

as Crone herself admits, the statistical incidence of actual violence declined significantly in nineteenth-century Britain, raising the question of whether siphoning off actual violence into the realms of representation and imagination ought to be considered a successful manifestation of the civilizing process, rather than evidence of its failure.

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**William Morris and the Uses of Violence, 1865–1890**, by Ingrid Hanson; pp. xxi + 230. London and New York: Anthem Press, 2013, £60.00, £25.00 paper, \$99.00, \$40.00 paper.

Ingrid Hanson's *William Morris and the Uses of Violence, 1865–1890* is the first sustained political and feminist critique of the instances of violence which pervade William Morris's creative work from his early tales through his late romances. Noting their imbrication in nineteenth-century ideals of masculinity, Hanson scrutinizes the physical conflicts portrayed in Morris's early *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* tales, the saga-based *Sigurd the Volsung* (1876), and the later prose narratives centering on tribal conflict. She postulates that an eroticized and even celebratory identification with warfare and combative physical contact—respect for “visceral, corporeal violence as a form of transformative touch”—is central to Morris's literary works (xvi). While the exposition of the book is nuanced and provides many insights, its readings seem to interpret projections of fear, horror, or stoical acceptance (“making the best of it”) as unqualified celebration on Morris's part (*The Collected Works of William Morris*, edited by May Morris, vol. 22 [Longmans, 1910–15], 81).

In chapter 1, “The Early Romances and the Transformative Touch of Violence,” Hanson places Morris's early 1856 prose tales within the context of the Crimean War and the writings of fellow contributors to the *Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*. In terms Hanson adopts from George Bataille, a requirement of cleansing violence is that it be excessive and sacrificial, and in these early tales resistance to an oppressor motivates heroes such as Svend and Lechnar to engage in battle without concern for personal cost. In chapter 2, “Knightly Women and the Imagination of Battle,” Hanson argues persuasively that for the women in *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858), “the appropriation of male roles” leads to a “generative dissolution of communal values,” but that the power of a disruptive imagination enables all of the work's protagonists to achieve an inward escape from imprisonment or violence, whatever their physical fate (61–62).

In chapter 3, “*Sigurd the Volsung* and the Parameters of Manliness,” Hanson explores Morris's unconventional notion of “manliness” as the exercise of courageous action, a quality available to both men and women. In chapter 4, “Crossing the River of Violence: The Germanic Antiwars and the Uncivilized Uses of Work and Play,” Hanson examines Morris's historical romances, *The House of the Wolfings* (1889) and *The Roots of the Mountains* (1890), in which fictionalized Germanic tribes fight representations of the Romans and Huns (“The Dusky Men”) (*CW*, vol. 15, 121). Placing the hostile portrayal of the “Dusky Men” in the context of 1880s racial theorizing, she observes that *Roots*'s failures in realism and “refusal of . . . personhood” to the tribe's enemies limit its stature as a socialist romance (129).

In chapter 5, "All for the Cause: Fellowship, Sacrifice and Fruitful War," Hanson considers Morris's most directly socialist literary works: "Chants for Socialists" (1885), "The Pilgrims of Hope" (1885), *A Dream of John Ball* (1886), and *News from Nowhere* (1890). She notes that Morris clings to the notion that only a violent upheaval can transform Britain's present system of slaughter-by-capitalism (defined as "organized misery" in *News from Nowhere*) into an egalitarian society (*CW*, vol. 16, 95). Yet not all readers will find Morris's imaginative tributes to historical struggles such as the Peasant's Revolt and the Paris Commune to be convincing portrayals of violence rather than meditations on failed struggle. As *Ball's* narrator notes in words with metaphorical resonance, "I pondered . . . how men fight and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name" (*CW*, vol. 16, 231–32).

Many have suggested that the events of "Bloody Sunday" in late 1887 altered Morris's view of whether social revolution through violence was even possible, and moreover that he became increasingly disillusioned about the likelihood that then-existing socialists could provide constructive guidance for such a revolution. Shortly before his death in 1896, Morris acknowledged that "[a]lmost everyone has ceased to believe in the change coming by catastrophe."

[S]ince war has been commercialized, I say, *we shall as above said not be called upon to gain our point by battle in the field*. But the disturbance and the suffering—can we escape that? I fear not. . . . Can that combat be fought out[,] again I say[,] without loss and suffering? Plainly speaking I *know* that it cannot. ("What We Have to Look For," edited by Florence S. Boos, *Journal of William Morris Studies* 19.1 [2010], 42, 44–45; emphases added)

As he approached the end of his life, then, Morris no longer believed that a single uprising of workers and organizers would effect the social revolution he ardently sought.

Hanson's choice of examples also deemphasizes the many travel narratives and peaceful romance plots found throughout Morris's writings, especially in works such as *The Life and Death of Jason* (1867), the four volumes of *The Earthly Paradise* (1868–70), *Love Is Enough, or the Freeing of Pharamond: A Morality* (1873), and his many private personal poems. A review of Morris's sources for *The Earthly Paradise* shows that he routinely altered medieval and legendary narratives to deemphasize military themes, downplaying violence in favor of romantic and erotic subplots. The recurrent portrayals of narrators, singers, artists, poets, auditors, observers, and time-travelers throughout his works also deflects attention from traumatic violence onto those who grieve, meditate on, or attempt to absorb its meanings. In addition, journeys and conflicts are often expressly allegorized in his writings. In what may be Morris's finest *Earthly Paradise* tale, "Bellerophon in Lycia," the hero confronts the monstrous Chimaera, now dissolving ash, and notes of its victims, "Belike it was of fear they died" (*CW*, vol. 6, 254). *Love Is Enough*, Morris's own favorite among his works, is perhaps the least action-packed of his longer narratives; in it King Pharamond renounces his kingdom and authority to seek a woman of the people, accepting that the search for love alone provides meaning.

That Morris staunchly opposed imperialist wars from the late 1870s onward adds mystery to his continued if uneven attraction to notions of individual heroism and so-called just wars, however, and Hanson's probing discussion calls attention to latent contrary impulses within the literary imagination of a man who at various times celebrated the prospect of a cataclysmic "Great Change" and an ensuing "epoch of rest" (*CW*, vol. 16, 179). Behind discussion of Morris's nineteenth-century milieu and his own imaginative identification with medieval battles lies an urgent pragmatic conundrum, faced by all who inhabit oppressive social systems. Neither warfare, with its so-called collateral injustices and provocation of further violence, nor more moderate appeals to reason and goodwill, have thus far been able to prevent the recurrent rise of murderous political or economic regimes. On this matter, it seems fair to give the aging Morris a final word on the means toward social transformation. In an 1893 lecture he reflected, "I do not believe in the possible success of revolt until the Socialist party has grown so powerful in numbers that it can gain its end by peaceful means. . . I will say once for all, what I have often wanted to say of late, to wit that the idea of taking any human life for *any reason whatsoever is horrible and abhorrent to me*" (*William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist*, edited by May Morris, vol. 2 [Russell and Russell, 1966], 350–51).

The relatively straightforward moral dichotomies of Morris's medieval romances thus enabled him to project a universe in which it was in fact possible to destroy evil once and for all by annihilating its embodiments. This helped nerve him to join the dispiriting struggles of a small band of comrades against an entrenched establishment with its intensifying "commercial war," as he called it in the title of an 1885 essay. Although Hanson's persuasive readings ignore the many *non-violent* actions by which Morris's protagonists and narrators seek healing and justice, they also remind us that even metaphorical representations of allegedly heroic acts of violence can obscure the destructive potential of their non-metaphorical counterparts.

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**"The Army Isn't All Work": Physical Culture and the Evolution of the British Army, 1860–1920**, by James D. Campbell; pp. xi + 224. Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2012, £68.00, \$124.95.

The Duke of Wellington famously said that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. James D. Campbell would likely agree, though he situates the marriage between sport and military efficiency as taking place somewhat later, after the Crimean War. Colonel Campbell is inclined to offer a reading of physical culture that credits military officers with using gymnastics, sports, and recreation to enhance the combat-readiness of British forces. Unlike more culturally-focused readings of athletics as about the construction of masculinity, or more critical readings that regard sport in the army as little more than an expensive distraction, Campbell argues that the British military used athletics to greatly enhance the fighting power of its small standing army.