

## REVIEWS

Carole Silver, The Romance of William Morris, pp. xviii + 233. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1982. \$20.95.

This latest critical study of William Morris's vast literary oeuvre provides a carefully researched, well-reasoned, readable, comprehensive, and sensible view of Morris's development as a writer and thinker. Carole Silver's writing style is clear and pleasing, and her arguments are well thought out and easy to follow. This study will be useful for advanced undergraduates as well as graduate students and all appreciators of Morris's multi-faceted achievements. There are six illustrations of relevance to the text as well as a bibliography and an index.

One of Silver's basic assumptions (in my view, an entirely valid one), is that Morris's literary work is integrally related to his life and, in fact, shows forth the stages of his own psychic development; thus his writings are grouped and considered chronologically. Working through the broad concept of romance, not so much as a genre but as a complex of related attitudes, Silver shows convincingly the inter-relatedness of the works considered as well as their relevance to the personal events and other concerns of Morris's life. The Introduction should be read carefully, as it provides the rationale for the title and explains the major concepts which order this study. Throughout, Silver achieves a good balance between biographical fact and literary analysis. The discussions of individual works are clear and satisfyingly comprehensive, bringing together much that is illuminating from previous critical works and, at the same time, frequently offering new insights, particularly with regard to Morris's use of source materials. Silver is adept at bringing in relevant information about Morris's sources in such a way as to amplify our understanding of his own thought, which is to say that she never loses sight of her primary task of interpreting Morris's own writings. Silver shows a particularly strong understanding of the intellectual and artistic milieu of Morris's time and thus is able to call attention to contemporary source materials and influences as well as the better known traditional sources, such as Malory and Froissart. But even with these, Silver is able to provide some fresh insights. One of the major strengths of this book is that the author has a good grasp of what is really important and does not become mired down in trivialities.

For all these reasons, Silver's book is a welcome and useful addition to Morris criticism. The newcomer to Morris's world will find it a reliable and comprehensive guide, and the seasoned Morrisian