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***The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Medievalism*, edited by Joanne Parker and Corinna Wagner**

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simply wasn't interested in exploring. Such redirection might also have created unwanted and negative controversy, such as that following the Primitivist art show at the MoMA (27 Sep 1984–15 Jan 1985) which deliberately paired modern and modernist art with that of "primitive" (aka indigenous and ancient) cultures. Besides that potential problematic, White Lion Publishing undoubtedly gave Elizabeth a page and illustration limit (the curse of all authors who devote themselves to ever-expanding subjects).

The beauty and strength of Elizabeth's *The Art of the Occult* lies in the art it showcases: this exhibition-in-a-book brings together a cornucopia of images from the Western occult tradition in a manner that inspires curiosity and thought. The possibilities for more books of this type, not to mention scholarly studies, dedicated to the tantalizing threads and subjects suggested in it is expansive.

Not an essential book for all libraries, perhaps, but one that individuals interested in the occult, mythology, art history, and wide range of related subjects are likely to keep in a privileged spot on their shelves—when it isn't open on the coffee table or library desk or beside the computer, drafting board, or easel.

—Emily E. Auger



THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF VICTORIAN MEDIEVALISM.

Joanne Parker and Corinna Wagner, editors. Oxford University Press: 2020. 720 p. ISBN 9780199669509. \$154.97

THIS EDITION IS A THOROUGH AND VALUABLE CONTRIBUTION to the study of medievalism, for both specialist and introductory readers alike. Thirty-nine essays offering discussions of the origin, development, sources, impact and reach of medievalism from the Tudor period to the end of the Victorian era—the ambition of this volume is undeniable and its scope is laudable.

Part I explores the early history of medievalism, prior to 1750. These essays highlight the political origins of medievalism, with the study being primarily deployed to defend the monarchical and ecclesiastical institutions. Philip Schwyzer opens the body of the volume with a discussion of the Tudor utilisation of a fictional Arthur to build social and political stability, followed by Timothy Graham's discussion of old English and old Norse studies as a springboard for eighteenth century justification of English Anglicanism and "the history of political, legal and ecclesiastical institutions as a whole" (51). Graham Parry takes this theme further in his essay "Validating the English Church" and demonstrates how various Catholic and Protestant apologists used

similar medieval sources to reach completely divergent conclusions. Rounding out Part I, Clare A. Simmons explores the ideology and legacy of the Digger movement, particularly how the conception of the “Norman Yoke” became a political rallying cry for the “enslaved” English people (77).

Part II traces the growth of medievalism through the romantic period. David Matthews’s essay highlights the literary turn to the medieval, the paradox of barbarism and chivalry, and the re-emergence of romance as a popular genre. Discussing the sources that fuelled romantic interest, Jack Lynch charts the history of medieval forgeries, considering how the “age of literary deception” (104) created a symbiotic relationship between historicist criticism and forgers. Kirsten Wolf’s essay on the origins of philology offers a brief biography of both Grímur Jónsson Thorkelin and Rasmus Rask as two individuals who invigorated the study of Britain’s Germanic past.

This is followed by Joseph Crawford’s “Gothic and Germanic fiction,” exploring the influence of the gothic on the romantic imagination—particular focus is given to the struggle between representing the medieval as a barbaric or heroic age, and the influence of the contemporary threat of Napoleon across the channel. Tom Duggett’s essay complements this by considering Wordsworth’s “Michael”; this essay relies heavily on a close reading of the poem and the influence of Wordsworth’s personal life on his work, so direct discussion of medieval influence takes something of a back seat, though this does not diminish the value of Duggett’s contribution. Finally James Watt concludes Part II with a contribution on Sir Walter Scott and the medievalist novel. In-depth consideration is given to popular responses to Scott’s evocation of chivalry and the legacy of *Ivanhoe* as a key step in the acceptance and popularisation of historical novels, reinvigorating interest in the distant British past.

Part III takes time to explore medieval sources, and several essays take pains to highlight the importance of grassroots enthusiasm for these sources—that is, they demonstrate that collection, printing, and attempts to analyse or recreate medieval texts were primarily supported by a small network of passionate individuals. M.J. Toswell’s contribution on Anglo-Saxon poetry reflects on the importance of “extreme” national pride (177) in one’s ancestors as a factor provoking scholarship. This thread continues in Richard Utz’s essay on the rediscovery of Chaucer, which inspired recreation of old English poetic forms, themes, and linguistic flourishes; the popular reception of Chaucer is also considered, particularly the polarised public responses and proliferation of adaptations, and the adoption of Chaucer as *the* English poet. “The Recovery of Anglo-Saxon Sculpture” by Jane Hawkes provides a refreshing focus on medievalism in material history before Huw Pryce opens a regional orientated discussion of medieval scholarship.

Irish, Welsh, and Scottish scholarship is addressed in two essays with Huw Pryce, Sarah Dunnigan, and Gerard Carruthers displaying the debt this field owes to devoted individuals as opposed to broad professional scholarship. In doing so, they offer an implicit connection between the desire of figures like Scott to understand the medieval past and the simultaneous impulse to imaginatively recreate it. The study of the medieval period in the nineteenth century in all three nations is clearly presented as indebted largely to Victorian clubs, relatively small-scale private endeavours funded by those devoted individuals.

Eleonora Sasso's essay on the lure of Boccaccio places particular emphasis on the symbolic value of the medieval, specifically the co-existence of spirituality and material existence. The discussion of Rossetti is particularly stimulating, though perhaps comment on the relationship of symbology to Catholicism would have expanded the scope of the examination. This could have been an interesting inclusion, given that earlier chapters gesture towards a simultaneous interest in medievalism and revival of Catholicism in Britain. This essay highlights the interpretative space of the medieval period, functioning as a window for challenging conventional Victorian morality.

Carl Phelpstead's essay turns attention towards Victorian interest in Scandinavia and Iceland, sparked by an increased availability of sources. The legacy of W.P. Ker is highlighted, as the explosion of Old Icelandic texts at hand to the British public "exerted a profound influence on the course of Victorian medievalism" (286). This is followed by Francis Gentry's essay, "Medievalism as an Instrument of Political Renewal in Nineteenth Century Germany," which considers the role of medievalism as a unifying ideology. The process of unifying Germany was a complex one and Gentry suggests the importance of a perceived historical harmony and cohesion contributing to the progress towards a single German nation.

Part III concludes with an essay from Elizabeth Emery and Janet T. Marquardt on the influence of French medievalism. Emery and Marquardt raise an interesting point regarding ownership of medieval monuments; namely, are these sites and ruins part of a collective national past or the preserve of noble and ecclesiastical classes, a charged question in post-Revolutionary France. Sadly, this point is raised merely in passing and would have benefitted from further discussion, as it could have provided a useful framework for the authors' discussion of the prominent figures involved in various efforts to conserve and restore medieval monuments.

Part IV considers the impact of medievalism on social, political and religious theory. Will Abberley opens this part with a discussion of philology, Anglo-Saxonism and national identity. The discussion concentrates on the various interpretations of Anglo-Saxon language, particularly focusing on the

tension between “Anglo-Saxon language as a pure national origin” (338) and the philological reality. Building on this search for national identity, Richard A. Gaunt considers the Young England movement, “the last hurrah of romantic Toryism” (352), a group of young men who reached back to the medieval period as an inspiration for contemporary social and moral regeneration. Complementing the political discussions, Dominic Janes’s essay “The Oxford Movement, Asceticism, and Sexual Desire” sets out a clear premise and follows through with a thoughtful and clearly illustrated discussion. The author recognizes the restricted parameters of his examination and treats this not as a limitation but as an opportunity to present a concise insight into the opinions and attitudes to monasticism. This discussion in fact stretches to encompass social and political pressures influencing the perception of monasticism, particularly the complicated male gender stereotypes of the Victorian period.

Ian Haywood’s essay thoughtfully explores the use of wood cut illustrations to invoke creative values associated with the medieval period, focusing particularly on Linton’s work. Haywood highlights the juxtaposition of grotesque impish figures and the naturalistic representation between parts one and two of “Bob Thin” as tapping in to two conceptions of the medieval—barbaric and idyllic, feudal and utopian. Building upon this tension, Corinna Wagner’s essay, “Bodies and Buildings,” provides a refreshing discussion regarding “modern” health concerns and the urban environment. This essay stands out as a reading of the Victorian struggle to understand the impact of an environment and social structure on an individual’s body—Wagner takes time to demonstrate the range of interpretations of the medieval, highlighting that the relationship between Victorian medievalists and Utilitarians was characterized by nuance and tension. Wagner’s discussion on dissection, burial, and commemoration leans heavily on Ruth Richardson’s work, but builds towards a clean demonstration of the intersection of medievalism, Utilitarianism, and materialism in Victorian society.

Concluding Part IV, Kathleen Davis and Nadia R. Altschul offer a useful interpretation of “Moorish” South America—they take the time to outline the connection between Spain’s Moorish history and the exportation of that national character to South America, where they suggest it was preserved due to the lack of civilizing influence (422). This ties the concepts of medievalism and stagnation together throughout the essay, an aspect of medievalism which has been hinted towards but largely left dormant by other essays. The authors lean heavily into the individuality of Spain during the Medieval period, being an Islamic center rather than a Catholic power, which provides a refreshing change of pace. The investigation of India which follows is similarly well founded, though perhaps less engaging. It returns to discussions of the inherent freedom of the Anglo-Saxons, the dynamics between these people and the

conquering Normans, and considers how this interpretation of history was broadcast onto the ruling of India. While well-constructed, this section of the chapter returns to safe, familiar territory as the historical battle ground of the Norman invasion has been explored multiple times within the handbook. Though discussing both Chile and India serves to demonstrate the international impact of medievalism, greater consideration of Spanish influence in Chile could have been a staging point to discuss the contrast between the British Christian and the Spanish Islamic medieval heritages.

Part V of the handbook turns to art and architecture. William Whyte opens this part with a thorough overview of “Ecclesiastical Gothic Revivalism,” concluding that neo-medievalism “survived the challenges of the late nineteenth century” (445) as the most prevalent style of ecclesiastical architecture. Standing alongside this, Jim Cheshire’s essay on secular design considers the influence of Pugin, Ruskin, Scott, and Eastlake on architecture, furniture objects and decorations. Although G.A. Bremner’s discussion of secular gothic architecture beyond Europe reads as an extended list, in this instance such a format serves to illustrate the variety of places, buildings and styles gothic architecture affected. Bremner demonstrates the sweeping influence of the architectural style which highlights simultaneously the enthusiasm for gothic and the lack of a single gothic. This theme is continued through the in-depth discussion of ecclesiastical gothic across the British empire—the essay explores the evolution of the style in response to climates and local geography, the availability of materials, and indigenous populations. The argument flows organically and remains engaging despite its occasional tendency towards listing.

Turning to visual culture, Ayla Lepine considers the relationship between medievalism and the pre-Raphaelites, neatly building to the conclusion that the pre-Raphaelites resisted easy categorization by blending sources, aesthetics, and themes from across genres and historic periods into their visual output. Jan Marsh focuses on William Morris as a central figure in Victorian medievalism—Morris’s significant influence in this field has never been in question, but Marsh elegantly combines a biography with discussion of his manufacturing, conservation, political, and printing contributions.

Rosie Ibbotson’s “Revisiting the British Arts and Crafts” forcefully grounds the appeal of medievalism in “its radical transformative potential” (525). Though this point is regularly gestured towards, this essay articulates it as the cornerstone, the most significant appeal of medievalism to the Victorians. Ibbotson’s commitment to this central argument underpins the entire essay, making it among the most engaging and persuasive in the handbook. It also raises an interesting point, questioning the connection between Victorian medievalism and the search for community. This is frustratingly skated over,

though I acknowledge this essay may not be the place to explore this relationship—a deeper consideration of societies and communities forming around medieval interests as a reaction to an increasingly isolating modern world would have provided an interesting discussion and reinforced the arguments for the appeal of the medieval as an escape to an idyllic past.

Part V concludes with John Haines contribution on “Medievalist Music and Dance.” Haines reflects on the Victorian belief that “medieval music and dance was maintained by the common people” (540). “Revival” is a key theme in Haines’s discussion of music, drawing attention to the notion that the medieval was somehow preserved, reinvigorated rather than reinvented—highlighting the importance of chant and the music hall to the Victorians is a natural conclusion to this essay.

Part VI explores the literary impact of medievalism and investigates a broad range of authors and genres. Elizabeth Helsinger opens with a contribution on pre-Raphaelite poetry which highlights the roles of Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris. Helsinger draws attention to the importance of the scholarly foundation of both Rossetti and Morris’s creative output and the role of the pre-Raphaelite movement in challenging a society which expected realist artistic depiction.

Clare Broome Saunder’s essay “Women Writers and the Medieval” is particularly engaging, being the only female-centric contribution to the volume. The essay offers a useful conception of medievalism as a screen to protect the commercial interests of Victorian women writers, being used to obscure, to sanitize and to offer a safe space for “unfeminine” criticism of the contemporary, providing women an—admittedly veiled—route into political and social dialogue. Broome Saunders highlights the vital role of chivalric stereotypes in challenging gender roles and reclaiming female agency, though she also takes care to demonstrate women writers’ awareness of masculine victims of chivalric stereotyping. The essay briefly reflects on the length of the Victorian period and the scope for change within that time; her closing statements highlight the flexibility of the medieval stage throughout the Victorian era as “the age which opened with the image of the medieval damsel in distress, closed with the icon of the medieval militant woman” (581).

Marcus Waithe returns to Morris, this time considering his utopian work, *News From Nowhere*, in which Morris “recover(ed) elements of the medieval age for use and adaptation in the present” (584). This essay highlights Morris’s focus on gothic architecture as a vehicle for his desire to disrupt the popular Victorian narrative interest in events, grounding his utopia in building above all else. “Mid-to-late Victorian Medievalist Poetry” by Anthony H. Harrison draws on the work of Arnold, Tennyson, Morris, Rossetti, and Swinburne to propose that medievalism was a format which allowed authors,

artists, and poets to reappropriate Victorian beliefs and values; awareness of the historical reality was tempered by artistic license and inspiration was drawn from medieval stories like the Arthurian narratives and Tristan and Isolde.

Returning to the Scandinavian sphere, Heather O'Donoghue explores the thematic and stylistic influence of Icelandic sagas; Stevenson's debt to the sagas is a particular focus, though O'Donoghue also considers Henry Longfellow, Henry Haggard and W.G. Collingwood. The sagas "chimed well with the preoccupation of Victorian novelists" (631), though often proved challenging in adaptation. Providing an interesting contrast to O'Donoghue's essay, Joanne Parker turns her attention to Victorian Anglo-Saxonism, and the influence of Walter Scott carries a great part of this essay. The legacy of Victorian Anglo-Saxon interest forms a stimulating conclusion, with Parker indicating the consistent themes which have survived into contemporary literature through their Victorian mediators—suspicion of Catholicism, feasting culture, Old English, and questions of English identity. "Tennyson and the Return of King Arthur" concludes the volume, with Inga Bryden considering the representation of Arthurian objects in literary production. References to Arthur pervaded popular Victorian fiction, with Bryden gesturing towards the importance of material remains and the budding interest in archaeology as fuel for the reinvigoration of Arthur.

Beginning and ending with Arthur, this volume is thorough, expansive, and well rounded. The medievalist thread ties all of these essays together, demonstrating the malleability, flexibility, and inclusiveness of the term. The value of "medievalism" as an ideology is reflected in the many facets of its interpretation, that "medievalism" can mean so many things to so many people. This volume is undeniably valuable and will offer something to scholars at all levels. However, it must be mentioned that the introduction, Graham's, and Phelpstead's essays particularly fall into the habit of using "Viking culture," presenting a simplified understanding of the vikingr period. Repeated use of "Viking culture" obscures the complexity of the social environment by failing to acknowledge that peoples of many ethnicities, cultures, and faiths chose to go a viking, with "viking" itself being a profession rather than a community. Though this simplification is understandable given the scope of this book, a more thorough acknowledgement of the historical context would help to dispel the false construct of "Viking culture" rather than adopting and therefore perpetrating this representation of the period. This small point aside, perhaps the greatest contribution of this book is to highlight and repeatedly demonstrate the paradoxical appeal of the medieval; its simultaneous familiarity and otherness which could pose radical challenges to Victorian—and contemporary—institutions.

—Alana White