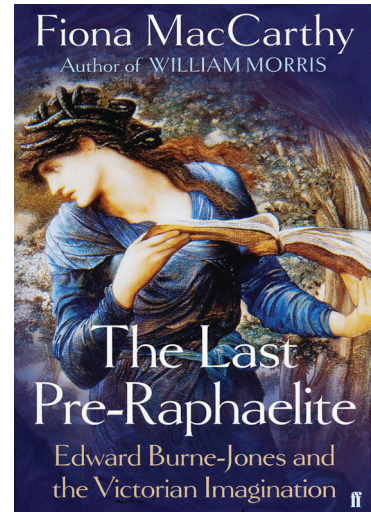


## BOOK REVIEWS & NOTICES

### Fiona MacCarthy, *The Last Pre-Raphaelite: Edward Burne-Jones and the Victorian Imagination*



Eventually, Ellen took pity upon me, and in the interest of efficiency, she took the reins. ‘Not too bad for a first try, but if you don’t mind, I think our horse needs a bit of a break from all these false starts. The poor dear doesn’t know what to make of you.’

When we arrived at the Thames, we stopped at a group of wooden docks designed for the mooring of small watercraft. A man came up and attended to our horse, leading him to a nearby stable. Ellen walked over to a small, colourfully-painted kiosk, and knocked on the door. In an instant, a bearded gentleman opened the door, and she entered the building. When she came out, she was carrying a metal box about the size of a brick, which looked to me like some type of mechanical device. Ellen beckoned me to join her, and we went out onto one of the docks, where a sort of rowboat was tied up.

The boat was painted in multiple colours and decorated with representations of mythical sea creatures. Although it was a rowboat in its general appearance, there was an enclosed area at the stern that had some levers and buttons mounted on a control panel. Recalling from the book the description of the river barge that ran by what William Guest described as “force”, I assumed this craft had a back-up engine if people tired of rowing upstream.

Ellen saw me looking at the boat, and seemed to read my thoughts. ‘Did you think we would be rowing up the Thames this morning? We can try, if you like, but maybe you would prefer something easier.’ With that, she opened a compartment below the control panel, and inserted the metal box she had obtained from the kiosk.

‘So your boat runs by force?’ I asked, then went on to say, ‘And by force, I presume you mean electricity?’

Ellen responded, ‘Electricity, yes, that is it. We don’t use much in the way of machinery here, you know, since we like to do most things ourselves. But after many years of trial and error, for certain tasks, we have developed a means of generating and using what some call “force,” which we store in devices like the one you saw. I couldn’t tell you much about how it all works. There are neighbours that specialize in that.’

I guessed that whenever Ellen travelled between her cottage and London, she left the device, a kind of battery, at the dockside facility to be re-charged.

*[to be continued]*

*George Duncan is senior heritage planner in Markham, Ontario and an architectural historian interested in the documentation of Ontario’s heritage buildings, local history and cultural landscapes. He has authored several books, including York County Mouldings from Historic Interiors (2007) and Thoreau MacDonald’s Sketches of Rural Ontario (2004), and has recently published a chap-book concerning Ontario’s vanishing barns, William Morris and his World. After learning about Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement, he now sees their influence wherever he goes.*

Printed by the Harvard University Press, 2012, \$35.00 from publisher; \$23.10 on Amazon; available in e-book and Kindle.

Fiona MacCarthy’s 629-page *The Last Pre-Raphaelite: Edward Burne-Jones and the Victorian Imagination* 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 “love[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” [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” [359]); and thought that “the best in me has been love and it brought me the most sorrow” (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" (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 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 failed to temper his dislike of feminism and contempt for socialism, as well as his gratitude for the company of aristocratic friends and 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.

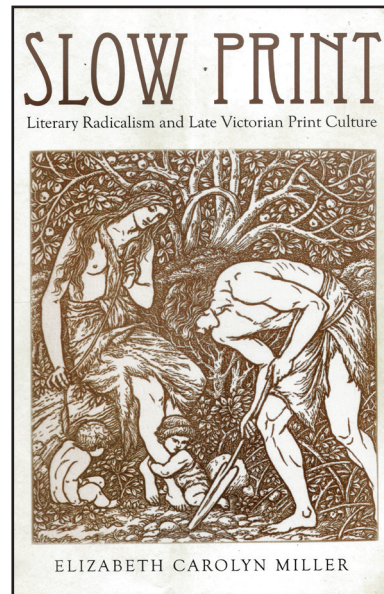
MacCarthy's summary evaluation of the two friends is that Burne-Jones "was the greater artist, though Morris was unarguably the greater man" (xxii), a comparison which elides (or at least diminishes) Morris's personal ideal of the "lesser" arts; widely held views that poetry is a 'high' art; Morris's 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's "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.'

*Florence S. Boos*

**Elizabeth Carolyn Miller**

*Slow Print: Literary Radicalism and Late Victorian Print Culture*



Printed by the Stanford University Press, 2012. Available in cloth and as an ebook, each for \$60.

This book explores the literary culture of Britain's radical press from 1880 to 1910, a time that saw a flourishing of radical political activity as well as the emergence of a mass print industry. While Enlightenment radicals and their heirs had seen free print as an agent of revolutionary transformation, socialists, anarchists, and other radicals of this later period suspected that a mass public could not exist outside the capitalist system. In response, they purposely reduced the scale of print by appealing to a small, counter-cultural audience. "Slow print," like "slow food" today, actively resisted industrial production and the commercialization of new domains of life.

Drawing on under-studied periodicals and archives, this book uncovers a largely forgotten literary-political context. It looks at the extensive debate within the radical press over how to situate radical values within an evolving media ecology, debates that engaged some of the most famous writers of the era (William Morris and George Bernard Shaw), a host of lesser-known figures (theosophical socialist and birth control reformer Annie Besant, gay rights pioneer Edward Carpenter, and proto-modernist editor Alfred Orage), and countless anonymous others.

*Slow Print* is available from the Stanford University Press website, [www.sup.org](http://www.sup.org), and at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).