Morris’s Ethics, Cosmopolitanism, and Globalisation

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In thinking about why it is good to know William Morris in the twenty-first century, we may begin with the relationship of a part to the whole. What is the relationship of the self to others, the individual to the collective, the nation or state to the world? These are the questions asked by all western socialists, but in Morris’s time they were asked very widely. The psychologist Havelock Ellis analysed Decadence in 1889 as when the individuation of parts led to the disintegration of the whole, and a Decadent style in literature as an anarchistic style in which everything was sacrificed to the development of the individual parts. Whether one thought this sacrifice of the whole to the development of the part was a sign of Degeneration, or, as I think, of wide-ranging thought-experiments on the limits of self and other, this was the key tension of the period. Stylistically, how did the deep internality or particular perspective of a narrator or character relate to the larger, more social structures of plot or narrative? (Morris, like Hegel, understood this to be the problem of modern literature. As Romantic art dissolved into excessive internality and subjectivity, the great historian of the aesthetic Bernard Bosanquet anticipated the total art of Morris’s unalienated worker, whose applied art was the expression of pleasure in labour.) Socially, how did individual needs and desires relate to the needs and desires of others? This was the problem of freedom versus equality. And how did nations or states relate to other nations or states - the problem of internationalism. Many fin-de-siècle figures opposed narrow egoism, domesticity, and nationalism with larger social visions. This tension of independence versus interdependence, specifically of individual development threatening the survival of the whole, constituted the anxiety of liberalism after a
century of its development, and was the fin-de-siècle's major contribution to modernism. It also explains the dual emphasis on individual freedoms and social provision that was a unique contribution of the 1880s and '90s.

In his quest to reconcile freedom and equality, Morris did not sacrifice what I call the Fine to the Good. The Fine, also called Taste, implies the capacity to make distinctions on the basis of individual choice and preference, the domain of the aesthetic. The Good is the realm of our conduct toward others, the domain of ethics and politics. Morris and those associated with him were exemplary in bringing the Fine and the Good together. As he said, 'variety of life is as much an aim of true Communism as equality of condition, and nothing but an union of these two will bring about real freedom'. Socialism expert Ruth Kinna has argued that Morris distinguished his creed from anarchism in that he was for an individuality that also required a conception of public or social good. With this harmony of individual and social, Morris also included, among the conditions of individuality, freedom from authority and satisfaction of material needs. He was for the expression of creative individuality without being methodologically individualist. He knew that the unit of analysis was society rather than individual monads, that only when society provided for all equally could individuals then develop fully according to different needs and capacities. He was also anti-authoritarian and antibureaucratic because both led to passivity, in the case of authority passivity of thought and in the case of bureaucracy passivity of responsibility. As both social and active, Morris shared in classic western conceptions of the Good as inconceivable without action, the Good not as contemplative but active. It has often been pointed out that unlike the Fabians, who were socially bureaucratic and conventional in their personal lives, and unlike the SDF under Hyndman, which was directed to working people who were multiply constrained, Morris's Socialist League was the party of educators, idealists, anarchists, and disciples of the unconventional Engels. Kropotkin said that while Morris could have gone all the way with the masses, he could not go with parties, with all their 'wire-pulling and petty ambitions'. Kropotkin also thanked Morris for preventing socialism in England from taking the authoritarian and functionalist character that it had in Germany.

Morris's sensuous freedom or creative development that made him
impatient with parties and bureaucracy extended to his unconventional tastes. It will always be one of the more charming refinements of history that a political agitator of such virility should spend his last years printing beautiful romances. In William Morris at Home David Rodgers calls Morris ‘the first champagne socialist’. Rodgers explains, ‘Until the radical changes in society came about, it would hardly be fair to sacrifice his family and employees to save his own conscience’. Others have less apologetically put it that Morris was not given to sentimental personal gestures. What is important about Morris’s taste is not the actual products of his or his firm’s artisan- and craftsmanship, or even his poetry or romances. These were just byproducts of what he valued, the sensuous and intellectual labour of making them. That socialised infrastructure would be but the basis on which individuals could freely develop was the essence of fin-de-siècle socialism, which was distinctive for its freedoms and toleration.

In the course of the twentieth century, the fin-de-siècle’s dual emphases on freedom and equality bifurcated. The West committed to markets and procedural freedoms of speech, dissent, lifestyles, while socialist states committed to substantive freedom from want in housing, education, and health. Today, where wealth has increased and markets have prevailed over planning, people do seem to want to possess the good things of the earth, they do want to choose these things for themselves, and they do want to possess the pleasures of both activity and leisure. For the foreseeable future, we need to recognise that tastes and choices matter for people living above necessity, and that whether we like it or not markets are the present way of distributing them. So Morris’s insistence that individuality not be sacrificed to equality but that equality be the enabler of individuality makes his socialism more acceptable to contemporary liberals. The tragedy that no one at the fin-de-siècle would have believed is that over a hundred years later most people in the world are no nearer taking ‘pleasure in their labour’ than they were in the nineteenth century. Ceaseless competition ensures a division between work and leisure for most of us. Since Morris’s individualism is premised on creative development in work, it still remains a romantic idea for most.

The second area in which I think we can benefit in the twenty-first century by knowing Morris is in his attitude toward religion, in which his attitude — rather than his ideas — is what I shall try to specify.
Morris's ideas about Christianity qua social institution were much like his ideas about bureaucracy generally and are clearly expressed in The Commonweal. When Socialism is realised, its theory of life will be all-embracing and Christian ethics will be absorbed within it. Until then, Christianity has taken the various forms that social, political, and economic circumstances have forced on it, most recently the sordid commercialism of modern capitalism. By the eighteenth century, he said, religion in England was 'recognised as a State formality, but having no influence whatever on the corporate life of the country, its sole reality a mere personal sentiment, not at all burdensome to the practical business of life'. For Morris the main Christian ethic - the essential ethic - is hospitality: the treatment of the Guest or the Other. I shall return to hospitality below.

In comprehending that modern religion had been relegated to the status of either hierarchical bureaucracy or personal sentiment, and in turning his capacity for reverence toward labour and the creative process, Morris helps us understand one of the sources of contemporary crisis. In modern history Europe established itself as 'the Christian continent', and it distinguished itself from Asia and Islam. But in the course of European history, European religion came to develop another source of distinctiveness, its optative quality. The sociologist of religion Robert Bellah distinguishes between theoretic, or critical and scientific, dimensions of human culture and mythic (which he defines as narrative) and mimetic (which he defines as bodily enactive) dimensions. Freedom of religion as something that we can choose, as if from an interdenominational menu, is a very modern idea. It is theoretic religion, whereas most religions in the world are mythic and mimetic. People inhabit them like fish in water. 'Religion', writes Bellah, is historically constituted. It is worth remembering that in its modern usage, the term religion is only about two hundred years old. In many societies religion is a dimension of the whole of life, the conscious expression of a way of life. That religion is basically a private belief system and that churches are voluntary associations of like-minded believers is a modern and Protestant idea.

What this means is that for most people in the world, religion is not primarily a matter of beliefs or ideas at all, but a way of living in the

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world. As Bellah argues, theoretic culture alone has never inspired ethics or politics; hence the ethical and political crises predicted by fin-de-siècle commentators for the twentieth century. What strikes me about the atheisms, agnosticisms, and transcendentalisms of the late Victorian radicals is that while institutional religions were just one idea among many for them, ethics and politics were both mythic and mimetic. Morris’s great works are mythic, in Bellah’s sense of ‘ethically and religiously charged narrative’ and their total commitment to the value of work, or pleasure in labour, is mimetic, in Bellah’s sense of bodily enactive. That is, Morris was indifferent to religion as ideas in favour of stories and labour as ethics and politics. The fin-de-siècle socialists were essentially ethical and political, where others are essentially religious, and we today may be essentially economic.

In comprehending that modern religion had been relegated to the status of either corrupt bureaucracy or ineffectual personal sentiment, and in turning his capacity for reverence toward the creative process, Morris was typical of fin-de-siècle artists. The only contemporary I can think of whose hatred of the age and reverence for beautiful things could match Morris’s in intensity was Joris Karl Huysmans in France. Such a shocking juxtaposition as Morris and Huysmans is instructive. Although their passions against civilisation and for art were equally intense, their temperaments were opposite. Morris was all sensuous action and energy, mythic and mimetic. Huysmans is all static and theoretic, notorious for a literary career that began as a Naturalist, became the prototype of the Decadent, and ended as an hagiographer. While, due to his association with Engels and the Marx-Avelings, Morris did not, like Huysmans, characterise the vulgarity specifically as ‘Americanisation’, he did share Huysmans’ disgust with the materialism of modern life, including contempt for the ‘big business’ of institutional religion. They both turned to medievalism: Morris to Icelandic sagas and Huysmans to medieval alchemy, Satanism, and ultimately to an oblation that in no way compromised his contempt for the clergy. Both equally frustrated with modernity, Morris chose political action and Huysmans the apolitical miracle of individual grace. Both of them predicted cataclysmic twentieth centuries.

Third, I think that we benefit by knowing Morris’s environmentalism. We know from Florence Boos, Martin Delveaux, Peter Gould,
and Jan Marsh's work, as well as from eco-criticism more widely, that the period of 1870–1900 was the most fecund period of environmentalism in western history before 1970. What is less addressed is how the enormous rise of environmental societies in England at the Victorian fin-de-siècle related to the global disasters besetting the world in the same period.

Under the pressures of economic globalisation, most recently and devastatingly depicted in Mike Davis's *Late Victorian Holocausts*, many of Morris's peers viewed western civilisation itself as the egotism of a part that threatened the survival of the whole. And here is where the Decadent figure became more like the biological figure of cancer — when one cell exceeds the regulating system of the organism and develops at the expense of the whole. If Decadence indicated when the individuation of parts endangered the survival of the whole, the enormous transfers of wealth from India, Latin America and China to Europe and North America — what Davis calls the late Victorian 'making of the third world' — was seen by perceptive governors and travellers as precisely the Decadence of the West. See Ruskin's shocking intuition of Europe and its empires as baptised in Turner's light: 'Light over all the world. Full shone now its awful globe, one pallid charnel-house, — a ball strewn bright with human ashes, glaring in poised sway beneath the sun, all blinding-white with death from pole to pole'. (I think that much of the really morbid literature of the Decadence — that Brian Stableford has collected — indicates European awareness of the death in the empire, culminating in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.)

The Indian followers of Rabindranath Tagore and Yeats's Celtic Twilight rejected Western Decadence for pre-industrial and indigenous movements. The period that Davis studies of the great famines in India and China of the 1870s through the 1890s, exacerbated by laissez-faire economics that saved the West while letting the rest of the world starve, was the period of refined environmentalism at home. The Edinburgh Environment Society (1884), the Selborne League (1885), the Selborne Society for the Preservation of Birds, Plants, and Pleasant Places (1886), the Society for the Protection of Birds (1889) and the Coal Smoke Abatement Society (1898), joined the Rational Dress Society (1881), the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (1877), the Anti-Vivisection Society (1875), and other protectors of large and small environments, in a fin-de-siècle flourishing of ecology.
In order to comprehend this juxtaposition, we shall need something like the ‘Systems’ approach favoured by eco-critics. As Richard Kerridge puts it, an ecological perspective:

... strives to see how all things are interdependent, even those apparently most separate. Nothing may be discarded or buried without consequence. Literature is not leisure, not separate from science or politics, any more than ‘nature’ can be separate from human life, or someone’s backyard be immune from pollution. There are local ecosystems, but all are subject to the global ecosystem, a totality which excludes nothing and can be rid of nothing. This makes environmentalism a vital testing-ground for relations between post-colonial pluralism and new ‘globalisation’.15

While systems analysis or dependency theory in politics has been eclipsed by neoliberalism’s methodological individualism in the last couple of decades, it is currently making a comeback in the physical sciences, in biology, molecular biology, climatology, and genomics. In a monograph attempting a new ‘perspective on the whole world’, Andre Gunder Frank lamented that he did not have the conceptual wherewithal to move from his anthropocentric analysis of global trade to an ‘ecocentric’ analysis of just the sort that Davis now exemplifies when he calls his book a ‘political ecology of famine’.16

Ecocritics working on fin-de-siècle figures such as Morris, Edward Carpenter, or Bernard Shaw have occasionally adopted systemic approaches, showing the links between exploitation of the environment and class and gender exploitation. (Even the blatantly apolitical writers of the period, like Huysmans, intuitively – that is, with the sympathetic erethism of the aesthete – described the gross pollution of Paris’s second river, the Bièvre, as a symbol of female prostitution: ‘feminine poverty exploited by a big city’.17) Yet while interlinking class and gender with environment systemically, ecocriticism has typically preferred the local bioregionalism to the global. The ecological societies I mentioned were local and British or European. What is the relation of their bioregionalism to the vast ecological disasters in Davis’s book, for which British and European economic policies were in part to blame? The late Victorian ‘Back to the Land – Back to Nature’ movements, and the ecocriticism that has studied them, have focussed on the climatic conditions, the food chains, soils, the animals,
refugees. I think that his wanderers are asking just this: what do we share, if anything, as human beings distinctly embedded in thick but always interdependent environments? Very early on in Morris criticism (1937) Dorothy M. Hoare pointed out how deeply Morris's translation from the Icelandic sagas and Edda poems misunderstood the originals. Morris perceived correctly that the Sagas were individualistic, 'not overburdened by religion', illuminating of personality and character, without the intrusion of self-consciousness, possessing a clear sense of value, and about general common life, all of which he admired. What his translations failed to capture was their violence and tragedy. Hoare thought that Morris was too leisurely, pleasant, and discursive, whereas the ancient Sagas were constrained, hot, and tragic. I would put it that Morris was less interested in tragedy - 'man alone in the world' - than in ethics, in our proper conduct toward each other, through an education of the emotions.

Nussbaum remarked on the loneliness of world-citizens, from Marcus Aurelius to Thoreau, and one can reflect on May Morris's description of her beloved father as 'an intensely lonely man'. May cites The Pilgrims of Hope (1885–86) lines 'that wall of distance, that round each one doth grow, / And maketh it hard and bitter each other's thought to know'. The poem is a passional enlightenment, in Nussbaum's sense, or a refusal to bifurcate reason and emotion, in which the love of humanity as such triumphs over personal betrayal, political failure, and every incitement to hate. A man, Richard, with a small inheritance and his lover from the country go to London. He is cheated out of his inheritance by a lawyer but is content to live by his labour. Influenced by communists he takes to agitating and is imprisoned. His wife stays with their son, and sings to him the most beautiful lullaby I know, in praise of the mother's voice, and the mother-tongue:

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When Richard is released, they take up with another communist, Arthur, and, despairing of solidarity in London, they join the communards in France, leaving the boy at home. Richard is aware of
of every other: ‘Human Personhood, by which I mean the possession of practical reason and other basic moral capacities, is the source of our moral worth, and this worth is equal’. She traced Stoic norms that have subsequently been appealed to to justify domestic and international political conduct, including renunciation of wars of aggression, constraints on the use of lies in wartime, an absolute ban on wars of extermination, and humane treatment of prisoners and of the vanquished. For peacetime, she included duties of hospitality to aliens working on national soil and denunciation of all projects of colonial conquest.

Nussbaum sustained intense criticism from as wide a range of antagonists as Judith Butler and Charles Taylor to Gertrude Himmelfarb and Hilary Putnam, typically because her approach to rationality seemed disembodied and insufficiently situated. In the following year, Nussbaum published a revised call for cosmopolitanism in a collection of essays on Kant's 'Perpetual Peace'. There she traced a thicker history of the kosmopolites, or world-citizen, beginning with Diogenes the Cynic's famous reply when asked where he came from, 'I am a citizen of the world'. He refused to be defined by his local origins but was part of rational humanity. But Nussbaum conceded that we all have at least two communities: a local community of practical reason getting by from day to day and a global community of argument and aspiration. Far from the passions or emotions being opposed to Reason, the central goals of the world citizen would be the overcoming of prejudice and the complete extirpation of anger, both in oneself and surrounding society. She linked world citizenship to this goal of passional enlightenment or enlightenment of the emotions. In linking Kant to this tradition of passional enlightenment, she quotes his famous conclusion, one of the great descriptions of how Progressives think:

However uncertain I may be ... as to whether we can hope for anything better for mankind, this uncertainty cannot detract ... from the necessity of assuming for practical purposes that human progress is possible. This hope for better times to come without which an earnest desire to do some thing useful for the common good would never have inspired the human heart, has always influenced the activities of right-thinking people.
Nussbaum concludes, 'this hope is, of course, a hope in and for Reason'. Reason, we may remind ourselves, is essentially the mind's ability to plan and pursue a course of action. In Kant, and Nussbaum here, it is also an action for the Good and not opposed to the emotions: a passional enlightenment.

If one key aspect of the new cosmopolitanism is the education of the emotions, a second is the situatedness of the global citizen, even in times of unprecedented mobility. In the wide-ranging collection *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (1998), editors Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins called for a cosmopolitics to match capitalist globalisation; they also called for a new personnel, not the Stoics, Kant, or first-world intellectuals, but the servants, helpers, companions, guides, bearers, and migrant workers who are particular rather than universal world-citizens, a postcolonial diasporic or migratory cosmopolitan. We should note here the diversity we would anticipate among these neocosmopolitans, with the diasporic bringing perhaps senses of loss or nostalgia, while the migratory may bring more positive feelings of new or better lives to come. The editors of *Cosmopolitics* reject Kantian and Stoic theory for 'actually existing cosmopolitans', who may in the present be united through religious activity, or include political activists who seek models outside their own cultures, or be entertainers who are global icons such as Bob Marley. Like Robbins, Scott Malcolmson also includes 'everyone on the market with goods, both merchants and sellers of labour': 'All of these existing cosmopolitans involve individuals with limited choices deciding to enter into something larger than their immediate cultures'. I shall return to the degree to which choice and decision are involved.

In one of the most cited papers in the *Cosmopolitics* collection, Anthony Appiah quotes Gertrude Stein's 'America is my country and Paris is my hometown' (*An American and France* [1936]) as an example of the cosmopolitan patriot, or the rooted cosmopolitan, who takes her roots with her as she moves about the world. Appiah de-couples the cultural nation from the political state, in which the nation is 'dependent upon will or pleasure', while the state is formal or procedural, regulating our lives through forms of coercion. For Appiah, cosmopolitanism flows from the same sources as political liberalism, 'for it is the variety of human forms of life that provides the language of individual choice', and patriotism flows from liberalism for 'the state
carves out the space within which we [can] explore the possibilities of freedom. The cosmopolitan ideal – take your roots with you – is one in which people are free to elect the local forms of human life within which they will live. Appiah argues that the best state – the state he would choose to live in – is the state that provides the most choice for the greatest number. We must note, however – and this distinguishes liberal cosmopolites like Appiah from the late Victorians I shall return to – that Appiah’s emphasis is on political freedoms of speech, religion, lifestyle, while the economic status quo is assumed. The emphasis is on the freedom to move about in the world and to participate freely in world governance, but from situated, or ‘discrepant’, localities that appear to be markets in labour, goods, and services. My point is that the neocosmopolitanisms from North America are typically neoliberal, lacking the substantive freedoms and equalities Morris demanded. The freedom to move about the world as a world-citizen is indeed discrepant if one is a refugee mother with dependents and another is what Vertovec and Cohen call a Cosmocrat, or one of the global economic elite.

The new cosmopolitanisms, or the cosmopolitanisms from below, are meant to distinguish themselves from the old cosmopolitanism, typically associated with a unitary appeal to universal Reason, the Enlightenment, or at least the West, as well as from ‘aesthetic’ or consumer cosmopolitanisms of limited access. The new cosmopolitanisms are situated, vernacular, rooted, discrepant, and might include forced or diasporic migrants – like the Communists, Jews, and 70,000 dead Communard dependents deprived of their means of livelihood who fled Paris at the fin de siècle – as well as the elite cosmopolitan intellectuals of the coteries, such as the Anglo-American artistic or same-sex communities in Italy. Current political theorists believe that the new cosmopolitanisms have a renewed urgency due to globalisation, international migrations, multiculturalism, global social movements, and war. Revived are the questions, can the world ever live in peace, not necessarily a Kantian perpetual peace but even momentary and fleeting peace? And what do we share, if anything, as human beings distinctly embedded in thick but always interdependent environments?

I now return to Morris, the educator of the emotions in his literature, and whom I consider the great writer of pilgrims, travellers and
refugees. I think that his wanderers are asking just this: what do we share, if anything, as human beings distinctly embedded in thick but always interdependent environments? Very early on in Morris criticism (1937) Dorothy M. Hoare pointed out how deeply Morris’s translation from the Icelandic sagas and Edda poems misunderstood the originals. Morris perceived correctly that the Sagas were individualistic, ‘not overburdened by religion’, illuminating of personality and character, without the intrusion of self-consciousness, possessing a clear sense of value, and about general common life, all of which he admired. What his translations failed to capture was their violence and tragedy. Hoare thought that Morris was too leisurely, pleasant, and discursive, whereas the ancient Sagas were constrained, hot, and tragic. I would put it that Morris was less interested in tragedy – ‘man’ alone in the world – than in ethics, in our proper conduct toward each other, through an education of the emotions.

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When Richard is released, they take up with another communist, Arthur, and, despairing of solidarity in London, they join the communards in France, leaving the boy at home. Richard is aware of
Arthur’s affair with his wife, as Morris was aware of Jane’s affairs over 25 years with his friends, but he is not bitter. At least he is not consciously bitter: in the narrative the wife and Arthur are killed in the rising. Richard returns to England to look after his son:

I came not here to be bidding my happiness farewell,
And to nurse my grief and to win me the gain of a wounded life,
That because of the bygone sorrow may hide away from the strife.
I came to look to my son, and myself to get stout and strong,
That two men there might be hereafter to battle against the wrong;
And I cling to the love of the past and the love of the day to be,
And the present, it is but the building of the man to be strong in me.  

Morris was equally committed to a nativist love of the land and socialist internationalism, what we would call a situated cosmopolitanism. He is also as interested in interdependence in personal relationships as in politics. Florence Boos has pointed out that *Pilgrims of Hope* is unique among both communist and epic literature in that it is equally feminist and socialist.

All Morris’s biographers concur that his deepest commitments are in *A Dream of John Ball* (1886–87) on the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381. As in *News from Nowhere*, the Poet-Guest is always outside, lonely: ‘I walked along with the others musing as if I did not belong to them’, he introspects. John Ball says of him, ‘Thy speech is like ours and yet unlike, and thy face hath something in it which is not after the fashion of our day’. After the first battle, his friend Will Green describes the fallen enemies, and the Poet is moved by his struggle to overcome his anger: ‘I looked at him and our eyes met to see how wrath and grief within him were contending with the kindness of man, and how dear the tokens of it were in his face’. The self-overcoming of anger was of course one of the classic signs of the cosmopolitan. Another was religious tolerance. The Priest John Ball tries to draw the Guest into religious dispute. Urged to express his views on religion and the afterlife, the Guest replies, ‘Friend, I never saw a soul, save in the body; I cannot tell’.

On the eve of the battle after which Ball will be hanged, drawn, and quartered, and the Guest will awake, the two complete their exchange of tales of the hope to come and despair at the immediate future (which turns out to be the fifteenth through the twentieth centuries),
the past dreaming the present and the present dreaming the past. My point is that time-travellers are also cosmopolitan, world-citizens, and Morris used the languages of world-historical literature — chivalric, Icelandic and Marxist — to inform his writing, architecture and design. In what is arguably the first modern cosmopolitan poem in English, *The Earthly Paradise* (1868–70), he retold cycles of pagan, medieval, and Norse myth and legend, in composing which we know that he learned to control his natural irascibility, extirpate anger, forgive enemies, and cultivate fellowship under inhospitable conditions. His first work, *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858), traced the psychology of the unfaithful wife; *The Earthly Paradise* made peace with rivals. In a recent tribute to Eleanor Marx's contribution to feminism — for Eleanor Marx was like Morris equally committed to feminism, socialism, and art, and was like Morris a translator of world literatures — John Stokes unwittingly or not describes her like Morris's Guest, ejected from the feast he helped prepare in *News from Nowhere*, 'a world that Eleanor Marx helps to make possible but which she never completely inhabits, never witnesses'. Culturalists will be aware that the category of World Literature is arising, not in the sense of the former Comparative Literature, based in national distinctions, but in a more global economy of literatures as political and economic forces in their own right. This is the import of Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters*, and we can expect much more emphasis on this global economy of literatures in the future. Morris's cosmopolitan romances, what were they but the classic definition of romance — the quest for the object of personal and social desire — in as many languages as he could read?

In addition to the importance of world literatures to the creation of cosmopolis, we should also note Morris's recurrent figure of the Guest: Morris is always the Guest as narrator; his works are typically centred on the reception of Guests and Others of foreign lands. One of the great pleasures of reading the *Icelandic Journals* and diaries is Morris's enthusiasm as a guest, consuming great fishes and chocolate, attempting to converse in Icelandic with his hosts, describing the minutiae of domestic architecture of the bonders, thanking them always for their hospitality. In Derrida's late writings on cosmopolitanism, reflecting on the establishment of European cities of refuge, Derrida, like Morris, defines ethics as hospitality: 'Hospitality is culture itself and
not simply one ethic among others. Insofar as it has to do with the ethos, that is, the residence, one’s home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is ... the manner in which we relate ... to others as our own or as foreigners, ethics is hospitality'.

In her essay ‘Dystopian Violence: William Morris and the Nineteenth-Century Peace Movement’, Florence Boos traces Morris’s pacifism from the unpublished 1880 essay ‘Our Country Right or Wrong’ to his last recorded statement on the subject in 1893 in an unpublished lecture on communism ‘Changed Times’. She puts great weight on the following as representing Morris’s mature view on war and terror:

As to the attempt of a small minority to terrify a vast majority into accepting something which they do not understand, by spasmodic acts of violence, mostly involving the death or mutilation of non-combatants, I can call that nothing else than sheer madness. And here I will say once for all, what I have often wanted to say of late, to wit, that the idea of taking any human life for any reason whatsoever is horrible and abhorrent to me.

While Boos acknowledges that Morris’s literary writing is nonetheless filled with war and battle, she attributes this to his admiration of personal courage and self-sacrifice, and describes such armed conflict as mostly ritualistic and allegorical. Even the butchery and conflagration of Sigurd the Volsung she calls ‘elegiac cartoons of muscular paganism’ emulating loyalty, persistence, and courage. This underscores the individuality and ethical centrality that I have attributed to Morris and is characteristic of epic, which is antithetical to current strategical and game-theoretic approaches to conflict. She points out that in any case Morris gave up this bellicose romance from 1878, just as he was turning to antiwar politics, and she finds consistent pacifism in Morris’s essays and political actions. In linking Morris to the history of anti-war movements, Boos cites Joseph-Pierre Proudhon, who ‘anticipated Morris’s view that a true revolution would be economic and social rather than political’ and military, and she concludes that Morris recognised that most wars of his time were commercial, imperialist, and unjust.

I conclude with a final contribution of Morris’s to the twenty-first century, again reflecting on the relation of part to whole. While always
a lover of the land called England – which he wrote in *News from Nowhere* could be loved like the fair flesh of the beloved – Morris was not only not jingoistic, but he actively rejected the whole theme of western progress and European exceptionalism that we are only now beginning to dismantle. Put simply, and now following not only Davis in *Late Victorian Holocausts* but also the systems analyst Andre Gunder Frank, far from being the autonomous miracle of industrial capitalism progressively leading barbarous Others to the end of history in free market exchange, Europe and Britain only came to dominate the globe by building on divisions of labour, markets and finances already established by China, India, and Turkey. As Frank formulated it succinctly, far from being an unprecedented miracle of industrialisation and progress, Europe and North America used silver extracted from the Americas to buy a ticket on a long-running Asian train. On this train, the division of labour was already flourishing with commercial and financial linkages through world-wide money markets and capitalist finance. Unlike the majority of complacent Victorians, Morris began his first literary works hating the Age into which he was born and under no illusions that it was the end of history. He looked for alternatives in whatever climates and languages he could find them. His disenchantment and then critical engagement with his own age, combined with his hospitality toward guests and others, may be his most precious legacy in our current crises. Most people remember from 'How I Became a Socialist' (1894) that the leading passion of his life apart from the desire to produce beautiful things had been a hatred of modern civilisation. What is often forgotten is that the passion to produce beautiful things was coupled with the study of history:

> To sum up, then the study of history and the love and practice of art forced me into a hatred of the civilisation which, if things were to stop as they are, would turn history into inconsequent nonsense, and make art a collection of the curiosities of the past, which would have no serious relation to the life of the present.\(^{53}\)

Far from being escapist nostalgia, I take Morris's medievalism, such as it was, as a resistance to turning history into inconsequent nonsense: a keeping before our minds images of freedom that are not relegated to leisure-time, and of justice for pilgrims, guests, and refugees of time and space both like and not like our own.
NOTES


8. William Morris and E. Belfort Bax, Chapter 5 of *Socialism From the Root Up*, serialised in *Commonweal* 2: 22 (12 June 1886); in Salmon, ed., p. 519.


10. Ibid., p. 12.

all in the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings was the key to Morris's socialism. See Frank Sharp, 'Morris, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and Italy', paper given to MLA Annual Conference, (Philadelphia, December 2004).


21. Ibid., Martha Nussbaum’s ‘Reply,’ p. 133.

22. See esp. (in Cohen, ed.) Charles Taylor and Immanuel Wallerstein (pp. 119–124) and Judith Butler (pp. 45–52), after Homi Bhabha. Other arguments were that it was too thin to inspire loyalty (Benjamin Barber); loyalty can only move from the inner to the outer circles of caring (Sissela Bok); structural factors (economic
globalisation) override value preferences (the humane state) (Richard Falk). Falk proposed a ‘neocosmopolitanism’ or a globalisation-from-below to contrast with the globalisation-from-above that is capital-driven and ethically neutral. Greenpeace was an example, and ‘cosmopolitan democracy’ such as UN conferences on women, development, and environment. Further arguments against cosmopolitanism included Gertrude Himmelfarb’s customary critique, that it was too high-minded, but also that it was too western, and Michael McConnell’s, that it was paternalistic, that to teach values of any kind is an attempt to ‘impose values’ in market culture. Hilary Putnam argued that ‘universal reason’ should be given up in favour of situated intelligence – actual reasoning is necessarily always situated within specific historical traditions (pp. 96–97).


24. This rational core as regulative ideal and universal was central to Kant’s idea of perpetual peace. As Allen W. Wood describes Kant’s project for perpetual peace: ‘Human history is a purposive natural process. As with all species of living things, nature’s end regarding the human species is the complete development of its dispositions and faculties ... Nature’s means for the development of these faculties ... consists in establishing relationships among human beings ... making them simultaneously interdependent yet fundamentally antagonistic to one another – a relationship Kant names “unsociable sociability”’ (Cheah and Robbins, p. 68).


31. Ibid., p. 96.

32. Ibid., p. 106.

33. Ibid., p. 95.


35. Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, eds., *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). See esp. pp. 21 and 228. Vertovec and Cohen remind us that ‘aesthetic cosmopolitanism’, or consumption / Taste, from the Cosmocrats (global economic elite) to world music, has given the theory a bad name. They analyse six usages of cosmopolitanism:

   i) A socio-cultural condition
   ii) A kind of philosophy or world-view
   iii) A political project towards building transnational institutions
   iv) A political project for recognising multiple identities
   v) An attitudinal or dispositional orientation and/or
   vi) A mode of practice or competence.

They also reject the false antithesis of communitarianism, a belief that moral principles and obligations are grounded in specific groups and contexts, and cosmopolitanism as a belief in overarching principles of rights and justice, or at least broader than national ones. In other essays, reiterating again the individual civic basis with which we began the discussion, the sociologist Ulrich Beck considers whether cosmopolitanism is moving toward ‘a legally binding world society of individuals’ (p. 61); Stuart Hall questions whether such liberal cosmopolitanism sufficiently recognises that the individual is not only related to cultural meanings but also dialogically constituted by the existence of the Other (p. 28); and Craig Calhoun queries whether cosmopolitanism is not the latest effort to revitalise liberalism – in which emphases have too often fallen more
on property than democratic rights (p. 93). These issues of cosmopolitanism as a world society of democratic individuals but on unequal national playing fields, in which liberal political freedom and choice are differently constrained economically and militarily, seem likely to provide the ground for whatever institutions of governance – whether formal (UN) or informal (mass media) – are to come.

Historically, Robert Fine and Robin Cohen provide an illuminating analysis of four key cosmopolitan moments, when cosmopolitanism seemed beckoned by circumstance: the ancient Greek city-state, or equality through reason; Kant’s work of 1785–97, around the French Revolution, when the rise of nationalisms urged something like a Leviathan-contract (Kant’s ‘unsocial sociability’) between nation-states (pp. 139–45); post-WWII, when impediments to new world orders had often been associated with ‘cosmopolitan’ Jews or international threats; and our current context of radical uncertainty as to whether or not the world can be governed (see also Tomlinson, p. 240). I am arguing here that the late Victorian period was another such moment.

40. Ibid., p. 408.
43. Ibid., p. 268.
44. Ibid., p. 253.
45. Ibid., p. 263.
51. Ibid., p. 29.
52. Ibid., p. 17. See also Salmon, ed., p. 509.