A Study in Victorian Historiography: William Morris's Germanic Romances

Nicholas Salmon

By the early months of 1888 Morris had come to the conclusion that he was becoming increasingly isolated in the socialist movement and that he had failed in his self-assumed role as an active propagandist. His immediate reaction was to reduce the burden of his time-consuming lecture engagements and contributions to *Commonweal* in favour of reviving some of his earlier interests. He once more threw himself whole-heartedly into the affairs of SPAB and, as a member of the executive committee of the recently formed Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, played an important part in the organisation of their first London exhibition held at the New Gallery in the autumn of 1888. Morris & Co. also began to occupy more of his time - largely due to financial necessity as the cost of subsidising his propaganda campaign had been enormous - and some of his most famous designs such as that of the 'Bruges' wallpaper were executed at this time. Morris & Co. was also a major exhibitor at the New Gallery showing tapestries, chintzes, silks and handmade carpets.

Most important of all, however, was his decision to return to creative writing with the publication of *The House of the Wolfings* in December 1888 and *The Roots of the Mountains* in November 1889. Prior to *The House of the Wolfings* his last non-political creative work - if one excludes his translation of the *Odyssey* - had been *Sigurd the Volsung* in 1876. Mackail records that the translation of the *Odyssey* had 'soothing effects' on Morris's nerves, and there can be little doubt that part of his motivation in returning to fiction amidst the interminable and tedious quarrels in the Socialist League was psychological in origin. For Morris creative writing was therapeutic and a means of escape from the unhappy reality of practical propaganda. May Morris, who was very close to her father during this period, had absolutely no doubt that escapism was the motivation for the romances. In *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist* she recalled how their composition served 'as a pathetic withdrawal, at moments, from the anxieties of the outer world where he so unflinchingly took his stand'.

Morris - in the pitifully small number of comments he made about the romances - acknowledged the element of pleasurable escape they afforded him during a period of considerable personal stress. While he was writing *The House of the Wolfings* he wrote to his family that the book was proceeding 'merrily' and added that he felt he should 'be rather melancholy when my book is finished'. As for *The Roots of the Mountains*, Mackail remembers him saying 'that this of all his books was the one which had given him the greatest pleasure in writing'.

59
Soon after its publication Morris stated: 'I am so pleased with my book – typography, binding, and must I say it, literary matter – that I am any day to be seen hugging it up, and am become a spectacle to Gods and men because of it.' The satisfaction engendered by the book's composition and publication induced such euphoria that he was to write to Janey on 17 October 1889 that 'I must have a story to write now as long as I live'.

The seriousness of this statement is borne out by the successive publication in the 1890s of *The Story of the Glittering Plain* (1890), *The Wood Beyond the World* (1894), *Childe Christopher and Goldilind the Fair* (1895), *The Well at the World's End* (1896) and, posthumously, *The Waters of the Wondrous Isles* (1897) and *The Sundering Flood* (1898).

An unfortunate result of the pleasure that Morris had writing these romances was that for a long time they tended to be dismissed as inconsequential. The assumption was that the method of their composition necessary precluded any serious interpretation. George Bernard Shaw described them as 'a startling relapse into literary Pre-Raphaelitism' – 'nothing more nor less than the resuscitation of Don Quixote's burnt library'. Given Shaw's enthusiastic endorsement of Morris's socialist writings this view is understandable, but the same cannot be said in the defence of later biographers. Philip Henderson, whose extensive biography almost completely ignores the romances, went on to offer an explanation for this when he edited Morris's letters. Here he argued that of 'all his voluminous works, these, with their artificially archaic prose, set in vaguely defined periods of the early Middle and Dark Ages, are very nearly unreadable today'. Paul Thompson had similar reservations, using expressions such as 'pure escape', 'gothic fancies' and 'regrettably eccentricities' to dismiss the main creative achievement of the last ten years of Morris's life.

This attitude is even to be found in E. P. Thompson's monumental work *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*. Like Henderson he chose to play down the significance of the romances which he considered to represent a strange contrast to Morris's active political and intellectual life. Thompson maintained that the 'romances should not be read with a literal mind' as Morris's purpose in writing them was 'that of pure self-indulgence in pleasurable reverie in which neither Morris's intellect nor his deeper feelings were seriously engaged'. He did grudgingly admit, however, that the two Germanic romances that Morris wrote during the 1880s were slightly more accessible than the later works, being more 'acceptable than the others to the reader who approaches them with a literal mind'. He believed this was because when elements of the supernatural intervened they did so 'more as a manifestation of the beliefs of the people than an external device of the plot'. Nevertheless, this analysis is not developed further and it seems remarkable with hindsight that Thompson could have seriously believed that an individual of Morris's intellectual ability could have suspended his creative faculties in such a way. It should be remembered that both *The House of the Wolfings* and *The Roots of the Mountains* occupied Morris on and off for the best part of a year.

Following Thompson's remarks the beginning of a critical reappraisal of the romances began to take place. Jessie Kocmanova's *The Aesthetic Purpose of William Morris in the Context of his Late Prose Romances* (1966) and the set of essays collected together under the editorship of Frederick Kirchhoff as *Studies in
the Late Romances of William Morris (1976)\(^1\) reestablished the importance of the romances as part of Morris’s wider literary achievement. When E. P. Thompson came to write the ‘Postscript’ to William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary, he acknowledged this ‘thaw’ in ‘the icy resistance to Morris’ in respect of the prose romances and noted ‘a renewed respect for The House of the Wolfings and The Roots of the Mountains’\(^1\). He also went on to note a new critical trend which sought to relate the romances to Morris’s political ideas. In this context he mentioned Lionel Munby’s article ‘William Morris’s Romances and the Society of the Future’ (1962)\(^1\) and John Goode’s ‘William Morris and the Dream of Revolution’ which had appeared under John Lucas’s editorship in Literature and Politics in the Nineteenth Century (1971).\(^1\) One might add to these B. J. Bono’s interesting article ‘The Prose Fictions of William Morris: A Study in the Literary Aesthetic of a Victorian Reformer’ (1975),\(^1\) Goode’s reassessment of Sigurd the Volsung, A Dream of John Ball and The House of the Wolfings, written in the light of the theoretical difficulties encountered by Morris in reconciling realism with the alienative aspects of historical determinism, particularly impressed Thompson, and led him to state that: ‘Henceforward these works [the prose romances] and the “political writings” must be taken together’.\(^2\)

Since Thompson wrote these words the rehabilitation of the prose romances has continued apace. Works such as Nancy Jane Tyson’s ‘Art and Society in the Late Prose Narratives of William Morris’ (1977),\(^2\) Charlotte Oberg’s A Pagan Prophet: William Morris (1978)\(^3\) and Amanda Hodgson’s The Romances of William Morris (1987),\(^4\) have continued the trend initiated by Kocmanova and firmly established the romances as an integral part of Morris’s wider literary aesthetic. However, attempts to establish the links between Morris’s political thought and his creative achievement in the romances, such as those by Hilgartner and Boos,\(^5\) have been marred by a failure to appreciate the chronological evolution of the theoretical basis of his political thought. Morris’s socialism was never a static phenomenon but one which responded throughout to contemporary political events and his own personal interests and predilections. Everything he wrote is explicable in terms of the ideas and themes which preoccupied him at the time. To appreciate the Germanic romances as examples of both socialist historicism and of his wider propaganda it is necessary to forge a link between them and the ideas he was pursuing in his lectures and articles.

Three interrelated sources provide the historical material which forms the basis of both The House of the Wolfings and The Roots of the Mountains. The first of these – Morris’s revitalised interest in classical literature and history – represents a return to the ideas he had been pursuing in the late 1870s and early 1880s. A criticism of classical civilisation and art, derived in part from the writings of Ruskin, had formed an important element of the dialectical relationship between art and history developed in his pre-socialist lectures. In his ‘Address to the Men and Women’s College, Queen’s Square’ in 1880, for example, he had already identified the decline of the Roman Empire and its subsequent defeat at the hands of the barbarians as a crucial watershed in human history. Alluding to the Roman historian Tacitus – a source he often referred to in his later writings – he highlighted the irony that the latter took pleasure in recording the tribal conflicts
which delayed the destruction of his own civilisation, without being conscious that
it was these very barbarians ‘who had the fate decreed them of catching up the
torch of progress from the dying hands of Rome’.

Morris’s hostility to classical art has tended to disguise his interest in, and deep
knowledge of, Roman and Greek literature and history. While the publication of
*Sigurd the Volsung* (1876) and *The House of the Wolfings* (1888) have often been
cited as marking the boundaries of Morris’s non-creative period, it is significant
that both these works were preceded by classical translations. *The Aenied of Virgil*
was publish prior to *Sigurd the Volsung* in 1876 and *The Odyssey of Homer*
appeared a year before *The House of the Wolfings* in 1887. When Morris
compiled his list of favourite books for the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1886 he included
Herodotus, Plato, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Theocritus, Lucretius and
Catullus as ‘ancient imaginative works’, Plutarch’s *Lives* as ‘traditional history’,
and mentioned Virgil and Ovid for their ‘archaeological value’. At the same time
as he was engaged in writing *The House of the Wolfings* he also gave a lecture
at Kelmscott House on 19 August 1888 on the German historian Theodore
Mommsen. Unfortunately, this lecture – which was entitled ‘A Chapter in the
History of Rome’ – was delivered without notes so no text remains. It is
significant, as I shall point out in more detail later, that Mommsen’s *Roman
Researches* is referred to extensively by Engels in *The Origin of the Family,
Private Property and the State*.

The second strand of Morris’s pre-socialist thought to reassert itself in the
Germanic romances is his interest in Icelandic history and the sagas. In 1868
Morris had been introduced to Eiríkr Magnusson by Warington Taylor and the
two men had soon struck up a firm friendship. Magnusson immediately began to
give Morris lessons in Icelandic and this resulted in a joint translation of *The
Story of Grettir the Strong* which was published in 1869. Two years later
Magnússon accompanied Morris to Iceland, a trip Morris repeated in 1873, and
soon Morris became deeply interested in the old Nordic sagas. Two further
collaborations followed – *The Story of the Volsungs and Niblungs* (1870) and
*Three Northern Love Stories* (1875) – before Morris branched out on his own to
write *Sigurd the Volsung* in 1876.

Although *Sigurd the Volsung* marked the end of Morris’s creative interest in the
sagas until he returned to them once more in the 1890s, it is significant that
during the most active phase of his socialism he also became interested in the
social forces that had shaped the literature. In 1884 he delivered ‘Iceland, Its
Ancient Literature and Mythology’ before the Sheffield Secular Society, and
followed this with ‘The Birth of Feudalism in Scandinavia’ in 1886 and ‘The Early
Literature of the North – Iceland’ in 1887. Unfortunately, the only complete text
that remains of these three lectures is that for ‘The Early Literature of the North –
Iceland’ which was first delivered at Kelmscott House on 9 October 1887. The
ideas developed in this lecture – written only a few months before he embarking
upon *The House of the Wolfings* early in 1888 – are extremely important for
understanding the organisation of the barbarian society portrayed in the
Germanic romances. The link between these Icelandic sources and the later prose
romances has been acknowledged. Stephen Hunt has pointed out the way in
which Morris borrowed from G. W. Dasent’s translation of the *Gisli Saga* for his

62
description of the brotherhood pact in The Story of the Glittering Plain, while Helen Timo has claimed that the source of The Sundering Blood was Thoroddsen’s Icelandic novel Piltur of Stulka (1850).

The background research for these lectures led Morris to become interested in the lives of the early Teutonic people. May wrote that in the 1880s this period of human history came to have ‘a great fascination for the writer [Morris], who read with critical enjoyment the more important modern studies of it as they came out’. It is hardly surprising, given this statement, that much critical attention has been given to speculating about which contemporary history books Morris read in this context. Hodgson, for example, suggests that Morris was influenced by a tradition of English history which began in 1768 with Gilbert Stuart’s An Historical Dissertation Concerning the Antiquity of the English Constitution, and then continued through Sharon Turner’s History of the Anglo-Saxons (1799-1805), Kemble’s The Saxons in England (1849), William Stubbs’s The Constitutional History of England in its Origin and Development (1874-8), John Richard Green’s A Short History of the English People (1874: but reprinted in a revised form in 1888) and the radical historian Edward A. Freeman’s The History of the Norman Conquest of England (1867-79). Elsewhere mention has also been made of the American historian Lewis H. Morgan’s Ancient Society, or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery Through Barbarism to Civilisation which was published in England in 1877.

Of the above texts the only ones we know for certain that Morris read are those by Freeman and Green as they are both mentioned as examples of ‘the new school of historians’ in ‘The Revival of Architecture’, an article published in the Fortnightly Review in 1888. Morris also makes isolated references to other texts. The most important of these occurs in ‘Early England’ (1886) where his text relies heavily for its factual background on Charles Elton’s The Origins of English History (1882). During the course of this lecture Morris quotesElton quite extensively and also acknowledges his debt. Morris also mentions Benjamin Thorpe’s edition of The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles which was published in 1861. In ‘The Early Literature of the North – Iceland’ (1887), it also emerges that Morris had read G. W. Dasent’s article ‘The Norsemen in Iceland’ which had appeared in Oxford Essays published in London in 1858. This tends to confirm Stephen Hunt’s contention that Morris was familiar with Dasent’s history of Iceland.

What remains a matter of contention, however, is whether Morris had read Engels’s The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. This work, which incorporated additional notes made by Marx on Lewis H. Morgan’s Ancient Society (1877), had been published in German in 1884 but did not appear in an English translation until 1902. Despite Paul Meier’s argument that Morris was greatly influenced by this work and had an extremely detailed knowledge of its contents, what little evidence there is suggests that it is very unlikely he read it in the original. Morris stated in 1886 the he could ‘only read even old German with great difficulty and labour’. If, as also suggested by Meier and supported by Thompson, Morris gained his knowledge of the book through his conversations with Bax and that this knowledge can be seen in Chapter 1 of Socialism from the Root Up, then it is worth pointing out that when the two men published their list
of the chief works of Marx – including those he wrote in collaboration with Engels – *The Origin of the Family* was absent.\(^{42}\)

However, the main difficulty in assessing the influence of Engels’s work on Morris is one that was obliquely acknowledged by Engels himself. In his ‘Preface’ to the first edition of *The Origin of the Family* he referred to the manner in which Morgan’s *Ancient Society* – a work which provided the material for much of his own analysis – had been ‘zealously plagiarised’ by ‘the spokesmen of “prehistoric” science in England’.\(^{43}\) In this respect he specifically mentions ‘the wretched liberal falsifications of Mr. Freeman’.\(^{44}\) As was noted earlier, Morris had praised Freeman as one of ‘the new school of historians’ in his lecture ‘The Revival of Architecture’ which had been published in the Fortnightly Review at precisely the time he was writing *The House of the Wolfings*. Freeman’s book *The History of the Norman Conquest of England* (1867-79) had referred at some length to Tacitus and his description of the Teutonic tribes, sources that were also used by Engels and Morgan. One can only assume that Freeman incurred Engels’s wrath for his argument that the origins of British constitutional democracy could be traced back through the Medieval ‘Witenagemót’ to the practices evolved amongst the ancient German tribes.

In England, however, the most prominent historian of the family and ancient society was considered to be J. F. McLennan and not Morgan. This was acknowledged by Engels in his ‘Preface’ to the fourth edition of *The Origin of the Family* written in 1891.\(^{45}\) In this Preface Engels alleged there had been a conspiracy on behalf of the British academic establishment to suppress Morgan’s book:

> In England his book is hushed up as far as possible, and Morgan himself is dismissed with condescending praise for his previous work; the details of his exposition are eagerly picked on for criticism, while an obstinate silence reigns with regard to his really great discoveries. The original edition of *Ancient Society* is now out of print: in America there is no profitable market for books of this sort: in England, it would seem, the book was systematically suppressed, and the only edition of this epoch-making work still available in the book trade is – the German translation.\(^{46}\)

What is significant about McLennan’s *Studies in Ancient Society* (a new edition of which had come out in 1886) is that it offers an alternative vision of tribal organisation to that presented by Engels and Morgan. McLennan divided the ancient tribes into two distinct groups: the exogamous and the endogamous. The former were those tribes within which marriage was forbidden so prospective mates could only be obtained from outside the existing grouping. As this stage of human development was characterised by a state of perpetual inter-tribal conflict, McLennan advanced the theory that such tribes were obliged to obtain their women by abduction. The endogamous tribes, on the other hand, were those in which it was permissible to find wives from within the existing tribal grouping. Although Engels was highly critical of the validity of McLellan’s definition of exogamous and endogamous tribes, he was forced to acknowledge that this antithesis had been accepted by most historians at the time ‘as incontrovertible
engels’s own view, based on the findings of morgan, was that there was no such antithesis between the exogamous and endogamous tribes. the basis of his argument was that no one had ever found conclusive historical evidence that exogamous tribes had ever existed. he argued, therefore, that all the tribes were strictly endogamous with men taking their wives from within the tribal grouping which ‘consisted of a number of groups related by blood on the mother’s side’.49 within these groupings (or gens), however, marriages between men and women were completely forbidden, so that while men took ‘their wives from within their tribe, they had, however to take them from outside their gens’.50 hence the tribe was endogamous while the gens was exogamous. as far as engels was concerned morgan’s discovery of the ‘mother-right gens’ had been the crucial development in the study of pre-history. yet in england at least it had gone largely unheralded and been regarded by supporters of McLellan as ‘rank heresy . . . a kind of sacrilege’.52 mclellan himself charged morgan with having ‘a profound antipathy to historical method’.53 nevertheless, during the 1880s engels went on to argue that morgan’s theories had been appropriated – without attribution – by a number of british pre-historians with the result that ‘morgan’s discoveries are now generally recognised . . . by prehistorians in england’.54

It is clear that at the time morris was writing The House of the Wolfings and The Roots of the Mountains there was a great deal of controversy amongst historians about the nature of early tribal organisation and the significance of the gens. if, as may morris noted, her father was reading ‘with critical enjoyment the more important modern studies’ of ‘tribal life on the verge of the Roman conquest’ then he must have been aware of these conflicting accounts. it is equally clear the he need not have actually read either mclellan or morgan (or, indeed, engels) to have been aware of the critical debate surrounding the issue. in fact we know that morris was aware of the debate. in ‘the development of modern society’ (1890) he spent some time discussing the manner in which marriage was arranged within the early tribes. there were, he argued, only two ways that this could have been achieved ‘either . . . by violent robbery in a haphazard fashion from outsiders [exogamous], or have some other society at hand into which they could marry, and who could marry into their society [endogamous]’.56 he went on: ‘it used to be thought that the violent robbery was the method, but i believe the second method was the one used’.57 although the above would seem to suggest that by 1890 morris had come down firmly on the engels/morgan side of the debate, in the germanic romances he displays a knowledge of both sides of the argument and makes a number of important contributions of his own.

morris’s own ideas about the development of early human society are to be found in various articles in Commonweal, lectures such as ‘gothic art – i’ (1884), ‘art and labour’ (1884), ‘early england’ (1886), ‘the early literature of the north – iceland’ (1887) and ‘the development of modern society’ (1890), and in chapter i of Socialism from the Root Up entitled ‘ancient society’. in the latter collaboration with bax, morris identified three stages in the early evolution of humanity. these he styled ‘mere savage life’, ‘primitive communism’ – or, as he
more frequently referred to it, ‘barbarism’ – and ‘ancient civilisation’. Of these three he paid the least attention to the period of savagery, merely introducing it as a condition of anarchy in which human actions were entirely dependent on the need to satisfy basic animal desires. Its chief characteristics he summarised as: a complete lack of co-operation between men; the satisfaction of purely individual needs; an economic state in which there was no surplus capacity; and the absence of any form of social organisation.

This state of savagery only gradually gave way to barbarism. This stage in human development was characterised by a number of changes: men were now able to produce more than they actually needed to survive; they obtained a rudimentary knowledge of simple agricultural and industrial practices; individuals melted into a wider community; and that – certainly in the early period at least – there was collective ownership of property. According to Morris barbarism evolved through three distinct stages: the gens, the tribe and the people. As we shall see these three stages were by no means mutually exclusive, but the process through which the gens was transformed into the people was crucial in explaining the nature of the next great epoch – that of feudalism.

The gens, or clan, was the basic unit of social organisation during the earliest part of barbarism. Each gens consisted of ‘a group of blood relations at peace amongst themselves’ but hostile to all outside groups. Within the gens all bond-pairings were exogamous, inter-marriage between members was forbidden ‘or rather was not even dreamed of’, and wives had to be found outside the gens. In ‘The Development of Modern Society’, Morris went on to argue – as Engels and Morgan had – that at first the gens were matriarchal in organisation, with descent being traced through the mother ‘who was the obvious parent of the child’. Within the gens wealth was held in common, but outside all wealth was regarded as a prize of war. This condition of perpetual war developed the qualities of leadership amongst men with the result that as time went on ‘successful warriors gained prominence over the other members of the Gens’. As the wealth of the gens increased above that needed for mere survival, this meant that these warriors began to gain an increasingly large share of the collective wealth. This in turn marked the point where ‘the primitive communism of wealth began to be transformed into individual ownership’. Eventually, due to the rule banning marriage within a single blood related gens, groups of gens began to amalgamate together in order to facilitate procreation. By this means the individual gens was gradually superseded by the wider concept of the tribe.

The tribe was a larger and more artificial association in which blood relations were only ‘conventionally assumed’. Nevertheless, as a result of this bonding – in which all members were deemed to have ‘a common ancestor’ who was worshipped as a god – there was no war between the clans or gens who composed the tribe. Similarly, although elements of the individual ownership developed in the gens remained, there was a communal responsibility within the tribe for disposing of – and cultivating – the land ‘according to certain arbitrary arrangements’. The most significant development within the tribal system, according to Morris, was that it was during the middle stage of barbarism that the practice of slavery first began. This in turn marked the first discernible movement towards class society.
In the final stage of barbarism the tribe eventually melted into a larger and still more artificial grouping: the people. The people, Morris wrote in *Socialism from the Root Up*, was a grouping of many tribes 'the ancient Gothic-Teutonic name for which - theath - is still preserved in such names as 'Theobald'`. These tribes were still bound by the idea that they were derived from common ancestors and therefore shared collective kinship through their worship of the same gods. Despite the more loose-knit nature of this arrangement there was little change in the condition of wealth to that pertaining within the tribe. Nevertheless, Morris considered this to be the final stage in the development of barbarism before it melted into feudalism. In its later stages it therefore contained 'something more than the mere *Germs of feudalism*'.

These 'Germs of feudalism' originated in the form of slavery that emerged during the later stages of barbarism. As tribal life was characterised by a state of perpetual war it was inevitable that sooner or later the question of what to do with prisoners taken in battle had to be addressed. Under classical civilisation the problem was solved by the development of chattel slavery. However, in the case of the Germanic tribes the process proved to be more complex due to their relatively primitive ideas concerning individual ownership. Indeed, in the early stages of barbarism the defeated tribesmen were actually adopted into the kindred. As time went on, however, the defeated tribes became so large that it was no longer possible to assimilate the numbers involved. Defeated tribes who were no longer able to defend themselves were therefore obliged to farm their lands for the benefit of their conquerors in exchange for military protection. According to Morris it was from this practice, along with the growth of individual wealth amongst the chieftains, that the whole complex feudal hierarchy of the Middle Ages was to evolve.

While barbarism was undergoing these developments it existed alongside a new and parallel form of social organisation, that of ancient civilisation. Classical society, Morris claimed, was 'founded on the corruption of the society of the tribes by the institution of private property'. While in the earliest period – in both Greece and Rome – the tribal ideal of 'the merging of the individual into the community was still strong', it was soon to give way to the rise in individualism which accompanied the creation of private property. Before long the idea of community became merely an abstraction and no longer served as 'the real visible body of persons . . . [to which] individual interests were to be sacrificed'. This abstraction was most apparent amongst the Romans in their worship of the city. Nevertheless, in his lecture 'Art and Labour' Morris went on to say that at first this was not an entirely negative feature as it encouraged the idea of a 'public spirit' which manifested itself in the construction of noble buildings. It was only over time that this abstraction became corrupted into 'an inflexible central authority idealised into a religion and symbolised in the person of the emperor, the master of the world enthroned in an Italian city'.

This deterioration in communal values was accompanied by the gradual development of slavery. Under barbarism the slaves at first formed only a small part of the work force and most productive labour was undertaken by the tribesmen themselves. This continued in a relatively unaltered fashion during the early period of ancient civilisation – 'both in Greece and Rome' – where 'a great
deal of the field-work was done by the freemen; the family [only being] ... helped in it by the slaves'. However, as society grew richer 'the occupations fell more and more under the division of labour system'. This meant that 'slave labour increased very much, till in the last days of the Roman republic the proportions of slaves to free labour relatively to the handicrafts and agriculture had quite changed'. In effect the slaves, like the proletariat under capitalism, had become the only producers of wealth.

Accompanying this redistribution of work was a corresponding, but gradual, redistribution of ownership in the means of production. In the early days of ancient civilisation 'the ownership' of the land 'had been common ... and the use divided amongst the citizens'. However, as the practice of slavery developed the land increasingly came into the hands of larger and larger landlords with the result that all productive labour came to be done by slaves 'superintendence and all': '... the livelihood being doled out to these poor devils on strict commercial principles, such as regulate the feed of a horse or cow, or an English labouring man'. This polarisation – which again parallels that between the proletariat and bourgeoisie under capitalism – had two important consequences. On the one hand the despair and hopelessness of the slaves began to manifest itself in open rebellion. Morris cited in particular the slave mutiny led by Spartacus, but also mentioned the 'countless minor mutinies by sea and land' that tormented the Empire during its declining years. On the other hand the rich became so idle and decadent that they begin to lose the will to defend their own position.

It was in this growth of selfishness and individual gratification amongst the Roman elite that Morris identified the seeds of ancient civilisation's ultimate collapse. Whereas the early valour of the Roman legions had gained his grudging respect – in 'Emigration and Colonisation' an article published in Commonweal in 1887 he had even cited 'the Roman idea of leading a colony' as a model 'right and good' – he considered the corruption of these values by the pursuit of wealth to have led to the complete destruction of public spirit. The Roman soldier – once a citizen religiously devoted to his city – soon became a bribed hireling. Ultimately no bribe was large enough to induce a civilised man to fight, with the result that the Roman legions were manned by the very barbarians whose kinsmen were attacking the Empire from without. Thus the Roman Empire fell as a result of its own internal contradictions and its inability to defend itself against the incursions of the Germanic tribes of the north and east.

Morris considered the subsequent rise of feudalism in Europe following the collapse of the Roman Empire to have been related to the Teutonic and Gothic tribes' success in side-stepping the stage of city life. This had two consequences. Firstly, it meant that the development of their customs had remained relatively unaffected through time and 'differed little from each other, and not much from those of the classical peoples before their development of the city and its life'. Secondly, it meant that when they succeeded in overthrowing the Roman Empire the new 'feudal system was based not on the city and its wards, urban and rural, as was the case in ancient society, but on the country district, the manor and its townships'. In 'The Development of Modern Society' he described this process in a specifically British context: 'When our Anglo-Saxon forefathers first conquered Romanised Britain, they did not know what to do with the cities they won; they
let them lie in ruins, and went to live down the dales on the borders of the streams in their homesteads, just as their ancestors had done in the clearings of the great central forest of Europe.\textsuperscript{79}

The ‘great central forest of Europe’ is the setting for both \textit{The House of the Wolfings} and \textit{The Roots of the Mountains}. From the start it was recognised by critics that these books had a form of historical verisimilitude absent from the later romances of the 1890s. Writing to T. J. Wise on 17 November 1888 Morris himself acknowledged this when he described \textit{The House of the Wolfings} as ‘a story of the life of the Gothic tribes on their way through Middle Europe, and their first meeting with the Romans in war’.\textsuperscript{80} Of \textit{The Roots of the Mountains}, which he was writing as \textit{The House of the Wolfings} was going through the press, he wrote to his daughter early the next year, that ‘the condition of the people I am telling of is later (whatever their date may be) than that of the Wolfings, they are people living in a place near the Great Mountains’.\textsuperscript{81} Nevertheless, despite these hints, Morris allowed the date of the action of both books to remain indistinct.

There is even the famous story reported by H. Halliday Sparling that when a German professor wrote to Morris asking for the actual historical source for his knowledge of the customs of the Mark in \textit{The House of the Wolfings}, Morris’s reaction was to explode: ‘Doesn’t the fool realise that it’s a romance, a work of fiction – that it’s all LIES!’\textsuperscript{82}

Morris’s vagueness about the timing of the action has not prevented a great deal of critical speculation about the events he describes. The only clue that Morris gives the reader in \textit{The House of the Wolfings} is at the conclusion of the book, when he states that after the Men of the Mark defeated the invading Romans the latter began to ‘stay the spreading of their dominion, or even to draw in its boundaries somewhat’.\textsuperscript{83} Although Morris didn’t mention Gibbon’s \textit{Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire} in his list of the ‘Best Hundred Books’ which he submitted to the \textit{Pall Mall Gazette}, Florence Boos has suggested that this book was firmly in his mind when he was writing the Germanic romances.\textsuperscript{84} If we interpret Morris’s statement in the light of Gibbon this would suggest that the action takes place between the accession of Hadrian in 117 AD and the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180 AD. Gibbon considered that the death of the latter – one of the ‘Five Good Emperors’ – marked the beginning of the period of the ‘decline’ of the Roman Empire. In any case it can be assumed that the events described do not occur later than 251 AD when the Goths were successful in battle with the Romans and actually killed Emperor Decius.

For this reason I would take issue with those critics who place the action in earlier or later periods. Amongst the former are Hodgson and Oberg. Hodgson describes the action as taking place ‘in the second or first century BC’,\textsuperscript{85} while Oberg suggests – albeit tentatively – that the book may have been inspired by the battle of Teutobury Forest in 9 AD when the Roman army under Varus was annihilated by Teutonic tribesmen commanded by Arminius.\textsuperscript{86} Oberg’s theory is attractive because this battle is regarded as the crucial event in the confrontation between the Teutonic peoples and the Romans that prevented the conquest of ancient Germany. It also provided the inspiration for much German literature and was seized upon by the Nazis to further their propaganda purposes in the twentieth century. In the light of Morris’s remark, however, such an early date
seems unlikely as this battle took place during a period in which the Empire was still expanding. Indeed, it was not until 43AD that the Roman invasion of Britain under Aulus Plautius took place.

Buxton Forman, on the other hand, places the action in a much later period than most other commentators. He suggests that the setting of the tale is the late fourth century, and hazards the guess that ‘the historical event of which a reflexion in small may be detected, [is] ... the overthrow of the Romans under Valens by the Goths’. The Battle of Adrianople, to which Forman is presumably referring, actually took place in 378AD. By this time, however, the rigid social laws and heavy taxation introduced by Emperor Diocletian had already been in place for nearly a hundred years. As Morris considered this bureaucracy to be a crucial characteristic of the later Roman Empire – a time when it sank into anarchy and social depravity – it seems improbable that he was really inspired by such a late incident in the history of Rome. This view is supported by the fact that the majority of legionnaires who attack the Mark are indigenous Romans as is their Captain. As was noted earlier, Morris considered the legions of the later Empire to have been composed chiefly of mercenaries.

It is much more likely that Morris intended the action of *The Roots of the Mountains* to take place at this later date. Apart from his statement – noted earlier – that ‘the condition of the people I am telling of is later ... than that of the Wolfings’, there are a couple of clues in the text which indicate that the action is set during the last days of the Roman Empire. When the Silverdalers are forced from their home their warriors are able to ‘sell their service to the men of the Cities’, and at the Spring Market at Burgstead it is reported that the ‘Dusky Men’ (the Huns) had ‘erewhile overthrown the forces of the Cities of the Plain and looted and pillaged their homes’. This suggests that the action takes place in the middle of the fifth century AD when waves of Hunnish invaders swept through central Europe. Although Attila was repelled from Gaul by mixed Roman-Barbarian forces in 451AD, he made successful raids into Italy the following year. Rome was also pillaged by Vandals in 455AD. As Oberg has pointed out, this would also be consistent with the tribal migrations which took place in the late fourth century during the period of encroachment from the east by the Huns, a feature which provides the background to *The Roots of the Mountains*. It was during the mid-fifth century AD that the Romans gave the Germanic tribes land between the Danube and the Balkan range, where, their tribal organisation left intact, they lived under their own laws as federates of the Roman Empire. This would be consistent with the trade which goes on between the Burgdalers and the merchants from the Plain.

The reader in conscious of a sense of historical continuity amongst the Teutonic tribes in both *The House of the Wolfings* and *The Roots of the Mountains*. Taken together the two books provide a remarkably convincing account of the process whereby the individual gens is assimilated first into the tribe and then into the people. In Chapter IV of *The House of the Wolfings* we learn that the Wolfings had originally been a mountain people who in ancient times had migrated down the Mirkwood-water – either on rafts or by following the banks of the river – before settling amidst the woods. Here they used their primitive skills to clear the forest and build their present homestead. The land had subsequently been
cultivated by planting rye and wheat as they gradually gained a basic understanding of agriculture. Over time the Wolfings gens became subsumed into the wider tribal organisation of the Mark. Thus by the time the story begins the tribe – that is, the Markmen – consists of a series of blood-related gens inhabiting three separate clearings in the forest. It is worth noting that although all men within the tribe are nominally equal in rights and freedoms, there is a definite hierarchical structure to the gens within the tribe. The Wolfings occupy a position of privilege not only maintaining the Hall-sun – the ‘ancient and holy thing reveried by all the kindred’91 – but also providing the leading War-dukes during periods of conflict. Of the other gens it is stated: ‘the chiefest were the Elkings, the Vallings, the Alfings, the Beamings, the Galtings, and the Bearings; who bore on their banners the Elk, the Falcon, the Swan, the Tree, the Boar, and the Bear’.92

The process whereby a new gens could be created within a tribe is illustrated by the example of the Elkings. During the early years of the occupation of the Mark the Wolfings had been divided when some of their number – for some unspecified reason – had chosen to leave the Mark. This group, who subsequently became known as the Elkings, had aligned themselves ‘in fellowship with a folk of the Welsh of like customs’93 and been involved in a number of skirmishes with the Romans. At one point this coalition of forces had taken ‘the great City of the Welshmen in the South’, an event recalled in a traditional poem entitled the ‘South-Welsh Lay’. Eventually, however, the combined tribes had been ‘overthrown with so great a slaughter, that the red blood rose over the wheels of the wains, and the city-folk fainted with the work of the slaughter’.94 It was only after many generations that the Elkings had returned to the Mark and built their own homestead as a separate gens within the tribe of the Mark.

In *The Roots of the Mountains* the next stage in the progressive development of barbarism is described: that of the gradual association of the tribes into a people. There are indications that Morris intended this second romance to be a sequel to *The House of the Wolfings*, with the tribes of the Wolf who reunite in a common cause against the Huns being direct descendants of the Wolfing gens who had settled by Mirkwood-water. There are many indications of this common ancestry in the text. The Hall of the Men of the Shadowy Vale, for example, is hung with banners displaying the Wolf and on a number of occasions reference is made to carved images of the Wolf decorating the approaches to the Vale. When these men attack Greentofts they do so dressed ‘with wolf-skins drawn over them’ and uttering a cry like a wolf. The crucial link, however, is the banner of the Wolf. In the battle with the Dusky Men the tribes of the Wolf march under a banner which bears ‘the image of the Wolf with red gaping jaws’.95 This is unmistakably the same as that of the Wolfings ‘wherein was wrought the image of the Wolf, but red of hue as a token of war, and with his mouth open and gaping upon the foemen’.96

The link between the Wolfings and the tribes of the Wolf is reinforced by Morris’s account of the ancestral background of the Men of the Shadowy Vale. The great fear in *The House of the Wolfings* – which is continually reiterated by the ‘stay-at-homes’ and those deemed to have the power of foresight – is that in their conflict with the Romans the Wolfings stand at a crucial crossroads in their history. As the Hall-Sun expresses it ‘the House of Wolfings ‘twixt dusk and dawn
does stand': 'On the left are the days forgotten, on the right the days to come/And another folk and their story in the stead of the Wolfing home'. For the older kindred this fear is actually manifested in a vision of the future history of the Wolfings: 'And it fell into their hearts that now at last mayhap was their abiding wearing out to an end, and the day should soon be when they should have to bear the Hall-Sun through the wildwood, and seek a new dwelling-place afar from the troubling of these newly arisen Welsh foemen'. In *The House of the Wolfings*, of course, this threat of tribal migration is averted by the Markmen's defeat of the Romans and the latter's subsequent decline in influence.

However, for the Teutonic tribes the Roman threat was to be replaced historically by that of the marauding Huns, and in *The Roots of the Mountains* the suggestion is made – albeit obliquely – that it was these waves of eastern invaders who finally forced the Wolfings to abandon the Mark. The two tribes of the Wolf – the Woodlanders of Burgdale and the Men of the Shadowy Vale – had, we learn, once inhabited 'the Mid-earth's mighty Woodland' but had been forced to abandon their traditional home and retreat into the mountains following their displacement by the incursion of the Huns. On their way through the mountains the tribe had separated, one section going south, the other north. The former had settled first in the Shadowy Vale and then in Silverdale where subsistence had soon failed them. Here over time their tribal integrity had been weakened by inter-marriage with the indigenous Westlanders so that their original strength was lost and 'the days of whoredom fell upon them'. Only one section of the tribe remained aloof from this generic degeneration and retained the practice of only marrying amongst the closest kindreds. When Silverdale had been attacked by the Huns the weakened kindreds had been overwhelmed and reduced to the level of thralls. The true-born under the leadership of Stone-wolf, however, had refused to capitulate and had retired instead to the Shadowy Vale where they had retained their identity by selling their services to the Romans who by this time were in a state of growing disorganisation.

The other group, those who had turned north, had settled on the outskirts of Burgdale. Here they became known as the Woodlanders. They retained many of the attributes of their ancestors, being both good hunters and craftsmen. They were particularly noted for their ability at carving 'knots and blossoms and leaves and the images of beasts and warriors and women', and for being 'wiser than most men in foreseeing things to come'. Nevertheless, although we are told that they 'were somewhat akin' to the Burgdalers, they did not directly inter-marry with them and are described as 'well-nigh their servants'. Over time, however, a certain mingling of blood had taken place as the Woodlanders had married with another tribe, the Shepherds, who did marry with the Burgdalers. Hence when the Men of the Wolf reunite in battle with the Burgdalers against the Huns their campaign can be interpreted as part of the process whereby the tribes are gradually assimilated into the wider concept of the people. At the end of the tale blood links have not only been established between the Burgdalers and the kindred tribes of Silverdale and Rosedale, but also with the new tribal grouping which emerges at Inglebourne.

Apart from enabling him to display his historical knowledge of the development of the gens, Morris was also attracted to the period of the Teutonic tribes for a
number of reasons which are closely linked to aspects of his wider propaganda campaign. The first of these was his belief that an historical affinity of sorts could be traced between modern Englishmen and the early Germanic peoples. This idea was almost certainly derived in part, as Hodgson has suggested, from his reading of British historians such as Elton, Freeman, Green and Stubbs, all of whom considered it possible to trace the origins of contemporary social and political institutions to the practices of the early Teutonic people. As Stubbs wrote, ‘The English are not aboriginal [but] . . . are a people of German descent in the main constituents of blood, character, and language’. He went on to add that they were also the inheritors ‘of the elements of primitive German civilisation and the common germs of German institutions’.

Morris’s view of the organic link between the early Germanic tribes and modern Englishmen is, however, less straightforward than Hodgson suggests. In ‘Early England’ (1886), a lecture which traced the history of England from the time of the Roman invasion to the Norman Conquest, he argued that these two events had partially severed the association. At the time of the Roman conquest he argued that the indigenous English population had still barely progressed beyond the state of savagery and were only just ‘tending towards a tribal condition’. These indigenous tribal potentialities were destroyed by the arrival of the Romans with their ‘civilised’ ideas. A second opportunity for the Teutonic peoples occurred when the Romans were in turn replaced by ‘the tribes of the English, the Jutes, and the Saxons’ whom Morris regarded as the direct descendants of the German tribes who had originated in ‘the great forests of mid-Europe’. At the time of their invasion of England these tribesmen were, significantly, ‘at the point of federating if they had not already federated into a bigger body “the People”’. As far as Morris was concerned England would have remained a Germanic nation if it had not been for the Norman Conquest which stopped ‘its development as a pure branch of the Teutonic family’.

It was this infiltration of Norman blood and culture – referred to contemptuously as having ‘developed from Roman provincials’ – which Morris believed had prevented the English from becoming a ‘great homogeneous Teutonic people infused usefully with a mixture of Celtic blood’. For this reason, while he exploited the perceived link between the Goths and modern Englishmen for propaganda purposes, he always did so in order to emphasise the corruption of these ancient ideals under conditions of modern capitalism. Whereas the English historians of the 1870s and 1880s saw tribal practices as the foundation on which modern institutions had evolved and improved, Morris used them to show how institutions reflect the health of the society from which they originate. This argument was the logical extension of a line of thought already apparent in his pre-socialist lectures. If – as he had maintained in lectures such as ‘The Art of the People’ – artistic creation mirrored the social environment in which it was produced then it followed that social institutions would do so too.

In both The House of the Wolfings and The Roots of the Mountains, therefore, Morris’s intention in detailing the customs of the tribes is not to establish a link with modern institutions but to provide his readers with a model against which to judge their legitimacy. One example should serve to illustrate this point. In both books he goes to a great deal of trouble to describe the ‘moot’ which serves as the
central forum for collective decision making and the administration of justice. It was this gathering of the whole people which was responsible for deciding what to do in disputes between neighbours and in the case of violence. It also had responsibility for revenging any injury to its members by outsiders as such an attack would, by its very nature, be interpreted as a threat to the stability of the community as a whole. That a link exists between these practices and those of modern society is established in The House of the Wolfings where it is stated that these moots (or ‘Thing-steads’ as they are sometimes called) were a ‘custom of our forefathers’.

Morris made it clear in ‘The Development of Modern Society’, however, that this link was only of the most tenuous nature. In this lecture, delivered shortly after he completed The Roots of the Mountains, he stated that although contemporary society superficially retained some tribal institutions in modified form, these cultural remnants were merely travesties of the spirit of the originals. In the case of the moot he cited two fundamental differences in conditions pertaining under barbarism which made it completely incommensurable with similar judicial arrangements under capitalism. The first of these was that under barbarism all the duties of a freeman had reference to the community in which he lived. His personal interests were therefore synonymous with those of his tribe which meant that the assertion of any . . . private interests would have been looked upon as a crime, or rather a monstrosity, hardly possible to understand. It is this view, incidently, which explains the people’s bewilderment at Thiodolf’s assertion of his individuality in wearing the bewitched hauberk. Thus under barbarism the administration of justice served as a physical representation of the will of the people rather than as an instrument of class oppression as it did under capitalism. The second point was that the popular democratic concept of ‘government by the majority’ was meaningless under a tribal system. As every individual derived his very existence from his integration into the tribe it was inconceivable that given this strong bond anyone could assert an opinion prejudicial to the interests of the community as a whole.

Another reason why Morris was attracted to the life of the tribes was that their social practices provided ideal models from which to derive a vision of the organisation of post-capitalist society. Morris spent some time in the late 1880s seeking to establish ‘vision’ as a legitimate socialist propaganda technique. For a vision to be theoretically valid it had to be the result of the synthesis of historical realism with imaginative insights emanating from the author’s own ‘instinct’. In this respect barbarism provided the perfect starting point as it was based on concepts such as community, freedom, equality and common ownership all of which would play an important role in a future communist state. As he wrote to Georgiana Burne-Jones in May 1885: ‘. . . how often it consoles me to think of barbarism once more flooding the world, and real feelings and passions, however rudimentary, taking the place of our wretched hypocrisies’. Coincidently, Engels made precisely the same point at the end of The Origin of the Family when he quoted a passage from Morgan’s Ancient Society in which the latter, speculating on the next stage of human history, had written: ‘It will be a revival, in a higher form of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gens’.

In both The House of the Wolfings and The Roots of the Mountains Morris
manipulated his historical knowledge of the organisation of the gens for just such a purpose. This is most apparent in his description of sexual relations amongst the Goths. In The Origin of the Family Engels had claimed that historically three forms of marriage relationship could be identified which corresponded broadly to the three main stages of human development. These he defined as ‘group marriage’, ‘pairing marriage’ and ‘monogamy’. The first was characteristic of savagery, the second of barbarism and the third of civilisation. The crucial distinction between ‘pairing marriage’ (that is, one man living with one woman where sexual freedom was permissible for the man but strict fidelity was demanded of the woman) and ‘monogamy’ (one man and women living together under formal marriage ties) was that under the former descent was matriarchal while under the latter it was patriarchal. For Engels the ‘overthrow of mother right was the world-historic defeat of the female sex’ whereby the woman became ‘degraded, enthralled, the slave of the man’s lust, a mere instrument for breeding children’. This lowered position of womankind Engels claimed to be ‘especially manifest among the Greeks of the Heroic and still more the Classical Age’.

With respect to this movement from ‘pairing marriage’ to ‘monogamy’ Engels considered the Germanic tribes of the middle to late barbaric period to have occupied a unique position. Unlike the classical civilisation that existed alongside them, the central economic unit of their social organisation was not the individual family but the ‘house community’ (Hausgenossenschaft). Quoting the historian Heusler, Engels maintained these house communities consisted of several generations – or individual families – gathered together in a single building. These buildings were described as ‘large . . . houses with a lofty communal hall reaching up to the roof, surrounded by sleeping rooms, to which access [was gained] . . . by staircases of from six to eight steps’. The similarity between this arrangement and that in The House of the Wolfings in which ‘one branch of kindred dwelt under one roof together’ and The Roots of the Mountains where ‘many men dwelt in each house, either kinsfolk, or such as were joined to the kindred’ is obvious.

Due to this emphasis on the house rather than the family as the basic economic unit, Engels claimed that marriage was a political rather than a personal act: ‘the interest of the House and not individual inclination’ being ‘the decisive factor’. To illustrate this he referred to the arranged marriages which occurred in the Icelandic Sagas and Germanic Epics. Amongst these he cited the examples of Gunther seeking the hand of Brunhild and Erzel the hand of Kriemhild, both without having set eyes on their prospective wives. He also mentions Gudrun, a German epic poem of the thirteenth century, in which Siegfried of Morland, Hertmut of Ormany and Herwing of Seeland all seek the hand of Gudrun. The latter case is of particular interest as Gudrun finally chooses Herwing not for political considerations but from her own free-will.

Gudrun’s choice was important for Engels because it was one of the first recorded examples of a marriage being entered into for personal love rather than communal interest. The idea that physical attraction should be the basis of all monogamous unions Engels described as ‘the greatest moral advance’ in sexual relations. He also saw it as an advance whose origins could be traced back to the circumstances of the Germanic tribes at the time of the final decline of the
Roman Empire. During this period, he maintained, three unique features united to produce this revolutionary development: (i) the fact that despite the people’s firm belief in the sanctity of marriage polygamy still existed amongst the men of rank and tribal chieftains, (ii) that within the tribes the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy was a much later development than under classical civilisation, and (iii) that ‘women among the Germans were highly respected and were influential in public affairs’ and that this acted as a balance to the male domination inherent in monogamy. However, despite these factors the concept of love only gradually replaced wider social considerations in determining a marriage partner, and it was not until the Middle Ages that it became the norm.

In *The House of the Wolfings* and *The Roots of the Mountains* Morris makes selective use of his knowledge of the gens and grafts on to it this later idea of mutual love as the basis of marriage. In doing this he rejects both polygamy and matriarchy in favour of monogamy and patriarchy. At no point is there any hint in either book that it was, or had been acceptable, for a tribal chieftain to have more than one wife nor is the concept of ‘mother right’ an active principle (unless, that is, it is supposed to be recalled in the character of the Hall-sun). Instead Morris attempts to idealise sexual relations by placing great emphasis on the equality of the sexes and the sanctity of marriage. This is despite the fact that in his lecture ‘The Early Literature of the North – Iceland’ (1887) he acknowledged that these ideas were not necessarily characteristic of the gens. He pointed out, for example, that divorce was not uncommon and that in the surviving literature there were many instances of ‘women divorcing themselves for some insult or offence, a blow being considered enough excuse’. He went on to observe that any violence by a woman against her husband was dismissed ‘on the score of their being “weak women” in a way which would offend our comrade Bax seriously’.

There is irony to be detected in the above remark, for despite the genuine historical basis for many of the features of the gens, Morris’s vision is flawed by his inability to escape from bourgeois prejudices concerning the relationship between the sexes. Although great emphasis is placed on pre-marital wedding ceremonies such as the Maiden-Ward, it is a remarkable feature of both *The House of the Wolfings* and *The Roots of the Mountains* that not a single one of the central characters is actually married (a circumstance that was, incidentally, to be repeated in *News from Nowhere*). They are all either single, widowed or obliged by tradition – as is the Hall-sun – to remain celibate. The result of this is that all the women are sexually available in much the same manner as their counterparts in *News from Nowhere*. In the case of Face-of-god in *The Roots of the Mountains* this only serves to confirm male sexual domination as every female he encounters immediately falls hopelessly in love with him. Bow-may, who otherwise stands as an example of the liberated woman, actually demands a kiss before she will enter the battle with the Dusky Men.

Similarly, the equality of the sexes, when examined closely, is nothing more than an illusion. Morris is completely unable to escape bourgeois myths concerning the ‘natural’ or ‘suitable’ role for women. At the beginning of *The House of the Wolfings* the scene is set immediately when we discover that ‘the looms and other gear for the carding and spinning of wool and the weaving of cloth’ are to be found in the ‘Woman’s Chamber’ in the communal hall.
Thereafter — despite the occasional atypical activities of characters such as the Hall-sun, Bow-may and the Bride — women are portrayed pursuing ‘traditional’ women’s tasks. At the time of the Hosting in the Shadowy Vale in The Roots of the Mountains it is the women who serve the men with food, while during the battle with the Dusky Men the women are to be found nursing the injured. In addition all positions of authority are occupied by men, and the latter are responsible for making all the decisions relating to communal survival.

Nowhere is this bourgeois predilection more obvious than in Morris’s portrayal of the character of the Sun-beam. When she is first introduced at the beginning of The Roots of the Mountains she has absolutely no scruples whatsoever in felling her brother with ‘a great stroke’ delivered with ‘a stout staff like the limb of a tree’ when he threatens to kill Face-of-god. It is her determination to forge a link between the Men of the Shadowy Vale and the Burgdalers which causes her to sacrifice her personal happiness in order to obtain a mutually advantageous marriage. Yet when Face-of-god visits her in the Shadowy Vale she suddenly renounces her past achievements and instead seeks to re-establish her femininity by recalling ‘the many peaceful hours that I have had on the grass down yonder, sitting with my rock and spindle in hand, the children round my knees harkening to some old story so well remembered by me!’ Shortly after this she faints away at the sight of Face-of-god doing battle with a band of Dusky Men.

The final reason why Morris was attracted to the period of the early tribes was that their historical location had many features in common with that of the proletariat in late nineteenth century England. They stood at a watershed in human history in which their successive defeats of the corrupt Romans and degenerate Huns could be seen to have determined the future direction of mankind. In ‘The Development of Modern Society’ Morris made the point that it was the workers’ task to emulate this achievement: ‘So shall we be our own Goths, and at whatever cost break up again the new tyrannous Empire of Capitalism’. The fact that the Goths existed alongside alternative yet inferior contemporary forms of social organisation also enabled Morris to exploit their position for propaganda purposes. He did this by contrasting their social practices with those of the Romans, and then forging a link between the corruption of the late Roman Empire and that of contemporary civilisation. The Gothic tribes, living amidst the remote forests of central Europe, served as a real historical and geographical utopia with which to compare contemporary forms of social organisation.

The main comparison Morris made was that between the Gothic tribes and ancient Roman civilisation during the final years of the Empire. His most detailed examination of conditions in the late Roman Empire is to be found in The Story of Desiderius. This tantalising fragment of a romance forms part of the May Morris bequest and is both untitled and undated. May chose its title when she included it — along with other unfinished prose works such as Kilian of the Closes and The Folk of the Mountain Door — in Volume XXI of the Collected Works. In her introduction to this volume she attributes the fragment of Desiderius to ‘the late romance-writing time’, which places its composition rather vaguely between the publication of A Dream of John Ball in 1886 and her father’s death ten years later. My own guess is that The Story of Desiderius dates from around...
the same period as *The House of the Wolfings* and *The Roots of the Mountains*. The idea for the story may indeed have been suggested to Morris while he was preparing his lecture on Theodore Mommsen in August 1888. As *The House of the Wolfings* was completed in early October 1888 and *The Roots of the Mountains* not begun until January of the following year, it is not inconceivable that Morris began the abortive romance in the winter of 1888.

The most compelling reason for dating *The Story of Desiderius* to the 1880s rather than the 1890s, however, lies in its firmly delineated historical basis. *The Roots of the Mountains* was the last romance to make any pretence at historical authenticity. Following the publication of *The Story of the Glittering Plain* in the *English Illustrated Magazine* between June and September 1890 Morris rejected historical realism for outright fantasy. May was one of the first to draw attention to this, stating that while the ‘earlier tales are seen historically’ the later romances – those produced in the 1890s – ‘lead us straight into the radiance of fairyland’. Her comments on *The Story of Desiderius* are revealing in this context:

> Of Desiderius I can only say it is to my lasting regret that this tale of the encounter of Barbarism and Roman was not worked out to the end. Even if, as we know was the case, the writer’s sympathies could not be with the decaying civilisation, his intuition would have built up a life-like picture of the clashing interests of the period.

From what remains of the tale this appears to have been Morris’s intention. The theme of the story can, of course, only be surmised. However, the action is set in the latter days of the Roman Empire in one of the southern cities – possibly Verona – that had been referred to in both *The House of the Wolfings* and *The Roots of the Mountains*. Here the hero Desiderius, the son of a rich merchant called Aurelian, lives along with his mother Julia, his uncle Tatian and a corpulent ‘master of thralls’ called Felix. Desiderius’s mother, Julia, has just obtained a new female slave who from her fair skin and soft hands is obviously not an ordinary thrall. Desiderius immediately falls hopelessly in love, an emotion apparently reciprocated by the slave who on meeting his love glance ‘grew troubled and ... flushed red, and then paled, and put her hand to her bosom as if in pain’.

Although Morris abandoned the tale shortly after describing this incident we can assume that he would have gone on to detail the barbarian’s final clash with the declining Empire and the complex social and psychological implications this would have had for the two lovers divided by an apparently insurmountable cultural gulf.

What made the encounter between the Goths and the Roman Empire of particular importance to Morris was that it represented the symbolic triumph of community over individual self-interest. His descriptions of Roman society always emphasised the way in which traditional ideas of community had been systematically replaced by individualism as a result of the rise of private property and materialistic values. The first stage in this deterioration is apparent in *The House of the Wolfings* where the Goths, in their contact with the Roman Empire at its height, are already conscious of the accumulation of wealth as one of the features which marks it out from their own society. Significantly the wealth of the
Romans is first introduced in Chapter IV when in conversation with Thiodolf the Wood-sun attempts to persuade her lover to don the haunted hauberk by describing the Romans’ strength, and by laying particular emphasis on their ‘captains and kings’ who dwell ‘amidst the walls of marble in abundance of fair things’. The Romans wealth is mentioned again when a Wolfing warrior describes how he has heard that a Roman city is ‘a garth full of mighty houses, with a wall of stone and lime around it, and ... in every one of these garths lieth wealth untold heaped up’. However, as the story proceeds it emerges that the Romans impressive accumulation of wealth has had dire consequence on their leaders. As the Goths move towards their final confrontation with the Legions word comes that far from enhancing their nobility as suggested by the Wood-sun, their wealth has led to idleness and dissipation, the freemen of Rome lingering ‘out their days in their dwellings and out of their dwellings, lying about in the sun or the hall-cinders’.

The threat that individualism poses for cultural survival is dramatised in The House of the Wolfings in the character of the Roman Captain who leads the Legions against the Mark. On three separate occasions the Mark-men are saved from defeat by his decision to place self-preservation above military consideration. The reason for his reluctance to avoid confrontation is revealed in Chapter XX:

He was both young and rich, and a mighty man amongst his townsmen, and well had he learned that ginger is hot in the mouth, and though he had come forth to the war for the increasing of his fame, he had no will to die among the markmen, either for the sake of the city of Rome, or of any folk whatsoever, but was liefer to live for his own sake.

When the Captain find himself surrounded in Wolfstead facing ‘Thiodolf’s Storm’ it is the prospect of his own death that finds expression in pointless cruelty. Realising ‘he would have to leave his treasure and pleasure behind him’ he ties up all his captives on ‘the chairs of the High-seat’ in the House of the Wolfings and surrounds them with faggots and small pieces of wood smeared with grease and oil ‘so that it and the captives should burn up altogether’. Although it is his thrust that ultimately kills Thiodolf, his actions – more than those of the hero himself – serve to illustrate the futility of pursuing individual desire against the collective will.

In The Story of Desiderius the Romans’ worship of wealth and their desire for short-term individual gratification has led to a state of near anarchy in which personal relationships have ceased to exist. Aurelian and Julia, Desiderius’s parents, although ostensibly married, do not allow this formal relationship to interfere with the satisfaction of their own material or carnal vices. Aurelian’s chief interest is the pursuit of wealth, an obsession only redeemed by his open-handedness ‘when the gain lay in his coffers’. His loyalty to Julia is non-existent as he ‘had as many wives as seemed good to him’. However, his selfishness pales into insignificance alongside that of Julia. Morris refuses to allow her even a single redeeming feature, describing her as ‘a fool, false and cruel, of many moods indeed but none of them good, a liar so that no one could say whether any word of her’s was false or true; a fawner and a flatterer to make the
time pass pleasantly'\textsuperscript{142} All this confirms a remark made in *The House of the Wolfings* that the Romans had ‘forgotten kindred, and have none, nor do they heed whom they wed, and great is the confusion amongst them’\textsuperscript{143}.

Morris considered the most important result of this rise in individualism to have been its affect on the military forces of the Empire. In *The House of the Wolfings* the Legions are still largely manned and led by indigenous Romans. The force that launched the attack on the Mark, for example, consists of 3,000 footmen, 500 horsemen and 6,000 bowmen all of Roman descent. The only exception to this are 500 ‘warriors of the Over River Goths’ who having been defeated themselves had been assimilated into the Roman force.\textsuperscript{144} Morris felt that as time went on the rise of individualism made the freemen of Rome reluctant to risk their lives in the Legions with the result that they had to be manned by men recruited from the very barbarians who were threatening the Empire. This change is apparent in *The Roots of the Mountains* where the Men of the Shadowy Vale are able to sell their services to the Romans and the Dusky Men apparently able to loot and pillage the Roman cities at will.

In *The Story of Desiderius* this idea is developed further. The unnamed city in which Desiderius lives is built on two sides of a river linked by a bridge of boats the midmost one of which was opened ‘to give passage to great ships which could come all the way up from the sea to the quays thereof’.\textsuperscript{145} All around the city was a great stone wall with ‘many towers for defence and for shelter of the soldiers that warded it’.\textsuperscript{146} At the south-east end of this wall was a great castle whose strategic importance was such that it was considered whosoever was in charge of it ‘was master of the whole city’.\textsuperscript{147} Although the latter is well-guarded it is no longer manned by the citizens themselves. The latter, we learn, would have ‘nought to do with such work, nor would gird themselves with steel except for hunting and whiles it maybe to murder men in some private quarrel for pelf or lust or vengeance’.\textsuperscript{148} It is also clear that the Roman citizens have come to accept the news of the defeat of the Legions in their skirmishes with the barbarians as a matter of little comment. When Felix informs Desiderius of one such debacle, the young man merely replies listlessly ‘That is no news’.\textsuperscript{149}

Desiderius’s listlessness is symptomatic of a wider psychological degeneration which Morris considered to be similar to that afflicting the bourgeoisie under capitalism. In ‘Art and Labour’, a lecture he had delivered in 1884, he argued that there were parallels between the attitudes of the Roman elite and those of the capitalists. Both thought their position of power was assured and failed to see that their own greed was creating the circumstances which would precipitate revolutionary change. Neither realised that they were living at a watershed in human history and that evolutionary developments were inevitable. In the case of nineteenth century capitalists this revolutionary potentiality was vested in the proletariat. In Rome it lay with the slaves.

It remains a matter of considerable frustration – though easily explicable in terms of Morris’s innate hostility to classical civilisation – that he chose to abandon *The Story of Desiderius*. There can be no doubt that the coalition of internal and external forces threatening the Empire would have provided the background to the story. As it was his habit to use the first chapters of his books to outline the location of the subsequent action, it seems more than likely that the
battle for the city's castle would have provided the central military episode around which the action would have been built. Would Desiderius, drawn to the tribes through his love for the mysterious Gothic maiden, have become a champion of the oppressed slaves in their united struggle with the barbarians against the corruption of the Roman Empire? There is a hint that this might have been Morris's ultimate intention, for when describing the hovels inhabited by the city's slaves at the opening of the story he wrote: 'Ah, if the dwellers therein had only thought them for once how many they were and how few their masters and yeomen!'

Maybe Morris intended Desiderius to be a Roman equivalent of John Ball contributing to the revolutionary process whereby human society developed from one great epoch to the next.

Following the defeat of the Romans by the barbarians, the Gothic tribes themselves were threatened by the waves of marauding Huns that began to sweep across Europe. On a superficial level the role of the Huns in *The Roots of the Mountains* parallels that of the Romans in *The House of the Wolfings*. The weaknesses of their respective systems of social organisation serve to accentuate the communal ideals of the Goths. However, the role of the Huns can also be interpreted in relation to the controversy between the rival supporters of Morgan and McLellan as to the early organisation of the tribes. Whereas both the Markmen and the Burgdalers conform to the type of endogamous tribe composed of interrelated gens described by Engels in *The Origin of the Family*, Morris's description of the sexual practices of the Dusky Men (the Huns) is based on McLellan's alternative definition of a strictly exogamous tribe in which intermarriage is impermissible and wives had to be forcibly obtained by abducting them from the neighbouring hostile tribes. McLellan's argument in *Studies in Ancient History* concerning the origins of this practice is convoluted and, it has to be said, not entirely convincing. He suggested that within certain tribes infanticide – particularly amongst female children – was common. As a result there was a superfluity of men within the tribe which led to polyandry being practised. This meant that even though it was the established practice for a single woman to be served by a number of men it was still necessary to supplement their numbers by abducting women from other tribes.

Most of these features are to be found in Morris's description of the Dusky Men in *The Roots of the Mountains*. We learn that human sacrifices is an essential feature of their social practices and that when 'children are born, they keep them or slay them as they will, as they would with whelps or calves'. According to Folk-might 'they have no women of their own' and it is their habit to take 'the younger and goodlier of the women [of the conquered tribes], whom they ... keep fair and delicate to be their bed-thralls'. It is not entirely clear, however, whether the Dusky Men are polyandrous or polygynous. The only bed-thrall that Face-of-god interviews was one of three kept by a master who is described as 'one of the chieftains of the Dusky Men'. Such an occurrence must have been atypical for a number of reasons; the sheer number of Dusky Men in proportion to their thralls; the complete lack of women of their own; their sacrificial practices; and the necessarily restricted number of attractive bed-thralls. It would not be unreasonable to assume that amongst the lesser tribesmen Morris considered polyandry would have been common.
Morris's portrayal of the Dusky Men raises the thorny question of whether he was influenced at all during the late 1880s by ideas borrowed from Social Darwinism? Social Darwinism - certainly in its British context - was one of those popular doctrines which could be adapted to support virtually any political philosophy. The theory was based on two central assumptions: that there were irresistible forces acting on societies corresponding to the natural forces operating in animal and plant communities, and that these forces manifested themselves in conflicts between social groups in which the most successful survived and was therefore deemed to represent a higher evolutionary level of society ('the survival of the fittest').

It was hardly surprising - given the almost unlimited scope for interpretation offered by this theory - that during the 1880s it was seized upon by both the bourgeoisie and the socialists. Herbert Spencer, for example, who in many ways anticipated Darwin, developed the theory to support his own laissez-faire view of society. He argued that just like organisms, social systems adapted to their environment by a process of internal differentiation and integration. In political terms, therefore, all state intervention necessarily interfered with the natural process of social evolution and progress. In his influential book *Man Versus the State* (1884) he applied these ideas to poor relief and the Victorians obsession with philanthropy. He argued that the indiscriminate giving of alms was detrimental to social evolution because it discouraged individual self-help. Those of the 'deserving' poor who were helped in this manner were in fact threatening the innate strength of the nation at the expense of those who accepted responsibility for their own economical survival. This reasoning allowed him to come to the controversial conclusion that the 'protection of the vicious poor [those relying on alms] involves aggression against the virtuous poor [those practising self-help]'.

Spencer, and more particularly the scientist T. H. Huxley, came in for a great deal of criticism in *Commonweal* during 1889 and 1890 for their alleged manipulation of Social Darwinism as a means of defending capitalism. Between February and April 1890, for example, no less than three articles were published on the subject: Arthur J. Dadson's 'Huxley and Spencer', Andreas Scheu's 'Prof. Huxley and His Natural Rights' and Paul Lafargue's 'Primitive Communism'. These authors concentrated on criticising Spencer and Huxley's opposition to socialism on the grounds that it was merely encouraging the survival of the unfit. Yet their arguments are not entirely convincing as Huxley at least also believed in the determining influence of social environment on the development of the individual, a view which was shared by many contemporary socialists. Huxley's support of medical reforms like vaccination and the extension of the programme to eradicate venereal disease were also supported by the socialists.

Although Morris didn't contribute directly to the debate in *Commonweal* he was certainly aware of the ideas of both Spencer and Huxley. His own comments were, however, confined to dismissing their views as examples of the bourgeoisie inventing alternative ideologies in order to challenge scientific socialism. As early as April 1884 he used an article in *Justice* entitled 'The Dull Level of Life' to attack Spencer's belief that socialism was anti-evolutionary because it required the individual to submit his will to collective tyranny. He was equally hostile to
Huxley. In his ‘Notes on Passing Events’ column in *Commonweal* on 8 May 1886 he compared him to Matthew Arnold in ‘declaring formally for Reaction’. Later, in the same month that Dadson’s article on ‘Huxley and Spencer’ was published, he stated in his ‘Notes on News’ column: ‘... the crushing of Socialism by intellectual argument seems rather like a joke; since by this time nobody but Professor Huxley or the regular debating-club bore ventures to argue against Socialism’.

Nevertheless, there is evidence in *The Roots of the Mountains* that Morris accepted that a link did exist between the health of a society and its evolutionary potential. Thus if any successful society compromised the traditional practices on which it was based, or attempted to change these in a manner which threatened to damage its genetic stability, then it was liable to find itself threatened by other forms of social organisation more adapted to existing circumstances. In *The Roots of the Mountains* Morris gives us two examples of the consequences of such genetic degeneration. The first concerns the fate of a section of the men of the Wolf who had originally overrun Silverdale. Unlike Sun-beam’s gens these tribesmen had abandoned their traditional endogamous practices and intermarried with the defeated indigenous tribe called the Westlanders. ‘Therein they did amiss’, Sun-beam tells Face-of-god, ‘for the blended Folk as the generations passed became softer than our blood, and many were untrustworthy and greedy and tyrantous, and the days of the whoredom fell upon us...’ So complete is the decline that follows, that when the Dusky Men fall upon Silverdale they are unable to offer even a token resistance to the new invaders and instead ‘gave themselves up to the aliens to be as their oxen and asses’.

The second example is to be found in Morris’s description of the Dusky Men themselves. As an exogamous tribal grouping their racial integrity is inevitably inferior to an endogamous tribe composed of related but exogamous gens. In *The Roots of the Mountains* it is suggested that their practice of mating indiscriminately with women from unrelated or inferior tribes had over time manifested itself in physical disfigurement. They are described as ‘short of stature, crooked-legged, long-armed, very strong for their size: with small blue eyes, snubbed-nosed, wide-mouthed, thin-lipped, very swarthy of skin, exceeding foul of favour’. There is also a suggestion that their unregulated sexual habits have come to threaten their reproductive capabilities. In Chapter XX Folk-might reveals that a child born to a relationship between one of the Dusky Men and a woman of Silverdale, if it fails to ‘favour his race’, is liable to ‘be witless’. Taking these factors into account it is not difficult to interpret the defeat of the Dusky Men at the hands of the combined forces of the Burgdalers and the Men of the Shadowy Vale as an application of the central tenets of Social Darwinism.

Incidents such as these have occasionally provoked comparison between Morris and theorists such as L. Glumpowicz and W. Sumner who used Social Darwinism to support the belief that some races are innately superior and bound to triumph over inferior ones. Charlotte Oberg – who has a lot to say about Morris’s ‘Aryan’ predilections – has even highlighted in this context the argument that there is an intrinsic connection between National Socialism and Marxism-Leninism ‘arising from the millennial eschatology on which both are based’. The fundamental flaw in this argument is that Morris never suggested that it was possible to breed a
super race through selective procreation along the lines advocated by the National Socialists. Instead he maintained that the health of a society could be gauged from the appearance of the people of which it was comprised. If a society adopted unnatural or improper practices these would inevitably be reflected in the appearance of its inhabitants. As an example of this one need only recall the shock William Guest has when he encounters the obsequious nineteenth century farm labourer after his return from Nowhere.

Ultimately the interpretation of The House of the Wolfings and The Roots of the Mountains is determined by the perspective of the reader. Read without a knowledge of Morris’s lectures and articles in Commonweal and Justice it is not difficult to see why the books have often been dismissed simply as imaginative fantasies. There are certainly elements of the supernatural in both stories which prefigure the essential role that magic was to play in the later romances such as The Well at the World’s End and The Waters of the Wondrous Isles. Yet to read the books out of context is to miss much of their meaning. As I have tried to show they respond in much the same way to the contemporary forces which had shaped most of Morris’s propaganda work. Whatever solace they may have given him during his last two years of active campaigning on behalf of ‘the Cause’ they could not help but be inspired by his wider concerns and his impressive knowledge of late nineteenth century historiography.

NOTES
1 For a concise account of Morris’s work with Morris & Co. see Helen Dare’s William Morris, (London: Pyramid Books 1990), pp. 79-113.
2 Morris’s remarks about his creative works were often inaccurate. In the famous autobiographical sketch he sent to Andreas Scheu shortly after joining the socialist movement he wrote: ‘In 1877 I began my last poem, an Epic of the Niblung Story founded chiefly on the Icelandic version. I published this in 1878 under the title of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblung’, Norman Kelvin (ed.), The Collected Letters of William Morris, (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1984-96), II, p. 229. In fact the book had appeared in the winter of 1876 (with the imprint 1877) and Buxton Forman even claimed to have received his copy by ‘the 20th of November 1876’, The Books of William Morris, (London 1897), p. 87.
7 ibid., II, p. 227.
8 The Collected Works of William Morris, op. cit., XIV, p. xii.


ibid., p. 675.

ibid., pp. 675-676.


Florence Boos's 'Morris's Germanic Romances as Socialist History, Victorian Studies, No. 27, (Spring 1984), pp. 321-42 is one of the better attempts to link the political writings to the Germanic romances, although her emphasis on the parallels between Morris and Gibbon is rather strained. Rudiger Hilgartner's article 'Freheit und Bruderlichkeit in der Klassengesellschaft: Vor der Moglichkeit des Umnoglichen in William Morris' Romancze The Well at the World's End', in Zeitschrift fur Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 3, No. 3, (1985), pp. 235-43, meanwhile, attempts to show how Morris's socialist thought can be detected in The Well at the World's End.


The Letters of William Morris to his Family and Friends, op. cit., pp. 245 and 246.


See in particular the section entitled 'The Gens and the State in Rome', in Karl

See The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris, op. cit., pp. 301, 308 and 311.


The Collected Works of William Morris, op. cit., XIV, p. xxv.


See The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris, op. cit., p. 159n and p. 166.

ibid., p. 172.

See Paul Meier, William Morris the Marxist Dreamer, (Hassocks: Harvester Press 1978), pp. 308 and 359-65. Goode’s argument (see note 35 above) that it is likely that Morris read Morgan’s book in the original is more convincing than that of Meier, but it is worth noting that Engels himself wrote in the Preface to the first edition of The Origin of the Family of how Morgan’s book was ‘remarkably difficult to obtain in London’, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, op. cit., p. 449.

The Letters of William Morris to his Family and Friends, op. cit., p. 246.

William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary, op. cit., p. 676.

This list can be found in Commonweal, 26 February 1887, p. 66.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Works, op. cit., p. 449.

ibid., p. 450.

ibid., pp. 454-458.

ibid., p. 459.

ibid., p. 458.

ibid., p. 458.

ibid., p. 458.

ibid., p. 458.

ibid., p. 459.

ibid., p. 459.

ibid., p. 460.

ibid., p. 459.

The Collected Works of William Morris, op. cit., XIV, p. xxv.

Commonweal, 19 July 1890, p. 226.

ibid., 19 July 1890, p. 226.

ibid., 15 May 1886, p. 53.

ibid., 15 May 1886, p. 53.
Despite this claim it is clear in Chapter VI that there was a legend amongst the Elkings – one of the gens that composed the Men of the Mark – that they had been in battle with the Romans many years before.


Morris earlier stated in a note (p. 12) that the description ‘Welsh’ was ‘used for all people of Europe who are not of Gothic or Teutonic blood’.

It is just possible that Morris intended this to be an oblique reference to the tribal contribution to the three Servile Wars which occurred between 134BC and 73BC.

Oberg has pointed out that for the Teutonic tribes the Wolf was a symbol associated with renewal on both an individual and tribal level. See *A Pagan Prophet: William Morris*, op. cit., pp. 109-110.
136 ibid., XIV, p. 45.
137 ibid., XIV, p. 46.
138 ibid., XIV, pp. 133-134.
139 ibid., XIV, p. 187.
140 ibid., XXI, p. 313.
141 ibid., XXI, p. 313.
142 ibid., XXI, p. 314.
143 ibid., XIV, p. 45.
144 ibid., XIV, p. 67.
145 ibid., XXI, p. 311.
146 ibid., XXI, p. 311.
147 ibid., XXI, p. 312.
148 ibid., XXI, p. 312.
149 ibid., XXI, p. 316.
150 ibid., XXI, p. 311.
151 ibid., XV, p. 136.
152 ibid., XV, p. 136.
153 ibid., XV, p. 195.
154 ibid., XV, p. 206.
156 *Commonweal*, 22 February 1890, 15 March 1890 and 12 April 1890. For a discussion of the influence of Social Darwinism on *News from Nowhere* see Anne Cranny-Francis’s ‘William Morris’s *News from Nowhere*: the Propaganda of Desire’, (PhD, University of East Anglia 1983).
157 *Justice*, 26 April 1884, p. 4.
158 *Commonweal*, 15 May 1886, p. 49.
159 ibid., 1 February 1890, p. 33.
161 ibid., XV, p. 112.
162 ibid., XV, p. 88.
163 ibid., XV, p. 136.