into the next century. Coleman's reprint and Salmon's substantive new editions prompt thoughts of wider new collections and comparative studies of all Morris' radical, socialist, and anarchist contemporaries: Shaw, Kropotkin, Besant, Wilson, Hyndman, Carruthers, Bax, Engels, and Marx could begin the list.

In his introduction to *Hopes and Fears for Art* and *Signs of Change*, Peter Faulkner shows that the first volume represented the fullest expositions of Morris' ideas up to the time of publication (1892), and the second a careful balanced selection of presentations of his basic message. In the context of reformist and revolutionary traditions that range from Ruskin to modern social ecologists, Faulkner asserts the continuing relevance of Morris' challenges to gradualism and appeals for "responsible political action." In *Arts and Crafts Essays by Members of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, with a Preface by William Morris*, Faulkner provides an introduction to several important members of the Arts and Crafts movement, as well as a background for assessing Morris' own contributions. The limited aims and scope of most of these essays contrast with Morris' vivid style and bold engagement with wider issues of aesthetics, social organization, and "the beauty of life."

Finally, from Thoemmes Press comes also *The William Morris Chronology*, by Nicholas Salmon with Derek Baker. This 292-page handbook of dates and facts from the lives and endeavors of Morris and his circle provides a surprisingly useful diurnal overview of someone whose activities were so notoriously wide-ranging. The volume's dateline is especially helpful in gathering what information is known about Morris' early life. Morris biographers have often blurred or subordinated details of timing in the interests of style and dramatic unity, and this little book provides a handy corrective for those moments when exactitude and rapid reference are desired.

In *Reclaiming William Morris: Englishness, Sublimity, and the Rhetoric of Dissent* (McGill), Michelle Weinroth examines the many strands of "the Morris legend" in the political ideals and rhetoric of the 1930s-1970s. Weinroth devotes several chapters to Robin Page Arnot's *William Morris: A Vindication* and its effect on later works such as E. P. Thompson's *Romantic to Revolutionary*. She provides a charming analysis in chapter six of Jack Lindsay's 1936 long blank-verse poem "not english? a Reminder for May Day," an experiment in populist historiography more memorable for experimental boldness than poetic resonance. In this Morris figures preeminently among "the men who were not english," who "cried out after Bloody Sunday: / Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay, / but one and all if they would dusk the day!" Weinroth critiques the self-flattering qualities of communist "redemptive epic saga[s]" (p. 238) as well as the reiterated appeals to "Englishness" of the works she studies, but there is something "redemptive" about her final affirming quotation from Ernst Bloch: "Reason cannot blossom without hope, and hope cannot speak without reason" (p. 244). Her sophisticated analysis testifies to the resilience of Morris' legacy in its many and manifoldly mediated forms.

In *The Artist as Critic: Bitextuality in Fin-de-Siècle Illustrated Books* (Scholar 1995), Lorraine Kooistra considers, among other things, Kelmscott Press illustrations as an example of the complex interrelations between aestheticism, late Victorian socialism, and the arts and crafts movement, and observes that "answering" (or harmony) between illustration and text is the relation theoretically consistent with socialist ideals. In her view, Walter Crane's illustrations for *The Story of the Glittering Plain* and Burne-Jones's illustrations for *The Well at the World's End* highlight the most conservative implications of Morris' texts, and she discusses Burne-Jones's illustrations for *The Well* at length. Kooistra contrasts, for example, Crane's and Burne-Jones' conspicuously "chivalric" and confining views of female sexuality with Morris' more egalitarian texts, and argues persuasively that Burne-Jones' choice of subjects for illustration pointedly ignored the more political aspects of his friend's narratives. She concludes that "Morris' socialist vision is answered, not only by Burne-Jones's conservative images, but also by its dialogic relationship with the material forms of Kelmscott Press production" (p. 183). Her work is a rare study of the interrelations between Morris' text and its illustrations, and her consideration of Kelmscott Press illustrations in the context of other work in this period by Linton, Paget, Beardsley, Ricketts, Housman, and Strang clarifies their relations with other, equally significant strands of contemporary art.

In *On Poetry, Painting, and Politics: The Letters of May Morris and John Quinn* (Susquehanna) Janis Londraville has edited the correspondence of Morris' daughter and the art and manuscript collector John Quinn. The letters strongly suggest that Quinn cultivated May to learn about her personal memories of her father's circle and further his efforts to collect manuscripts. The pain the elusive Quinn caused her makes them sad reading, redeemed only by the lovely language in which May recalled her father's presence, and took pride in her accomplishments as the editor of *The Collected Works*.

It was my pleasure to edit the 1996 centenary special issue on William Morris for *Victorian Poetry*, which included nine articles by Morris critics from four countries. I aimed in this collection at chronological balance, and included two articles on "The Defence," three on *The Earthly Paradise*, one on *Sigurd the Volsung*, two on *Poems by the Way*, and one on Morris' influence on other fin-de-siècle writers and artists.

In my introduction, "1896-1996: Morris' Poetry at the *Fin de Millénaire*," I tried to identify some of the distinctive underlying aspects of Morris' poetry, and argued that the experimental qualities of his later work embodied quasi-populist efforts to seek less "elite" and more varied audiences, but anticipated and paralleled (paradoxically?) a number of generic and thematic innovations of the fin de siècle as well. In the introduction's last paragraph, I expressed a hope that Morris' poetic preoccupations with social enigmas and the practical and visual arts might evoke pleasure and recognition for several more *siècles* to come.

The first two articles in the special issue make divergent claims about the title poem of *The Defence of Guenevere*. In "Arthurian Ghosts: The

Phantom Art of 'The Defence of Guenevere,'" W. David Shaw argues that the poem's many "phantom" images and archaisms operate to evade and dissolve conventional definitions of truth. In "Dissident Language in *The Defense of Guenevere*," Karen Herbert asserts that Guenevere's monologue is subversive in its refusal to observe linguistic conventions for silence and speech, and observes that the volume's Froissartian poems also show cognate patterns of opposition between individual expression and social constraints, public lies, and private truth.

Three articles reexamine *The Earthly Paradise*. In "Literal and Literary Texts: Morris' 'Story of Dorothea,'" David Làtham considers Morris' efforts to distance himself in successive revisions of the tale from the religious absolutism of his source, and argues that he discarded the tale in the end because he could not reconcile it with *The Earthly Paradise*'s evolving communal ethic. In "'The Highest Poetry': Epic Narrative in *The Earthly Paradise* and the *Idylls of the King*," Amanda Hodgson compares Morris' notions with more traditional Victorian notions of "the epic", and sets out some of the thematic and narrative devices Morris used to undermine received authority in his narrative cycle. In "The *Laxdaela Saga* and 'The Lovers of Gudrun,'" Laura Julian observes that Morris heightened the imagery of his spare Icelandic source, infused his narrative with allusions to "tales" and "stories," and recast its dynastic feuds as an extended allegory of heroic persistence and the solace of art.

In "All for the Tale: The Epic Macropoetics of Morris' *Sigurd the Volsung*," Herbert Tucker examines possible motives for Morris' choice of *Sigurd*'s remote and in some ways rebarbative subject, the tale's carefully patterned language, its occasional near-stoic fatalism, and the ecstatic triumphalism it projects onto the remote future. He remarks that *Sigurd* is unusual among nineteenth-century epics in its professions of belief in the efficacy of the tale itself as a source of prophecy and other forms of narrative transmission, and concludes that the poem's "storicism" expresses an ardent "conception of what it might mean to belong to a line and have a stake in a plot."

In "Morris, the 1890s, and the Problematic Autonomy of Art," Norman Kelvin scrutinizes Morris' relation to Pater, Wilde, Beardsley, Yeats, and other writers of the fin de siècle who professed to draw inspiration from Morris' work, and finds aspects of aestheticism in his belief in the unity of the spiritual and physical aspects of art, avant-garde aspects of his socialist vision, and his association of the decorative arts with pleasurable work. In his conclusion, Kelvin affirms that belief in the "essential autonomy of art" evokes "an energy that carries [the writers and aesthetes of the 1890s] beyond self-containment, [and] beyond their own boundaries."

Two articles, finally, consider Morris' often-neglected *Poems By the*

Way. In "The Male as Lover, Fool and Hero: 'Goldilocks and Goldilocks,'" Peter Faulkner interprets this folk-tale poem as a democratization of Müller's myth of a solar hero, whose many pastoral and folkloric elements form a comedic romance pattern, and parallel the spirit of his late prose romances. In "The Summation of a Poetic Career," Kenneth Goodwin examines Morris' complex motives for the revisions he undertook in the poems he chose for this final collection, and concludes that the resulting tonality is both "more engaged and more tranquil" than Morris' earlier works.

Five other journal articles gathered for this year's review focus on Morris' literary work. In "'Two Red Roses Across the Moon': Reconsidering Symbolic Implications" (*JWMS* 12, no.1), Vanessa Furse Jackson discerns complex suggestions of danger and a perilous sexuality in Morris' erotically charged early refrain-poem from *The Defence of Guenevere*, and views the poem as a miniature of the volume's attempts to "transcend the brutality and suffering of life through love." In "Imagery of Gold *in 'Sigurd the Volsung'*" (*JWMS* 11, no. 4), Jane Ennis explicates the poem's recurrent images of daylight, brightness, and metaphorical "gold" that brings bane to its possessor. In "An Index of Their Maker: Morris' Labour in *A Book of Verse* and the Kelmscott *Poems By the Way*" (JPRS 5, Fall), David Faldet considers "The Book of Verse" and the Kelmscott Press edition of *Poems By the Way* as embodiments of Morris' ideals of craft and social relations, and finds in these works' "indexical presence of the artist" a "token of the fellowship Morris valued so highly," and a "realization of the 'whole intelligence' of Morris."

In "Fire and Ice: Clashing Visions of Iceland in the Travel Narratives of Morris and Burton" (*JWMS* 11, no. 4) Pamela Bracken Wiens contrasts Richard Burton's imperious self-absorption in *Ultima Thule; or, A Summer in Iceland* (1875) with the self-effacing and respectful concern for what he surveyed that Morris expressed in his *Icelandic Journals* of 1871 and 1873, and interprets these qualities as exemplars "of Morris' more 'humanitarian' and Burton's more 'authoritarian' views of that . . . borderland." In "William Guest Goes Shopping" (*JWMS* 11, no. 4), Ian Gallagher composes a "sequel" to *News from Nowhere*, in which Guest visits "Meadowhall" mall in Sheffield in 1995, and confronts a number of all-too-recognizable crassnesses of the "post-modern" social order. Graceful touches include Guest's visit to a bogus-Victorian tearoom, and his disgust with cheap reproductions of art, including his own. When the revenant Guest finally meditates on Walter Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (conveniently left by a previous patron of the tearoom), Gallagher's ironic time-travel-narrative honors the spirit as well as the letter of its great original.

Seven articles explore the implications of Morris' social criticism in other ways. In "A Postindustrial Prelude to Postcolonialism: John Ruskin, William Morris, and Gandhism" (*CritI* 22, no. 3), for example, Patrick Brantlinger tells us what Ruskin, Morris, and others thought of traditional Indian arts, and what Mahatma Ghandhi, Ananda Coomaraswamy, and some recent Indian post-colonial theorists said about Ruskin, Morris, and others. The article provides a guide to Ruskin and Morris' views of colonialism and imperialism, a summary of intercultural debates about the limits of "modernity," and an appeal for reflection: "Whether the West or the Rest is entering or can enter a postindustrial, postcapitalist, finally postcolonial orbit, the task of imagining alternatives to (post?)contemporary history seems more urgent than ever. We still need Gandhi; we still need Morris and Ruskin; we still need Marx, only more so. We also need the radical hope—Ernst Bloch's 'principle of hope'—that utopian thinking expresses, and we need to take such thinking seriously."

In "William Morris and the Search for Poet Laureate, 1892" (*JPRS* 5, Spring) Frank C. Sharp provides the first full account of James Bryce's attempts to interest Gladstone in Morris' possible candidacy, and Morris' straightforward reply that "if it were necessary or even decent for me to go to court or write a court ode, I could not do it: Absolutely could not." Assorted sidebars provide interesting diversions: John Morley urged Swinburne's elimination for "an unbroken consistency of evil," and the *Times* characterized Morris as "a sweet singer once upon a time [who] only aspires now to be a street preacher of socialism." Sharp finds it "stunning to realize that Morris' socialism did not automatically disqualify him and that Gladstone seriously considered a socialist as Laureate," but his research makes it clear that Morris' political convictions made the outcome inevitable.

In "'Compulsory Baxination': Morris and the Misogynist," (*JWMS* 12, no. 1) Roger Aldous reviews the several ways in which Morris and Ernest Belfort Bax interracted to negotiate their views of the "society of the future," and correctly observes that Bax was indeed a Marxist theorist of substance whose views often complemented those of Morris. Less persuasive are his criticisms of those who find Bax's contributions undercut by the virulent misogyny of his anti-suffrage tract, *The Fraud of Feminism* (1913), a shrill diatribe which attacked, among other reforms, attempts to make men answer at law for wife-beating and wife-murder. I have argued elsewhere that Morris' attempts to accommodate his collaborator were probably responsible for the absence of more developed socialist-feminist tenets about familial and women's issues from their common manifestos.

A more nuanced view of Bax's legacy appears in "Morris, Bax, and Babeuf" (JWMS 12, no. 1), in which Ian H. Birchall explains the motives and effects of Morris' suggestion that Bax, author of an earlier study of

Marat, should write a biography of Gracchus Babeuf. The latter was the eighteenth-century founder of the "Conspiracy of the Equals"—arguably the first revolutionary socialist organization in history—and a revolutionary whose communitarian and egalitarian ideals anticipated the aims of the Socialist League. Bax did eventually publish in 1911*The Last Episode of the French Revolution: being a history of Gracchus Babeuf and the Conspiracy of the Equals*, and Birchall assesses it as a significant contribution to the history of socialism, but finds it flawed by Bax's undervaluation of Babeuf's originality as a communist thinker, and his characteristic suppression of source-accounts of women's contributions to the revolution.

In "Isabella Morris Gilmore" (*JWMS* 11, no. 4), Frank C. Sharp draws a moving portrait of Morris' sister, whom Morris once paid the tribute of saying "I preach Socialism. You practice it." Isabella Gilmore ministered to the poor of South London as a Deaconness of the Church of England, and managed to persuade her superiors to extend this initially controversial social service into the next century. The parallels between Morris and his selfless and (for a woman of her time) equally unconventional sister suggest common childhood experiences or perceptions that lie now beyond our retrieval.

In "The Political Commentary of *The Hammersmith Socialist Record*" (*JWMS* 11, no .4), David Morgan reconstructs articles published by Morris, Bruce Glasier, Andreas Scheu, and others in a humble local newsletter which had fallen through the cracks of socialist memory. It is interesting to have Morgan's recuperation of these texts, and see Morris' views in his last years on such subjects as Irish Home Rule, the prison system ("jails are nothing less than nurseries of crime"), and shabby local foodstuffs ("the idlers . . . have eaten all the good butter, and now invite the toilers to satisfy themselves with a cheap and nasty substitute").

Finally, in "Gustav Holst, William Morris and the Socialist Movement" (*JWMS*, 11, no. 4), Andrew Heywood describes the considerable influence of Morrisean socialist ideals on the young musician who joined the Hammersmith Socialist Society, led its choir for a brief period in 1897, wrote musical settings for several of Morris' prose passages and poems (including "No Master" and "Masters in the Hall"), and dedicated to Morris the slow movement of his 1900 "Cotswold Symphony." Heywood's study of Holst describes a significant instance of the musical transmission of social and aesthetic ideals.

As we have seen, the focus of recent interest in Pre-Raphaelite studies has shifted—perhaps disproportionately—toward Christina Rossetti and William Morris. New publications and nuanced historical approaches have also fostered a variety of studies of Pre-Raphaelite poetry and other writings, and contributed to a better understanding of fin-de-siècle aesthetics and social thought. May these writers' human concerns and artistic accomplishments evoke more pleasure, insight, and reflection as new critical and aesthetic seasons revolve.

Swinburne

MARGOT K. LOUIS

In 1995 so little appeared on Swinburne that I had not enough material to produce my usual review; the past year and a half, on the other hand, has been extremely rich. Foremost in importance is of course Rikky Rooksby's long-awaited biography, *A. C. Swinburne: A Poet's Life* (Aldershot: Scolar Press 1997). This is the first Swinburne biography since Donald Thomas' patronizing and sensationalistic *Swinburne: The Poet in his World* appeared eighteen years ago, and Rooksby's lively, well-written work will long be a sine qua non for students of the poet. There is a large amount of original research in this book (some of which has appeared in Rooksby's earlier notes, reviewed here over the years). On Swinburne's early life, especially, Rooksby has unearthed information available to no previous biographer: information on Swinburne's brother Charles (who died in infancy and was apparently never mentioned by the family), on the nature and duration of Edith Swinburne's fatal illness, on Swinburne's own erratic career at Oxford. *A. C. Swinburne: A Poet's Life* includes plenty of discussion (and, again, some new data) on Swinburne's sexual behaviour, but also takes Swinburne seriously as a poet, and deals much more thoroughly with the poet's views on religion and spiritualism, his relationship to the natural world, and his extremely active social life up to 1879 than previous biographies were able to do.

Rooksby does not have a new story to tell, inasmuch as his sense of Swinburne's life—its major phases, its crucial turning points (the death of Swinburne's sister Edith, the "lost love," the scandal surrounding the 1866 *Poems and Ballads*, the breakdown in 1879, and the association with Watts)—is not radically different from the pattern presented by previous biographers. He does, however, compel significant modifications to that pattern. For example, Edith's death was not a sudden blow but a long-drawn-out strain and distress; the Old Mortality Society, it now appears, played a more important role in Swinburne's development than is generally recognized (pp. 51-53); and Rooksby shows that Swinburne, who was not nearly so indifferent to criticism as he pretended to be, responded to the attacks on *Poems and Ballads* not only by his initial defiance but also, later, by attempting to present himself and his poetry as radically changing from a "Bacchic"