

movements serve as a ‘reminder of how easily resistance to capitalism can transmute – or be transmuted – into antipopulism and how part of capitalism’s strength is to render the anticommercial as the antidemocratic’ (p. 301).

**Ruth Kinna**

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Amelia Yeates and Serena Trowbridge, eds, *Pre-Raphaelite Masculinities: Constructions of Masculinity in Art and Literature* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 251 pp., 18 illustrations, £65.00 hbk, ISBN 9781409455585.

The majority of critical work on the Pre-Raphaelites from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has focused predominantly on what Dinah Roe describes as ‘[w]omanhood in general and female sexuality in particular’, though, as Roe notes, nineteenth-century critics were as interested in the Pre-Raphaelites’ ‘depictions of men’ as of women (p. 151). The editors of *Pre-Raphaelite Masculinities* seek to redress this critical blind-spot by providing a wide-ranging and impressively researched collection of essays that examine the complex and often contradictory representations of manhood and manliness in the work of Pre-Raphaelite artists and writers, drawing on the rich body of critical and theoretical work on gender and sexuality that has developed in recent years. As the editors and individual contributors acknowledge, they are to varying degrees indebted to the pioneering work of scholars such as Herbert Sussman (*Victorian Masculinities*, 1995) and J. B. Bullen (*The Pre-Raphaelite Body: Fear and Desire in Painting, Poetry and Criticism*, 1998), whose seminal studies laid the foundations for future work in this area, but they also argue convincingly for the need for a thorough reappraisal of Pre-Raphaelite conceptions and constructions of masculinity in the twenty-first century, and this book provides a series of original, thought-provoking and at times provocative essays that succeed in encouraging us to re-examine and rethink the Pre-Raphaelites.

Yeates and Trowbridge assert in the Introduction that masculinity as understood by all the contributors is ‘constructed, fluid and mobile’ (p. 3), and the book as a whole thus refutes stereotypical ‘separate spheres’ approaches to gender and sexuality in the Victorian period. The opening chapter by Jay D. Sloan develops this premise by analysing how Rossetti overtly challenges ‘prevailing Victorian gender ideologies’ through two different constructions of masculinity in his poems ‘Jenny’ and ‘On the “Vita Nuova” of Dante’, which Sloan identifies as the ‘Confessional Man’ and the ‘Pilgrim of Love’ respectively (p. 19). There is an extensive and insightful analysis of ‘Jenny’ in this chapter, the detailed textual analysis supporting Sloan’s claim that in ‘exposing the abusive nature of Victorian men’ through the contemplations of the

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poem's speaker, 'Rossetti activates potential for cultural change' (p. 31). There is a much more succinct discussion of the second poem in which Sloan argues that the Dantesque 'Pilgrim of Love' figure demonstrates Rossetti's identification with 'poetic traditions strikingly at odds with mainstream Victorian culture' (p. 32), but the relatively brief supporting analysis results in a less substantial argument and the chapter would have benefitted from a more even balance between the two poems.

In the second chapter, Gavin Budge approaches Pre-Raphaelite art in the context of 'a mid-nineteenth crisis of masculinity' (p. 55). Noting the significance of Keatsian Romanticism to Pre-Raphaelite painters, Budge suggests that just as the 'class and gender ambiguity' characteristic of Keats's work 'subverts the cultural hegemony of patriarchal aristocracy', so the 'insistence' of detail in Pre-Raphaelite paintings is itself a radical act, disrupting 'the visual hierarchy on which the aristocratic paradigm of authoritative spectatorial overview depends' (p. 57). The chapter considers Pre-Raphaelite pictorial technique in some detail, although it does take a while for the argument to get going due to the range of contextual and critical material included. Nonetheless Budge offers a considered analysis of how the Pre-Raphaelites painted, as well as what they painted, and considers their technique as a 'democratization of vision' (p. 61), critical responses to which were symptomatic of wider anxieties regarding political democracy in the mid-nineteenth century.

A similarly detailed reading of painting technique as well as subject is provided by Rosemary Mitchell in her chapter on William Bell Scott's 'Wallington Scheme', a commissioned series of paintings depicting Northumbrian history. Mitchell presents a cogent account of the eight pictures in the series and argues persuasively for the shifting conceptions of masculinity they represent, from the authoritarian and militaristic figure of the Roman centurion to the 'civilizing and sacrificial type of manhood' of Cuthbert (p. 112), and from the 'emasculated' figure of Bede (p. 115) to Bernard Gilpin's performance of masculinity through social engagement. The chapter concludes with a fascinating analysis of *Iron and Coal*, a painting which appears to celebrate the 'modern working-class masculinity' of the industrial era, but which also disturbs and complicates this interpretation through a range of motifs, including the young girl sitting on a gun in the foreground (p. 126).

Simon Cooke's chapter on Pre-Raphaelite illustration is a welcome part of this collection of essays, examining an important, if perhaps sometimes overlooked, aspect of Pre-Raphaelite work. Beginning with an examination of the type of athletic and energetic illustration exemplified in the illustrations of Henry Courtney Selous, Cooke examines how Pre-Raphaelite illustrators in contrast 'offer a reading of masculinity which is largely static' and which re-visualises men 'as creators and thinkers' (p. 128). There is a detailed consideration of the Moxon *Tennyson*, in which what Cooke

describes as ‘Tennyson’s highly ambiguous writing of Masculinity’ (p. 130) provides fertile territory for Rossetti, Hunt and Millais, who often feminise their male characters, giving them ‘small frames’ and ‘delicate hands and feet’ (p. 135). A subsequent discussion of Rossetti’s frontispiece for Christina Rossetti’s ‘Goblin Market’ notes how a rapacious male desire is indicated by ‘a dense field of suggestive signs’ (p. 143), whilst in an interesting shift of focus towards the end of the chapter Cooke discusses Millais’s illustrations for Trollope’s novels in which manliness is defined as ‘a quality of the home and only definable in relation to the household’ (p. 147).

Several chapters in the book will be of interest to Morris enthusiasts, not least Ingrid Hanson’s excellent chapter on *Sigurd the Volsung*. Hanson notes the pervasive identification with the Old North in Victorian cultural and nationalistic discourses which no doubt influenced critical appraisals of *Sigurd* as being ‘more “masculine”, or “virile”, with “greater healthfulness of tone”, than his earlier poems’ (p. 36). Hanson offers a sensitive critique of the role violence plays in constructing male identity in the poem, a topic she has focused on more widely in her book *William Morris and the Uses of Violence, 1856-1890* (2013). She also notes how fluid gender constructions are in the Norse Sagas, enabling Morris to ‘suggest a kind of manliness that is not tied to maleness and that is rather based on behaviour’ (p. 47), as the poem’s representations of Brynhild and Gudrun demonstrate; indeed Hanson suggests that it is the female characters ‘who shape the masculine world of the text’ (p. 51). Particularly interesting in this chapter however is Hanson’s observation that several years before Morris embraced Marxism he was already, in *Sigurd*, envisaging a dialectical view of history in which ‘a developing manliness transcends the individual lifespan’, being accomplished ‘over a number of generations’ (p. 44), an argument which supports her claim that Morris offers us an ‘inclusive’ and ‘communal’ vision of masculinity in this most remarkable of poems (p. 35).

Morris also receives sustained attention in Dinah Roe’s chapter on male chastity, in which she offers an astute analysis of Morris’s poem ‘Sir Galahad, A Christmas Mystery’. Morris and Burne-Jones, Roe argues, inaugurated ‘a second phase of Pre-Raphaelite medievalism which shifted its interest from monastic to chivalric masculinity’ (p. 160). Having considered representations of monasticism in the work of earlier Pre-Raphaelite artists, Roe examines how the figure of Sir Galahad becomes an altogether more complex and nuanced figure in Morris’s poem in which ‘sexual purity [...] is a decidedly mixed blessing’ (p. 163). This more ambivalent representation of Galahad, she argues, can also be seen in Burne-Jones’s 1858 drawing of the knight, in which the combination of images of ‘male sexual chastity and eroticism’ generate a certain ‘intensity’ (p. 166). The chapter concludes with a brief but pertinent discussion of Walter Pater’s review of Morris’s poetry which

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appeared in the *Westminster Review* in 1868 and the influence of Pre-Raphaelitism on Pater's Aestheticism, 'in which sacred and profane male desire can be simultaneously expressed and contained' (p. 168).

Also of interest to Morris scholars will be Amelia Yeates's chapter on Burne-Jones. Indeed, Yeates's chapter provides an interesting counterpoint to Hanson's chapter on *Sigurd*, in that whilst several contemporary critics were clearly pleased by the refreshing virility of Morris's poem, Burne-Jones's painting style was repeatedly criticised as being 'unhealthy and unmanly' (p. 81). Yeates notes the prevalence of the word 'morbid' in much of this criticism, an indictment that was linked to 'a wider complaint about pessimism and sadness in his work' (p. 89) – something seemingly unforgivable in a culture which advocated 'manly cheer' (p. 90). Yeates examines the different ways in which Burne-Jones's work was judged in the context of gender norms and conformity, and her chapter concludes with a thoughtful consideration of how we might now approach his work through the concept of 'queerness' in its broadest sense – a term used by several contemporary critics and more particularly Henry James, for whom, Yeates argues, 'the term "queer" best summed up the otherness of Burne-Jones's work, particularly with regard to its gendered qualities' (p. 99).

Sally-Anne Huxtable continues this discussion of 'queerness' in the penultimate chapter of the book, in which she argues that the story of Tannhäuser 'functions as a cipher for diverse queer practices and ideas' for nineteenth-century artists and writers (p. 167). The chapter focuses on Swinburne's 1863 poem 'Laus Veneris' and Burne-Jones's 1861 watercolour of the same name. Swinburne's 'queering of masculinity' can, Huxtable proposes, be seen as part of a wider endeavour shared by Morris and Burne-Jones 'to use the trope of medieval chivalry to redefine the notion of the male protagonist or "hero" in European literature' (p. 172). The discussion of Burne-Jones's watercolour is particularly interesting in its demonstration of how Burne-Jones alters the focus of the myth so that it is Venus, rather than Tannhäuser, who is represented as the central suffering character. A brief consideration of Morris's poem 'The Hill of Venus' from *The Earthly Paradise* prefaces a discussion of Swinburne's poem in which the emphasis is 'on the Venusberg as an occluded queer space' (p. 186), and the chapter concludes with the claim that the treatment of the Tannhäuser myth by both Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic artists and writers offers 'a new, more complex, fluid and humane perception of masculine identity' in the nineteenth century (p. 187).

The book concludes with Eleanor Fraser Stansbie's chapter on Holman Hunt's three versions of *The Light of the World*, paintings which, she argues, 'generated completely different sets of meanings, contingent upon the contexts of their production, their reception and their display' (p. 191). Hunt's original use of both

male and female models did, Stansbie argues, contribute to the achievement of a ‘somewhat insubstantial and androgynous figure’ (p. 194) in the earlier versions (the first in Keble College, Oxford, and a smaller copy in Manchester Art Gallery), whereas in the later version (St Paul’s Cathedral) the muscular physique of the model Domenico Mancini produces a ‘less ethereal’ and ‘more sensuous’ (p. 203) figure of Christ. The distinction acquires a new significance when we take into consideration the fact that this final version was taken on a tour of British colonies, its purpose apparently being to ‘uplift the masses spiritually and culturally’ (p. 206).

Stansbie’s chapter thus ends with a more overtly political consideration of the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, and in his Afterword Colin Cruise notes how the different forms of masculinity identified in the book must also be located in the context of a broader ‘struggle for political and legal justice’ (p. 217). Whilst this is often implicit in this collection, and occasionally explicit, it is an aspect that deserves greater consideration overall in the book than it receives. The book would also have benefitted from a clearer distinction between early and later versions of Pre-Raphaelitism – and indeed those familiar with the work of Morris might well challenge the unquestioning inclusion of him at all under the umbrella term ‘Pre-Raphaelite’. For example, whilst this collection would certainly be much the poorer without Ingrid Hanson’s impressive discussion of *Sigurd the Volsung*, I am probably not alone in wondering whether this most un-Pre-Raphaelite of poems has a place in a book concerned with Pre-Raphaelite art and literature. Likewise the categorisation of Burne-Jones’s work as distinctly Pre-Raphaelite – second stage or otherwise – might well be challenged. These issues aside, *Pre-Raphaelite Masculinities* is a significant and enjoyable contribution to academic studies in the field of Pre-Raphaelitism and confirms the continuing importance of this movement for scholars in the twenty-first century.

### **Phillippa Bennett**

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Michelle Weinroth and Paul Leduc Browne, eds, *To Build a Shadowy Isle of Bliss: William Morris’s Radicalism and the Embodiment of Dreams* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015), 392 pp., 25 b&w photographs, £87.00 cloth, ISBN 9780773544604; £27.99 pbk, ISBN 9780773544611.

This attractively produced and substantial book came about, we are told, as a result of a conference on Morris’s aesthetics and radicalism held in Montreal in 2010, followed by a workshop at the University of Ottawa in the following year. This accounts for its continuity and coherence. In the Introduction, Michelle Weinroth tells us that the book’s two aims are ‘to delineate and define Morris’s unorthodox