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It seems that 2011 was yet another socialist anniversary of a kind, in that it marked the centenary of the death of Robert Tressell (Robert Noonan), author of The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, completed the previous year, but not fully published until 1955. The plot of this wonderful book is probably well known to many readers, but it was also recently (and rather movingly) summarised by Howard Brenton, so I hope that he (and they) will not mind my paraphrasing parts of his description.

Around the year 1905, in a seaside town on the south coast of England, a group of painters and decorators are about to have dinner … The conversation flits from subject to subject, ill-informed but lively, ignorance blazing into certainty … An argument flares up about poverty: what causes it? One man blames drink, another ‘overpopulation’ (even in those days). Another thinks education the cause – it puts foolish ideas in people’s heads and encourages laziness. An older man says that there’s always been rich and poor in the world, and always will be. One, a ‘chapel man’, blames original sin: ‘When it comes to poverty, what a grown man must do is conquer hisself’. Eventually, Frank Owen, a skilled man, and a socialist, can stand it no longer. Overpopulation, drink, laziness, sin have nothing to do with it. The real cause of poverty, says Owen, is money.

Of course, he is immediately challenged to prove it, and does so by means of what Tressell calls ‘the Great Money Trick’. Using pieces of left-over bread, Owen demonstrates to three of his colleagues how the wage system not only fails to pay them the full value of their labour, but also charges them for the necessities of life they have already produced, so that they end up with nothing. Thus is money, according to what I am sure we most of us recognise as Marx’s Theory of Surplus Value, the cause of poverty.

The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists is set at a time (another time?) of rising unemployment and increasing poverty, which, in those pre-welfare state days, places increasing stress on the very charitable institutions our present government sees as its Big Society safety net. But as we have just learned, the workers
are not ‘philanthropists’ because they give generously to such charities (although some do), but because they already give away the true value of their labour to their employers. Tressell sees them as stunted, their potential blocked, forever made to hurry and botch jobs in order to keep down costs, suppressing their natural creativity—precisely the phenomena described by Morris in many of his lectures and essays. Like Morris, Tressell was also a member of the Social Democratic Federation, although long after Morris had left to form the Socialist League.

I first read *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* as a result of reading what someone might consider an unlikely source—*Borstal Boy*. But Brendan Behan, his father Stephen, and his brothers Rory and Dominic, were all at one time or another house painters, and ‘strong union men’, and Brendan maintained that if you ever asked a house painter anywhere whether they had read the book—which he called ‘the House Painter’s bible’—they would always say ‘Yes!’ So, one day, back in the mid-1960s, one of my many journeys between Lancaster and Devizes, I found myself on a train sharing a compartment with a house painter, and asked him, had he read it, and he replied ‘Oh Yes!’ (Would I get the same answer nowadays, I wonder?).

Meanwhile, current events in the Middle East, especially in Egypt, recall what many regard as the key section of *News from Nowhere*, Chapter XVII, ‘How the change came’. Here, Morris explains that the main reason his own particular revolution was successful was because the soldiers sent to control a key demonstration, having seen the consequences of their first actions, refuse to fire a second time upon the crowd. Given the essential differences between the two revolutions—one fictional, one real; one socialist, one ‘democratic’ (so far)—the parallels with Egypt (and the opposite, more chilling one, with Libya) are very striking. Indeed, an account of the fall of Mubarak I saw recently, reads as if it is indeed an extract from ‘How the change came’.

On Friday 4 March, after Ahmad Shafiq, the last-minute prime minister appointed by Mubarak, finally resigned, and minutes after the new prime minister had spoken in Tahrir, people noticed plainclothes men carrying garbage bags out of state security headquarters in Alexandria. They intercepted the men and found the bags contained shredded documents. The people formed a cordon and insisted nothing leave the building. State security went on the attack. The army, after standing on the sidelines for a while, came in on behalf of the citizens. Within minutes the people had moved on state security buildings across Egypt, and everywhere they found documents being shredded or burned, and computers stripped of their hard disks. But they found enough files to show the enormity of the operation that had been in place against the Egyptian people. … For one hallucinatory evening our young people were inside the state security buildings rescuing files and taking our calls as we urged: ‘Find my file’. … Two days later
the thugs came back. But now the revolution belongs to everybody, and they won't let go of it.\footnote{5}

But surely the widespread occurrence of protests across the Arab world raises the question of why they have not taken place more widely elsewhere, especially in the ‘mature democracies’ of the West. The truth of course, is that they have, but nowhere with the impact (so far) of those of the ‘Arab Spring’. In particular, why has the increase in inequality which has characterised the richest nations over the past decade or so (and which will clearly be emphasised by most of the recent measures taken to restore ‘financial stability’) – and the placing of the burden for ‘balancing the books’ on the community, the poorest and the most vulnerable, while those responsible continue to reward each other with obscene amounts of money (and do not even seem to understand why they should not) – not led to more widespread outrage?\footnote{6}

One clearly important argument is that, as Ruth Kinna recently put it, many people in the West are complicit on their own oppression, in that they have been ‘seduced by capitalism’s competitive logic. Mistakenly regarding themselves as free, … they (have) been pacified by the slim probability that they might emerge as beneficiaries of market exchange’.\footnote{7} Or as Morris explains,

… in the days to come poor men shall be able to become lords and masters and do-nothings; and oft it will be seen that they shall do so; and it shall be even for that cause that their eyes shall be blinded to the robbing of themselves by others, because they shall hope in their souls that they may each live to rob others: and this shall be the very safeguard of all rule and law in those days.\footnote{8}

And here we see the essential cruelty of ‘the Great Money Trick’ in all its manifestations – the ‘American Dream’, the ‘Lucky Country’ – the prospect that given sufficient motivation, but also a great deal of luck and opportunity, we can all become rich. Which is, of course, a cruel lie, because, in a finite system, which is what we now understand the Earth to be, one person can only become rich if many others are impoverished.

Morris, of course, had his own description of ‘the Great Money Trick’, which he used several times. For example

… as to the class of rich people doing no work, we all know that they consume a great deal while they produce nothing. Therefore, clearly, they have to be kept at the expense of those who do work, …

As to the middle class, … they do, as a rule, seem to work quite hard enough, and so at first sight might be thought to help the community, and not burden it. But by far the greater part of them, though they work, do not produce, and even
when they do produce, … they consume out of all proportion to their due share. …

The class that remains to be considered produces all that is produced, and supports both itself and the other classes, though it is placed in a position of inferiority to them; … But it is a necessary consequence of this tyranny and folly that again many of these workers are not producers. A vast number of them once more are merely parasites of property, … engaged in the service of the private war for wealth …

Next there is the mass of people employed in making all those articles of folly and luxury, the demand for which is the outcome of the existence of the rich non-producing classes; things which … whoever may gainsay me, I will for ever refuse to call wealth …

… further, there is even a sadder industry yet, which is … the making of wares which are necessary to them and their brethren, because they are an inferior class. For if many men live without producing, … it follows that most men must be poor; …

To sum up, then, concerning the manner of work in civilized States, these States are composed of three classes – a class which does not even pretend to work, a class which pretends to works but which produces nothing, and a class which works, but is compelled by the other two classes to do work which is often unproductive.

Civilization therefore wastes its own resources, and will do so as long as the present system lasts.9

In ‘Socialism’, as Florence Boos recently reported, Morris quantified his argument

… the tribute taken from the workers is no trifle, but amounts in all to about two thirds of all they produce: … such profits as that are seldom made by the employer[,] who has to be content with 10 percent perhaps, or perhaps even less in bad times. … (But) it is the rich class that (takes) this tribute[,] not the individual employer only; besides his tribute, which in all cases is as much as he can get …, the worker has to pay taxes for payment[,] amidst other things[,] of the interest of the national debt which the privileged classes take to themselves: and remember that all taxes are in the long run paid by labour, since labour only can produce wealth: rent also he has to pay, and much heavier rent in proportion to his income than rich people[,] as well as the commission of middle-men, who distribute the goods he has made, and who instead of doing this distribution simply and for a moderate payment, form a system of wheels within wheels, and make monstrous profits from their busy idleness.10

But now it seems that, given the insouciance of many bankers (even those now
employed by banks taken into public ownership in order for them to survive) we can add another stage to Owen’s Trick – that when the system breaks down, it is the producers of wealth who must pay to put it back in working order, and the ‘kindhearted capitalists’ who must be rewarded for their incompetence.

In this issue, Jan Marsh traces the history of Morris’s only surviving easel painting, La Belle Iseult, although as she explains, that is not how it has always been known. Gabriel Schenk explores the ‘living past’ of Morris’s late prose romances, and how this imagined past can remain alive in us, so long as we live in fellowship – a key human trait the very existence of which advocates of the unfettered free market are forced to deny. Antoine Capet evaluates the thesis that Morris’s political thought possessed a dualistic aspect which stemmed from his own experience of life – that while he could sympathise with the victims of ‘the Great Money Trick’, he found it more difficult to empathise with them, as he had not experienced their conditions directly – hence what might be called his ‘ouvriérisme’. And Emma Ferry discusses the contribution to one aspect of Victorian interior design of Lucy Orrinsmith, one of several female artists employed by ‘The Firm’, and perhaps somewhat overshadowed by her better known sister, Kate Faulkner.

We also carry reviews of a new and important text on Morris’s significance for contemporary life (William Morris in the Twenty-First Century, edited by Philippa Bennett & Rosie Miles), and of the final volume of William E. Fredeman’s The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Regina Gagnier’s Individualism, Decadence and Globalisation discusses the role of individualism in the development of modern, globalised society, and how Morris’s ideas differ from those of the many others who have influenced this process. Morris’s impact on the builders of Garden Cities is assessed in Mervyn Miller’s English Garden Cities: an introduction, and publications on the legacy of Morris and others on various crafts are represented by reviews of books on the Royal School of Needlework: Handbook of Embroidery, and on modern interior design from Victorian times. Finally, Jim Cheshire correctly points out that it is possible to understand the practicalities of Morris’s ideas about the significance of ‘work as pleasure’ whilst failing completely to comprehend their economic implications – that they reveal ‘the Great Money Trick’ for what it is.

NOTES

2. ‘Rereading: Howard Brenton on The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists’


9. ‘Useful work versus Useless Toil’ (1884); http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1884/useful.htm (as accessed 24 March 2011).

La Belle Iseult

Jan Marsh

Described in 1874 as ‘unfinished’, 1 William Morris’s only easel painting was begun around the turn of the year 1856–1857, when he was dividing his time between London, where he shared lodgings with Burne-Jones at 17 Red Lion Square, and Oxford, where he was courting Jane Burden. She modelled for the figure, which depicts La Belle Iseult (Figure 1) from Thomas Malory’s version of the Tristram and Iseult (Isolde) legends. Their engagement was announced by March 1858 and their wedding took place in Oxford in April 1859.

Morris had taken the Tristram legend as his subject for the mural decoration at the Oxford Union debating chamber during summer 1857, and it appears that he began or at least conceived two other related compositions: ‘Tristram recognised by Iseult’s Dog (in a garden)’ and ‘Tristram and Iseult on the Ship’. The former was commissioned from Morris by the businessman Thomas Plint at Rossetti’s behest, presumably as a means of promoting Morris as a professional painter, although unlike his friends Morris did not need to earn money, and any advance payment made was refunded to Plint’s executors on his death in 1861. Both La Belle Iseult and ‘Tristram recognised by the Dog’ progressed as oil paintings, though no trace of the latter is now known.

It is not now possible to reconstruct fully the progress of the painting during the months after March 1858; customarily, artists prepared the background setting of a composition first, leaving space for the figures to be added, but Morris was formally untrained in art and it is not clear when or from whom he learned to paint in oils beyond the rather unskilled efforts on panels and pieces of furniture decorated at Red Lion Square. He may therefore have painted the figure of Iseult first, using Jane as the model and working in Oxford before moving the canvas to London. Philip Webb, a close companion of this date, recalled that the bed behind Iseult was painted from one in Red Lion Square, where it was ‘not disturbed for months’. This suggests that it was carefully left rumpled, as seen in the picture, although Webb also added that ‘one day we found Morris lying on it smoking. He said it was to make it look as if it had been slept in’, 3 which rather contrarily suggests that the rumpled state was a later idea.

1
Figure 1 – La Belle Iseult by William Morris, 1857–8. By permission, © Tate, London 2011.
The figure, the bed, the small dog curled up asleep on the sheets, the table covered with a woven or embroidered cloth and holding a mirror, illuminated missal, oranges etc, the brass ewer and wooden bowl are painted carefully and precisely, with the wealth of detail associated with the Pre-Raphaelite group during the 1850s, and are assumed to have been completed at this time. It is possible that the linen hangings, and the dark blue cloth on the rear wall, which resembles the stitched 'tapestries' Morris was producing at this time, also date from this period. The distant background and in particular the small minstrel figure on the right appear to have been painted at a later date, together with the brown passage immediately in front of the bed, which is unresolved.

Although the work is not large, the wealth of detail was ambitious for a beginner, and Webb also recalled that Morris laboured to complete it. "[A]fter struggling over his picture for months, “hating the brute”, Morris threw it up."4 It was thus left unfinished, though to what degree is unknown. The most probable date for him to have abandoned it is summer 1858, when Morris and Webb visited the cathedrals of northern France and began planning the house which Webb would design for the Morrises to occupy when married, but it is possible that the canvas remained with Morris, either in London or Oxford, until his wedding, when he vacated his lodgings in both cities. According to Webb, ‘Rossetti took it to finish, and then Madox Brown’.5

Rossetti spent a large part of 1858 outside London, in Matlock, Derbyshire, where he worked on his translations from early Italian poetry and painted small watercolours on medieval, Malorian themes. His studio remained at Chatham Place, Blackfriars, in London. In August, he paid a swift visit to Oxford, calling on and drawing a large pen-and-ink portrait of Jane Burden.6 It is just possible that he found Morris’s unfinished canvas and took it to London with him then. A few months later Rossetti would resume working in oils, but there is no direct evidence that he did paint any parts of La Belle Iseult. However, an opportunity to do so occurred around the time that he painted the diptych Salutation of Beatrice in oil on panels, as part of a promised wedding present for the Morrises; which were completed in June 1859.7 Both panels depict Jane Morris as Beatrice.

Intriguingly, there are points of comparison between La Belle Iseult and the right-hand panel of the Salutation. These include the garland of spiky leaves on the head of both Iseult and Beatrice, the stringed musical instrument held by the background minstrel in Iseult and two female musicians in the Salutation, and the distinctive red notes of both compositions. The minstrel playing a stringed psaltery would become one of Morris’s favourite motifs in stained glass, but Rossetti had been the first to employ it, notably in a watercolour version of the Salutation, completed in 1854.8 In Iseult the motif is not identical, but the similarity is suggestive. And as there are some indications from careful inspection of the picture that Iseult’s red sleeves are overpainted, it seems possible that this could
have been added, together with the minstrel, if the canvas was with Rossetti during the summer of 1859.

By his own report, it remained unfinished, however; and Webb’s recollection transferred it from Rossetti to Madox Brown. In view of its later history, this was an accurate account, so when and why was the canvas moved from Chatham Place to Brown’s studio? The most likely date is summer 1860, after Rossetti had married Elizabeth Siddal and returned from honeymoon to lodgings in Hampstead. For some weeks Rossetti searched for a suitable new home before deciding to remain at Blackfriars and enlarge the apartment. At this stage, a nearly-finished picture of Janey Morris, with whom Rossetti had flirted in Oxford sufficiently to alarm Lizzie, would not have been a good item to keep on the premises. Conjecturally, therefore, Rossetti moved the canvas to Brown’s hospitable home in Kentish Town.

Or the move may have been prompted by Morris’s desire to resume painting under Brown’s guidance. By inference, he had Iseult delivered to Kentish Town, together with one or both of the other projected ‘Tristram’ subjects. By April 1861, he was working on the canvas depicting ‘Tristram recognised by the Dog’, commissioned by Plint. ‘The picture is now at my house’, Brown told Plint, ‘and at my suggestion he [Morris] has so altered it that it is quite a fresh work. There is still a figure in the foreground to be scraped out and another put in its place … I take as much interest in Morris’s picture … as though it were my own’.9

This is a curious episode, since no such canvas survives, whereas a few years later Iseult appears to have been lying half-forgotten in Brown’s new studio in Fitzroy Square. What happened to ‘Tristram and the Dog’? And though Brown’s letter implies that Morris was painting in Brown’s studio, the actual words state only that the picture was there, and that Brown was advising Morris on how to proceed.

Morris at this date was still living at Red House, miles away in Kent, and was currently establishing a workshop for the newly-established firm of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co, back in Red Lion Square. Did he move his own studio there from Red House, in order to work on his unfinished paintings as well as the painted furniture which the firm planned to produce? The business brought all the partners into regular contact, and it is just possible that Morris’s two canvases were then delivered to Brown, who offered to assist their completion by, for example, altering the composition of ‘Tristram and the Dog’. Webb, we may recall, claimed that Brown took Iseult ‘to finish’ in succession to Rossetti. Was his perhaps a ‘holding message’ to Plint, to explain the picture’s non-delivery? There is no firm evidence that he worked on it, unless one wishes to attribute the minstrel and red sleeves to Brown’s intervention. My own unsubstantiated guess is that perhaps Brown painted in the sleeping dog, which is rendered with a good deal more skill and sophistication than Morris could muster.
Clearly, however, it remained uncompleted and apparently untouched. In November 1865, when the Morrieses finally left Red House for Queen Square, the Browns also moved, to Fitzroy Square and the Iseult canvas presumably went with them. Nothing more is recorded of it until 1874, when Brown pencilled a note explaining that the picture was ‘left at my house & never finished. William Morris gave it subsequently to Nolly’.10

Oliver (Nolly) Madox Brown had been born in 1856, and in November 1873 published a full-length novel entitled Gabriel Denver, which Rossetti read and commented carefully on. The following spring Nolly was invited to Kelmscott Manor, where Rossetti was now living after his mental collapse of 1872. During this visit, Nolly borrowed and damaged the boat belonging to the Manor. This will entail ‘sending the boat to Oxford for repairs’, Rossetti told him.11 Nolly’s reply does not survive, but a few days later Rossetti wrote again, saying he would not tell Nolly’s father of the misdemeanour, nor ask for the cost of the repair. ‘If you are needing funds,’ he continued, ‘and like to sell the unfinished picture by [Morris] I will give £20 for it almost immediately – not just at this moment but in a few weeks’ time’. A postscript elaborated: ‘Mind, I don’t in the least want to press you to sell the picture if you prefer keeping it, but should like to buy it if you are willing, & am not making the offer merely in case it should be convenient to you’.12 This suggests that the survival of La Belle Iseult, and Morris’s otherwise unrecorded gift of it to Nolly, had been spoken of during Nolly’s stay at Kelmscott. Possibly, at some date Brown had asked Morris what he wished to do with the picture, noting that it was a favourite of his son’s, and was told Nolly could have it.

Nolly evidently replied in the affirmative, for on 3 June Rossetti responded, thanking him for his ‘letter about the picture. My wish to possess [it] is solely as an early portrait of its original of whom I have made so many studies myself – thus, as long as there is any question of the work becoming mine, please don’t touch the figure on any account in the least’.13 Evidently, Nolly had also offered to ‘touch up’ or maybe finish off the painting. Also, Nolly had both asked where the canvas should be sent, and declined the offered cash in favour of a reciprocal work of art by Rossetti, who continued; ‘From what you say of the picture, however, it strikes me that I really might not be able with any sort of fairness to meet its value by such exchange as would be in my power, which could merely be represented by some chalk head or other or something of that sort. I fancy we had better let the subject remain pending till I could see it at your house, but if sent anywhere at present, better to Euston Square only I don’t know when I should be there to look at it. I am writing Wm a line on the matter in case you do send it to his house’.14 Brown’s later annotation on the back of the first letter confirms the financial arrangement: ‘DGR offered Nolly 20 guineas for it on account of its being from his favourite model Mrs Morris. Nolly refused the money but gave him the picture’.15
although it is also clear that some exchange value had been agreed.

The proposed destination for the painting was determined by the facts that as Morris's work it could not hang at Kelmscott without his knowledge and permission, and that Rossetti had no current plans to return to Cheyne Walk, where in addition it would upset Fanny Cornforth. His family's house in Euston Square was a useful alternative. 'Dear Wm', wrote Rossetti the same day, 'Nolly has a picture (unfinished) by Morris which there was some talk between him (Nolly) & me of my making some exchange for & thus acquiring. He seems to have looked it up & and to propose sending it here or to Chelsea. I fancy Euston Square wd [sic] be best & have told him so, unless he likes to keep it till I happen to be able to see it at Fitzroy Sq. If it comes to you, please put it away & I'll look at it whenever there. I don't want to noise abroad my bargain for it'. This confirms that Rossetti wished to keep his acquisition secret from Morris, and maybe others who might interpret it as further evidence of his own intimate relationship with Jane. At this stage, it appears to have been known as Queen Guinevere, perhaps by identification with Morris's early poem about this figure, but no title is given in the extant correspondence.

It is not known exactly when the canvas was delivered to Euston Square. William Rossetti and Lucy Brown married in March 1874, and on return from honeymoon on 13 May moved into the Euston Square house, temporarily vacated by the Rossettis' mother and sister Christina. One small bedroom was allocated for Gabriel's use, and it is possible that La Belle Isulet was moved there from Fitzroy Square with Lucy's possessions. Later in the year, however, it was probably sent to Cheyne Walk after Rossetti's return there in July – although no-one recorded seeing it there and it featured neither in Rossetti's (rather hasty) will nor in the inventory of possessions after his death in April 1882.

Fifteen years later, William claimed that 'Gabriel, at the time of his death had in the house a “Queen Guenevere” oil-painting by Morris,' adding that 'Watts-Dunton (Gabriel’s friend and legal adviser) told me that the intention of G. had been to return it to M. or his wife, and I gave instructions to that effect’. Whether such instructions were actually given is open to conjecture; certainly they were not acted upon, as William confessed: 'but from time to time I have had reason to observe that the picture never reached the Morrises, & was supposed to be still in my hands'.

A few weeks after Morris's death in October 1896, a memorial exhibition was proposed. 'There has lately been a scheme mooted for an exhibit of the works of William Morris and D.G. Rossetti in the coming winter to be organised by the Directors of the New Gallery & a Committee under the presidency of Sir E.B.J.' wrote Sydney Cockerell to Jane Morris. Someone involved – perhaps Burne-Jones or Philip Webb – recalled La Belle Isulet, and during summer 1897 Cockerell, who had been secretary to the Kelmscott Press and as one of the execu-
tors was responsible for winding up Morris’s estate, asked Jane about this ‘lost’ painting. She replied that it was probably with William Rossetti, a logical deduction regarding an item formerly owned by Gabriel. On 11 August, assuming he now owned the work, Cockerell wrote to William, asking if he would exchange it, perhaps for a book from the Kelmscott Press. William replied saying he had given instructions for the picture to be returned to Morris. Cockerell asked Jane again.

‘It is curious about the Guenevere picture,’ she replied, ‘the only other person likely to throw any light on the subject is Fairfax Murray. He might be consulted on his return to England, but I fancy it was he who told me that William Rossetti had it, or most likely had it’.21

Then, on 27 November 1897, William, now living in St Edmund’s Terrace, Primrose Hill, wrote to Cockerell to say he had found it.

Dear Sir, you will be agreeably surprised to learn that the picture by William Morris (about which you and I were in correspondence in August last) has after all turned up in this house. This morning I happened to enter the bedroom vacated by my eldest daughter (who went off to Florence on the 18th prior to marrying) and there to my astonishment I saw the picture. Had not set eyes on it since June or July 1882. My eldest daughter being gone, I cannot enquire of her how or whence the work was found; but she was rummaging about after many things before her departure, and I learn that somewhere or other she found it. All’s well that ends well.22

The same information was recorded in William’s diary: ‘this morning, on going into Olive’s vacated bedroom, there I find the work displayed. I gather from Mary that O. found this picture perdu somewhere or other, & fetched it out. I wrote to Cockerell apprising him of the facts & inviting him to fetch the picture away’.23

To Cockerell, William also stated that ‘in your letter of 11 August you assume that this picture is my property; and in fact I believe that it was my property at the time of his death, but that he intended (though the intention was not put into writing, nor expressed to me direct) that it should return to Mr or Mrs Morris. I therefore make no claim upon it whatever’. But, he added in respect of Cockerell’s offer of a Kelmscott Press book, ‘I don’t expect anything at all: but, if you like to allot to me some such thing as a goodwill gift, I see no reason for saying No. It can be anything – or, as you might prefer, nothing’.24

The picture was duly removed to Kelmscott House, Hammersmith in early December. Jane probably did not see it, as she was by then staying at Lyme Regis for the winter. On 14 December she replied to an enquiry from Cockerell regarding the forthcoming exhibition. ‘I shall be very glad to show the picture at the New Gallery’, she wrote. ‘Will it be at once?25 A week later she wrote ‘Thanks for letter and all you have done about the picture’.26 The exhibition ‘Pictures Ancient and Modern by Artists of the British and Continental Schools Includ-
ing a Special Selection from the Works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti’, opened at the very end of the year.

This was the painting’s first public appearance. If still as ‘unfinished’ as in 1874, it was either displayed as such, or with some hasty infilling of blank spaces. Such infills could be the brown passages below the bed and in the background, if done simply to cover bare canvas. There was no time for any more extensive additions or alterations.

Entitled Queen Guenevere, it was no. 24 in the New Gallery catalogue, which carried the following description:

Small full length figure to left wearing pink embroidered white dress with red sleeves, a wreath of flowers on her head; she stands before a toilet table and is putting on a girdle; in the background is a bed, on which sleeps a dog; and on the right a man playing a lute. / 28 x 19½ ins./ This is the only oil painting by William Morris/ Lent by Mrs William Morris. 27

Jane Morris may well have missed the exhibition, as she had not visited the New Gallery by 9 March, having not been to London. After the exhibition closed, the painting was presumably returned to Hammersmith, though probably not to Kelmscott House, which was to be let. It was photographed by Emery Walker’s firm Walker & Boutell, and reproduced both in Aymer Vallance’s 1897 book on Morris’s career and in J.W. Mackail’s official Life of William Morris, published in April 1899. Here it was captioned ‘Queen Guenevere, from the picture painted by William Morris in 1858’ and its history given as follows:

Much the greater part of the year [1858] was spent by him at Oxford, either in his rooms in the city or at Summertown with the Maclarens. There he went on painting hard, but with continued dissatisfaction. He even sold a picture for the considerable sum of £70 to Mr Plint of Leeds. The negotiation was conducted by Rossetti, who loved making bargains for his friends as well as himself. This picture, which has now, after many wanderings, returned to the possession of his family, is believed to be the only finished easel-painting by Morris certainly known to exist. It was exhibited in London at the New Gallery in January 1898. 28

Perhaps Philip Webb or Georgiana Burne-Jones queried the title; they were virtually the only members of the Morris circle surviving from 1858 besides Jane, who does not seem to have challenged the ‘Guenevere’ name. Until, that is, their daughter May began work around 1901 on the edition of the Collected Works which appeared from 1910–1915. 29 Then, in response to a question from May, she wrote: ‘“La Belle Iseult” is what the dear father always called his picture, and I think we ought to keep that’. 30 And it was presumably around this period that Jane wrote the label which was formerly on the back of the painting, which reads ‘La Belle Iseult, painted by William Morris 1858…’. The photogravure by Walker & Boutell was
reproduced in Volume 16 of the Collected Works, on p. 451, and captioned ‘La Belle Isuelt from the picture painted by William Morris in 1858’.

The work remained in Jane’s possession until her death in 1914, when it passed to May, who in turn bequeathed it to the Tate Gallery in 1938. In her will it was named ‘La Belle Iseult’. On accession the work was cleaned and re-lined, and some paint losses restored. Despite Jane’s label, in 1965 it was re-catalogued as ‘Queen Guinevere’, presumably by reference to the New Gallery catalogue, or the reproduction in Mackail’s biography. As such it appeared in the 1984 Tate Gallery exhibition The Pre-Raphaelites with a catalogue entry by John Christian, who noted that ‘all the earlier records’ called the subject ‘Guenevere’, although ‘the title is unimportant, since it is essentially a portrait in medieval dress of Jane Burden’.32 Following the present writer’s article in the Burlington Magazine, on Morris’s shortlived career as a painter,33 it was re-titled La Belle Iseult, which it remains, despite an ambiguous caption from 2004, which opens with somewhat misleading information: ‘The inspiration for this painting was Thomas Malory’s “Morte d’Arthur” (1485), in which Guinevere’s adulterous love for Sir Lancelot is one of the central themes. The model is Jane Burden who became Morris’s wife in 1859’.34

NOTES

3. ibid.
4. ibid.
5. ibid.
10. Undated note on back of letter from D.G. Rossetti to Oliver M. Brown; Fredeman Letter no. 74: 86, n. 4, p. 444. As the MS of this letter, according to Fredeman, is unlocated, it is not clear where this information originates.
13. D.G. Rossetti to Oliver M. Brown, 3 June 1874; Fredeman, Letter no. 74: 111, pp. 469–70.
14. ibid.
15. Fredeman, Letter no. 74: 86, n. 4, p. 444.
18. W.M. Rossetti, Diary, 27 November 1897, as quoted Fredeman, Letter no. 74: 86 n. 4, p. 444.
19. ibid.
23. W.M. Rossetti, Diary, 27 November 1897; quoted Fredeman letter no. 74: 86, n. 4, p. 444.
30. Jane Morris to May Morris, 7 July 1901; Sharp & Marsh Letter no. 368.
31. Tate Collections, accession file no. 4999. Note dated 30 November 1972:
‘Queen Guinevere/La Belle Iseult by William Morris, which was the original title before it was changed on 8.12.1965’.
The Living Past of William Morris’s Late Romances

Gabriel Schenk

The past is not dead, but is living in us, and will be alive in the future which we are now helping to make.¹

The above quotation becomes more complex the more we think about it: how can past events be in the present, and be used in the future? What does it mean for the past to be ‘alive,’ and ‘living in us’? The answers to these questions can be found most clearly in the invented times and places of Morris’s late prose romances, which, like the quotation, are more complex than they first appear. *The Story of the Glittering Plain* (1891), *The Wood Beyond the World* (1894), *The Well at the World’s End* (1896), *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* (1897), and the posthumously published *The Sundering Flood* (1897),² are five texts which seem difficult to connect with a living past, all being set in vague medieval settings, and peopled with characters who possess the simplicity of children. It is exactly these points, however, which make the late prose romances so important to understanding the idea of a living and non-linear past: the childlike perception of the characters enables them to experience past settings from a direct and sometimes ignorant perspective, encouraging readers to live through a re-imagined medieval past, free from the limitations of an historical framework. Morris appeals to our personal childlike histories, as well as to our collective, historical narrative, in order to complicate a seemingly simple version of the past, presented in the romance form. The result is a rejection of limited static time, and an embracing of past and present employed together.

Even a brief summary of the romances shows that the passing of a time is an important theme. *The Story of the Glittering Plain* and *The Wood Beyond the World* are progressions from Morris’s historically-located romances (*The House of the Wolfings*, 1888; *The Roots of the Mountains*, 1889),³ in that the stories begin at times and settings which seem recognisable, before moving into dream-like locations, outside of time and place. *The Story of the Glittering Plain* follows Hallblithhe on a
quest for his lost love, taking him through a land which restores health and youth; *The Wood Beyond the World* describes Golden Walter, the son of a merchant, and his adventure in a forest disconnected from universal time and space. *The Well at the World’s End* is more obviously established in a created world, albeit with mixed references to our own history and cultures (such as Rome, and the Christian Church), and tells of Prince Ralph seeking a magic well which bestows health, long life, and charisma to whoever drinks from it. *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* is set over twenty-five years, during which time great changes occur, particularly to the islands of the title – and thus the created medieval world evolves and develops within the story. The plot describes Birdalone escaping from an evil witch, before confronting her fears and accepting past mistakes. Finally, *The Sundering Flood* spans eleven years inside a complex landscape of churches and castles, and follows Osberne in his search for his lover, beginning when he is twelve years old, and ending when he is an adult.

These romances resist classification. What are they, and why did Morris spend part of the last decade of his life writing them? At what point in time, and in what location, are they based? Are they intended for adults or children, and are the characters in them children or adults? In 1969, Ballantine Books remoulded Morris as ‘the man who invented fantasy,’ when Lin Carter suggested that Morris had previously felt too restricted by a historical setting. This may be true, but it is also a simplification which ignores the many deliberate links to our own world, and the approach of the romances to time, which does not simply move away from history. Morris was not taking us away from all times and places, but to new times and places, based on the idea of a living past.

The characters themselves allow us to experience this living past. Perhaps the best example is found in *The Well at the World’s End*, in which Ralph explores the wider world for the first time. In his first encounter with a host of knights, Ralph notes their ‘goodly’ armour, and much detail is given of the foreign designs on their tabards. After they have proved only ‘somewhat’ courteous, in the next chapter he meets another set of knights – and though they are ‘clad as those of the company which had gone before,’ they are not described as ‘goodly,’ because Ralph has already ceased to project his limited, adventurous opinion on the part of the world which involves unknown knights, revealing a development of understanding of medieval *topoi*. Morris also describes the exact devices on the tabards and pennons, placing readers in the mind of Ralph, seeing these strange designs of a golden tower and a leafless tree for the first time. No historical or cultural context is given, because Ralph does not know any. The tabards are historical props – but they feel alive in the present, because we are discovering them anew through Ralph.

The land to the south, of which Ralph knows little, seems ‘a wondrous place’ which he deems ‘full of fair things and marvellous adventures,’ projecting onto
it the belief that his home is small and restraining, and that the further world must therefore be exciting. The narrator includes some irony in Ralph’s opinion of his home, describing a long list of advantages as ’nought but this little,’ foreshadowing Ralph’s eventual return to Upmeads, when he fights to protect it. By the end of the romance, Ralph has established himself as king of Upmeads, but he is also lord of the Four Friths, captain to Highham, brother to the shepherds, commander of the Dry Tree, and cleanser of the Wood Perilous; by establishing himself in society he has mastered the lands he has previously only travelled through, demonstrating a longer term approach to the world, growing beyond subjective impressions.\textsuperscript{5}

It is not simply the case though that Ralph begins as like a child, and grows into the wisdom and responsibility of an adult. At the beginning of the story, Ralph is twenty-one, but is yet to understand his relation to the world he is escaping: he regards himself ‘above’ the Chapman to whom he speaks at the beginning of the story; ‘above’, also, a ‘stargazer ... a simpler ... a priest, or a worthy good carle’, all of whom would be satisfied with Upmeads, whereas he, as a ‘king’s son’, must obtain more from the world. Following these events, Ralph refers to his singular self as ‘we,’ causing the Chapman to say ‘thy talkest big, my lad’: and his wife calls him ‘king’s son’, but does so while patting his cheek, an act which establishes herself in the role of mother and Ralph as her child, even though Ralph, by years, is an adult. The status of royalty is demoted to a mere role which Ralph plays, outclassed by the more important mother-child relationship which the dame has created. In the same way that a child might be, in their imagination, both a young boy and a knight, Ralph is both a visiting prince as well as a mothered child. His status between child and adult corresponds to a world rooted neither in the historical past nor in our present, and outside of known space. Consistent with this status is the regular image of Ralph looking down from the top of a valley, between one land and another, which also fits the intermediate nature of the romances, poised as they are between the setting of the medieval past and the childlike discovery of the present.\textsuperscript{7}

The immediacy of present discovery is used throughout the romances, appearing most starkly in \textit{The Sundering Flood}, when at times the protagonist is described using the present tense. Osberne stands before us: ‘he bears with him shield and spear’. The narrative soon resumes the past tense, but returns to present immediacy later on, when Osberne ‘comes to the riverside and turns his face south’. May Morris tells us that the text would have been edited and developed more had Morris lived longer; it is therefore possible that such ‘lapses’ to the present are merely an error of the original manuscript. Even if this is so, the fact that Morris changed tenses in the first instance suggests that he was trying to convey an immediacy to the world of his imagined past, an intention also present in the initial framing of the narrative. The ‘Sundering Flood’ itself is a river which
‘once ... ran south into the sea’, but the narrator states that he shall ‘now presently show’ us the meaning of the river’s name, taking us along its path, even though it no longer exists, and the narrator himself is based in present day Oxfordshire. The combination of times is also found in descriptions of the characters. In *The Sundering Flood*, when Osberne is thirteen, he looks young and feels old: ‘I am a man, but young of years, so they call me a boy’ – but later on, as a twenty-year-old he looks old and feels young, saying ‘thou deemest me old, but I am a young man’. There is progression from past to future, as Osberne wins greater fame and wisdom, and Elfhild returns the magical gift which only works for her as a child – but past and future are not divorced, and exist to an extent inside each other. This is also the case for Birdalone in *The Water of the Wondrous Isles*, whom the witch observes ‘lookest more towards thy womanhood’ owing to the influence of her ‘woodmother’. But this development towards womanhood never ends, and Birdalone still meets her regularly throughout her later life. At twenty-five she is both an adult, able to act ‘as a mother with a child’ herself, and, on the next page, able to play with her lover ‘like two happy children’. Ralph has shifted between opposing identities throughout *The Well*, but these are brought into harmony by the society of Upmeads gained at the end. Ralph’s father observes that in one sense his son seems a child, but in another way appears as a fearful warrior; Ralph replies that now he is both. The romances are not concerned with progress from child to adult, or past to future, but in change which combines and develops these two states.

The characters also possess an element of simplicity; for instance their names are often intrinsically linked to their identities. Ralph is a king’s son: therefore he travels away from his land and uses the majestic plural. He is also both a mother’s son and a royal hero, one identity reflecting his past origins, the other his present duty and future. The childlike part of his character is also reflected in his title, which he gives early on as ‘Man Motherson’, wishing to hide his real name, but unable to create a new independent identity. Name and description are also intrinsically linked in the case of the King’s Son in *The Wood beyond the World*. His given name, Otto, is only used in one conversation when the Mistress mocks him – his primary title is ‘the King’s Son’, despite this king being far away and anonymous. In fact, it does not matter whether he is a son of a king or a merchant, because all the characters are servants to the Mistress. ‘The King’s Son’ is a role rather than a title, and, like Ralph as the king’s son at the beginning of *The Well at the World’s End*, forms Otto’s identity in the romance. Walter even tries the royal role himself, when he adopts new clothes which make him ‘as the most glorious of kings’, a disguise which does not convince the King’s Son, even though his own identity is only established in much the same way.

Naturally there is confusion when these seemingly absolute identities prove to be tenuously established on words and appearance alone. The roles collapse
in *The Wood beyond the World*, when the Mistress kills the King’s Son, mistaking him for a traitorous Walter because of a misleading magic spell. The spell itself is a plot device, turning the confusion of identities into something which is physically true – but they were confused long before the magic was cast. The Maid first mistook Walter for the King’s Son, and in turn Walter later mistakes the Mistress for the Maid, and then the Maid for the Mistress. The Maid’s character in the wood is deliberately basic, acting ‘humble and happy’, and addressed as ‘child’, but outside the wood she reveals herself to be very different: a sorceress who can catch fish with her hands like a bear. The identities of the characters in the Wood are as simple, and therefore as weak, as static versions of the past existing in the nowhere and ‘nowhen’ of the Wood; when the categories change it shows them to be more complicated.\textsuperscript{11}

There are further instances of deliberate simplification in the romances, particularly in the shape of the Isle of the Young and the Old in *The Water of the Wondrous Isles*. Here live two three-year-old children and an old man. The children remind Birdalone of her own early life, and the young girl treats Birdalone as her mother. When, at a later date, others visit the island, the old man has no memory of Birdalone. Comparisons here can be made with *Peter Pan*, which contains some similar ideas to Morris’s romances, albeit from different perspectives. The old man acts like Peter, who forgets Captain Hook soon after he has died. The children are only an idea, an image of childhood, ‘so pleased and merry’, like the idea of childhood in *Peter Pan* (‘gay and innocent and heartless’); also, the children never age. They are an illusion, of which the old man is part. None of them are part of the living past: the children are not fully alive because they do not develop, and the man is in stasis, unable to remember the past or escape into the future: he begs others to take him away, but they do not. No wonder Birdalone finds the island disturbing: ‘the look of the elder scarce liked her, and the children began to seem to her as images’.\textsuperscript{12}

Such frozen time is not restricted to images of childhood; it is also experienced in the purely adult *The Story of the Glittering Plain*. In that land, like the old man forgetting Birdalone, the people have forgotten the outside world, and will forget passers-by in the future. The contrast here is between Hallblithe, for whom ‘time presses,’ and the denizens of the Glittering Plain, for whom ‘time is nought’. Though it is a paradise, and called the ‘Land of the Living’, it is also considered false by Hallblithe owing to its unchanging nature. The text poses the question: what is true living? A speech by Hallblithe describes the importance of the sword of thy fathers, the traditions of kindred and place, and the future begetting of children. No such future or past exists in the Glittering Plain. The alternative name of that land is ‘The Acre of the Undying’, but it is forbidden to speak of such a title, perhaps because it is too near the sinister truth: the people of that land do not live; rather, they do not die.\textsuperscript{13}
Morris’s requirement of ‘an active mind in sympathy with the past, the present, and the future’ for a ‘decent life’ is pertinent to the romances. When Birdalone returns to the Isle of the Young and Old, she finds that the previous inhabitants have vanished. Instead there is now a multitude of children, from five to fifteen years old, all ‘goodly ... and merry’. They do not know the meaning of ‘old’, but wish to learn what it means, demonstrating a willingness to be connected to the future; one of the children also speaks of the past, and what they have achieved since they arrived on the island. Clearly the children are more ‘advanced’ than the island’s previous occupants, building shelter and making bread and raisins from the land – and such advancement, based on knowledge and forethought, depends on a greater awareness of past and future. The children are also like the adults in *News from Nowhere* (1890), who are described as ‘like children’, because they are more aware of the cycle of seasonal time than modern readers. They are also joyful; for Morris, such joy is an integral part of the child identity. It could be said that Morris is idealising childhood and the past, associating it with happiness. For example, in *The Water of the Wondrous Isles*, once Birdalone is reunited with Audrey (her mother), her mother is so happy that ‘the goodliness of her youth came back to her’, suggesting that happiness and youthfulness are inextricably bound together. Morris is not always working outside of the *Peter Pan* ‘gay and innocent’ idea of childhood and the past – but he does at least indicate the advantages of a past which is alive and changing.

A review of *The Water of the Wondrous Isles*, written the year the romance was published, acts as a stern criticism of Morris, and specifically his use of a past setting. The problem, wrote the reviewer, is that the story falls along the lines of Malory and Spenser, but Morris ‘could not get away from his modern environment’, and made the characters too ‘modern and psychological’. It is true that Morris deviates from the common path of romance, the clearest example being Birdalone’s attempt to help her friends resulting in the death of one of them, Baudoin. The happy ending of Baudoin and his lover is lost because of a simple mistake: it is not even any single person’s fault, and Birdalone is not blamed for the outcome, creating a moral uncertainty alien to more traditional romances. As May Morris wrote, the format is a fairytale, but the characters are modern, and Morris writes with a modern mindset: but this is not a fault, only a recreation of the past romances, in an age when people’s relations to each other were questioned by Morris. Northrop Frye described the combination of the past romance form and the uncertainty of the present age as creating a literary experience which gathers past and future together in the present, an act of ‘creative repetition’ of which Morris is a notable example. The *Academy* reviewer did not consider that *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* might be an attempt creatively to repeat the past; to update the romance form while still keeping its beauty, which Morris retained in the setting and language of the romances.
The reviewer also assumed that fairytales or romances must always be simple, ‘as being written for children or primitives’. In that one sentence the personal past of childhood is related both to the ancient historical past, and to ‘non-civilised’ humanity. In *The Wood beyond the World*, the Maid and Walter encounter the ‘Bear-folk’, who are clad in ‘nought but sheep-skins or deer skins’, and for weapons use mere ‘clubs and spears, headed with bone or flint’. In contacting this group, Walter and the Maid are visiting the past. The Bear People accept a hierarchy based on power and sophistication, adopting the Maid as their god when she promises them rain water and revives the flowers hanging around her body. It is fitting that the Bear People’s god is seen as ‘the Mother of their nation’, and the Maid makes herself look like ‘the Mother of Summer’ in preparation for meeting them. The People themselves are called ‘Children of the Bear’, and later become the children of the Maid. They represent infancy on two levels – of human technology and civilisation, and also that found in the relationship between mother and child. But rather than the romance being directed at their supposedly ‘low’ level, the Bear People are instead included as an element of a past which is literally alive and developing in the present setting of the romance. They also return in another form in *The Well at the World’s End*, as the ‘ancient folk’ who built ‘Bear Castle’ and ‘Bear Hill’. Although now extinct, they are remembered in names, and in the bear and tree which they carved into the hillside, adding another layer of history to the landscape.

Morris also takes us outside of time, for instance in *The Wood beyond the World*, where the titular setting represents an almost timeless space. The story prior to the Wood is concerned with the future: before Walter is shipwrecked, he must travel back to his home in order to avenge his father and to fight in a war. After the Wood, the narrative is concerned with the future, when Walter becomes king of Stark-wall, and we read of his deeds and lineage thereafter. The tale *within* the Wood is, in contrast, unconcerned with the future or the past. References to time are given by the Maid – she remembers every day of the five years she has spent in the Wood, but there are few instances of development or change, unlike the Maid’s memory of the world outside, and the importance of ‘the year’s beginning, the happy mid-year, the year’s waning, the year’s ending, and then again its beginning’. No seasons or weather are mentioned, and any social change is slow: it takes the Mistress two years, ‘little by little’, to learn of the Maid’s wisdom. The Wood follows time, but only according to its own isolated chronology, like a dream. It also possesses its own points of comparison, being ‘Beyond the World’, and containing items which are ‘beyond compare’ to anything else, acting like a dream separated from the external world.

C.S. Lewis emphasised the dreamlike ‘nowhen’ of *The Wood Beyond the World* when, in *The Magician’s Nephew*, he turned it into the ‘Wood between the Worlds’. In Lewis, the Wood makes people feel as if their previous life has been
a dream, although the Wood itself is also ‘dreamy’, where one could easily doze forever without realising that any time had passed. It is a setting which must be escaped, which is the same in Morris. Like the Isle of the Young and Old in The Water of the Wondrous Isles, it is not alive, in the sense that it is not a developing part of time, and Walter and the Maid must leave it or be doomed to stasis, which is described as ‘death in life’. Unlike Morris’s Wood, Lewis’s is sinister, because you could fall asleep in it forever, but also warm, peaceful, and ‘very much alive’.19

Lewis returned to the setting in his modern romance That Hideous Strength, in which an isolated wood made him feel totally alone, and experience the feeling that ‘everyone is a child’. For Lewis, nowhere and ‘nowhen’ can be positive spaces which are alive, and which can bring us outside of simplistic categorisations of time and childhood. In contrast, Morris’s timeless spaces are unreal: the false children of the Wondrous Isles are ‘images’, and the King’s Son appears as an ‘image’ in The Wood; even the trees are ‘still as images’. The past separated from the future is only an image: it is not ‘alive within us’. 20

E.P. Thompson places all of Morris’s romances in dreamland, ‘a world having its existence only in the writer’s imagination, with its own inner consistencies, and its own laws, unlike those of the real world but related distantly to them’.21 This thesis is supported by Morris’s self-description as a ‘dreamer of dreams’, as well as by the inclusion of dreamlike spaces such as that found in The Wood beyond the World, where time is vague, and people are disconnected from a wider context. However, Thompson admits that at least one dreamlike space, the Glittering Plain, is to be escaped from, not dwelt in, although the same is also true for the Wood, and the Isle of the Young and Old. Lands which are most greatly divorced from external reality, and from universal laws, are not advocated as healthy places, even though they may contain happy people. In addition, even these dream-world spaces conform to some laws which exist outside of themselves: when, in The Wood beyond the World, the Mistress kills her lover, she wishes to be rid of the past, and to create her own false future, but finds that she cannot. ‘I shall forget, I shall forget; and the new days shall come!’ she declares, before saying ‘no, no, no! I cannot forget; I cannot forget!’ when she admits that the reality of the past cannot be imagined away. The only way she can slip through the events of time is to erase herself from them completely, which she does by killing herself. Repetition of ‘forget’ echoes the twice repeated lines ‘Forget! Forget!’ in ‘Remembrance,’ an anonymous poem, possibly written by Morris, published in The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine for 1856. This poem, like the Mistress, concludes that we can never relinquish the past completely, because it exists whether we wish to forget it or not. 22

Thompson’s overall criticism is that the romances are nothing more than self-indulgent tapestries, but this does not necessarily affect the existence of a complex and living past at work in the texts. Even if the romances are ‘an imaginative
child’s day-dream’, that does not reduce the past to mere decoration; the limits of the childlike mind only emphasise the excitement of discovery. What is more, the childlike aspects are an integral part of an eventual future. In *The Water of the Wondrous Isles*, Birdalone plays ‘a game’ with her woodmother friend, and the two are like ‘children’; the result is Birdalone’s discovery of her own beauty and strength. Likewise, Ralph, Osberne, and Walter all return to society to become important leaders, but these endings depend first on a childlike period of exploration, as they discover their identities, and their places in the world.

Thompson also states that the romances are tales of ‘desires fulfilled’, but this is simply not correct: the romances are in fact full of yearning. An acute example is found in a short scene from *The Sundering Flood*. Here, a damsel adores Osberne to such an extent that she wants never to stop kissing him, while over her shoulder, Osberne secretly longs for a glimpse of Elfhild, the girl who is frustratingly out of reach, on the other side of an impassable river. This kind of feeling is, by its nature, impossible to fulfil. The damsel, in her act of claiming Osberne, nevertheless pines for more – and even when Osberne sees Elfhild again, it is only ‘the beginning to him of the longing of a young man’. It is significant that Osberne is a boy by years but calls himself a man; his longing and responsibilities bring him past the simple category of ‘child’. Endless yearning runs as a guiding thread throughout all of Morris’s romances, from Ralph’s longing for adventure in *The Well at the World’s End* – intensified by mentions of ‘the well at the world’s end’ in alluring capitals – to sexual longing in *The Wood beyond the World*, which strikes Walter like a ‘red hot iron’ so that ‘he knew not where he was’. As Thompson noted, death is often nonchalantly dismissed – for instance with Birdalone’s mother, who is killed in half a sentence – but to linger over a character’s death would be to dwell on the finished past, and an emphasis on longing is a singling out of feelings which can never be dead, because they can never be fulfilled. Such an emphasis, together with childlike perception, keeps the medieval setting alive, even if it also appears, as Thompson states, like a tapestry.

As many have noted, the statement ‘Fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death’ summarises much of Morris’s attitude to the world. Therefore, the protagonists of the romances must work to live in fellowship with others. As Amanda Hodgson has pointed out, the paradisiacal image of a living tree surrounded by water is not found in a single location, but rather used for the banner of Upmeads, and the fellowship found there. It is also significant that the magic waters of the Well at the World’s End do not give eternal life, but only long life, with the freedom to return to one’s own place and people, and the past and future contained therein. The opposite of the living tree is the dry tree, surrounded by poison, and in *The Well at the World’s End*, this is an actual location devoid of people – but also, crucially, locked in time: filled with corpses wearing ancient armour, preserved by the desert so that one cannot tell how long they have lain there. Death is not
just lonely, but timeless.

Morris called *The Wood beyond the World* ‘a tale pure and simple’, but within its own simplicity, and the apparent simplicity of the other romances, is an attitude to time which forms part of Morris’s approach to the world: not in the guise of allegory, but in the very fabric of the storytelling. When the story is told as a romance it is called simple and childlike, but that is only so that we can experience the imagined past in a direct and lively way. Morris spoke of romance in a general sense during a lecture on architectural restoration: ‘what romance means is the capacity for a true conception of history, a power for making the past part of the present’.28 This power is certainly at work in Morris’s prose romances, and it shows us that the past is not dead when we live in fellowship with each other – and, what is more, when we live in fellowship with time.

NOTES


29
16. Academy, p. 344.
27. The Well, pp. 70–73.
Between *Ouvriérisme* and Élitism: The dualism of William Morris

*Antoine Capet*

*Ouvriérisme* – ‘the glorification of manual laborers, often in opposition to the leadership of the labor or socialist movement’ – is now very much part of the vocabulary of social, and especially labour historians, usually with derogatory undertones. The term entered the French language via Jules Vallès, who wrote of an ideology which regards working people as the only ones able to lead a truly popular movement. *The Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that it was Gareth Stedman Jones who first used the word, defined as ‘the belief that the traditional working class has a monopoly of socialist potential’, in 1969 – a notion clearly derived from Karl Marx’s concept of the ‘working-class vanguard’ of Revolution. Today, the words (the French word seems to be used increasingly in English – and we will therefore retain it) imply a kind of idealisation of ‘the salt of the earth’, or as Ferdynand Zweig puts it, ‘ouvrierism implies that the worker can never be the wrongdoer, he can be wronged but he cannot wrong others’. It may be argued that there is an ouvrieriste dimension to William Morris – the difficulty lying in what is meant by the terms ‘the worker’, and even more so ‘the traditional working class’ – but the initial definition used above seems particularly apt to feed the ‘accusation’ as far as Morris is concerned.¹

I

Paul Meier is the French author who has possibly most accurately perceived the ‘dualist’ dimension of William Morris’s objectives. Interestingly, even though the ‘signified’ is everywhere present in Meier’s *magnum opus*, the ‘signifier’, *ouvriérisme*, is not used.
Only a bourgeois intellectual, impregnated with a Marxism whose rigour he does not always sense, carried away as much by his enthusiasm as by his very origins into practising an uncompromising purism, can want to change the world by offering to the oppressed classes a living image of their liberation.

Meier writes of Morris’s ‘paternalisme bourgeois’, of his ‘paternalisme puritain’, in his first approaches towards the working class, however sympathetic and well meaning they may have been. He reproaches him for initially considering these ‘masses ouvrières’ as an ‘abstraction’, the result of this ‘abstract vision’ being that he only shed his illusions on the imminence of revolution after Bloody Sunday, and only forgot his ‘purism’, which kept him isolated from the ‘real mass movement’, after the success of the Great London Dock Strike of 1889.2 Meier also underlines Morris’s apparent fear of the result of the proletariat’s accession to power after the revolution, adducing evidence from a passage in ‘The Hopes of Civilization’ (1885), which he quotes in English.

Meier builds his argument around his central thesis – it should never be forgotten that the original French title of his book is La pensée utopique de William Morris – that all that William Morris offered the masses was his utopia: incapable as he was of speaking to them knowingly of their actual experience, he was only able to talk to them of the perspectives opened by utopia. But – and we are back to the discussion of Morris’s ‘dualism’ – Meier argues that towards the end of his life Morris acknowledged that he could never have become a militant Socialist other than via the utopian route, precisely because he was a bourgeois and never knew the difficulties of everyday life. He adds that Morris’s position proceeded from a humble and guilty endeavour to mark the superiority of the proletarian class consciousness.3

Meier’s most damning comment on Morris’s ‘dualism’ is formulated a few lines earlier: ‘L’utopiste, cherchant dans le futur l’apaisement d’un sentiment de culpabilité, se replongeait aux sources bourgeoises de son utopie’. Still, Meier concedes, Morris was ‘un travailleur [note that he does not say ‘ouvrier’] manuel autant qu’intellectuel’; he astonished workers [‘ouvriers’] by his extensive practical knowledge. Therefore we may conclude that perhaps he was not the ‘Marxist dreamer’ of Meier’s translator – or at least that he was not so at all times, which takes us back to his ‘dualism’.4

However, William Morris’s Marxism, combined with his appreciation of
manual work, gave birth indirectly to a masterpiece of bookbinding, executed in 1884 by Cobden-Sanderson — to whom we apparently owe the term ‘Arts and Crafts’.\(^5\) This is the 1867 French edition of *Das Kapital*, which Morris had read again and again since his acquisition of it in 1883, apparently until sections of his original copy in paper wrappers completely fell apart. There was at the time no English translation, and Morris’s knowledge of German was much less extensive than his understanding of French. Even if one is not interested in bookbinding, one immediately perceives that this volume is a masterpiece, with elaborate hand tooling at a time when decoration was routinely obtained using heated block plates. Each dot on this cover is produced by a separate operation, and one is reminded of the painstaking work of the copyists and illuminators of the Middle Ages — an obvious source of attraction for William Morris, when one bears in mind his idealisation of mediaeval labour.

We cannot fail to come to the conclusion that down to very recent days every-thing that the hand of man touched was more or less beautiful: so that in those days all people who made anything shared in art, as well as all people who used the things so made: that is, all people shared in art.\(^6\)

There is nothing incongruous either in this encouragement of the ‘Lesser Arts’ when it is remembered that William Morris had earlier written an essay in praise of them.\(^7\) So, what we may call his ‘dualism’ is to be found elsewhere, in the discrepancy we perceive between this treatise of Communist political economy, by an author who sees in the proletariat the saviours of the world, and the splendour of the shrine found in the luxurious covers of his copy of *Das Kapital*.

The many denunciations of this ‘dualism’, voiced soon after Morris’s Socialist commitment — as in the famous caricature, ‘The Earthly Paradox’, published in *Funny Folks* in 1886 — are well known. Following scuffles with the police during the Dod Street demonstration in favour of free speech on 20 September, he had been arrested and brought before a magistrate, charged with striking a policeman. During the course of his hearing, Morris had used his elevated social status to impress Judge Saunders — who had indeed acquitted him while severely condemning the ‘guilty’ coming from the lower layers of British society: ‘I am an artist, and a literary man, pretty well known, I think, throughout Europe’.\(^8\)

Phil Katz reminds us that it was William Morris the anti-monarchist who accepted the commission for wallpaper destined for Balmoral. Tim Barringer also underlines this apparent contradiction, contrasting Morris — accused of not putting his existence in conformity with his great principles — with Gandhi, who did.

William Morris had learned the skills of the weaver and the printer, his arms and hands often stained with inks and dyes, while nonetheless remaining ineluctably
bourgeois in his life and habits. But Gandhi, the dapper, sophisticated lawyer of London and Durban, renounced absolutely the luxuries of middle-class life and painstakingly adopted the persona and the skills of a village spinner.9

In contrast, Asa Briggs believed that it was not so much his way of life as his approach to work which gave Morris his credibility:

Morris’s work as a craftsman and designer prepared him for the change [to Socialism] far more than his work as a poet. Before he expressed in words his rebellion against [his] age he expressed it in his art… His workshop was a challenge to the Victorian factory.

We may also otherwise note that the anonymous journalist who interviewed him in 1895 declared afterwards that ‘Mr. Morris is eminently a working man’.10

For William Morris, who would answer by studying things from another angle, there was of course no contradiction between his taste for fine things, in spite of their price, and his rejection of luxury – that is, in his eyes, of the gaudiness prized by the pretentious middle class, as he makes it clear in the case of buildings:

You must dismiss at once as a delusion the hope that has been sometimes cherished, that you can have a building which is a work of art, and is therefore above all things properly built, at the same price as a building which only pretends to be this.11

Likewise, a book with a strong binding, made according to the best methods, may be seen as perfectly justifying the cost. We can concede the point; the old principle that ‘cheap goods are more expensive in the long run’, and the fact frequently lamented by philanthropists that the poorest people are often forced to buy the shoddiest products.12 But it is far more difficult to follow William Morris when the covers of his Le Capital are magnificently tooled. Where then is the utility value? Where is the simplicity he advocates?

Simplicity of life, begetting simplicity of taste, that is, a love for sweet and lofty things, is of all matters most necessary for the birth of the new and better art we crave for; simplicity everywhere, in the palace as well as in the cottage.13

Are we not in the realm of the superfluous, and therefore of the vulgar luxury which Morris abhors, and denounces in his harangues against the middle classes, who combine both an absence of taste and of scruples in exploiting the workers?14 As he was to write in Commonweal ten years later,

We have been forcing the great mass of the workers to make things of no use to the workers (or to any one else for that matter), and we have assumed that we
shall always be able to find people willing to take these pieces of manufacture from us in exchange for food and other necessaries which are produced by the workers, and not by the buyers of the useless things. [...] these buyers of inutilities have nothing to buy them with except the necessaries which they steal from the workers.

The idea was taken from a lecture of 1884: ‘The present position of the workers is that of the machinery of commerce, or in plainer words its slaves; [...] the other classes are but hangers-on who live on them’. 15

It may be argued that William Morris takes refuge in sophistry when he explains that there are two definitions of the superfluous. On the one hand, there is the genuinely superfluous, that of the Philistines, those parasites who decorate their ugly homes with trinkets produced by their latter-day slaves: ‘Believe me, if we want art to begin at home, as it must, we must clear our houses of troublesome superfluities that are for ever in our way: conventional comforts that are no real comforts, and do but make work for servants and doctors’. On the other, there is what seems to be superfluous only in appearance for, he says, if you want a golden rule that will fit everybody, this is it: ‘HAVE NOTHING IN YOUR HOUSE THAT YOU DO NOT KNOW TO BE USEFUL OR BELIEVE TO BE BEAUTIFUL’. 16

It is well known that William Morris despised Utilitarianism – he wrote that reading a refutation of Socialism by John Stuart Mill greatly contributed to converting him to the idea. 17 How then is it possible to understand his apparent reference, if not to Bentham’s principle of utility, at least to this word, which recalls the abhorred doctrine? Of course one can make point that Morrisian usefulness cannot be (and indeed refuses to be) quantified, whereas Benthamite utility rests almost entirely on the kind of spurious quantification (and commodification) so beloved of modern politicians, but which was the root of Morris’s detestation. Still, he was to go even further in the apparent paradox, in an ardent plea in favour of utility: ‘Nothing can be a work of art which is not useful; that is to say, which does not minister to the body when well under command of the mind, or which does not amuse, soothe, or elevate the mind in a healthy state’. Admittedly, he simultaneously denounced en passant the rich man’s costly baubles: ‘What tons upon tons of unutterable rubbish pretending to be works of art in some degree would this maxim clear out of our London houses, if it were understood and acted upon?’ 18

This is a superfluous only in appearance. It is not a mere bonus: it is simply art. Not of course the factitious and useless art of the false elites, but the only art which elevates the mind, popular art or ‘the art of the people’. 19 How can this genuine art be defined? It is very simple – some would say ‘simplistic’ – it is only a form of authentic creation born of the pleasure which human beings finds in their work, and which constitutes one of the few ‘real values’ of the human pres-
ence on earth: ‘Nature will not be finally conquered till our work becomes a part of the pleasure of our lives’. 20

The first *Homo faber* was by definition the first *artifex*, the person who transforms nature, the ‘natural’ into the ‘artificial’, by manual and intellectual intervention; simultaneously artist and artisan, if one follows the later derivations from the common Latin root. It will be remembered that – as he explained in a lecture delivered on several occasions between 1884 and 1886 – for William Morris, it was the Renaissance which brought about the rupture between the artist and the artisan, by introducing the division of labour: ‘The craftsmen were now divided into artists who were not workmen, and workmen who were not artists’. And as he was to repeat in *Commonweal* in 1887: ‘Before the rise of capitalism in the sixteenth century, the artisan did not differ in kind from the artist; all craftsmen who made anything were artists of some kind, they only differed in degree’. 21

This art may only be ‘popular’, considered solely from the point of view of its intended public — as opposed to the passive consumers from the world of commercialism — and this is how one could understand what Morris wrote to the *Daily Chronicle* in 1893, ‘I hold firmly to the opinion that all worthy schools of art must be in the future, as they have been in the past, the outcome of the aspirations of the people towards the beauty and true pleasure of life’. This might therefore be an art exclusively destined for the people — an interpretation buttressed by what he writes further on: ‘I try to express myself through the art of today, which seems to us to be only a survival of the organic art of the past, in which the people shared, whatever the other drawbacks of their condition might have been’. But this would be far too limiting, and in “The Art of the People”, Morris introduces a formula he was to take up, hardly modified, in later writings: ‘… Real art, the expression of man’s happiness in his labour, – an art made by the people, and for the people, as a happiness to the maker and the user’. 22

But after all – one might object – all this only discusses ‘labour’ and ‘the people’, but there is no mention of ‘the worker’: where then is Morris’s *ouvriérisme*? During the first months of his active conversion to Socialism (it can be argued that it had long been latent within him), William Morris no longer wrote simply of ‘the people’, but actually of ‘workers’:

When things are done not for the workers but by them, an ideal will present itself with great distinctness to the workers themselves, which will not mean living on as little as you can, so as not to disturb the course of profit-grinding, but rather living a plentiful, generous, un-anxious life, the first quite necessary step to higher ideals yet. 23

Six years later he seemed weary and disillusioned over the purely working-class dimension of the Socialist movement

36
When I first joined the movement I hoped that some working-man leader, or rather leaders, would turn up, who would push aside all middle-class help, and become great historical figures. I might still hope for that, if it seemed likely to happen, for indeed I long for it enough; but to speak plainly it does not so seem at present.  

It can be argued that William Morris was gradually, from the 1890s, during the last years of his life, to turn away from what could be called ‘Socialist ouvriérisme’ – but this does not mean that he rejected ‘artistic ouvriérisme’, as News from Nowhere was to show. The ‘Marxist’ phase actually lasted only for a brief period: from the compulsive reading of Das Kapital in 1883 to the distance taken in News from Nowhere.

It is perhaps the literary critic Northrop Frye who gives the best answers, even if indirect, to the questions which arise from William Morris’s political evolution during that period. He notes first – which is also immediately apparent when one reads the book – that in Nowhere one sees hardly any industrial production or factories, and consequently few factory workers. We know the reason: in Nowhere, there are no ‘factories’ as such, only workshops. Admittedly, the Revolution has taken place, but it was not just the ‘vanguard of the working class’, namely the industrial proletariat in the Marxist sense, which made it – and it is certainly not this vanguard as Marx conceived it which constitutes the people of Nowhere. In contrast, Frye argues – with the greatest relevance for our present discussion – that at bottom Morris goes further than Marx in focusing, not just on ‘the worker’, but on ‘labour’: ‘Morris started out, not with the Marxist question “who are the workers?” but with the more deeply revolutionary question “what is work?”’ How does William Morris answer this ‘deeply revolutionary question’? In fact he comes back over and over again to what he wrote – as we have seen – before his ‘Marxist phase’: “That thing which I understand by real art is the expression by man of his pleasure in labour”.

But then another problem arises: what does William Morris include in ‘real art’? It is clear that Morris & Co. (‘the Firm’) deliberately specialised in the Decorative Arts. One sees that his best friends were pictorial artists: one can only bow before his taste in matters of architecture when visiting Red House. We are ready to believe that the workers who were employed by him at Merton Abbey, where mechanical power – which he did not rule out – was provided not by a steam engine (horribile dictu!) but by a water wheel, could find some interest in their labour, even some artistic satisfaction. It is equally plausible that highly qualified bricklayers and other craftsmen from the building trades may have found it intellectually rewarding to participate in the construction of Red House: for good measure, we can add the gilders who decorated his copy of Le Capital. But it soon becomes clear that all this is limited to the visual arts. One must of course count
literature, chiefly poetry, among what would be called today William Morris’s cultural practices – but where are the working-class poets?

II

In a remarkably documented article, the late Nicholas Salmon began his article on Morris and the Victorian theatre with a falsely limitative incipit: ‘On the face of it an article on Morris and the Victorian theatre would not seem to have a great deal of potential. It is well-known that Morris had a dislike of theatre-goers and the plays they went to see’.

Salmon derives his conclusion from a prima facie incontrovertible testimony, that of Morris’s daughter May, who indicates in her biography of her father: ‘As a form of art my father disliked the modern play, as an amusement it bored him almost (sometimes quite) to swearing point, and modern acting, with its appeal to the emotions, its elaborate realism and character study, was intolerable’. But, as usual with Morris, the important words are ‘modern’ and ‘realism’ – two notions he abhorred. May Morris actually tells us that his tastes ended at Shakespeare.

No hope therefore for plays staged in the manner of the nineteenth century – all the same in his eyes. Yet – surprise! – he wrote a ‘Socialist’ yarn, The Tables Turned, in order to shore up the treasure chest of the Socialist League in 1887, and even joined the troupe – with an enormous success, apparently – to play a caricature of the Archbishop of Canterbury. This point is central to our discussion. Where is the ‘highbrow’ dimension? Morris of course drew his inspiration from his immense culture, and this ‘Socialist interlude’, as he called it, is a pastiche of the Towneley Mystery Plays dating in all probability from the fourteenth century, intended as a mockery of elites who take themselves too seriously. Where is the ‘popular’ dimension? We are told that the hall, with its two to three hundred seats, was full for the première, and we conclude that the spectators could not all have been sophisticated intellectuals, even though George Bernard Shaw was among the most enthusiastic.

Yet some doubts remain about the really ‘popular’ composition of the audience, since William Morris himself privately possessed the greatest reservations concerning the intellectual abilities of the workers who joined the Socialist League, or at least came to its public meetings. The diaries he kept briefly during the early months of 1887 have survived, and enlighten us on the severe judgement he formulated on those who came to listen to him – for instance in this extract from 23 February:

Except a German from Wimbledon (who was in the chair) and two others who looked like artisans of the painter or small builder-type, the audience was all
made up of labourers and their wives: they were very quiet and attentive except one man who was courageous from liquor, and interrupted sympathetically: but I doubt if most of them understood anything I said; though some few of them showed that they did by applauding the points. I wonder sometimes if people will remember in times to come to what a depth of degradation the ordinary English workman has been reduced.

Or another from 21 March:

Sunday 13th I went to lecture in a queer little den for the Hackney branch, a street out of Goldsmiths’ Row, Hackney road, a very miserable part of the east end of course: meeting small almost all members I suspect: one oldish man a stranger, a railway labourer who opposed in a friendly way gave me an opportunity of explaining to the audience various points which I expect; also a fresh opportunity (if I needed it) of gauging the depths of ignorance and consequent incapacity of following an argument which possesses the uneducated averagely stupid person.

Therefore, in the eyes of William Morris – this ‘paternalist bourgeois’, as Nicholas Salmon (otherwise a great admirer) called him – in the Britain of the 1880s, the ideal or idealised worker no longer exists. All the more reason to begin the Revolution and to introduce Socialism – and even if his play was not ‘popular’ in the sense of ‘fully appreciated by members of the people’, he could reckon that it at least advanced the cause of Socialism. Paradoxically, as a man who – to say the least – did not like the theatre of his own time, Morris was a great supporter of A Doll’s House, Ibsen’s play premièred in London in 1889, in the name of the implicit Socialism it supposedly contained. When a number of critics denounced its amorality and its morbidity, Morris published a defence in Commonweal, with the definitive pronouncement, ‘all intelligent people who are not Socialists are pessimists’:

Whatever may be the demerits of ‘A Doll’s House’ as an acting play (by the way, if it is different from an ordinary modern play it must be better, just as any day different from last Whit-Monday must be better than it) – I say in any case it is a bit of the truth about modern society clearly and forcibly put. Therefore clearly it doesn’t suit the critics, who are parasites of the band of robbers called modern society. Great is Diana of the Ephesians! But if my memory serves me, her rites were not distinguished for purity. I note that the critics say that Ibsen’s plays are pessimistic; so they are – to pessimists; and all intelligent people who are not Socialists are pessimists. But the representation of the corruption of society carries with it in Ibsen’s work aspirations for a better state of things.

With this point, we are back to the principle of utility à la William Morris.
already discussed: everything which can expedite the elimination of ‘the band of robbers’ and the introduction of authentic values goes in the right direction and should be encouraged. Even if, in his eyes, it is boring, a play which denounces the decaying values of the middle class deserves respect.33

Last, there was musical life, a ‘cultural practice’ extremely common among his ‘middle-class’ contemporaries – and unsurprisingly the same difficulties immediately arise in trying to assess William Morris’s real attitudes to it. Fiona MacCarthy aptly takes up the well-known story of Morris losing his temper over Wagner, who dared to appropriate his hero, Sigurd (he refused to call him Siegfried), indignantly exclaiming: ‘The idea of a sandy-haired German tenor tweedledeeing over the unspeakable woes of Sigurd, which even the simplest words are not typical enough to express!’ In the same letter, he mocked opera, ‘the most rococo and degraded of all forms of art’. Another witness recalls that Morris could not bear the piano. Arnold Dolmetsch, commonly considered the great pioneer in the rediscovery of early music, goes even further: ‘He could find no pleasure in piano recitals and big orchestras’.34

But such absolute judgements must be qualified. Andrew Heywood, one of two authors who have recently undertaken a ‘rehabilitation’ of William Morris in this field, makes two judicious points: playing the piano at home was for William Morris the archetype of the ‘artistic’ pretensions of bourgeois society, and the instrument itself, as an object, was of an ugliness which was impossible to reconcile with his tastes in matters of furniture. In addition, Lesley Baker makes a common sense remark: ‘There is no doubt that Morris reacted favourably to certain forms of music, and unfavourably to others’.35

In fact, during his time at Marlborough College Morris had thoroughly enjoyed sacred music – one of the few aspects of his school years which had left a positive mark on him. Later, as a student visiting France during the summer of 1855, he admired the choral singing he heard in Rouen cathedral:

We were disappointed in one thing, however, we had expected Vespers every afternoon ... We found they were only sung in that diocese on Saturday and Sunday. And weren’t they sung, just. O! my word! on the Sunday especially, when a great deal of the psalms were sung to the Peregrine tone, and then, didn’t they sing the hymns, and then, didn’t they sing the hymns! 36

Almost forty years later, his friend George Bernard Shaw was to note, in an article discussing the new taste for early music, thanks particularly to the work of Dolmetsch with his clavichord:

That clavichord will start just such a reform in musical instruments as William Morris started in domestic furniture. It is noteworthy, by the way, that Morris, whose ear, as I can testify from personal observation, is as good as any musician’s,
and whose powers as poet, artist and craftsman have made him famous, hates the pianoforte, and is evidently affected by modern music much as he is affected by early Victorian furniture. He will not go to an ordinary concert; but he will confess to a strong temptation to try his hand at making fiddles; and he has been seen at one of Dolmetsch’s viol concerts apparently enjoying himself.  

This comment evidently returns us to the familiar dichotomy between Morris the anti-modern (the piano, nineteenth-century opera) and the advocate of a return to sources (the clavichord, viol and early music); between the man who rejects the spurious sophisticated elite culture of his time, and the man who takes a passionate interest in the rediscovery of a past which they relegate to obscurity. The all-important notion here is to be found in the English word ‘plain’ — as opposed to over-ornate — a word which Morris treasured, and which is found in the expression ‘plain chant’ — a musical form which probably represented in his eyes the absolute antithesis of the Wagnerian Heldentenor’s ‘tweedledeeing’.  

The best proof of Morris’s taste for music — provided it consisted of unornamented melodies inherited from forgotten ancestors — is to be found in a scene which took place on his deathbed. One night, Dolmetsch came to play the virginal for him, and William Morris fell into tears: this obviously makes it difficult to refute Heywood’s conclusion:

> The fact that he wished for virginals on his deathbed (…) combines with this information [=that Jane played the harpsichord] to reinforce the view that while Morris was critical of the instruments associated with Victorian music-making, he was appreciative of those linked to the music of earlier periods.

William Morris thus had a taste for ‘popular’ music — in the specific sense he gave that word, as we saw. Also in his defence, Mackail tells us that he was not against singing ‘Scotch Ballads and their old tunes’, and that he liked the bagpipe.  

In musical matters, the link between an idealised past (did the common people really know of Byrd’s music during his own time?) and his ‘Socialist’ aspirations was made concrete by the creation of his ten *Chants for Socialists*, intended to be sung on tunes familiar to everyone. The titles are revealing: ‘The Voice of Toil’, ‘The March of the Workers’ etc. Salmon cites Morris’s famous phrase, taken from Ruskin: ‘A cause which cannot be sung of is not worth following’.  

Heywood also studied the role which music, both choral and instrumental, played during the meetings of the *Hammersmith Socialist Society* and other militant organisations, and concludes: ‘Music did not just play a role as entertainment, in the early socialist movement; it provided the opportunity for an exercise in comradeship in performance and could be directly inspirational’. Notably, he takes the example of the ‘Death Song’, one of William Morris’s *Chants for Socialists*, written to music by Malcolm Lawson (1847–1918) for the funeral of Alfred
Linnell, mortally wounded by mounted police during one of many Socialist demonstrations on ‘Bloody Sunday’, 20 November 1887. Fiona MacCarthy believes that this episode enhanced Morris’s prestige among fellow-Socialists:

Morris’s role at the Linnell funeral subtly altered his standing in the Socialist movement. He had now become the well known and the loved figure. There was a sense of ‘He who comes among us’. He had gravitated into the movement’s grand old man.

Finally, by one of those uncanny twists of history, William Morris, ‘the man who did not like sophisticated music’, was to inspire one of the best-known British composers of the twentieth century, Gustav Holst (1874–1934). In addition to composing *The Planets*, between 1914 and 1916, Holst set some of William Morris’s poems to music; he had been a militant in Hammersmith beside Morris when he was twenty, and dedicated the slow movement of his *Cotswold Symphony*, first performed in 1900, to him. Also, a few years before his own death, in 1930, Holst entitled a commission by the young BBC *Hammersmith*, in memory of those distant years during which he occasionally conducted the militants’ choir. In a roundabout way, therefore, via his Socialist militancy, Morris was to find himself the inspirer of a very intellectual form of music – precisely one which he profoundly disliked. Though this is an aspect of Morris which received relatively little attention until recently, it is clear that in music as well, his oscillation between ‘popular culture’ and ‘high culture’ is very much in evidence.

III

This entire discussion must be placed in the general context of the debate on ‘elite’ versus ‘popular culture’ in nineteenth century Britain. My argument here is that one of the main avowed objectives of William Morris was precisely to refuse to make working people partake of the sham ‘culture’ of the elites, encouraging them instead to accede to ‘genuine’ culture: ‘popular high culture’, however audacious the oxymoron may appear.

What was artificial in William Morris’s eyes was not the division between ‘high culture’ and ‘popular culture’ – it was simply the artificiality of the ‘culture’ of the British governing classes, which he could not conceivably consider ‘high’ culture. On the one hand, they were habitual Philistines; on the other, the very idea of a compatibility between the concept of an elite and that of culture was totally alien to him. To enjoy life while cultivating the arts without knowing it – or at least without taking ‘superior’ airs – this is everyone’s business.

Morris believed that all his contemporaries, whether they came from elites or from ‘the people’, shared an alienation which had gradually been imposed upon
them. He rejected the lapsarian Judaic-Christian vision, which made humanity a stranger in its own God-given domain – the Earth. What is more, his Marxism led him to argue that this confiscation of humanity’s birthright was ‘only’ due to collusion, reinforced at the time of the Renaissance, between those whose power was political and economic, and those who held political and religious power (often the same people).

It is perhaps in order to end on the fine phrase which Fiona MacCarthy attributes to E.P. Thompson, defining William Morris as ‘our greatest diagnostician of alienation’.43 One can unreservedly approve – but, to continue the medical metaphor, establishing a diagnostic is not the same as formulating the prognostic, still less unfailingly determining the correct remedy. This is perhaps the foundation of what we have called William Morris’s ‘dualism’.

NOTES

3. Ibid., pp. 73, 82.
4. Ibid., p. 82, p. 81.
10. Asa Briggs, ed, William Morris: Selected Writings and Designs, London: Pen-
17. ‘How I Became a Socialist’, Briggs, p. 34.
19. ‘The Worker’s Share of Art’, Commonweal, vol. 1, no. 3, April 1883, as in Salmon, Political Writings, p. 87.
24. ‘Where are we now?’, Commonweal, vol. 6, no. 253, 15 November 1890; Salmon, Political Writings, p. 490.
‘The other Miss Faulkner’: Lucy Orrinsmith and the ‘Art at Home Series’

Emma Ferry

The ‘Art at Home Series’, published by Macmillan & Co. between 1876 and 1883, was a highly successful collection of domestic advice manuals devised and edited by the Rev. William John Loftie aimed at a growing lower-middle-class readership.1 The series eventually encompassed subjects as diverse as Amateur Theatricals (1879) and Sketching from Nature (1883), but the most significant of the final twelve volumes are probably the four which considered aspects of the domestic interior.2

Lucy Orrinsmith’s contribution to the series, The Drawing Room: its decoration and furniture, published in November 1877, is mentioned in almost every study which considers the late-nineteenth-century domestic interior. Her opening comments, in which she condemns the ordinary lower middle-class Victorian interior as: ‘The very head-quarters of commonplace, with its strict symmetry of adornment and its pretentious uselessness’ are much-quoted, and often accompanied by illustrations from that volume. Nikolaus Pevsner, for instance, places The Drawing Room in the context of the late 1870s when ‘a whole spate of books appeared all dealing with furnishing, interior decoration and furniture’. Peter Thornton simply dismisses the volume as ‘tiresome’, while Asa Briggs makes wildly inaccurate comments in his chapter on ‘Hearth and Home’. More recently, Thad Logan opens her study of The Victorian Parlour with references to The Drawing Room, suggesting that Mrs Orrinsmith’s text ‘is a useful starting point for a study of the parlour’.3

However, none of these writers has questioned the validity of The Drawing Room as a source of information about the Victorian home. Instead, they have used the book as straightforward historical evidence, with little analysis of the text, and without considering the production of the publication or questioning the authority of its author. This article aims to recover the history of Mrs Orrin-
Smith and explain her involvement with the ‘Art at Home Series’, while exposing the difficulties of using this book as a conventional source of information about the Victorian middle-class interior.

I

In March 1876, following discussions with a representative of the American publishing house, Coates & Co. of Philadelphia, William Loftie wrote to the publisher, Alexander Macmillan outlining his scheme for a ‘little series of art books’ aimed at a readership composed of ‘people of moderate or small income’. Initially, this joint venture was to comprise eight books – four to be written in England and four in America – all of which would be published by Coates. The four British volumes (which it seems had already been commissioned and in some cases were nearing completion) were briefly described. They included Loftie’s own contribution, initially entitled Art at Home, Rhoda & Agnes Garretts’ House Decoration, and two other volumes which never saw publication; Good Things We Have Lost: or Hints from Old English Households, and Hints from Foreign Households.5

Loftie proposed that Macmillan should publish these four books, but not the four unnamed American volumes, which he felt ‘would be of little or no use here: as the subjects proposed were such as would require local treatment’. Instead, he wanted Macmillan to commission at least four more books for the British market, including Art at Table and Dress, while proposing J.J. Stevenson for a volume on Domestic Architecture and John Pyke Hullah to write on Music at Home. He recommended that they should be 8vo, approximately 150 pages long, and illustrated with relatively cheap photo-zincographs. He also suggested that authors should receive £30 or £40 for their copyright, and that the books should sell for 1s, corresponding to the price of US 25c proposed by Coates. Having volunteered to oversee the whole project in return for 4% on the retail price, Loftie naturally sought to expand the series even further:

The list of eight subjects given above by no means exhausts those of which I have thought. [...] Another of the series might be on Needlework & Embroidery, generally, another on Sketching from Nature, another on Carving & amateur Carpentry; even reading aloud & elocution would make one, as well as dancing & gymnastics. Art would however be kept strictly in view, & the general title of the series would be Art at Home.7

Eventually Macmillan was to publish twelve volumes as the ‘Art at Home Series’. These were planned as a collectable set, and from the outset possessed a clear visual identity. Books were bound in a suitably ‘artistic’ blue-grey cloth,
each bearing the title, the authors’ names and the Macmillan initial engraved by J.D. Cooper. Only four were published in America, by Porter & Coates of Philadelphia; these were bound in brown cloth and decorated with the ‘Art at Home’ motif designed by Harry Soane (Figure 1). Such visual unity belies the diverse and often contradictory advice given by contributing authors: each volume is written as a distinct text which highlights its own concerns and scarcely relates to others.

Mrs Orrinsmith’s involvement with the series seems to be the result of friendship with her neighbours; George Lillie Craik (1837–1905), a partner in Macmillan & Co., and his wife, the novelist Dinah Mulock Craik (1826–1887). Indeed, on the first page of The Drawing Room are the words:

To George Lillie Craik
At whose suggestion this little book was written, it is dedicated by
Lucy Orrinsmith

The friendship between the Craiks and the Orrinsmiths is noted by Lewis Carroll, who, with amusing inaccuracy, recorded a visit to Beckenham in January 1873:

Joined Mr. Craik and went down with him to Beckenham. The party are Mrs. Craik, their little adopted child ‘Dorothy’, a nice little creature, about five; Miss Craik, and a Mrs. Laing. Went with them to tea with Mr. and Mrs. Orrinsmith. She is the sister of Faulkner of University, who was there.

Yet the question remains: who was Lucy Orrinsmith and why did Craik ask her to contribute to the ‘Art at Home Series’ on what was considered the most important room in the house?

Few historians who have used the ‘Art at Home Series’ have considered this notion of authority, and only Charlotte Gere has offered any biographical details. Drawing on Bea Howe’s biography of Mrs Haweis, she comments:

Mrs Orrinsmith (née Lucy Faulkner, sister of William Morris’s associates Charles and Kate Faulkner) married the print maker Harvey Orrinsmith. The Orrinsmiths lived in a villa at Beckenham and she was a great advocate of do-it-yourself decoration, recommending the painting and varnishing of furniture and woodwork over the time-wasting activity of ‘dabbling’ in watercolour. She was also considered an authority on flower-arranging.

That Lucy Orrinsmith was part of the Morris circle would seem to offer a far wider range of sources from which to recover her personal history. Indeed, the William Morris Gallery holds letters both to ‘Miss Faulkner’ and ‘Mrs Orrinsmith’ dating from between 1861 to 1905; her correspondents include William Morris, Jane Morris, Philip Webb, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Georgiana Burne-Jones.
Figure 1- ‘Art at Home’ motif by Harry Soane. By permission of The Macmillan Archive, Macmillan Publishers Ltd.
These letters position her socially within the Morris circle, but significantly also indicate her role as a craftswoman who, with her younger sister Kate, worked for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Company.\textsuperscript{12}

The Faulkner sisters are mentioned in both early biographies of Morris, and also by Georgiana Burne-Jones, where, given their lasting friendship, the emphasis is upon Kate. Writing about events in 1862, Georgiana noted:

Both sisters shared Faulkner’s own skill of hand, and one of them [Kate], as it proved, was but waiting time and opportunity to develop a power of beautiful ornamental design: friendship with them was a foregone conclusion, and between Kate Faulkner and me there grew up a lifelong intimacy: both Morris and Edward loved her also.\textsuperscript{13}

Kate Faulkner (1841–1898), was a designer of fabrics, wallpapers and ceramic tiles produced by Morris & Co., and Jeffrey & Co., best known for her gesso-work, decorating the grand piano designed by Edward Burne-Jones for Alexander Ionides, now on display at the Victoria & Albert Museum.\textsuperscript{14} Far less is known about Lucy Faulkner, and perhaps it could be argued that a contributing factor to her comparative obscurity is simply that she married and changed her name. Indeed, Deborah Cherry has commented upon the difficulties faced by women in ‘the making of an author name’:

Those who married had to negotiate a change of family name and either re-establish their career with a second or sometimes third name or retain that by which they were already known.\textsuperscript{15}

Moreover, several important sources have incorrectly given the date of Lucy’s marriage as 1861 (rather than 1870), an error which has effectively hidden the career of the elder Miss Faulkner from design history. Until fairly recently her work had been attributed to her more prolific sister: indeed, in 1964 Arnold Wilson commented upon this confusion of attribution, noting that Lucy Faulkner’s initials on the hand-painted tile panels at the William Morris Gallery ‘are usually overlooked and the painting is vaguely attributed to one or other sister’.\textsuperscript{16} Fortunately, the wealth of primary and secondary sources which surrounds Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Company has made it possible to piece together the following biography of this forgotten craftswoman, whose most lasting contribution to the Victorian interior is \textit{The Drawing Room}.

II

Lucy Jane Orrinsmith (\textit{née} Faulkner) was born at 99 Bath Row, Birmingham on 16 November 1839, the eldest daughter of Benjamin and Ann Faulkner, and one
of four surviving children. Her elder brother, the mathematician Charles Joseph Faulkner (1833–1891) met William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones at Oxford, and later became a founder member and, until 1864, bookkeeper of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. (‘the Firm’; founded April 1861). The Faulkner family remained at Bath Row until the early 1860s, when, following the death of Benjamin Faulkner, they moved to 35 Queen Square, Bloomsbury.17 The Faulkners were closely connected to the Morris Circle: they were regular visitors to Red House, and were later neighbours at Queen Square. They also joined the Burne-Jones and Morris families on several holidays: Georgiana Burne-Jones describes the amusing antics of the three families at Littlehampton:

Occasionally also Edward would take some trifle as text and preach us a sermon in exact imitation of the style of different preachers; convulsing us one evening, I remember, as he turned with solemn pomposity to the two girls, Lucy and Kate Faulkner, saying, ‘And now I address myself more particularly to the younger female portion of my congregation’. 18

Charles Faulkner’s lasting friendship with Morris is well documented; Lucy and Kate Faulkner became involved with the activities of ‘the Firm’ via their brother. Although they began as amateurs, both women later earned money for their work: J. W. Mackail’s notes from an earlier (now missing) Minute Book for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., records that, in October 1862, payment was made to Miss Kate Faulkner and ‘the other Miss Faulkner’.19

During the 1860s, both Lucy and Kate Faulkner produced embroideries for ‘the Firm’. Preliminary sketches by Burne-Jones, based on Chaucer’s *Legende of Goode Wimmen*, made in 1864, which depict heroines from classical antiquity, contain pencil notes allocating an embroiderer for each of the twelve figures; the name ‘Lucy’ appears next to the figure of Hypsiphiles. The sketches, intended for embroidered hanging for John Ruskin’s house, were re-workings of designs for twelve tiles produced by Burne-Jones during May or June 1862. Lucy Faulkner is known to have executed several tiles based upon this theme, and it was in production of hand-painted tiles that she came to play a significant role in ‘the Firm’. As Aymer Vallance recorded ‘at first Morris and Faulkner used to paint tiles themselves; later Miss Lucy Faulkner undertook this branch of the work in place of her brother and Mr. Morris’. According to May Morris, this ‘branch of the work’ seems to have been carried out both at Morris’s workshop at 26 Queen Square and ‘partly by the Faulkners in their own home lower down the square’.20

The William Morris Gallery now holds the largest surviving collection of Lucy Faulkner’s hand-painted tiles, which form an important part of the Gallery’s exhibitions, the curators having ‘always aimed to represent properly her historical significance’. 21 The tile panels are signed with her distinctive ‘LJF’
or later more stylized ‘LF’ monogram, first identified in 1964 by Arnold Wilson, and provide detailed illustrated information about surviving examples of Lucy Faulkner’s work in this medium. The invaluable survey of tiles produced by Morris and his fellow-workers by Richard & Hilary Myers provides detailed illustrated information regarding surviving examples of Lucy Faulkner’s work in this medium, and is the one of the few sources to highlight the significance of her contribution to the early work of ‘the Firm’.22

Perhaps the best known surviving examples of Lucy Faulkner’s painted tiles are the fairy tale narrative tile panels also designed by Burne-Jones, depicting Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella and Beauty and the Beast, painted originally for bedrooms at The Hill, at Witley in Surrey, a house designed by Philip Webb for the artist Miles Birkett Foster. Richard & Hilary Myers list other tiles and panels which bear Lucy Faulkner’s ‘LJF’ or ‘LF’ monogram, including other Cinderella and Beauty and the Beast over-mantels; a vertical Cinderella as Queen tile; a tile designed by Burne-Jones depicting Thisbe from Chaucer’s Legend of Goode Wim-men; two of the twelve Labours of the Months and a Cockerel tile designed by Philip Webb. It seems likely that Lucy Faulkner also painted the figure panels for an over-mantel for the hall fireplace at Sandroyd, the home of Spencer Stanhope at Fairoile near Cobham in Surrey, also designed by Philip Webb.23 In addition, Lucy Faulkner may have painted The Four Seasons and SS Peter and George for the Combination Room replaces at Peterhouse, Cambridge.24 Vallance certainly highlights the importance of her role in the production of figurative tiles, stating that after her marriage ‘the firm produced but few figure-subject tiles’. He also comments upon Miss Faulkner’s lesser-known skills in wood engraving, a technique she learned at the office of ‘Messrs. Smith and Linton’s’.25

On 8 January 1870, Lucy Faulkner married Harvey Edward Orrinsmith (originally Orrin Smith), a wood engraver and master bookbinder who had been in partnership with W. J. Linton, and was a director of the bookbinding firm, James Burns & Sons. The artist-designer Walter Crane was apprenticed to Linton from 1858 until 1862, and his autobiography describes his training at the office of Smith and Linton. He also gives a description of the character of Mr Orrin Smith, ‘a man of considerable energy’ and ‘an excellent friend to me’. However, he makes no mention of a female pupil in the office. Thus, Lucy Faulkner’s training seems to have begun after 1862. Archival sources and surviving objects offer evidence of her skill in wood engraving; besides the wood-block for Goblin Market discussed in an earlier article, she is also known to have cut at least one of the wood blocks for Morris’s Earthly Paradise in ca 1865. This is also mentioned by Vallance, and recorded by George Wardle:

These designs were ... all put on the block by me from B-J’s rather rough draw-ings on tracing paper [...] A few were given at first to the trade to be cut but
the result was so unsatisfactory that Morris tried to get the cutting done by unprofessional hands. G. F. Campfield, then a foreman of painters to the firm, and Miss Lucy Faulkner, sister of Charles Faulkner, each made a trial.

Lucy Faulkner’s ‘trial’ was titled *Cupid leaving Psyche* and is now on display at the William Morris Gallery.²⁶

The 1871 Census shows that the Orrinsmiths lived at Beckenham Villa, Bromley Road, Beckenham (SE London). During the next decade they produced three children: Mabel Kate (b. 1871), who died of diphtheria in December 1880, Ruth Charlie (1873–1954), and Edward Harvey (b. 1881). The pastel portraits of the Orrinsmiths’ daughters by Arthur Hughes, and the five pieces of embroidery executed by Lucy Orrinsmith now in the collection at the William Morris Gallery, all date from this period of motherhood and domesticity: as does *The Drawing Room*.²⁷

The Census for 1881 gives the Orrinsmiths’ address as ‘Sunnybank’, Christ Church Road, Hampstead. Lucy Orrinsmith was widowed in 1904, and remained there until her death in 1910. A letter from Harvey Orrinsmith to W. J. Linton of April 1882 sent from this Hampstead address is one of the few pieces of archival evidence which mentions the domestic life of the Orrinsmith family. Written at a time ‘blighted’ by grief at the death of their eldest daughter, it states:

In your last letter you hoped I had reaped the reward of my hard work – Well! Yes!
I have done fairly well – should have done better pecuniarily but that my dear wife is described best in Georges Sand’s words:
“*Elle n’estime pas l’argent, mais elle adore la dépense*”
Still I don’t complain my wife has done so much for me – her high moral and intellectual qualities have raised my nature.²⁸

During the 1880s Mrs Orrinsmith continued to design, make and purchase decorative objects. The catalogues of the first two exhibitions of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society record that she exhibited a book cover for James Burns & Co. in 1888, and a mural brass the following year. A book-cover design with a repeating motif of acorns and oak leaves designed by Lucy Orrinsmith is also illustrated in Gleeson White’s *Practical Designing* (1893). A full-page illustration of her design accompanies a chapter ‘On the Preparation of Designs for Book Bindings’ written by Harvey Orrinsmith.²⁹ Nonetheless, Mrs Orrinsmith’s best known work after her marriage seems to be *The Drawing Room*. 
The book was written and produced quickly. Mrs Orrinsmith agreed to write it in June 1877; the dedication to George Lillie Craik is dated September 1877; a first edition of three thousand copies was issued in November 1877. In total six thousand copies were printed, the majority of reviews appearing after the second printing in February 1878. It includes several illustrations which had already appeared in ‘Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks’, a series of eleven illustrated articles on house furnishing by the American art critic, Clarence M. Cook, published by Scribner's Illustrated Monthly between June 1875 and May 1877. Cook’s articles were collected and published in America in 1878 as The House Beautiful, and it is interesting that his text unwittingly refers to Mrs Orrinsmith:

Some of the ladies belonging to the families of the house of Morris, Marshall & Company have distinguished themselves by the beauty and originality of their designs and no less by the excellence of their workmanship; and they have become important members of the business, their work and their taste having not a little to do with the success of the enterprise.

Although Mark Girouard alleges that Macmillan & Co. plagiarised the illustrations from Cook’s articles for use in the 'Art at Home Series' (an allegation that has been often repeated), my examination of the Macmillan archive has shown this charge to be false.30

In March 1877, Cook had written to Frederick Macmillan offering him the British publication rights to this collection of articles. Macmillan, however, after asking Loftie for his advice on the matter, refused this proposal, and wrote to Cook offering instead ‘to buy the very beautiful illustrations & to re-cast or re-write the text so as to suit it to English requirements’. After brief negotiations, Macmillan & Co. bought electrotypes of the original wood engravings from Scribner’s for £100, and immediately set about finding authors willing to write new books around the illustrations. A letter from Craik in June 1877 recorded that Mrs Orrinsmith had ‘gone over the illustrations’ and ‘is much interested in the book’ feeling ‘a certain confidence that she could do it’.31

The Scribner’s illustrations appear in only six of the final eight chapters of The Drawing-Room: ‘Walls and Ceilings’; ‘Fireplaces and Chimneys’; ‘Floors and Carpets’; ‘Windows, Doors and Curtains’; ‘Furniture’; ‘Lighting and Floral Decoration’ and ‘Picture Frames, Mirrors, Odds and Ends’ were considered in turn, and Mrs Orrinsmith resolved the difficulties of writing around these images simply by reorganising them, inventing new descriptions, and re-naming many of the cuts. For instance, an illustration ‘drawn by Mr. Lathrop, from “the life”’ appeared in The House Beautiful as ‘A French Settee’, but reappeared in The
Drawing Room as ‘A “Sheraton” Sofa’. Similarly, an image which Cook describes as an ‘Italian Fire-screen’ became, in Mrs Orrinsmith’s text, ‘lovely pieces of Japanese embroidery … worked in glowing silks, representing peacocks’ feathers’.

It is debatable whether this says more about the knowledge of the author, the quality of the engraving or the fluidity of its meaning. Indeed, the use of these images was to cause criticism and complaint from the professional press and rival authors. Never one to pull her punches, Mrs Haweis commented upon the illustrations – among other things – in her stinging criticism of the ‘Series’:

I vainly overhauled the many manuals of good advice now daily pouring from the press – among them ‘House Decoration’ in the Art at Home series – a series, by the way, which, considering how good was the primal notion, has been ill-carried out by the writers, and is meagre in suggestions to a miracle. [...] and the illustrations, which are peculiarly American in character, better suited the articles in ‘Scribner’s Illustrated Monthly’, where they first appeared, than the English series, which they probably fettered.

As the journal for the contemporary furniture trade, The Furniture Gazette also took Mrs Orrinsmith to task in two separate reviews, complaining at length of her ‘censorious criticism of modern cabinet-work’:

Of the merits of the book as a whole we regret to say we cannot speak very highly. The work is marred by a strong predilection which the writer evinces for antique, which propensity asserts itself again and again.

Another biting review, by E. W. Godwin, appeared in The British Architect and Northern Engineer. His own designs, first published in the same journal in 1874, had also been used in Cook’s articles and The House Beautiful, where, modified by Francis Lathrop, they are at least acknowledged as Godwin’s work. What Godwin condemned was their unacknowledged reproduction in the ‘Art at Home Series’:

In the Art at Home series, Mrs Orrinsmith lectures us on the Drawing Room. In her last chapter she says (p. 142), ‘The encouragement of original ideas has been throughout the motive of this book’. [...] This is all very fine, but if Mrs Orrinsmith and her friends would have the grace to acknowledge the sources of their ‘original ideas’, it would enlighten readers as to the method to adopt in searching ‘after pure decorative beauty’…

The most scathing review was published in The Athenaeum, which complained both about the images and the text, and also questioned the authority of the female author:
Figure 2 - ‘Italian Fire-Screen’ from Clarence M. Cook’s The House Beautiful (above), re-titled a ‘Peacock Screen’ in Mrs Orrinsmith’s The Drawing Room (below), as photographed by the author. ‘By permission of The Macmillan Archive, Macmillan Publishers Ltd.’
In the name of the author of this little book we recognize that of John Orrin Smith, the well-known and clever pupil of William Hervey. The writer may therefore be said to have ‘married into the arts’ which is a very sufficient introduction in these days of pretence. It would be introduction enough for one less competent than this volume proves its author to be. Yet, notwithstanding the limited nature of its aims, the work hardly proves its right to exist.33

Sadly, only one letter survives in the Macmillan archive which mentions production of The Drawing Room, and this highlights a crucial aspect of the text missed by most twentieth-century design historians, but referred to in Imogen Hart’s recent study.34

In October 1877, Craik had written to Loftie about the ‘Preface’: it seems that William Morris was uncomfortable with the flagrant puffery of the text. Craik commented that ‘William Morris altho’ not once named’ was ‘referred throughout Mrs Orrinsmith’s book’. He also expressed concern that Morris ‘might not like the concluding words’ of Loftie’s Preface, and asked him to omit the words ‘Earthly Paradise’ which had been included in the original draft: consequently, these words did not appear in the published version of the ‘Preface’ to The Drawing Room.35

As Craik noted, references to the unnamed William Morris appeared on almost every page, but were perhaps most apparent in the chapter on ‘Walls and Ceilings’, where the only illustrations were two cuts of the Morris wallpaper designs Vine (1874) and Rose (1877). In this chapter Mrs Orrinsmith, having described examples of bad taste in wall decoration in recent times, even referred to:

Real genius, true art, have of late years come to our aid; and in London, at all events, one need not long be ignorant of the vast improvements which a short time has produced in one important branch of drawing-room decoration – wall papers.36

Other products sold by Morris & Co. were also recommended. These included fabrics and, unsurprisingly, hand-painted tiles:

At present hand-painted over-glazed tiles in blue and white, or yellow and white, may be purchased at certain well-known London houses, at prices varying from one shilling to two shillings each. A tile called the ‘Longden’ pattern can be recommended for surrounding borders or slanting sides of grates or hearths. [...] Others, such as the swan, sunflower, or bough patterns, differ but slightly in price and are all suitable.37

The four designs – Longden, Swan, Sunflower and Bough – were first produced by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. during the 1860s and 1870s, and it is prob-
able that Lucy Faulkner had painted some of them: _Swan_ pattern tiles surround the fairytale narrative panels from _The Hill_. Morris also gave Lucy Orrinsmith some practical assistance with the research she undertook for her chapter on ‘Floors and Carpets’. In a letter dated 20 July 1877, he replied thus to a request for advice:

My Dear Lucy

You are very welcome to any information our Misters Smith can give you either he of Oxford St. or he of here: the Persian Rugs are up here: the really good ones are very expensive articles, because they are old & are no longer made. The modern oriental carpets that are made for the European market are very much deteriorated; especially in colour.

I have passed the word to the Smiths that you are to have every assistance into this matter.

The Misters Smith were indeed able to help, for in _The Drawing Room_, Mrs Orrinsmith gave detailed information about eastern carpets, both ancient and modern.

While the influence of Morris is obvious throughout, it could also be argued that the ideas expressed by Mrs Orrinsmith suggested a subject for Morris to consider. Striking similarities are apparent when comparing _The Drawing Room_ with Morris’s lecture ‘Making the Best of It’ (1880), later published in _The Architect_ as ‘Hints on House Decoration’. For example, in her first and most significant chapter, ‘Evils and Remedies’, Mrs Orrinsmith presents good taste as a social duty, ‘which may prevent an exhibition distressing to a visitor or, perchance, more educated taste than our own’. Similarly, in his lecture, Morris remarked that ‘We are heedless if our houses express nothing of us but the very worst side of our character both national and personal’.

Morris delivered ‘Making the Best of It’, written three years after publication of _The Drawing Room_, before the Trade’s Guild of Learning and the Birmingham Society of Artists. Much of his lecture was devoted to pattern design and the use of colour, but both he and Mrs Orrinsmith dealt with the treatment of the walls and ceiling, the floor, the windows and doors, the fireplace and ‘movables’. They made the same complaints about plate-glass windows, the evils of gaslight, ugly modern fireplaces and over-ornamented furniture: interestingly, both referred to the strictures of Dr Richardson on the unwholesome practise of fitted-carpets. Both texts also identified the root of these decorative problems, considering the damaging impact of the division of labour, the use of machinery, and the moral and social effects of art. For Morris, these themes became opportunities for political rhetoric, but with self-deprecating irony, Mrs Orrinsmith was prepared to ‘take lower ground, and say that a well-dressed room, like a well-dressed dinner, conduces to a suave and equable temper’.
While Morris’s lecture suggested that the drawing room ‘ought to look as if some kind of work could be done in it less toilsome than being bored’, for Mrs Orrinsmith, *The Drawing Room* was work. A close reading reveals this text to be a demonstration of the expertise she had acquired as ‘Miss Faulkner’ of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. In effect *The Drawing Room* is autobiography, and in each chapter it is possible to discern oblique references to her experiences, skills and knowledge. For instance, in ‘Fireplaces and Chimneypieces’, this crafts-woman, whose hand-painted tiles adorned fireplaces at Sandroyd, The Hill and Peterhouse, commented:

Perhaps the inclination of some might tend to the production of home painted tiles, and in that case a little inquiry is all that is now needed to find out proper colours and assisting kilns […] But lest unwittingly the absorbing topic of tile and pottery painting should lead to lengthy digression, we will here bring our chapter to a close.43

This article has aimed to account for the partial disappearance of ‘the other Miss Faulkner’ from design history and to draw attention to the complex relationships between *The Drawing Room*, Cook’s *House Beautiful* and Morris’s later lecture ‘Making the Best of It’. That contemporary critics of *The Drawing Room*, and indeed the twentieth-century historians who have cited it, were unaware of the author’s true identity, has led to its misinterpretation: one wonders whether the critical reception would have accused Mrs Orrinsmith of having ‘married into the arts’ had it been known that she was the former Miss Faulkner of Morris, Marshall Faulkner & Co. This partially recovered history of Mrs Orrinsmith makes it clear that *The Drawing Room* did not simply represent the views of a Beckenham housewife with a passion for flower-arranging, and while her decorative work is relatively unknown, her contribution to the ‘Art at Home Series’ has survived to offer us an imperfect window into the drawing rooms of the past.

NOTES


6. See Note 4.

7. *Ibid*.


9. Mrs Orrinsmith, Dedication.


19. J. W. Mackail’s unpublished notes for The Life of William Morris, 1899; William Morris Gallery, J163 and J164. The original minute books, now at the Huntington Library, San Marino, California (MOR 20 Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Minute Book, A. MS. [110 pp.], [1862–1874], London, Eng.), cover the period 10 December 1862 – 4 November 1874. I am very grateful to Gayle Richardson at the Manuscripts Department of the Huntington Library, who has catalogued the William Morris Papers, for confirming these dates, and for providing me with copies of the finding aid to this collection. Photocopies of the minute books are held at Hammersmith and Fulham Archives and Local History Centre: DD/235/1.


21. Email from Peter Cormack to Emma Ferry, 6 June 2003.

22. Wilson, pp. 57–59; Myers & Myers, pp. 71–2; William Morris Gallery C214, C175.

23. Myers & Myers, Ibid.

24. This is suggested by a copy of Vallance which once belonged to Lucy Orrinsmith, now at the William Morris Gallery, K330a; Peter Cormack, personal communication. The pencilled initials ‘L. O.’ occur next to descriptions of the tiles Sandroyd and Peterhouse, p. 81. See also Myers & Myers, p. 71, n. 180.


26. The marriage certificate states that they were married at the Parish Church of St. George the Martyr, 44 Queen Square, Holborn. Harvey Orrinsmith was aged 40 and Lucy Faulkner aged 30. He gives his profession as ‘Book binder’, and his address as 35 Hatton Garden. Lucy does not give a profession; F. B. Smith, Radical Artisan: William James Linton 1812 – 97, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973, 254 pp; Walter Crane, An Artist’s
‘THE OTHER MISS FAULKNER’


36. Mrs Orrinsmith, p. 12.
41. *Hopes and Fears*, p. 92; Mrs Orrinsmith, p. 8.
42. *Hopes and Fears*, p. 92.
43. Mrs Orrinsmith, p. 49

Compared to the average collection of essays this is a splendidly presented book. There is an exciting cover and stimulating coloured illustrations. Morris has been well served. Regenia Gagnier’s enthusiastic Preface puts the emphasis firmly on the present day, and the introduction by Bennett & Miles carefully charts the leading ideas of the book and explains its plan. The essays are grouped thematically, and one can see that Utopia seems to have more than its fair share of space.

The first two parts bring us up to date with recent work on Morris. In the third section, ‘Morris, Politics and Utopia’, we find the heart of the book. There are three superb essays which try to confront, tackle or even solve the paradoxes at the heart of Morris’s central ideas. They complement each other. Brilliant as usual, in his account of ‘Versions of Ecotopia in *News from Nowhere*’ Tony Pinkney once again worries at the patches of inconsistency and self-doubt, which have surely been obvious to all but the most uncritical readers. Why are most of the people in the country of Nowhere so feeble, why is their society so lacking in stimulus? Using the medieval four elements he shows that the pure air, water and earth which Ruskin campaigned for are not enough to secure Utopia; we need fire, especially in the metaphorical sense of intelligence and drive. This is why we all think Ellen is such a splendid human being, though she only appears in the second half of the book. She shows liveliness and a wish to get things done; perhaps she will revolutionise Nowhere and shake it from its lethargy.

Piers J. Hale takes these points further in his essay on ‘Human Nature and the Biology of Utopia’. It is good to have a historian of science working on Morris. He explains why Social Darwinism could not solve the crisis that the nineteenth century found itself in. It was simply the same old Malthusian beliefs of those
who were benefiting from the Industrial Revolution now transferred to biology and then back into social thinking. Only Neo-Lamarckian ideas could transform human beings quickly, and this is seen in Morris’s concern to make Socialists. He believed that human nature could be changed, but could the new ideas be passed on to our descendants? Hale comments: ‘It might seem that the implications of the fact that Morris based his utopia upon what we would now perceive to be an erroneous biology are that we should give up on the possibilities for humanity that he imagined … After all, our own scepticism about the possibility of a radically different future is no less culturally contingent than was Morris’s optimism’.

Peter Smith also chooses an impressive topic: ‘Attractive Labour and Social Change’. He engages in a grand wrestle with the Ruskinian ideal of manual labour, and Morris’s demand for pleasure in work. The inhabitants of Nowhere are fascinated by craftwork as a form of art. Backbreaking manual labour seems to be forgotten, but Smith jerks us forward into the twenty-first century by alerting us to the increasing amount of sweated labour now being undertaken. He notes that Barry King has recently observed how ‘in the sweatshops and Enterprise Zones of the Third World, the old disciplines of manual labour have returned with an intensity that recalls the early nineteenth century, rather than the technoi- utopias of the futurologists’. He concludes by saying of Morris: ‘his plea for an ecological approach to socialism seems somehow modestly appropriate when confronted, as we are, by the delusions of mass culture and the neo-liberal view of capitalism as a project without end’.

These three thinkers are bang up to date, and it is refreshing to be allowed an Interlude, which David Mabb entitles ‘Hijack: Morris Dialectically’. He points out that Morris thought that interior design would transform everyday life, but that ‘today his work is seen as safe and comfortable’. He shows us ten examples of his juxtaposition of Morris’s designs with modern life, including some large-scale artworks: but the ironies do not always come across. I think that the Morris Kitsch Archive is the best illustration of his ideas, but the irony is on us. I saw a garden trowel, hand-painted with flowers, similar to the one in the coloured plate, in an art exhibition which was meant to demonstrate the artist’s homage to Morris. However, you could argue that Morris has now become part of popular culture, and that this would be in accordance with his negative attitude towards High Art.

The next section is concerned with literature but is limited to prose texts. Anna Vaninskaya writes on Germania, which is a ‘lost area’ to most people. A mythic view of the Germanic tribes can be traced back to Tacitus. Morris was therefore following a common view of their history when he wrote The House of the Wolfings and The Roots of the Mountains. Marx found the social order of the early Germans to have been communistic, and Vaninskaya states that ‘the
Barbarian society of the Wolfings and the socialist society of Nowhere were the beginning and end terms of a single historical sequence.

David Latham, announces his subject as ‘Between Hell and England’; he begins by justifying Morris's flight into Romance. Notice his discussion of ‘the province of Art’, which accumulates meanings until we understand why Yeats admired Morris ‘as a poet committed to extending the jurisdiction of the province of art’. An early reviewer of *A Dream of John Ball* hailed it as ‘a brand-new kind of prose fiction’. The whole of Latham's essay is like *A Christmas Carol* with the spirits of Christmas Past – John Ball – and Christmas Future – Ellen from *News from Nowhere* – showing us idealised versions of England before we return to the awful nineteenth-century present, which is Hell. Latham concludes that

The ornament of romance involves no evidence of a retreat from the reality of life; it is no such thing for Morris who employs it to show us how to reach towards the heavenly realm of art wherein we find ourselves by embodying the angelic vision of our potential and thereby begin to replace our wishful dreams with the reality of creative deeds.

This very enjoyable and perceptive essay is appropriately followed by ‘Rejuvenating our Sense of Wonder: the Last Romances’. The many aspects of wonder are very well documented by Phillippa Bennett, and the source for the nineteenth century is identified in the *Lyrical Ballads* of Wordsworth and Coleridge. Bennett uses the concept to test the romances to the limit. This careful work pays off: a whole section on buildings in the romances seems quite new. The characters are shown to have inner strength, and their wanderings have a purpose. She ties this in to Morris's lecture on ‘The Ends and the Means’ – ‘there is no turning back into the desert in which we cannot live, and no standing still on the edge of the enchanted wood; for there is nothing to keep us there, we must plunge in and through it to the promised land beyond’. With regard to the problems of environmental degradation, she brings Rachel Carson and Robert Macfarlane into the argument; there are now so many observers of nature calling our attention to what we have lost, reinforcing the observations of Morris in ‘Art and the Beauty of the Earth’: ‘there is no square mile of earth’s inhabitable surface that is not beautiful in its own way, if we men will only abstain from wilfully destroying that beauty’.

The last section, ‘Virtual Morris’, is clearly sited in the world of today, the world of computers and the Internet. In ‘Editing Morris for the Twenty-First Century’, Rosie Miles discusses ongoing problems. These are mainly concerned with the editing of Morris texts for the new online edition. Of course a great deal of Morris was not re-edited in the old days of ‘book culture’ down to 1980, so there is a great deal to be done. She refers to the ‘the working goal of the Morris Online Edition’ which is ‘to provide readable annotated texts of Morris’s poetry
and selected prose’. Well, yes, but things then get more complicated as our computers ask us to use all their resources to the full. Long descriptions of what might be done are suddenly confronted by thoughts of what Morris might say: ‘Is the Morris Online Edition aesthetically attractive as a site? … Is it beautiful?’ And finally, there is more to life than all this, she says, in spite of her enthusiasm: ‘We may live part of our lives now looking at screens, but I also hope that frequently we go and sit under an elm tree’.

Thomas Tobin writes on ‘Spreading Socialist Ideals via the Internet’. He outlines the varying attitudes of Morris towards the new technologies of his day; there were exploitative machines, and machines which did not operate for profit but helped in the co-operative and therefore socialist process. In our own times we have the Internet, and Tobin discusses whether this could be defined as ‘socialist’. I think this is stretching the meaning of the word, and that even ‘co-operative’ won’t do, since huge profits are made from the Internet and not redistributed to the users. Tobin describes the history and progress of the William Morris Society website, forecasting an amazing future; he concludes: ‘The Society pledges to continue to develop our website as a socialist enterprise, and, on behalf of the William Morris Society, we welcome everyone’s suggestions and involvement’.

Peter Preston devotes his ‘Afterword’ to what is virtually a review of the present volume, taking the wind out of the present writer’s sails. In the comparable 1996 volume (the Centenary Essays) the contents included literature and specifically three essays on the poetry. There were several studies of the Arts and Crafts movement. In this 2010 collection there is one essay on the crafts and a condensed section on literature; poetry is nowhere. He modifies these remarks as the essay progresses but says that this shows how the emphasis has changed during the twenty-first century.

Though I enjoyed reading the book, I felt that there are not enough difficult texts under discussion, though as Preston says: ‘all the essays in this volume actually include subtle and illuminating readings of at least parts of Morris’s texts’. Most authors concentrate on ecology and society, and do not consider the survival of Morris’s work in literature and art. I am concerned about the effect of this selective approach on the general reader. Apart from the essay on May Morris’s embroidery there is little about the crafts he inspired. For example, fine printing, which gets no mention, flourishes. Stained glass is back as a viable art form, and in Pembroke College, Cambridge, last week I sat with my back to a window full of Ted Hughes’ imagery – if you face it you get no work done. The poems and the early contributions to the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine are being allowed to fade from consciousness. Even in the twenty-first century there are students reading The Defence of Guenevere, and Other Poems for the first time, the ‘great poems of desire’, as Isobel Armstrong is allowed to cry out from the far side of our text. (p.234) We must not elevate Morris into the ideal Guardian reader,
without thinking of his impatience with the endless debates of his own day, and
his demand for revolution. But, as I write, it looks as if the twenty-first century
will have its share of that.

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John Purkis

William E. Fredeman et al., eds, The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. 9,
The Last Decade, 1873–1882: Kelmscott to Birchington, 1880–1882. Woodbridge,
730 pp., 1 colour & 4 black-and-white illustrations, £125. ISBN 9781843842279.

It is a pleasure to salute the publication of the Rossetti correspondence for the last
two years and three months of his life. This fine volume follows the organisation
of its predecessors in beginning with a statement of principles from the editorial
board (now consisting of Roger C. Lewis, Jane Cowan and Anthony Harrison);
a list of illustrations (the main one being a small reproduction of Dante’s Dream
as the frontispiece); a list of the numerous abbreviations occurring in the text,
including those for the sources used in the annotations, and a small number of
recently located letters not included in earlier volumes (none of great impor-
tance). Each of the three years of this volume is preceded with a note of the Major
Works of the year, a Summary of the year’s letters, and a Chronology. Then we
have the fully annotated letters. But there is not a great deal of unpublished mate-
rial here, so that our sense of Rossetti’s final years is not significantly changed.

Although Rossetti had largely withdrawn from society by 1880, that year was
productive for him: he wrote a number of sonnets and The White Ship, added to
the earlier narrative poem Sister Helen, and made important contributions to the
reissue by Anne Gilchrist of the Life of Blake and to a lengthy article on Thomas
Chatterton by Watts-Dunton; and he worked on three important paintings, The
Day Dream, La Pia de’ Tolomei and Dante’s Dream. His most frequent correspond-
ents were F. J. Shields, who often came to paint with Rossetti, who instructed him in the use of oils, and Watts-Dunton, who conducted much business for him, including matters of jury service and income tax, as well as engaging in literary discussions. Other letters were exchanged with his mother, brother, sister-in-law and sister; with patrons such as Leonard Valpy, William Graham and Constantine Ionides; with old friends like Brown, Scott, Stephens and Dixon, and of course Jane Morris; and with new correspondents, particularly the young provincial Hall Caine, who was preparing an anthology of sonnets for publication and was keen to embark on a literary career. Rossetti’s letters to him are, the editors remind us, ‘the most literary letters of all he wrote’.

A similar pattern was followed in 1881, although there was a slowing down in the later part of the year. He published Ballads & Sonnets and Poems: New, for which he wrote a number of additional poems, including the ballad ‘The King’s Tragedy’, which he later called ‘a ripper’. Of paintings, he worked on Mnemosyne, The Salutation of Beatrice and Found, as well as the chalk study for Desdemona’s Death-Song. In September, Dante’s Dream was sold to the city of Liverpool. Following an unfortunate visit to Cumberland with Caine and Fanny Cornforth in late 1881, during which Fanny tried to persuade him to make a will in her favour, and his consumption of chloral rose dangerously, the tone inevitably becomes sadder. Rossetti rallies briefly to conduct a correspondence with the French critic Ernest Chesneau, who had asked him questions about the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, in connection with a book he was to publish in Paris in 1882 called La peinture anglaise. But time is running out, as he is well aware. His last, dictated, letter, on 5 April 1882 is to his kindly patron, Frederick Leyland, asking him to supply a little more wine of the kind he had recently sent, and ending, ‘I am feeling very weak today’.

Some of Rossetti’s more attractive characteristics continue to find expression. Despite his poor handling of his own finances, which even Watts-Dunton could not greatly improve, he was consistent in his generosity to those he felt needed support. He also gave generously of his time and knowledge to help Anne Gilchrist in revising The Life of Blake, and to help the young Hall Caine to develop a literary career by offering judicious criticism and encouragement. Readers may warm to his advice on 12 March 1880 when he felt that Caine was writing criticism in a pretentious manner: ‘surely you are strong enough to be English pure & simple. I am sure I could write 100 essays on all possible subjects ... without once experiencing the “aching void” which is filled by such words as “mythopoeic” & “anthropomorphism”. I do not find life long enough to know in the least what they mean. They are both very long and very ugly indeed – the latter only suggesting to me a Vampire or a Somnambulant Cannibal’. His own language could still occasionally take an attractive slangy turn, as when he tells Caine on 24 August 1880, ‘Don’t trouble yourself for a moment about the bloke
in question. No doubt he is a skunk’. His turn of phrase to his brother’s wife Lucy, on 4 Feb. 1881 is lively, as he sends love to her children, whom he seldom cared to see, ‘from their phantasmal uncle’. Congratulating Brown on his impressive work-rate on 30 Dec. 1880, he remarks that by comparison, ‘I feel like one of the Seven Sleepers’. A particularly attractive moment occurs when Rossetti meets the collier and poet Joseph Skipsey. He describes the meeting in a letter to Caine of 27 June 1880: ‘He is a working miner, & describes rustic loves & sports & the perils & pathos of pit-life with great charm, having a quiet humour too when needed ... The other night, as I say, he came here, and I found him a stalwart son of toil and every inch a gentleman. In cast of face he recalls Tennyson somewhat, though more bronzed & brawned. He ... recited some beautiful things of his own with a special freshness to which one is quite unaccustomed’. Rossetti’s response here is not inhibited by class, although the writing may be felt to be somewhat uneasy.

Ample evidence is given in the letters of Rossetti’s taste as a late-Victorian Romantic. On 12 March 1880 he writes in a P.S. to Caine, ‘Did you ever read Christopher Smart’s “Song to David” – the only great accomplished poem of the last century? The unaccomplished ones are Chatterton’s. Of course I mean earlier than Blake and Coleridge and without reckoning so exceptional a genius as Burns’. And on 26 March he tells Caine, ‘The 3 greatest English Imaginations are Shakespere, Shelley & Blake. I grudge Wordsworth every vote he gets’. Other letters spell out his critical view of Wordsworth, which is not unlike Morris’s view. He tells Caine on ca 10 September 1880 that ‘Primary vital impulse was surely not fully developed in his Muse’. In correspondence with Buxton Forman, he writes enthusiastically about Keats. He also approves of Tennyson’s work, telling Caine on 2 November 1880 that ‘all poets nowadays are redundant except Tennyson’, by which he means that only Tennyson uses every word with proper care. Similarly, he tells William Davies on 16 March 1881, in a discussion of the danger of producing ‘redundant’ poetry which offers ‘meandering narrative, empty declamation, or mere jagged jargon’, ‘The only man who has husbanded his forces rightly, & whom you can never open at the wrong page, is Tennyson’. He also praises the work of his old friend, and Morris’s, R.W. Dixon, in a letter to Caine of 17 March 1881: ‘His finest passages are as fine as any living man can do’. But when Dixon sends Caine two sonnets from his friend the young Roman Catholic priest (and at the time unpublished poet) Gerard Manley Hopkins for his poetry anthology, and Caine in turn shows them to Rossetti, his response is negative: ‘I cannot in any degree tolerate Mr Hopkins’s sonnets, though perceiving well that he is an able man’.

Caine did not include the sonnets in his anthology, which in view of Hopkins’s later reputation, looks like a lost opportunity. But Rossetti could on occasion go beyond Victorian taste, as in his liking for the poetry of Donne; ‘Do you know Donne?’ he asks Caine on 11 April 1880. ‘There is hardly an English
poet better worth a thorough knowledge, in spite of his provoking conceits & occasional jagged jargon’. He is not often negative in his judgments, though he does say in a letter to Christina of 6 August 1881 that he is sending her ‘a little vol.’ by Augusta Webster, which ‘seems (like George Eliot’s lyrics) written without vocation’. The editors remark, in a Note on a letter to F.G. Stephens of 11 August 1881, which includes statement, ‘I don’t know that Pater ever wrote a line about me’, that Rossetti ‘disdained the admiration and professed “indebtedness” of “aesthetes” such as Pater and Wilde’. He was certainly dismissive of Wilde’s 1881 book Poems – some of which derived their forms from Rossetti himself – telling Jane on 1 October 1881: ‘I saw the wretched Oscar Wilde book, & glanced at it enough to see clearly what trash it is. Did Georgie say Ned really admires it? if so, he must be driveling’.

Some of the letters shed light on Rossetti’s views of the relative demands of painting and poetry. On 9 June 1881 he tells Caine of the hard work he has been putting in on Dante’s Dream, and adds, ‘Poetry is a d—d deal more [comfortable]’. Not that poetry came easily to him. Although he insists, writing to Caine on 17 February 1881, that he has no time for those who would lay down ‘rigid rules for rhyme’ in English sonnets, he adds at the end, ‘I would not be too anxious, if I were you, about anything in the choice of sonnets except the brains & the music’. The application of intelligence is essential, as he insists more powerfully to Caine on 8 March, through the layout of his sentence:

You have much too great a habit of speaking of a special octave, sestette, or line. Conception, my boy,

Fundamental Brainwork,

is what makes the difference in all art. Work your metal as much as you like, but first take care that it is gold & worth working.

Rossetti’s poetry is as much the product of thought as of inspiration. As he remarked to Christina, when sending a sonnet for his mother on 19 January 1881, ‘With me, Sonnets mean Insomnia’.

Rossetti’s complete adoption of a British persona is shown in his slighting references to French culture. Flaubert died in May 1880, and Rossetti writes to Watts-Dunton on the 26, suggesting that he should write a pamphlet on ‘the Poetry of Nero & the latest French Muse’. He goes on: ‘It seems Flaubert got as bloated as his practical prototype above-named before he went bang. It really ought to be done, with a hint (such as might be) at the Marquis by the way’. The editorial Note tells us that Rossetti elsewhere compared Flaubert with Sade, and saw Salammbo as the product of a decadent culture. In a similar mode he tells Jane on 14 February 1881 that he has received ‘a huge fussy folio of lithographed sketches from the Raven by a French idiot named Manet, who certainly must be the greatest & most conceited ass who ever lived’. It is therefore a relief to finding
Rossetti, writing to the French critic Ernest Chesneau in an unpublished letter of 31 March 1882, remarking, ‘The composition by Gustave Moreau struck me greatly, particularly as I am so ignorant of the present state of art in France that his name is quite new to me. Few indeed are the painters capable of this clear projection of the spiritual beauty, and the artistic qualities are as high as the conception’.

References to Morris are not numerous, and are usually sardonic. A letter to Jane on 18 March 1880 remarks that ‘the Member for Lechlade is only dallying with the fish tribe and angling for some much better kind of game’ – Morris’s political commitment was always a puzzle to Rossetti. On 11 June Rossetti writes to Caine about a letter he has received from the young poet William Watson, who, he is afraid, has misunderstood some advice from Rossetti: ‘he seems to think I wished to persuade him from following narrative poetry. Not in the least – I only wished him to try his hand at clearer dramatic life. The dreamy romantic really hardly needs more that one vast Morris in a literature – at any rate in a century’.

This is a view of Morris’s poetry which has often recurred. In an unpublished letter of 14 July, Rossetti, perhaps deriving his information from Jane, writes, ‘I hear that Top goes on with his enormous “Sampler” which promises no visible use or outlet for sale. He has already spent two years on it and has now established a complete school of embroidery in his coach-house, he teaching & paying girls to produce the article. A large number of the available products have sold rapidly’. The editors provide a Note which says nothing about the Sampler – presumably the tapestry panel ‘Vine and Acanthus’, on which Morris spent 516 hours – or the Hammersmith rugs, but states that increasing business was to lead Morris to move his ‘tapestry and embroidery works’ to Merton Abbey during the following year.

On 10 August 1880 Rossetti tells Fairfax Murray, in an unpublished letter, ‘Morris & family have taken the funny freak of spending a week going up the river in a big boat – I suppose with a sort of gondola cabin. I fancy it sounds rheumatic though romantic. The editors’ Note is inaccurate; the ‘article’ it refers to on ‘The Expedition of the Ark’ by J.M. Baissus in JWMS vol. 3, no.3 (Spring 1997) is actually a transcription of the notes Morris made on the journey at the time. The Note states that the journey was from Kelmscott House, Hammersmith, to Lechlade, missing the point about the original Kelmscott as its destination. It then also claims that the journey provided ‘the basis for the Arcadian adventure of The Guest in WM’s utopian romance News from Nowhere (1890), as he travels by boat up the Thames Valley from twenty-first century London to medieval Oxfordshire for a harvest feast, the climax of the romance – it takes place in an ancient manor house closely resembling Kelmscott Manor’. It is strange to find such an ill-informed account in a scholarly work. Even stranger perhaps is the
Note to an emotional letter to Jane of 3 September 1880 in which Rossetti imagines inventing political news for her: ‘I wish I could create news. It wd. be worse than useless to tell you that Gladstone had hanged himself: the river is too near at Kelmscott for such tidings to be safe’. The Note states that the prime minister was ‘the darling of socialists such as WM and his political associates especially in foreign policy matters – his loss, DGR humourously (sic) supposes, would have driven them to despair’. Did Morris really feel so enthusiastic for Gladstone?

The later references are less contentious. On 26 November, Rossetti writes to James Noble, who had asked whether he had a copy of the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine. Neither he nor his brother has a copy, but Rossetti remarks, quite accurately, that ‘it was published about 1856 & contains a good many prose tales of rather a Fouqué character by Wm Morris who was then still at Oxford’. On 14 February 1881 Rossetti writes to Jane with what seems to him surprising news about Morris’s recent behaviour: ‘The Courtesy of Topsy will be getting into the Percy Anecdotes when reprinted’. Rossetti had been asked by his patron, Valpy, to ask Morris whether he would help with the decoration of some schools in Bath in which Valpy was interested. Rossetti had written, he says, ‘to Top as to a bear notorious for the sorest of heads’, only to hear back from Morris that he had told Valpy that he would be pleased to ‘draw out a scheme of decoration gratuitously!!!’ What is happening to Top? His wrap-rascals [loose-fitting overcoat] must for the future be made with a case for wings’.

Unfortunately, as a Note tells us, no correspondence between Morris and Valpy has been found. Rossetti writes on a similar subject in an unpublished letter to Scott on 16 February; it had fallen to him to send to Morris a copy of Victor Hugo’s Le pape, which he had expected would annoy Morris and cause him to ‘hurl forth the book on the head of the passing stranger’. But ‘the regenerate Top’ had responded politely. ‘I wrote to him that if he does not take care, his Courtesy will get into the Percy Anecdotes and his nimbus will eventually cost a deal at Queen Square for lacquered metal & punches of symbolic design’. No such letter appears here; perhaps it was no more than an intention. But it would seem that, for whatever reason, Rossetti believed that Morris’s behaviour had become less interestingly dramatic than it had been. On 6 March Rossetti writes to Jane, alludes to Topsy’s having become ‘unnaturally courteous’, and says that he has written to remonstrate with him. ‘I hope he may yet return to his old Adam’. The last reference, to Jane on 18 July 1881, refers to a recent visit by Watts-Dunton to the Morrises. Watts-Dunton had been ‘enraptured by the enormous democratic obesity of Top. O for that final Cabinet Ministry which is to succeed the Cabinet d’aïsance of his early years!’ The Note, from Bryson, refers to ‘the three-seated privy at Kelmscott Manor’, but this was hardly an experience of Morris’s early years.

The volume concludes with seven informative appendices: 1 gives full details
of the material about the relationship of Rossetti and Hall Caine from 1879 to 1882; 2 provides an illuminating account of the negotiations – in which Caine played a helpful part – for the sale of Dante’s Dream to the city of Liverpool; 3 gives a chronology of the composition of the two 1881 books Ballads and Sonnets and Poems: New; 4 offers bibliographical summaries of these two volumes; 5 is a list of the reviews of the two volumes; 6 is a well-balanced account of the relationship between Rossetti and Fanny Cornforth during these years; and 7 gives details, with photographs, of the Rossetti memorials at Birchington and in Chelsea. It is interesting to find that Madox Brown, about whose ‘dogmatic Atheism’ Rossetti warns Caine in a letter of ca 10 August 1880, agreed, at the instance of the elderly Mrs Rossetti, to produce the memorial in the churchyard at Birchington in the form of a Celtic cross. This is an impressive book, for which all the editors are to be congratulated, above all, of course, though too late, William E. Fredeman, the great Pre-Raphaelite scholar who inaugurated the edition.

Peter Faulkner


Regenia Gagnier’s book operates on at least three levels. First, it provides an intricate survey of a set of reflections on individualism, individuality and will from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Second, it presents a normative argument in defence of a particular conception of individualism. Third, holding these two dimensions together, it adopts a methodological approach which draws on what Gagnier calls the integrative evolutionary science pioneered by Victorian writers. Though the book is pleasingly comfortable to hold, its size is misleading, for the ideas packed within the covers are complex and difficult; and whilst the writing is clear, Gagnier’s mastery of her material and her concise, confident handling is challenging for anyone less familiar with the terrain. She moves effortlessly from Darwin, Spencer and Arnold to Freud, Trotsky, Said, Adorno and Derrida, capturing short, focused studies of Alice Meynell, John Davidson, Charles Leland and William Morris, on the way. The introduction is helpful and it sets out the aims and the structure of the argument very well. Nonetheless, her book is for daytime, not evening reading and it demands careful concentration.

The discussion of the principal idea – the relationship of part to whole – is organised thematically. Models of Victorian liberalism are set out in the first chapter: Pater and James feature here. The second chapter uses a study of new womanhood to probe concepts of the self and ideas of independence and auton-
omy. The third picks up a structuring idea raised in the introduction – decadence – in order to consider emerging psychologies of the will: Yeats, Wilde and Hardy appear in this discussion, but the theoretical frames come from Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Durkheim. The fourth chapter examines philanthropy and the ways in which ideas of individual responsibility and self-reliance became mapped on to different understandings of elite-mass relations. Art education provides an interesting platform for this analysis. The last chapter, which includes a discussion of Morris, examines ways in which the ethics of individualism supported different conceptions of identity, internationalism and nationalism.

Gagnier’s normative argument is threaded through these chapters and its force comes from the background account she gives of the rightward drift of European ideas towards the end of her period and a sustained critique of current systems of neo-liberal globalisation – the embodiment of a lop-sided individualism which Victorian individualists showed to be faulty. Knowing both where Europe went and where it now is, she presents an ideal relationship of part to whole which allocates priorities to values of interdependence and mutual development; an ideal which is democratic rather than aristocratic, plural not uniform, distinctive not separatist and other- rather than self-regarding. It is cosmopolitan, but rooted in internationalism not Western exceptionalism. In developing this conception, Gagnier’s aim is ‘to keep alive models of freedom that are not confined to free markets, choice that is more than consumer choice, liberalism that is not neo-liberalism, and an individualism that is more than the maximization of self-interest’. (p. 163) As she says, Morris was also a great exponent of this conception, and her powerful re-statement of his principles is a joy to read.

The author describes her approach as ‘an analytic of part and whole’ (p. 163) and this makes sense of the organisation of the book. Her main claim indeed emerges from the interrelationship of the chapters, supported by the particular, detailed discussions of the individual writers, artists and philosophers contained within them. Yet there is another aspect to her approach which complicates the analysis but also provides a foundation for the greater picture of wholeness that she wants to present. This draws on the synthetic philosophy associated with Spencer, Darwin and others, which took ideas of organic development and the relatedness of all forms of life as a starting point for social-scientific research. Gagnier highlights her enthusiasm for this approach in the introduction when she discusses contemporary biology: micro-metabolisms, global ecological and evolutionary time. (p. 12) At this stage, the significance of this work to her project is not entirely clear. Yet following the discussion of Morris, Gagnier returns to the themes of dynamic adaptation, relatedness and complexity to show the ways in which the principles of part to whole which she seeks to defend rely on the recognition of the interplay between nature, culture and technology and the rejection of the methodological individualism which supports the neo-liberal project.
Given the aims of the book, it is not surprising that Gagnier emphasises the discussion of individualisms over the analysis of concepts of community, collectivism and so forth. The idea of wholeness emerges from the analysis of the parts; the ways in which Victorians and early twentieth-century figures conceptualised these balancing concepts are secondary to her purpose. Yet the effect of their neglect can be distorting. In the second chapter, for example, she argues that Grant Allen’s *The Woman Who Did* was untypical of new-woman literature because it ‘represents a woman negating all relations’. Against this she says, ‘Woman-created New Women were not so rigidly independent. They wanted autonomy, individual development, but they wanted it through relationship’. (p. 63) The rich survey she presents is persuasive in showing that this was generally the case.

But it was not universally so. When Dora Marsden cut her ties with the anarchists, accusing them of being woolly humanitarians and adopted the label ‘egoist’, she did so precisely because she wanted to assert a principle of self-mastery which was limited only by will. In one of two brief notes, Gagnier mentions Marsden’s journal the *The Egoist* as an antidote for those otherwise fearful of the mass and as a source of later strength for Nietzsche’s ‘good Europeans’. (p. 115) Marsden’s unattractive treatment of the ‘herd’ and the stupidity of common people is ignored. Was Marsden an extreme case, an exception who demonstrates a rule? Probably. Nevertheless her exceptionalism points to an important aspect of early feminism and radical individualism which Gagnier’s discussion passes over lightly, namely the relationship between autonomy and commitment.

Ideas of commitment and concomitant concepts of sacrifice and compassion were strong themes in late nineteenth-century socialist thought. The martyrdom of the Haymarket anarchists in 1887 was an inspiration in this respect, and the involvement of women in the Russian Revolutionary cause was another. Reflections on both seeped into literature: penny dreadfuls as well as more serious work. While the ideals which socialist martyrs embodied were sometimes considered irreconcilable with autonomy – this was Marsden’s claim – others contested this view and interpreted them as heroic expressions of autonomy. This was Morris’s position: mastership was integral to fellowship. And Gagnier, too, makes this point towards the end of the book when she discusses Morris’s cosmopolitanism: ‘we need to give up vulgar notions of socialism that see it as incompatible with individualism or with freedoms and choice that modern citizens have come to expect’. (p. 150) However, the idea of commitment does not feature strongly in Gagnier’s discussion though it seems relevant to her ideas about ethics, and my feeling is that its analysis would have enriched the broader thematic claims which she wants to make. That said, this is a rich, thoughtful and thought-provoking book and its message is important.

*Ruth Kinna*

Mervyn Miller is an acknowledged expert on the Garden Cities Movement, with substantial publications to his name, on Letchworth, Hampstead Garden Suburb and the visionary town planner, Raymond Unwin, amongst others. It is therefore not surprising that English Heritage has turned to him in order to write the latest in their series of introductory books in their ‘Informed Conservation’ series. *Garden Cities: An Introduction* is the twenty-second in the series, and, like the others, short, and none the worse for that.

The idea of Garden Cities will always be associated with Ebenezer Howard (1850–1928), and his book *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*. Howard’s idea originated in social and environmental concerns, a reaction to the failure of the nineteenth century industrial city portrayed as ‘Coketown’ by Charles Dickens in *Hard Times*. A vision of ‘the peaceful path to real reform’ as he called it, the book set out the vision over one hundred years ago, and in an age of a degrading environment, rising inequality and increasing social disharmony, it holds plenty of relevance for us today.

Howard was not a landowner, but a parliamentary reporter who transcribed lengthy debates, committees and government commissions, and never trained as an architect. George Bernard Shaw famously wrote of him as being one of those heroic simpletons who do big things while our prominent worldlings are explaining why they are utopian and impossible. He was influenced in his thinking by John Ruskin, Peter Kropotkin, Henry George, by the utopianism of Thomas More and William Morris, and by the experiments of nineteenth century paternalistic industrialists such as Robert Owen at New Lanark, Sir Titus Salt at Saltaire, and Colonel Edward Akroyd at Akroydon, who had quickly learned the economic, social and advertising value of model living.

The approach was further developed by William Lever at Port Sunlight (named after his top-selling brand of soap) and George Cadbury at Bourneville, but *Garden Cities* was a much more ambitious concept. When it was published in 1898, Howard’s book felt like an idea whose time had come. By June 1899, a Garden City Association, later to become the Town and Country Planning Association, had been formed; within a year or so, the Association had recruited prominent supporters and raised a significant amount of capital. Two architects, Barry Parker and Raymond Unwin – both influenced by Morris, and the ‘simple life’ philosophy of Edward Carpenter – were crucial in turning the ideas into reality, which was, and is, Letchworth Garden City, Welwyn Garden City, both in Hertfordshire, Hampstead Garden Suburb in North London, and Wythenshawe in Manchester.

It is also town planning. That concept barely existed when Howard’s book was
published, but by 1909 the Town Planning Act, the cornerstone of British town and country planning, had been passed. It is difficult to imagine today the impact of town and country planning on politicians and social reformers during the first half of the twentieth century, although Winifred Holtby’s *South Riding*, recently dramatised by the BBC, gives a flavour of the excitement and possibilities which it opened up for people across the country, eager for progressive change after the horrors of World War I.

The book takes these major developments sequentially – Letchworth, Hampstead Garden Suburb (‘the suburb salubrious’), Welwyn, and Wythenshawe, exploring why developments took place when they did, the advantages and the disadvantages of each site, the extent to which they conformed to Howard’s vision, in practise providing – this is after all a book published by English Heritage – much very interesting detail on layout, house design, the different architects whose work can still be seen, and some of the major modifications these places have undergone since their original construction. Miller takes the reader through the realisation of each development, beginning in September 1903 in a marquee south of Baldock Road, with pouring rain lashing the canvas, where Earl Grey declared the estate which became Letchworth open.

The chapters on Garden City homes and the ‘spirit of the place’ provide delightful detail on how the new residents lived, and what they did. The ‘simple life’ was certainly part of the deal, especially in Letchworth, which became notorious nationwide, with pacifism, internationalism, vegetarianism, temperance, Esperanto and Theosophy all playing their part, leading to a number of literary and theatrical parodies. The reader is supplied with plenty of images, both contemporary and current, and dozens of photographs to illustrate what garden cities look like, and what anyone taking a day out to explore these locations today might hope to see.

Miller’s assessments of these initiatives are pithy and to the point. Of Hampstead Garden suburb he writes that it ‘… represented the architectural ideals of the Garden City Movement to perfection, (but) in planning terms it fell short of attaining Howard’s comprehensive vision, being somewhat two-dimensional, restricted to institutional and residential elements and lacking provision for local employment’. Of Welwyn – which he considers to be by far the most successful in realising Howard’s vision – he states, ‘… whether its success was and remains due to convenience for London commuters is a moot point. Its achievement in building a genuinely new city was, however, of huge importance in influencing later experiments in town planning: it was the conduit through which Howard’s garden city ideas flowed into the post war era of reconstruction, of which Welwyn Garden City itself became a significant part’.

However, probably because of the restrictions of the brief, Miller does not address the influence of the Garden Cities on the New Towns Movement which
followed the Second World War, let alone the effect of this kind of thinking and planning on practise around the world, from America to India. The New Towns Act 1946, the work of Town and Country Planning Minister Lewis Silkin, and the role of the Commission for the New Towns are dispatched in less than three pages. So, while the book celebrates the successes of the Garden Cities movement in an accessible and informative way – and there is plenty to celebrate – it does not address some of the failures and the lessons to be learned. If Miller had been given room to discuss whether Howard’s vision really worked and what we can draw today from these very substantial and long lasting experiments, for a future where sustainable living in constrained environments will become a much more pressing priority, it would have been a more interesting book.

Martin Stott


The re-issue of Leticia Higgin’s 1880 Handbook of Embroidery is very welcome. Not only has it long proved an invaluable technical guide for embroiderers but also, in later years, a very useful historical source. Despite being a story about the formation of a book, this volume is particularly useful for textile historians for its well-researched introduction, which traces the evolution of the original publication and provides a survey of the foundation in 1872 of the Royal School of Needlework, Britain’s most enduring professional embroidery workshop, which, having weathered the vagaries of fashion for almost one hundred and forty years, continues to practise to this day.

During the mid 1980s I was approached to see whether I would be willing to write a history of the School. My predecessors at the Victoria and Albert Museum had declined the opportunity to arrange a centenary exhibition at the Museum in 1972, finding few surviving archives and so, with a full-time job and limited time for research, I too reluctantly refused. I am pleased to say that with her introductory essay Lynn Hulse should be congratulated for achieving much more than seemed possible some years ago. Her thirty-six-page Introduction (with seven additional pages of footnotes) is packed with information discovered not just in the organisation’s archives but also from a wide range of sources, as the extensive bibliography testifies. She has identified (often with biographical notes) many of the main personalities involved in the 1880’s publication but, more significant, the early years of the School and its important role in the revival of hand

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embroidery during the later part of the nineteenth century. Hulse was employed as Archivist and later Tutor in Contextual Studies at the Royal School: it is a tragedy that lack of funds has forced the termination of her contract, for without an understanding of the School’s history and purpose its teaching is likely to suffer.

The craze for canvas-work embroidery (referred to in later years as embroidery by numbers) took Britain by storm with the widespread import during the 1820s of German printed patterns and bright merino wools to complete the panels. Skills developed over centuries and handed down through families were abandoned for these kits, which demanded no more than an ability to hold a needle and thread and follow a printed or painted guide. Hundreds of versions of historical, biblical and literary scenes were embroidered and this type of work became so popular that many haberdashers’ shops at the time were referred to as ‘Berlin Warehouses’.

Fortunately not all nineteenth century embroidery lacked innovation and artistic individuality. Exponents of ecclesiastical embroidery, produced almost exclusively in convents and other religious institutions, maintained and increased the technical excellence of their work as the revolution in, and expansion of, church building spread throughout Britain. Using designs by many of the leading architects and designers of the day, church needlework outshone anything produced in the home. It was feared that domestic embroiderers would never again aspire to the same heights.

The architect George Edmund Street, an expert on medieval embroidery and keen designer of needlework for his own churches, was one of the first to record the potential demise of domestic production. In a lecture of 1863 printed in The Ecclesiologist magazine he stated ‘Is it possible for anyone to feel any joy in the contemplation of the work in which so many ladies pretend to find pleasure — that contemptible system of cross-stitch work, which requires no sense, no thought, hardly any manual dexterity on the part of the worker; and which, be the worker good, bad or indifferent, produces the same hard formal absence of good results?’

William Morris, who had worked in Street’s office for a short period during his youth, had already come to the same conclusions. Ignoring the prevailing commercial trends, he had revived traditional skills and by 1872, the year that the Royal School of Art Needlework was founded, there was already a strong body of feeling within artistic circles that things needed to change. Morris taught himself traditional embroidery techniques soon after leaving Oxford, by completing an intensively worked and eccentric looking hanging of his own design for his rooms in Red Lion Square in London. Over the next four years he designed two quite separate sophisticated embroidery schemes for the furnishing of Red House, gaining confidence within that short time and mastering which techniques produced the right effects and how to teach these to others.
Street and Morris were not alone in advocating an improvement. Many male artists and designers were involved in the push for change and this gave the campaign credibility within the wider artistic world. However, it was left to wealthy and influential members of British society, both men and women, to provide the means to make this happen.

The Royal School of Art Needlework, as it was initially named, was founded by Lady Victoria Welby, wife of a Baronet and Conservative MP, and opened in 1872 with premises over a bonnet shop in Sloane Street, London. Its aim from the outset was to concentrate on secular embroidery. Lady Welby’s intentions were not only to provide teaching of traditional techniques but also a means of employing ‘distressed gentlewomen in reduced circumstances’, a theme echoed in a number of philanthropic projects at the time. Output would concentrate on the completion of orders and commissions for new work but also adapting, transferring, repairing and copying historic pieces at a time when the London antique trade was burgeoning.

Despite any urgency brought on by their circumstances, it was not easy for potential employees to gain employment at the School. Apart from demonstrating considerable skills with the needle, applicants required two references from ‘respectable members of society’ and were expected to live within commuting distance. Successful applicants were then put through an initial course of technical training consisting of nine five-hour lessons for which they paid a fee of £5. Once employed, they worked seven hours per day.

Lady Welby’s main support came from the ranks of British aristocracy and included Viscountess Down and the Countesses Spencer, Brownlow and Cowper. From the beginning women took on the role of directing the School’s activities with men taking care of funding – very much in line with the average middle-class Victorian home. The Managing Committee for 1880 comprised twelve women with seven men forming a separate group to control finance.

Royal patronage provided an important early seal of approval. Princess Helena of Schleswig-Holstein, Queen Victoria’s third daughter, became President, and in 1875 the School acquired its royal prefix when the Queen agreed to become patron. The School was beginning to exhibit political and social clout, and within two years of opening, an increase in orders enabled the number of qualified embroiderers employed to rise from twenty to eighty-eight, with twelve staff dealing directly with administration.

It is not clear who was responsible for artistic direction during the early days. Some practising artists and designers seem to have been involved on the periphery, but only three of those listed as Committee Members can be identified as possessing artistic qualifications. These are Lady Charlotte Schreiber, the traveller and collector, Madeline Wyndham, friend and client of William Morris and
a member of ‘The Souls’ artistic set based around Clouds, her country house in Wiltshire, and Sir Coutts Lindsay, water colourist and founder of the Grosvenor Gallery.

In 1875 the School moved to larger premises on Exhibition Road. By then there were several separate departments specialising in different types of embroidery, and the School began what history has shown to be its most important artistic period. Many embroidery designs were produced in-house, but a separate fund was set aside for the purchase of work by leading free-lance designers of the day. An advisory panel of ‘gentlemen skilled in decorative work’, including Lord Leighton, Edward Burne-Jones, Alma Tadema and the architects William Burges and G.F. Bodley was formed, and then superseded by a permanent Art Committee which advised on all new commissioned work. Madeline Wyndham seems to have been instrumental in involving William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, and some of their designs pre-date the move to South Kensington. Other notable recruits were Fairfax Wade, Selwyn Image and Walter Crane, the most successful of all, whose relationship with the School continued for twenty years.

The School acquired a stand at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition of 1876. It was the largest project taken on to that date and Bessie Burden, Jane Morris’s sister, is said to have directed some of the work. The large and impressive stand displayed crewelwork curtains, hangings and screens designed by Walter Crane and William Morris. Despite suffering heavy financial losses, the School’s work was universally applauded. In later years Candace Wheeler, one of the founders of the American Aesthetic Movement, cited it as one of her greatest influences. The School developed a continuous following in the US, owing in part to the publication there of the Handbook, and various offshoots over the next few years.

Returning to the main subject of this book, one can only admire the decision to go into print with the Handbook of Embroidery in 1880, at the height of the School’s popularity. As already indicated, the Handbook is a technical manual on traditional embroidery with sections on materials, stitches, equipment and types of needlework. It also includes a section on finishing and one on frames and framing. Instructional linear drawings are scattered throughout. The book ends with twenty-five illustrations of commercial designs by the School. Just three are from the studio, the rest by fashionable designers of the time including Walter Crane, William Morris Fairfax Wade, Gertrude Jekyll, and Selwyn Image.

Lynn Hulse’s research follows, blow by blow, the routes followed by Lady Marian Alford, the formidable Vice President of the School, in sponsoring, organising and editing the publication. Letitia Higgin, who was the third author to be considered, had already submitted the text of a book on embroidery to the Managing Committee, who approved its publication. A Lancashire woman, she
was one of three sisters employed by the School and, at the time of publication, was the School’s assistant secretary. Lady Alford’s editing of the submitted text and the problems she encountered with a proposed second volume, is a torturous read and it is difficult to decide which of the individuals involved was most to blame for the abandonment of the later project owing to a dispute over copyright. Lady Alford, clearly devastated by the lack of support from the School, resigned in 1883: Leticia Higgin left a year later. However, her career blossomed, as she went on to found the Society of Associated Artistes, a London business specialising in costume embroidery, and continued to write for the Art Journal and The Magazine of Art.

The new book is divided into two separate sections, the illustrated Introduction, followed by the re-printed Handbook, which is cleverly printed on cream paper in order to differentiate it from the new text. It is physically attractive and easy to handle, although the lack of an index makes it a difficult book for an historian to dip into. But that is not the book’s true purpose and practising embroiderers will find it just as useful as when it was first published one hundred and thirty-one years ago.

Linda Parry


Designing the Modern Interior brings together nineteen contributors and editors, many drawn from the pioneering design-history stable at Kingston University, but also springing from Sheffield, Oxford, the Royal College of Art, the Bard, the University of Vienna and the broader international academic community. The contributors’ fields include cultural studies and sustainable design as well as architectural and design history: there has been a surge in studies of the interior during the last ten years. The Arts and Humanities Research Board Centre for the Study of the Domestic Interior, formed by the Royal College of Art, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Bedford Centre, Royal Holloway, University of London, is one manifestation of this.

The book discusses how the modernising impulse in interior design began during the Victorian period, and places the modern interior in a broad, multi-disciplinary context:
Given the breadth of its manifestations, meanings and influences – the modern interior can be linked to architecture, which is visible in plans, axonometrics and photographs etc.; to the idea of theatre, as, that is, a ‘stage set’ for its occupants which invokes discussions about interiority; as an extension of the body, linked to the world of fashion; and as a represented, mediated ideal connoting a modern lifestyle. (p. 3)

A clear structure divides the text into four chronological sections, almost books within a book, each with an introduction giving an overview of the contents and the period covered, followed by illustrated case studies. In her lucid general introduction, Penny Sparke lays out the purpose of the book as:

… to portray the modern interior as both linked to the experience of modernity in all its complexity and as it was addressed by architects, decorators and others who sought to find visual, material and spatial means of expressing that modernity, the modernists among them. In adopting this approach the book's main aim is to provide students of the late nineteenth- and twentieth-century interior, practitioners who intervene in the design of interiors, and anyone else interested in the spaces we inhabit, with an understanding of why they look as they do and convey the meanings that they do, and with a sense of both the context of, and the key themes that informed, the development of the interior in the period in question. (p. 1)

Emma Ferry's introduction to the section on the late nineteenth-century describes the lasting influence of Nikolaus Pevsner’s Pioneers of the Modern Movement from William Morris to Walter Gropius (1936) as it tried to persuade the English that architectural history was a line of progress culminating in the ‘Authentic Modern Movement’

The dominance of this approach explains the early tendencies of architectural and design historians working on the nineteenth century to focus upon the use of new materials and building types; to highlight the work of designers like Morris and Mackintosh; and to trace the emergence of the avant-garde rather than popular revival styles. (p. 15)

Mid-twentieth century exhibitions of Victorian and Edwardian decorative arts deliberately sifted items of extreme, bad or derivative taste. Peter Floud's introduction to the catalogue of the exhibition ‘Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts’ (1952) at the V&A is quoted:

We have deliberately eliminated what was merely freakish or grotesque. At the same time we have purposely left out a whole host of Victorian designers whose work was unashamedly based on the copying of earlier styles. (p. 17)

It was not until the 1970s that a more inclusive approach to Victorian design was
employed and the period was more honestly represented.

Modernism spawned a variety of slightly confusing terms. ‘Modernisation’ bred ‘modern’ which was followed by ‘modernism’, ‘modernity’, ‘modernist’, ‘modernistic’ and ‘moderne’; ‘the International Style’, ‘streamlined’ or ‘surreal’, ‘contemporary’, ‘retro’ or ‘minimal’. Elsa Lanchester described ‘the spacious bareness around me’ in the modernised flat she shared with Charles Laughton, (p. 7) and modernist housing was designed to look practical, rational and functional. It sought to use new materials and mass-production techniques and to bring modern housing within the reach of the majority of the population. It was antihistoricist and antidecorative. German and Fennoscandian expatriates Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, Josef Albers, Elliel Saarinen, Walter Knoll and Mies van der Rohe disseminated modernism in the United States, whence it was transported to the rest of the world. However, there are great contrasts in modernity’s manifestations. Mies van der Rohe, for instance, provided ascetic, spare settings ‘in which decoration is provided only by the shadows that fall on their white walls’, (p. 8) whilst the Bloomsbury Group, also defined as ‘modern’, covered their Omega furniture and walls with pattern and figurative designs. The Bloomsbury set may be seen as signalling their British roots through ‘the amateur traditions and whimsical iconographies of the Arts and Crafts movement’. (Note 10, p. 91) Charles and Ray Eames gave the nod to comfort and to decoration as a form of personal expression, while living in a house composed of mass-produced, industrial components and sharing the same furniture designs in their domestic interior and their work space. Their collection of objects proved that everything can be of decorative value, from Japanese pottery to a beautiful pebble.

Modern housing has not always been easy to live in. Edith Farnsworth found the transparency of the house Mies van der Rohe designed for her most uncomfortable. Other modernist icons, such as Corbusier’s Villa Savoye, ‘were not exactly cherished family homes but rather showcases or second residences, used to entertain large parties rather than to accommodate the messiness of everyday reality’. (Christopher Reed, p. 128) Corbusier’s houses could be unpractical, however functional they appear. Most mass housing in Britain continued to employ conventional brick construction in the Georgian style as being less expensive and more appropriate to the national environment than new materials and production methods. Far from serving the working class, the modernist style in Britain was embraced most strongly by the bourgeoisie, who suddenly found themselves with fewer servants in the first half of the twentieth century and could thus appreciate its spare rationality.

Homophobic and sexist rhetoric could be used in criticisms of the interior. Corbusier’s gendered Towards a New Architecture opens by defining ‘houses and moth-eaten boudoirs’ as feminine spaces which undermine the masculinity of the men who live in them, leaving them ‘sheepish and shrivelled like tigers in a
cage’. (p. 80) Christopher Reed describes a playful, home-grown style of British modernism, which he labels the ‘Amusing style’. The products of the Omega workshops and the style showcased, for instance, by the Sitwell House in *Vogue* in 1924, with its exotic mélange of baroque furniture laid with silver, tribal artefacts and modern art, are certainly amusing. They were popular among emancipated young women and therefore vilified by the likes of Paul Nash and Wyndham Lewis, who longed for professional, male, modernist, interior designers.

Indeed, the first half of the twentieth century did witness the rise of the professional interior designer. At first designers were female, such as Syrie Maugham and Sibyl Colefax. Elsie de Wolfe had been an early pioneer, through her 1913 book, *The House in Good Taste*, in which she made the apposite comment, ‘you will express yourself in your home whether you want to or not.’ (p. 71) After the Second World War however, prominent, male, interior designers such as David Hicks and John Fowler came to the fore, often working directly with architects. In London the Royal College of Art hired the architect Hugh Casson to set up an interior-design course. Interior decoration was increasingly linked with fashion, feature films and holiday destinations as fantasy interiors proved an important part of the experience in hotels, cinemas, cafes and cruise ships. Magazines devoted entirely to the interior helped disseminate new trends and products and the Ideal Home Exhibition became a fixture of the London scene.

Beauty had been redefined. Elizabeth Darling of Oxford Brookes University describes Mies van der Rohe’s buildings, such as the Villa Tugendhat, Brno, of 1929–31, as containing abstract rooms with ‘eloquent silences’. (p. 109) The filled living space of the nineteenth century is contrasted with the emptied living space of the twentieth century:

> It is as though nature had entered the house in the grain of the wood, the fibres of the fabrics, the design of the cut onyx, the surface of the water in the winter garden … nearly all of these surfaces are smooth, gleaming, and they often reflect light. Paintings, hitherto conventional components of living rooms, were replaced by the experience of framed nature. (pp. 111–112)

Latterly, there has been a post-modern reaction. Trevor Keeble describes how technology is now often used in a ‘fetishistic and emblematic manner’ in Joseph shop interiors, the domestic interiors of Future Systems, railway stations and airports. Memphis used colour, decoration, and the juxtaposition of materials and forms to challenge conventional understanding and, it appeared, to reject all trace of modernist ‘honesty’. (p. 222) Internal spaces have been created by Foster Associates at the Royal Academy and the British Museum by glazing in previously external space. Another trend is the conversion of disused industrial space, for instance Herzog and De Mueron’s redevelopment of the Bankside Power Station into Tate Modern. Alison J. Clarke, Professor of Design History at the University
of the Applied Arts, Vienna, describes how ‘an ever complex and rapid system of style obsolescence is a defining feature of a late capitalist society’. (p. 270)

Unhinged from preexisting hierarchies of cultural capital, the new vernacular of style is interwoven in the processes of riddance that has come to define contemporary dwelling, be it the project of ‘making-room’ or decluttering or passing on. … The occupants of British dwellings, as they rearrange, declutter, modernise and retrofit their interiors, use style in constant processes of remembering and expelling. (p. 271)

The final contribution in the book, by Anne Chick of Kingston University, describes the Beddington Zero Energy Development (BedZED) which aims to encourage sustainable living. This partnership of the Peabody Trust, Bill Dunster Architects and the BioRegional Development Group has developed innovative housing for social and key workers in Wallington, Surrey. The central aim of the development has been the reduction of the ecological domestic footprint. ‘Key to this ambition was the aim to assist inhabitants to change the default decisions of their daily lifestyle to ones which are sustainable’. (p. 277) The development aims to eliminate carbon emissions owing to energy consumption, and to reduce water consumption by 33%, power consumption by 60%, space heating needs by 90% and private fossil-fuel car mileage to 50% of the UK average.

Designing the Modern Interior is well referenced fully indexed, and contains a large bibliography. It provides an excellent example of academic rigour, presented with interest, and clarity in prose and print. The black and white illustrations and plans are relevant. This particular reader found the sans serif type difficult to read for long periods, but it looks beautiful and is totally appropriate to its subject. Apart from one contributor’s misuse of brackets, the editing and presentation are exemplary. The prose is accessible, with no indulgence in the exclusive academic vocabulary or strangled syntax which can so mar academic books for the general reader. The content succeeds in its aims of offering an introduction to the broad themes evinced in interior design since the Victorian era.

Diana Andrews


If you have looked under the bonnet of a modern car and found yourself bewildered and distressed by futuristic machinery which does not resemble an engine, you might find some solace in The Case for Working with Your Hands. Matthew
Crawford despises what he describes as ‘the layers of electronic bullshit that get piled on top of machines’, (p. 7) and sees this as a symptom of a much wider cultural malaise which deskills workers and makes false promises of freedom through consumer culture. It soon becomes apparent that the author has led an interesting life. From the age of nine to fifteen he lived in a commune; he then worked as a mechanic and as an electrician before developing an interest in philosophy while studying for a Physics degree, which led to a PhD in the history of political thought. He was then appointed as executive director of a Washington think tank, but lasted only a year before resigning to set up his own motorcycle repair shop. This unusual career trajectory forms the substance of much of the book: biographical episodes are analysed through the filters of philosophy and socio-cultural research, to build up a critique of contemporary attitudes towards work.

Crawford’s basic premise is that manual work is undervalued, both intellectually and socially. He explains his passion for motorcycle maintenance in some detail and builds up a sustained critique of the ‘contemporary office’, the ‘knowledge economy’ and global corporate structures which distance workers from the products of their labour. He traces this attitude to the development of ‘scientific management’ during the early-twentieth century, which sought to concentrate knowledge in the hands of a managerial élite who broke down the labour into small segments to be carried out by an unskilled (and therefore cheap) workforce. He describes how wages became compensation for work which lacked fulfilment, and typifies the modern condition in the figure of the mortgage broker who climbs Mount Everest during his summer holiday: ‘the exaggerated psychic content of this summer vacation’ (p. 181) sustains his vacuous professional life.

Crawford examines the frustrations of office work in a chapter entitled ‘The Contradictions of the Cubicle’. He sees a fundamental contradiction in the way that corporations portray themselves as ‘results-based’ and ‘performance-orientated’, (p. 126) but suggests that when there is nothing material being produced, it is difficult to judge objectively how well an employee has performed. He contrasts this arrangement to that of a machinist in a factory: if the part the worker has produced does not meet specification, he has failed and the worker and employer find a way of correcting this failure. In an office environment, when employees are working towards ambiguous goals, success and failure are more difficult to evaluate. As the nature of corporate work is ill-defined, offices become timid places which lack any concrete sense of individual responsibility, which gives rise to anxiety, stress and the timidity of political correctness.

Crawford believes that the education system consistently undervalues and misunderstands craft skills. The ‘new capitalism’ demands a flexible workforce and so higher education concentrates on ‘open’ education which stresses the ability to learn new things and celebrates ‘potential rather than achievement’. 

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By contrast, teaching a student to be a plumber or an electrician is seen as ‘closed’, making the egalitarians fear ‘that acquiring a specific skill set means that one’s life is determined’. (p. 19) The role model of the ‘open’ education is the management consultant, ‘who swoops in and out and whose very pride lies in his lack of particular expertise’. (p. 20)

Against the banality of office work Crawford attempts to explain the ‘cognitive richness of the skilled trades’. (p. 21) This argument is chiefly delivered via descriptions of his own education in the subtleties of motorcycle maintenance. Such work is skilled, presents mental as well as physical challenges and demands a nuanced approach. Respect for manual skill is elaborated in the description of the author’s rite of passage in being allowed to help ‘Chas’, a skilled mechanic and machinist, rebuild the engine of his VW Beetle. Skilled mechanics must care for their work; be involved. The bad mechanic is illustrated by the author’s favourite passage from Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, where poor mechanics misdiagnose and damage the bike. Finding the real mechanical fault requires a certain attitude lacking in the poor mechanic: ‘finding this truth requires a certain disposition in the individual: attentiveness, enlivened by a sense of responsibility to the motorcycle’. (p. 98) By examining the Greek root of the word ‘idiot’, Crawford then explains that someone who is idiotic fails to appreciate their public role, and does not connect their work with any public responsibility. This theme is developed throughout the book: working communities surrounding the skilled trades are shown to be healthy and intrinsically social. Gurus of motorcycle maintenance can teach an apprentice things a textbook or diagnostic program never will, and apprentices gain entrance to the culture of skilled work by earning respect from the skilled workers. Crawford’s commentary on the value of manual work is underpinned by a range of philosophical thought, particularly Aristotle, and the attempt to lead a good, happy life is presented as intrinsically connected to working with one’s hands.

Someone influenced by the socialism of William Morris might be tempted to describe the politics of the Crawford’s book as confused. On one side many of the anti-corporate arguments will be familiar to those who have read socialist critiques of capitalism and consumer culture, and much of the material about the value of manual work can be traced to writers such as Richard Sennett and Michael Polanyi. But far from being a socialist, Crawford agrees that defending the right to private property is ‘a pillar of liberty’ (p. 209), and is a self-confessed ‘gearhead’ devoted to petrol-guzzling motorcycles. He describes his mentor ‘Chas’ with some enthusiasm as ‘once a classical guitar-playing Buddhist vegetarian ... now a gun freak and brilliant misanthropist’. (p. 84) He is explicitly contemptuous of political correctness and his own turn of phrase is unashamedly laddish. Sometimes this is funny and engaging, as in his concise exegesis of Aris-
In English, this teleological understanding of happiness gets condensed in
the proverbial saying “Happy as a pig in shit”. (pp. 192–3) At times his bawdiness
is far less appealing: ‘Volkswagens ... tend to get passed around like a reasonably
priced sex worker’. (p. 95)

Uncritical love of the language of the mechanic is integrated into his theory of
work. Crawford admires the ‘speed shop’ (a specialist garage containing skilled
mechanics) enormously, and suggests that one way in which an aspiring mechan-
ics are vetted by the other workers is by their ability to return insults: ‘If he is able
to return these outrageous insults with wit, the conversation will cascade toward
real depravity; the trust is pushed further and made reciprocal. If the young man
shows promise, that is, if he is judged to have some potential to plumb new depths
of moral turpitude, he may get hired: here is someone around whom everyone
can relax’. (p. 183) Are we to understand that the implicit sexism in this scenario
is a laudable way of furthering a culture of meaningful work?

The focus on the local, the personal and the specific is connected to a theme in
Crawford’s book which seeks to develop a critique of global universalising trends.
In a biographical anecdote he describes arriving in India aged sixteen and feeling
alienated by smells and unfamiliar sensations. He explains how his anxiety was
suddenly overcome by a feeling of kinship with a group of Indian electricians per-
forming a task which was familiar to him: ‘They were currently encountering the
world in a way that was familiar to me, orientating to it through a set of concerns
I knew well, and the consciousness behind their eyes I took to be the same as my
own’. (p. 200) In this and in other areas he champions the solidarity of working-
class culture against the blandness and false rhetoric of corporate globalisation.
Personal engagement is necessarily superior to ‘systems of universal ethics’ which
are criticised for being both ‘dreary’ and ‘abstract’.

There are many admirable aspects to this book. It is very lively and readable,
especially considering the complexity of the subject and the large number of
sources employed in order to support the argument. Crawford’s thoughts on the
nature of meaningful work are a refreshing departure from what he describes as
‘the kind of mysticism that gets attached to “craftsmanship”’, (p. 5) and he dis-
tances himself from a sentimental yearning for the ‘simple life’ in favour of an aim
to ‘rehabilitate the honour of the trades’ – a project surely very close to the heart
of William Morris. The specific aims of the book are articulated and argued con-
vincingly and many readers will find themselves won over by his assertions about
the devaluation of manual work. The problem, however, is what to do about it
and here (inevitably) the book is less convincing. A mistrust of collective ideals
is all very well, but this prevents Crawford from really confronting the corporate
culture he clearly loathes. It is difficult to envisage how small-scale capitalism
might be a remedy for the ills articulated in this book, or how this might exist
without corporate capitalism. I applaud the broad approach of this book but the reactionary political stance is troubling, and I cannot help thinking that being a mechanic is not quite as fulfilling as being a philosopher and mechanic.

Jim Cheshire
Guidelines for Contributors

Contributions to the Journal are welcomed on all subjects relating to the life and works of William Morris. The Editor would be grateful if contributors could adhere to the following guidelines when submitting articles and reviews:

1. Contributions should be in English, and word-processed or typed using 1.5 spacing, and printed on one side of A4 or 8.5 x 11 paper. They should be at 5000 words in length, although shorter and longer pieces will also be considered.

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7. At the end of your article please include a short biographical note of not more than fifty words.

Please note that the views of individual contributors are not to be taken as those of the William Morris Society.
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Linda Parry has studied British nineteenth-century decorative arts for many years. She retired from the Victoria and Albert Museum, where she specialised in William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement, in 2005, and has published widely on these subjects. She is a past President of the William Morris Society, and is presently working on a revised edition of her 1983 *William Morris Textiles*, to be published in 2012.

John Purkis joined the William Morris Society in 1960, and is a former Honorary Secretary. He was with the Open University from 1970, and is currently writing a memoir of his time in Finland during the 1950s.

Gabriel Schenk discovered *The Wood Beyond the World* by accident in a second-hand bookshop in Machynlleth (Mid-Wales) and as a result used Morris for the subject of his MA dissertation in Victorian and Romantic Literature at the University of Durham: his article in this volume is a redevelopment of that work. He is currently researching a D. Phil. in the Arthurian Revival at Pembroke College, Oxford.

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