

The Colours of the Past in Victorian England edited by Charlotte Ribeyrol. Bern: Peter Lang, 2016. xiv, 270 pp. + 40 colour plates. ISBN 978-3-0353-0827-3. \$67.95.

Charlotte Ribeyrol has edited a wonderful collection of essays that deepens our appreciation of material culture and broadens our understanding of colour in the revolutionary nineteenth century. The book's cover suggests much of what is to be found inside: on a background of indigo, with a bar of sky blue highlighting the title below, is J.A.M. Whistler's *Nocturne: Blue and Gold, St Mark's Venice*. Venice is a significant port of contact with the East, and indeed the colour blue, in its many variations, is a motif throughout these essays, along with the recurring themes of the aesthetic Victorians' association of music with form, their fascination with the beauty of religion, and their impressionistic gaze blurring the boundaries between dream and reality.

Having grown out of an interdisciplinary seminar series on the "Colours of the Past in Victorian England" in the autumn of 2014 at Sorbonne Universités, the volume is part of a larger series entitled *Cultural Interactions: Studies in the Relationship between the Arts*, edited by J.B. Bullen. Nine chapters are distributed among three parts: "The Temporality of Colour," "'Foreignizing' Colour," and "Material and Abstract Colours," categories by no means impermeable, with some chapters suitable to any part and all complementary to one another. All but one of the essays are accompanied by four to six colour prints, a necessity in a work so concerned with the particularity of objects and colour.

The Colours of the Past in the title refers to both present insight into Victorian England and the Victorians' own understanding of historical colours. The introduction explains that the volume "offers a *synchronic* understanding of the Victorians' chromophilia, which was intimately related to their interest in the past, whether antique, biblical, medieval or Renaissance." This nostalgia, elaborates Ribeyrol, leads to ideological imaginings and reinventions as much as to historical discovery. Fundamentally, the collection traces several struggles to retain meaning in colour and its connection to the past, amidst an influx of new chemical or synthetic colours that, though vibrant, seemed drained of traditional significance.

Ribeyrol sets the tone with an interdisciplinary opening chapter co-authored with Philippe Walter, Professor of Chemistry at Pierre et Marie Curie University in Paris, who conducted chemical analyses on paintings. "'A magic web with colours gay': W.H. Hunt's Chromatic Nostalgia" focuses mainly on Hunt's *The Lady of Shalott*, begun in 1890 and finished in 1905, establishing the volume's pattern of yearning for a pre-industrial past and the attempt to capture it through *ekphrasis*. Hunt professed very definite prefer-