

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Last Pre-Raphaelite: Edward Burne-Jones and the Victorian Imagination* by Fiona MacCarthy

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authority, and the delights of the seedy side of naval dockyard towns, where pubs like the French Maid provided all the entertainment a sailor needed. This book and the trilogy of which it is a part will be required reading for all students of the subject—a handsomely illustrated introduction to a quintessentially British hero.

Kings College, London

Andrew D. Lambert

The Last Pre-Raphaelite: Edward Burne-Jones and the Victorian Imagination. By Fiona MacCarthy. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012. Pp. xxiv, 629. \$35.00.)

Beloved and often bizarre, the works of the Victorian painter Edward Burne-Jones evoke oneiric fantasy worlds. Although a wealth of scholarly literature on the artist exists, his peculiar oeuvre in many ways continues to defy analysis. And despite his wife Georgiana's *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, published in 1904, and Penelope Fitzgerald's 1975 biography of the artist, Burne-Jones himself has remained an enigmatic figure. Fiona MacCarthy's new biography holds its own admirably beside those formidable predecessors, making excellent use of recently discovered sources that illuminate hitherto tenebrous aspects of the artist's life, including his wild, if largely epistolary, romances with a host of women—filling in a few of the gaps in Georgie's account, which remains understandably reticent on this score. Some of this material derives from Josceline Dimbleby's 2004 book, *May and Amy*, based largely on the discovery of a trove of letters from the artist to that author's great-grandmother, May Gaskell. But while Dimbleby was primarily concerned with her ancestors' secret lives, MacCarthy contextualizes the rhetoric of this effusive correspondence (the artist sometimes wrote five letters a day to his lady love) and particularly its imagery of "medieval romance" within Burne-Jones's Pre-Raphaelite project and rejection of nineteenth-century materialism (412). In addition to delving into Burne-Jones's erotic life, MacCarthy explores the artist's depressive tendencies, which he described as "a deep sunk fountain in me" (4).

The narrative of Burne-Jones's life is inseparable from that of his work, and, along with his emotional ups and downs, MacCarthy retraces in great detail his formative journeys to Italy, identifying numerous links between artwork he saw there and his later productions (unfortunately none of these comparisons is illustrated). Though MacCarthy does not neglect the creation of Burne-Jones's blockbuster paintings like *The Golden Stairs*, she highlights the artist's work in other media, especially stained glass. Her emphasis on old media and the influence

of the Italian Renaissance might have been tempered by more consideration of the artist's modernity. Caroline Arscott's brilliant 2008 book, *William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones: Interlacings*, for example, argues compellingly for the artist's relation to contemporary science, technology, and visual culture.

Yet if MacCarthy does not make as much as she could of such connections, she does offer a moving account of the vicissitudes of Burne-Jones's posthumous reception history. Following the decline in popularity of his work late in life and in the years following his death, his major unfinished canvas *The Sleep of Arthur in Avalon* and his designs for stained glass took on new meanings during World War I, when the former was exhibited at Burlington House and the latter were dedicated as memorials for fallen soldiers in churches throughout England. In these years, when the "values of courage, fidelity and self-sacrifice" defined public and private life, she contends, Burne-Jones's visionary narratives did, for a moment, encapsulate the ideals of the nation at the farthest remove from such medieval tales (519). Overall, MacCarthy's tome is an engaging, well-researched account of a complex character in a rapidly transforming world.

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Alison Syme

The Baker Who Pretended to Be King of Portugal. By Ruth MacKay. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2012. Pp. xii, 300. \$29.00.)

Over the last two decades, Ruth MacKay has been one of the most perceptive and insightful historians working on early modern Spain. Her previous books have examined aspects of Spain's social and popular culture history, providing insightful and novel understanding of resistance to royal power and the representations of Spanish artisans. In *The Baker Who Pretended to Be King of Portugal*, she turns her remarkable historical and archival skills to explicate one obscure episode in the religious and cultural history of the Iberian realms. In doing so, she casts a new understanding of millenarian moments in early modern Iberia and the enduring fascination with the belief that the Portuguese King Sebastian, lost and/or killed at the battle of Alcazarquivir (North Africa) in 1578, would return to lead Portugal to millennial glory. Shortly after his death and Philip II's (King of the Spains) election as king of Portugal, pretenders emerged from every corner of Iberia, claiming to be the king. Sebastianism, the name of the millenarian movement that envisioned the return of the king and the dawning of a new age, had a long history. As late as nineteenth-century Brazil, Sebastianism propelled struggles of resistance and hope.