

William Morris's Utopianism: Propaganda, Politics and Prefiguration by Owen Holland. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. xi, 337 pp. ISBN 978-3-319-59601-3. \$99.99.

The structuring idea of Owen Holland's book – and it is fitting to discuss a structuring idea in this tightly woven argument – is that William Morris's utopian writing is more concerned with the “now-here” that can be read in the title of his 1891 text than with “nowhere.” This is not a new formulation, of course: Holland draws on Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's reading of *Erewhon* for this “distinction between immanent and transcendent utopias.” What Holland makes of it, however, is a sustained, illuminating, and original exploration of the artistic, political, cultural, and international contexts of Morris's work, arguing that his socialist writing is primarily neither nostalgic nor speculative, but interventionist. The argument that Morris himself is not a political dreamer but a strategist whose writings constitute detailed engagements with contemporary social and cultural debates rather than creative thought-experiments or indeed a kind of timeless “socialist scripture” is thoroughly, carefully, and persuasively defended.

Holland signals the positioning of his argument with an opening chapter on twentieth-century critics of Morris's political writings, focusing on E.P. Thompson, Perry Anderson, and Raymond Williams. He qualifies Thompson's use of Miguel Abensour's idea of “the education of desire,” that is, a way of directing and opening up utopian longings for a better future by estranging the present and its norms, and Anderson's claim that, although Morris's work is political rather than moral, *Nowhere* is ultimately a “craftsman's paradise.” On the contrary, Holland suggests, the political radicalism of Morris's work lies not in its refusal to engage with contemporary life, nor even in its defamiliarization of the present but in engagement with the practical details of the present, its use of utopia as a strategy in itself. At the same time, he sets Morris in the context of Arnold's and Wilde's arguments about the function of art, proposing that Morris's utopian writings demonstrate “propagandistic instrumentality” in contrast with the “aesthetic autonomy” he gestured towards in his earlier engagements with the palace of art.

The main body of the book is divided into three sections. Holland's strategy is to set up a proposition – we must re-examine Morris's relation to the “woman question,” we must re-appraise the meanings of his pastoralism, we must question the ways in which *News from Nowhere* has been seen as “nationally circumscribed” in content – and then take us into detailed analysis of contemporary debates, interwoven with readings of the text. The approach is rich, rewarding, and illuminating, based on careful detective work of the kind that is often eschewed in writings on Morris in favour of examining and