William Morris: an annotated bibliography 1986-87

David and Sheila Latham

This bibliography is the fourth instalment of a biennial feature of The Journal. Some items inadvertently omitted from the 1984-85 bibliography are added here. Though we exclude book reviews, we include reviews of exhibitions as a record of temporal events. We give each original entry a brief annotation meant to describe its subject rather than evaluate its argument.

This year we have arranged the bibliography into seven subject categories. The entries in Part I include new editions, reprints, and translations of Morris’s own publications, and are arranged alphabetically by title. The entries in Part II include books, pamphlets, articles, exhibition catalogues, and dissertations on Morris, arranged alphabetically by author within each of the following six categories:

- Bibliographies
- General
- Literature
- Decorative Arts
- Book Design
- Politics

The General category includes biographical surveys and miscellaneous details as well as studies that bridge two or more subjects. Though we still believe that each of Morris’s interests is best understood in the context of his whole life’s work, we hope that the new format will save the impatient specialist from having to browse through descriptions of woven tapestries in search of critiques of ‘The Haystack in the Floods’.

PART I: PUBLICATIONS BY MORRIS


The Introduction notes how Morris changed from optimism that political ideas can influence public events to 'disillusion about the people holding the ideas'. Morris first defines politics as 'preaching the ideal'; but with the corruption of language by the middle class, he shifts his attention from the verbal to the visual, from words to craftsmanship, concluding that 'only when we are out of history will the word become truth again'.

   A paperback reprint of the 1888 Reeves & Turner edition.

   A German translation of stories from The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine.

   A German translation of The Ideal Book (1982).

   A German translation of 'Art and the Beauty of the Earth' and three other lectures.

   A German translation of The Well at the World's End.

   A reprint of the 1894 Kelmscott edition with 23 woodcuts by Walter Crane.

   A reprint of the 1885 Socialist League edition.

PART II: PUBLICATIONS ON MORRIS

BIBLIOGRAPHIES


   Colbeck gives detailed annotations for 128 items by or about Morris.

The Brotherton Collection at the University of Leeds includes two incunabula from Morris’s library (with his book label illustrated), a complete set of Kelmscott Press volumes, an unpublished manuscript of his translation (with Magnússon) of ‘The Story of Olaf the Holy’, and Alf Mattison’s collection of Socialist pamphlets and placards.


The 189 publications are divided into three categories: 11 publications by Morris, 171 publications on Morris, and 7 catalogues of exhibitions.


Schulte lists ten works by Morris translated into Italian between the years 1963 and 1985.

GENERAL


From his barge on the Seine in Paris, Ney Lannes MacMinn bequeathed to Kelmscott Manor his collection of Morris books, letters, and Charles Fairfax Murray’s death-bed pencil portrait of Morris.


If this ‘first nationally important small museum to be threatened with closure’ is lost, then ‘it may set a ghastly precedent for other local authorities.’


Jonsdottir recalls May lodging at her family’s manse, painting Icelandic landscapes in watercolours, and kindly sending gifts of English books.


This survey delineates the important stages in Morris’s life. The lectures on art and socialism – ‘his most important literary work’ – reveal him as a transitional figure whose dialectical conception of history spiralling toward a new order requires the communion between past and present.

The effective enforcement of the University Reform Act of 1854, prohibiting tests, made it possible for Morris to graduate without either signing the 39 Articles or officially rejecting his religion by declaring himself ‘extra Ecclesiam Anglicanam’.


A loyal friend, an affectionate mother, and a busy embroiderer who dabbled in bookbinding and illuminated keepsakes, Janey may be the model in News from Nowhere for the handsome, graceful homemaker who warmly welcomes the arrival of the haymakers at the riverside.


An intelligent, self-educated lover of music and books, Jane had a marriage that survived two love affairs, used her illness to secure a leisurely lifestyle, and in her old age helped May with details for a biography of Morris. May worked hard to publish Morris's writings, corresponded with his friends and acquaintances on biographical matters, and defended Love Is Enough as the key to all of Morris’s work.


Morris provided Yeats with a ‘reassuring model for an integrated life’ in his Tower at Ballylee where he enjoyed the ‘intersection of visionary grandeur and “popular” life’.


This sketch of Morris and his circle was delivered at the opening of the 1985 California State Library exhibition celebrating the quincentennial of Caxton’s Morte D’Arthur.


Jane’s flattering letters appeal to Blunt’s ego, encourage his visits, and reveal her anxiety about Jenny’s epilepsy, her own health, and political events in Ireland and Egypt. Blunt’s unexpurgated diaries infer an intimate relationship, describe a sympathetic kiss, and state that Morris had no interest in women or in nationalism.


The Waltham Forest Council’s proposal to close down the William Morris Gallery
will be protested by art and social historians. This issue sparked a series of letters to The Times dated 26 November p.13, 12 December p.9, 22 December p.9, and 29 December p.9.

Morris's 1871 and 1873 journeys are included in this study of the European travellers who verbally and visually documented their impressions of Iceland.

Lethaby was influenced by Morris's fusion of art with politics and theory with practice, was hired by Morris and Co. to partially decorate Stanmore Hall, and worked closely with Morris for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

The William Morris Gallery was established through donations from Edward Lloyd, Frank Brangwyn, A.H. Mackmurdo, and J.W. Mackail, but is now threatened with closure ironically by the Labour council.

Tanner’s Morris-inspired philosophy, that since children ‘catch standards from us’ their classrooms should not be ugly, supported the efforts of David Evans to develop a successful primary education program based on Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement.

This appreciation of Morris imagines his responses to the modern political and ecological scene, with such comparisons as the original Merton Abbey chintzes with the ‘shallow and untrue’ modern reprints.

Penty was an architect and social reformer whose medievalism and Guild Socialist movement were inspired by his devotion to Morris.

A reprint of the 1897 G. Bell edition.

33. Walsdorf, John. ‘How to Build a Poor Man’s William Morris Library.' AB:
From his perspective as a collector of Morrisseana for twenty years, Walsdorf explains how to choose a subject, to research it in libraries, to hunt through bookshops, and to study catalogues.

LITERATURE

   The romantic myths of The Earthly Paradise, emphasizing courage, endurance, valour, and reverence for nature, combine ‘Yeats’s dream of natural happiness with a Keatsian melancholy.’

   Morris’s sympathetic and detached development of the multiple narrators who transcend death and change as well as their own narrative frames, is exemplified in the essay ‘Shadow of Amiens’, its fictional companion ‘The Story of the Unknown Church’, and ‘A Dream’, all early prose that ‘hovers between fiction, descriptive essay, and stylized autobiography’.

   Considering the poetry of Tennyson, Arnold, Morris, and Swinburne, Victorian critics used metaphors of organic grafting, fashionable masquerading, and industrial galvanizing for deciding whether an animated spirit could make the old bones of classical and medieval literature live.

   Morris is the most realistic medievalist; his view of the past is contrasted with Thackeray’s and his view of the future is contrasted with Jefferies’ in After London.

   A rebuttal to Gribble’s arguments (JWMS 6 [Summer 1985]) that Morris regarded Nowhere as a negative example of what socialism could be like documents the value of books and education in Nowhere and concludes that ‘critics should not attribute their own misgivings about socialism to William Morris’.


As a ‘satiric obverse’ of contemporary Victorian society, News from Nowhere scrutinizes reason and reality as arbitrary concepts, and thus anticipates Ursula Le Guin and Samuel Delany.

Morris’s story supports Lévi-Strauss’s theory that myths reconcile contradictions in human experience as the characters of Mistress, King’s son, Maiden, and Golden Walter pair off in relationships that resolve the conflict between sexual lust and spirituality.

Morris emphasized pattern in his poetry and was sensitive to the ‘physical presence of the artist’.

In his stories about the unattainable and the process of change from The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine and The Earthly Paradise, Morris explores the influence of the past and the problems of preserving fluid time by fixing it into art. Sigurd and the prose romances show how Icelandic mythology, philological research, and socialism made Morris realize that the antiquated form of the romance, with its heroic quest, was the natural medium for his views.

After referring the reader to G.W. Dasent’s translation of the Icelandic Gisli Saga, Morris directly borrows from the tale in his description of a brotherhood pact ritual.

Contrary to Horace, a comparison of Rossetti’s paintings and Morris’s poems entitled ‘The Blue Closet’ and ‘The Tune of Seven Towers’ shows that Rossetti’s ‘artistic motives are not parallel to Morris’s purposes as a writer.’

The Earthly Paradise reveals not diffusion but the concentrated control of two-dimensional art which frees the artist from a fixed relationship to his work; its tales contrast mural ornamentation with the three-dimensional statuary associated with self-conscious obsession with a single image.

Resistant to conventional reading habits, Kelmscott Press books restore artistic experience to the act of reading; resistant to the conventions of realism, the prose romances foreground the distinction between the fictional and the real world.


A psychological reading of the body image in Morris’s early and later work illustrates, according to Paul Schilder’s ‘body schema’ theory, the difficulty which Morris had in conceptualizing the human body and human sexuality.


Characterized by aestheticism, faith in the perfectibility of man, and benign anarchism, Morris’s utopia is a Garden of Eden much ‘like a modern reconstruction of an historical site – homogenized and sterilized’.


A study of the chronology of the omitted tales of The Earthly Paradise and an analysis of their revisions demonstrate the artist exploring the relationship between personal vision and cultural tradition as the means to rediscover our lost paradise.


Morris’s utopia follows the historicizing influence of Pugin and in turn influenced Frank Lloyd Wright’s Usonian City.


Avoiding both the satiric denial of the utopian genre and the elegiac evasion of the arcadian genre, Morris presents in News from Nowhere the constructive literary vision found in the Romantic idyll as defined by Schiller.


The revisions of News from Nowhere from its serialization in Commonweal to its book form a year later address matters concerning physical labour, international relations, Socialist factions, and the delay of the revolution by forty years.

53. Nielsen, Torben Hviid. ‘Udviklingens eller Moralens Realisme: Om Fremskridtet
The approaches of Bellamy and Morris to morality and historic progress are contrasted.

   Days to Come is a dystopian novel which 'defines itself against' Morris's News from Nowhere.

   Morris's News from Nowhere is a dialectical reading of Bellamy's Looking Backward: 2000-1887.

   While John Clare, William Barnes, and Alfred Tennyson use the pastoral tradition to defend the social order and local culture, Morris, in News from Nowhere, uses it to attack the process of modernization.

   The rejection of Platonic universals allows Morris in 'The Chapel in Lyoness' and 'The Defence of Guenevere' to compose a two-dimensional pictorial pattern, 'a way of saying everything about nothing.'

58. Silver, Carole. '“East of the Sun and West of the Moon”: Victorians and Fairy Books.' Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature, 6 (Fall 1987), 283-98.
   Compared with Bronte's Jane Eyre, Morris made the fairy bride respectable in his tale from The Earthly Paradise by presenting her as sexually passive and an unwilling deserter.

   The Earthly Paradise at once sustains the escapist conceit of the idle singer and exposes his inevitable failure in a world more Victorian than medieval.

   After reviewing Guenevere’s logic, Sternberg analyzes her rhetoric, elaborating on Jonathan Post’s article (VP 17 [Winter 1979]) to show how Guenevere exploits the beauty and passion of art to seduce her audience.

61. Sussman, Herbert. 'The Language of the Future in Victorian Science Fiction.' In

As a work of science fiction, News from Nowhere fuses soft elements (the romance and a metaphoric style) with hard elements (the necessity of political 'action in the hard world of human history')


Birdalone’s escape from the repressive Castle conventions and French diction to a natural life and northern diction represents Morris’s feminist challenge to the traditionally masculine quest-romance.


The source for The Sundering Flood may have been Jón Thoroddsen’s Icelandic novel Piltur og Stulka (1850).


While Morris did not intend to paint symbolic pictures, he manipulates the reader’s emotions with varying shades of gold for spiritual matters, red for matters of the heart, green for irony, destroyed hope, or betrayal, and grey for the absence of spirit or emotion.

DECORATIVE ARTS


The democratic design of Morris's Arts and Crafts movement encouraged social reform.


Reputed to be a founding father of British design, Morris is a cultural regurgitator responsible "for Britain’s anti-industrial, anti-urban culture," and is somehow likened to salesmen who "tell you about their scuba holidays in Florida."


As the leading exponent of the Arts and Crafts movement which "promised to maintain traditions of art until the time when true craftsmanship and social production would be indistinguishable," Morris was the inspiration for similar movements in the United States.

A summary of Morris's achievements is followed by a list of a dozen nineteenth-century reviews, articles, and exhibition catalogues on Morris's decorative arts.


Morris introduced his abstract, flat floral patterns when America was dominated by the natural, succulent Rococo patterns of French designers; his work is now recognized as adaptable to rustic country as well as austere modern furnishings.


With choice details and illustrations, Cooper surveys the Morris firm from its early pedestrian designs to the later commercial compromises of George Jack and the Smith brothers.


This well-illustrated survey of the Arts and Crafts movement traces Morris’s influence as the founder whose presence continues today at Sanderson’s and Liberty’s.


The Morris firm strove for a purity of colour and lead-line, from Webb’s thick rods and crisp, methodical design to Burne-Jones’s pictorial motion in long, flowing lines, all in collaboration with Morris as the splendid colourist.


A chair designed by Webb was exhibited by the Morris firm at the 1862 International Exhibition in the Medieval Court though it is an assimilation of Egyptian and Japanese styles.


Morris’s thinking (not Ruskin’s) dominated “the theory and practise of the Arts and Crafts movement during its apogee,” and influenced such designers as George Jack, W.R. Lethaby, and C.F.A. Voysey.


Frederick Reed’s fulfilling experience as a tapestry weaver at the damp Merton Abbey from 1922 to 1938 is recalled and his Kingfisher tapestry is illustrated.

In an age that considered embroidery as typifying feminine purity and docility, Morris preferred men for the artistic work, Janey showed scant respect for the medium or her talent, while the enlightened May considered it a true artform practised best by female artists.


Morris was “a businessman of great ability and merit” who understood his markets and created the new business concept of the “complete interior decorating service” using strategies, products, technologies, and managerial behavior that were unorthodox but effective in terms of his ideals and goals.


Webb’s designs for Red House (including those for the unconstructed wing) show the influence of Pugin’s “true principles” of practical design, Ruskin’s “ideological impetus of the poetic kind,” Street’s Gothic revivalism, and Butterfield’s functional layout and roof plans.


Catalogue of the March-May 1987 Boston exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts credits Morris’s far-reaching influence on American design with reference to furniture, printing, and textiles.


Windows designed by Burne-Jones and maybe Morris in 1894-5 for London’s Holy Trinity Church now enhance Vancouver’s Christ Church Cathedral, while other Morris & Co. windows designed in the 1930s are in Vancouver Memorial Library.


The Liberty style evolved in reaction to the conflict between riotous aestheticism and sentimental philistinism, between exotic English aestheticism and erotic French decadence.


Morris’s revival of arts and crafts is discussed in relation to his precursors, his training in architecture, and to his work as a painter, designer, and printer.
83. Lynn, Catherine. “Reforming America.” American Craft, 47 (June-July 1987), 40-49, 72, 74.
   Review of Kaplan’s 1987 Boston exhibition of the Arts and Crafts movement in America.

   Objecting to palliative measures, and “aghast at the cost of” his own furniture productions, Morris reluctantly assisted Manchester philanthropist Thomas Horsfall in his efforts to influence the common workman’s taste with an exhibit of a decorated small house for the Manchester Art Museum.

   Morris’s paintings and designs – including a sideboard (depicting St. George rescuing a princess from a dragon), an easel painting (“La Belle Iseult”), and a stained glass window (“The Recognition of Sir Tristram”) – typify the Pre-Raphaelite woman as weak and passive in contrast to valiant men.

   Morris’s interest in painting lasted longer than once thought. Marsh pursues the mysterious history of Morris’s first oil, discovers from pencil studies that the painted scenes on a settle at Red House are Morris’s work, and proves with the bracket on the bed and with Jane’s letters and labels, that the Tate’s misnamed “Queen Guinevere” is indeed “La Belle Iseult.”

   Topics discussed include Morris’s use of the Museum’s collections as a source of inspiration for his textile designs, the decoration of the Green Dining Room, and the revival of embroidery for domestic and church use.

   While the Museum’s textile collection inspired his own designs, Morris in turn developed the collection as an Art Referee (1884-96), and personally contributed more to the designs for the Green Dining Room than has been acknowledged.

   With his garden at Red House, his stories and wallpaper designs, and his lecture “Making the Best of It,” Morris helped to revive the popularity of the old-fashioned flower garden and, with Ruskin, helped to articulate the relationship between landscape design and art.

The embroideries that G.F. Bodley commissioned for St. Martin-on-the-Hill church in Scarborough may be the first of Morris’s commercial textiles. Includes five illustrations.


Originally furnished with a mixture of antiques and Morris & Co. wallpapers, furniture, and metalwork, Wightwick Manor now holds one of the largest existing collections of Morris and De Morgan art and memorabilia.


Introductions to Morris, De Morgan, and Wightwick Manor are followed by a descriptive tour of the richly decorated rooms of the Manor.


Contrary to popular opinion that Warington Taylor was responsible for the firm’s commercial success, Taylor had limited commercial knowledge and imagination, while Morris, the competent businessman, “well understood the rules of capitalist enterprise.”

BOOK DESIGN


Catalogue of the January-March 1987 Providence exhibition at the Rhode Island School of Design includes illuminated ornament from Blake to Morris that affirms the value of human work and chivalric values during the Industrial Revolution.


Private book collections developed by Sanford Berger and Arnold Yates provide the inspiration for a study of Morris’s books printed by Bell & Daldy, Reeves & Turner, F. S. Ellis, Longman, H. Buxton Forman and at the Kelmscott Press by Morris himself.


xiv
Walker learned printing at the Typographic Etching Company, was active in the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, joined Cockerell and Cobden-Sanderson at the Doves Press, and founded his own firm Emery Walker Ltd.

   May Morris lent to Alfred Fairbank for several years Morris’s morocco-bound copy of four Renaissance Writing Manuals.

   Morris influenced Theodore DeVinne, the foremost American commercial printer who designed the still popular Century type and the Morris-inspired Renner type.

   Kelmscott Press books are rising again in value as Sotheby’s sold a Kelmscott Chaucer for £6,000, some Froissart specimen pages for £1,075, and a copy of The Earthly Paradise inscribed by Jane to W.S. Blunt for £1,265.

POLITICS

   Keenly aware of the flaws in the English legal system of the 19th century, Morris objected to “the inadequacy of Parliamentary reform, the repressing of dissent, the insufficiency of legal equality, the deficiency of the workplace, the unfairness of private property ownership, and the destruction of the environment.”

   Comparisons of Morris’s communism with that of his contemporaries – Marx and Kropotkin – and with that of our contemporaries – Raymond Williams and Rudolf Bahro – show him as an orthodox Marxist before he studied Marx, but then anticipating Williams and Bahro by further ennobling an ethic of work as a form of fellowship while complementing “anarchist beliefs in self-determination”.

   A “social theorist,” Morris believed that labour should bring pleasure either through artistic fulfillment or a contribution to the community; otherwise it should be assigned to machines or avoided, even at the loss of beneficial products.

Proclaiming the 20th century to be "The Century of Education," Morris hoped that all children would receive a "child-centred" form of education presented through a kind of apprenticeship designed to teach basic skills (cooking and carpentry), encourage individual aptitudes, promote knowledge of art and outdoor pursuits (swimming), and serve the general good of the community.

   Centring his lectures on the opposition between useful work and useless toil, Morris suggests an alternative culture and an axiological turn in cultural theory.

   A German translation of the Russian article published in Iskusstvo, 9 (1984), 35-49, on Morris's effort to combat capitalist technocracy by reviving the English artistic tradition.

   Morris denounced the "mechanical soullessness" of Bellamy's utopia.

   Morris typifies the late 19th-century effort to unite Marx with an earlier Romantic anti-capitalist tradition to inspire a "warm stream" of revolution which is culminating in the late 20th century.

   Indebted to the best of Marx's writings but misunderstood by Engels, Morris "was the first to use Socialism and Communism as names for two stages" in the process of reorganizing society.