

CORRESPONDENCE

What I expect of the William Morris Society

Sir,

I am one of the despised class of PhD students, although I am not engaged in 'devouring the corpse' of William Morris. (By the way, why knock the poor PhD student? Isn't it enough to be poor, & obscure, & occupied with the often unrewarding minutiae of a subject, without being sneered at for it into the bargain? Research is often like mining – it is not until one has done the hard work & excavating that one knows whether gold ore or merely rubble will result.)

Anyway, this letter is not to outline the difficulties of the PhD student, but to comment, for what it is worth, upon your first issue of *The Journal*. Or rather to utter a cry of protest. MUST we have this ostentatious licking of a dead man's boots with one eye cocked upon the living? This is the regrettable impression that some portions of *The Journal* make. Morris, the man with the Authentic Medieval Mystique – it sounds like a bad (very bad) advertising slogan. MUST your contributors reach into 'the rag-bag of memory' – to bring out cliché-ridden rags, with the air of a bad conjurer taking paper flags out of a hat?

This sort of ghastly adulation can, in fact, put off those very people (myself among them) who have picked up this *Journal* because they want to know more about Morris and his ideas. I have read only one book by Morris – *News from Nowhere* – and it had a profound effect upon me. I was stirred by his attempt

to achieve a fusion of life and art, to make work a creative pleasure rather than a necessary monotony. This seems to me a noble and viable ideal, far removed from the sickly & silly triviality in some of the pages of *The Journal* – I hasten to say, not all – which might cause the unconverted determinedly to vow to remain so.

I send in my subscription, however, in the hope that the following issues of *The Journal* will have less of the ‘Medieval other-where’ (which conjures us the worst sort of caricature of the PreRaphaelite movement) and more of those ‘bigger issues’ which Mr Purkis hints at in his letter.

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