

# The Journal of William Morris Studies

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# Editorial: In praise of scholarship

*Patrick O'Sullivan*

I am very pleased that this issue of the *Journal* contains essays by four distinguished Morris scholars – Florence Boos, Beth Helsing, Lynn Hulse and Wendy Parkins. As this is ‘my’ penultimate issue, it is good to see the *Journal* attracting input from scholars of such distinction, even though it seems that it continues to be ignored – long may that happen – by the utilitarian bean counters who compile various spurious tables of ‘academic success’. Much of this current reputation is surely due to the efforts of my predecessor, Rosie Miles, who oversaw conversion of *JWMS* from a (highly valuable) ‘house journal’ into a full-blown scholarly periodical. As to the current issue, I feel I must also reveal, as its editor, that none of the above contributions were in any way solicited by me: their arrival was entirely spontaneous.

Sadly, this issue also marks the passing of Norman Kelvin, the indefatigable editor of *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, which – along with the *Collected Works* – is surely the Morris source most frequently cited in these and other pages. I never actually spoke to Norman – I saw him at the ‘News from Nowhere’ conference held in Oxford during the early 1990s, but was too in awe of him to introduce myself – but had I known of him then what I now learn from Peter Faulkner’s article, (p. 6) I would certainly have done so. The article mentions Norman’s contribution to the special issue we compiled in honour of Peter (*JWMS* Vol. XX No. 2, Summer 2013): when I asked for contributions to this volume, Norman was one of the very first to agree – by return. As I did not know then of the friendship between Norman and Peter, this rapid and positive response represented a most pleasant surprise – another piece of serendipity, if solicited this time. During the course of our correspondence, Norman invited me to his house on Riverside Drive; an offer which – as I possess no interest in mega-cities (even Art-Deco ones), and am terrified of flying – I was unlikely to take up. But now, again on reading Peter’s article, I am fairly glad I did not own up to this particular piece of chicken-heartedness to a veteran of World War II.

In this issue we mark the impact of Morris’s journeys to Iceland, particularly

upon his family (his ‘Icelandic Imaginary’), and the lively relationship between Morris’s sister-in-law Elizabeth (‘Bessie’) Burden and the Royal School of Needlework. Articles then follow discussing the impact of Morris’s work and ideas on early twentieth century Chicago, and the formation of the first William Morris Society. We also print reviews of books on Eleanor Marx, erstwhile comrade of Morris, and two on John Ruskin – a man currently appearing in various feature films, not always to his advantage it seems, but who was the early ‘master’ of Morris and his circle. These are followed by reviews of books on ‘faith’ and ‘spirituality’ – not words, as Richard Frith points out, associated with Morris (although ‘hope’ is another matter) – in the work of Algernon Charles Swinburne, on Sir Ambrose Heal, entrepreneur of the Arts and Crafts, and on the stained glass of the J. Paul Getty Museum. Finally, I am very pleased to print two masterly reviews of books on Morris’s political ideas – one on the legacy of E.P. Thompson, whose *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* I have always considered a great work of literature as well as scholarship, the other on *Utopia as Method*.

As Martin Crick points out in his review, it was Thompson who identified a key aspect of Morris’s thought; that socialist revolution requires not just an economic change, but a moral one. As far as ‘Morris the Green’ is concerned, this point could not be more crucial. For a ‘red-green’ revolution, which is what it must surely now be, would not see Nature – as does capitalism – as a source of (personal) ‘wealth’, nor even as a set of resources to be harnessed, either in the pursuit of profit, or in the interests of the ‘glorious revolution’, but as a community, of which humanity is only one component (an entirely legitimate one, however – you will not find Lovelock’s ‘planetary cancer’ in Morris). Thus, in *News from Nowhere*, the wilderness is not tamed, but left in peace (‘We like these pieces of wild nature’), and the productive landscape no longer ‘an ill-kept, poverty-stricken farm’, but ‘a garden, where nothing is wasted and nothing is [spoiled]’ (Chapter 10), and commodities are taken from Nature in order to make goods *only* on the basis of need (Chapter 15).

It seems that it is fashionable to decry the value of scholarship, to predict ‘the death of the book’, and to argue that scholars should get out of their ivory tower (these prophets do love cliché) and engage with the wider community via social media, particularly in the interests of engaging the attention of ‘young people’. Apart from underestimating the capacity of such people to do these things for themselves (I write as the father of a family full of ‘reds’), I have reservations about this approach. Although I understand these things only in vague terms, one thing I think my generation must avoid if we are to get Morris’s ideas across to those younger than ourselves – the vast majority of the human species these days I’m afraid – is being thought ‘sad’. And I do find such arguments somewhat patronising of young people. For example, during the original occupation of Tahrir Square, Jeremy Paxman asked one of the occupiers, Gigi Ibrahim, what

she intended to put in place of the Mubarak regime. ‘After all, you young people don’t have an ideology, do you? What’s your political position?’ Back came the most wonderful answer: ‘I’m a revolutionary socialist!’

The inhabitants of Nowhere do not encourage ‘bookishness’, at least not the ‘early’ kind. Instead, like Morris, who hated school, and schools (‘boy farms’), and who learned stained glass making, bleaching and dyeing, and Icelandic for himself, people learn anything they need to learn—skills, techniques, languages—as and when they are needed. However, places of book-learning are not unheard of:

... where the houses are thinly scattered they run large, and are more like the old colleges than ordinary houses as they used to be. That is done for the sake of society, for a good many people can dwell in such houses, as the country dwellers are not necessarily husbandmen; though they almost all help in such work at times. The life that goes on in these big dwellings in the country is very pleasant, especially as some of the most studious [people] of our time live in them, and altogether there is a great variety of mind and mood to be found in them which brightens and quickens the society there. (Chapter 10)

So, maybe the opposite is true. Maybe people such as myself do need to get out more, and ‘down with kids’. If so, my only question would be: ‘Without the work of such people as Norman Kelvin, Edward Thompson, and indeed *all* the contributors to this issue (and to this *Journal*), what are we going to tell them?’

# Obituary: Norman Kelvin, 1924–1994

*Peter Faulkner*

The world of Morris scholarship lost one of its great figures with the death of Norman Kelvin in New York on 14 April 2014. Norman was born in Brooklyn in 1924 late in his parents' lives and attended the local public schools. His father was severely affected by the crash of 1929 and never financially recovered, so that Norman grew up well aware of the consequences of economic insecurity. Upon graduation from high school in 1942 he received a scholarship to Columbia College and attended until he entered the US Army in July 1943. He served in the Medical Corp as an X-ray technician at Schick General Hospital in Clinton, Iowa, and in the Philippines. He was discharged in March, 1946 and returned to Columbia, financed by the G.I. Bill of Rights. Norman's widow, Phyllis, to whom I am indebted for information about Norman's early life, remarks that Norman often said that it was while he was in the Army that he got to know America and Americans. His democratic interest in people of every kind was one of his marked characteristics.

When he returned to Columbia it was as a pre-medical student, but he quickly discovered that literature was what he wanted to study. He wrote short stories for the undergraduate literary journal, *The Columbia Review*, and served as its editor for a year. After graduation in 1948 he entered the Columbia University Graduate Program in English. Norman and Phyllis married in 1956 and had two daughters, Elizabeth and Jane. The dissertation topic for Norman's PhD was George Meredith, so that his first academic book, published in 1961 by Stanford University Press, was *A Troubled Eden: Nature and Society in the Works of George Meredith*. He was an enthusiastic teacher. As a graduate student he taught at Rutgers University in New Jersey and English as a Second Language at Columbia. He began teaching at The City College of New York in 1961 and remained there and at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York until he retired in 2006. He published articles and book reviews in various journals, as well as a survey anthology of English literature with several colleagues at the City College of New York, and a book on E.M. Forster in 1967. On a trip to England in the

same year, he came across some unpublished letters of William Morris in the British Library. He had been looking about for a new project and Morris's letters seemed like a possibility—and this certainly proved to be the case.

By Morrisians Norman will always be valued for his great work of scholarship, his edition of *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, which appeared in four volumes from Princeton University Press in 1984, 1987 and 1996. The volumes have been of enormous value to all those who have been involved in Morris studies; it was also the case that Norman was of the greatest help to younger scholars who sought his advice on their work. He came over to England every summer while working on this project, staying in Mecklenberg Square, and it was one of my summer pleasures to spend a day with him annually, talking of Morris and many other matters, including the British class system, of which he made me guiltily aware. He was a fine conversationalist, who liked to bring out his ideas while slowly wandering the streets, with no particular end in sight. All our conversations seemed to come to a premature end, but could fortunately be taken up again in the same liberal spirit the following year. He embodied the true spirit of academia, impressing my young children when on a visit to our house he proposed a toast, not to our selves, but to the Spirit of English Literature. Patricia and I had the pleasure of visiting Norman and Phyllis in their apartment in Riverside Drive in New York, and were given an engrossing tour of the cultural highlights of the area, including a production of an obscure play by Chekhov and an outstanding pizza restaurant.

It was a natural part of his work that Norman should write a number of perceptive articles about Morris. These include 'The Erotic in *News from Nowhere* and *The Well at the World's End*' 1976, 'The Morris Who Reads Us' in 1996; the Kelmscott Lecture for 1996, *Letters as Biography & Autobiography*; 'News from *Nowhere* and *The Spoils of Poynton*: Interiors and Exteriors', published in 1999; and an edited selection of Morris's political writings, *William Morris on Art and Socialism*, published in New York in 2000. In the same year, he wrote on 'H.D. and the World War I Years' in *Victorian Poetry*. I was delighted that Norman contributed to the issue of the *JWMS* that its editor kindly dedicated to me in Summer 2013. His wide-ranging contribution 'The Dream, Image, Vision, Wizardry, and Erotic in Morris's Work' contrasts the dream as a metaphor making possible the delivery of a socialist message in *John Ball* and *News from Nowhere* with dreams in the 'fantasy tales' as 'elements within the text'. He was clearly continuing to read Morris's fiction with attention and insight.

I was fortunate enough to have a correspondence by email with Norman during the last few years. He did not like the vocabulary of emails, preferring to call the messages that he sent to me *letters*. One of his interests was language, and in particular the differences between British and American usage, but our main topics were of course literary. Only near the end did he tell me about his experiences

as a medical orderly in the US army at the end of World War II; I had not realised that he was of an age to have served then. In a long lifetime I have met only a few people who have impressed me as so intelligent and humane as Norman Kelvin; it is a privilege to have known him.

*Peter Faulkner*

*Some further words from Phyllis, Norman's widow:* His greatest professional pleasure was when a former student became a colleague. Norman also wrote poetry throughout his life and several have been published in *Sewanee Review*. In high school Norman started to draw and paint and he continued to do so throughout his life.

Norman was never slow to show his daughters love and attention. Above all, he was honest with them, as he was with everyone. I think his legacy to them is his love of the book and of the search for knowledge.

# ‘Almost as good as Iceland on a small scale’: William Morris’s ‘Icelandic Imaginary’ at home

*Wendy Parkins*

In his 1899 biography, J. W. Mackail observed that William Morris’s travel to Iceland exerted ‘an importance in Morris’s life which can hardly be over-estimated’. Ever since, scholars and biographers have been fascinated by Morris’s Icelandic journeys (1871 and 1873), as recorded in his *Journals of Travels in Iceland*.<sup>1</sup> As is well known, Morris’s passion for the saga literature of Iceland underpinned his preference for the austere north over the balmy south, a preference which marked him out as an atypical Victorian tourist although, as Peter Preston has noted, the nineteenth century did see increasing numbers of visitors to Iceland and the appearance of published accounts of their journeys (such as Anthony Trollope’s *How the Mastiffs Went to Iceland* in 1878).<sup>2</sup> While much attention has been given to the impact of his Iceland experience on Morris’s subsequent literary output,<sup>3</sup> in this article I wish to sketch the impact of Morris’s Icelandic travels on a more homely scale. In particular, I will consider whether Morris’s fascination with the ‘otherness’ of Icelandic culture, demonstrated both by his Icelandic journals and the artefacts with which he returned, constituted an early example of an attempt to ‘think globally, act locally’ which brought about an altered understanding of home which also influenced the rest of the family. In the wake of recent scholarship which has critically interrogated the ways in which foreign cultures were ‘woven deeply into the texture of English domesticity’ through the incorporation of material objects,<sup>4</sup> I will explore whether the reception of Icelandic artefacts in the Morris home differed from that exhibited by other Victorian middle-class households, where exotic objects were re-located from colonial or imperial contexts.

Speculating on the ways in which Morris’s immersion in Icelandic culture may have influenced the everyday life of the family, I propose to employ the concept of an ‘Icelandic imaginary’, a term which may require some explanation.

The concept of ‘the imaginary’ has been employed in varying ways by a range of thinkers, from Jacques Lacan to Cornelius Castoriadis, but my usage here corresponds most closely to that formulation of the ‘cultural imaginary’ which Graham Dawson has described as a ‘vast [network] of interlinking discursive themes, images, motifs and narrative forms’ shared by a culture or social grouping, providing a conceptual frame of reference which shapes both the group’s social knowledge, and their internal, psychic lives.<sup>5</sup> I am suggesting that, in the case of the Morris family, Icelandic literature and culture provided one such network of themes, images, stories, objects, even feelings or states of mind, that the family came to share – in different forms and to varying degrees – but which nevertheless constituted a set of resources, both cultural and emotional, which influenced the inner lives of family members, the dynamics between them, and their perspective on the world beyond the home. As May Morris would later write, reflecting on her introduction to Icelandic literature and culture as a child, ‘we certainly had good material for dreaming ourselves into another life than our own’.<sup>6</sup> If such exposure to cultural difference enriched the imaginative scope of childhood for the Morris daughters, I will suggest, it also possessed the potential to influence their perspective on a world beyond the home domain.

The question of perspective – in a literal as well as a metaphorical or conceptual sense – was a recurring concern in William Morris’s reflections on his Icelandic journeys. Not only were they themselves unsettling, a sharp disruption from the normal routines of his daily life, but they also seem to have unsettled Morris’s sense of his place in the world, the stability of the location from which he assessed the world around him. Where did he stand? How could he evaluate the experience of travel in such an unfamiliar landscape, outside his usual frame of reference? Writing to Louisa Baldwin days after his return to England in 1871, Morris already questioned both the reliability of his recollections and the capacity of a retrospective account (even one based on his own journal entries) to provide a valuable rendering of his experience:

... it is true that the journey was altogether successful, and that I think I have gained in many ways by it; but it seems such a long way off now, and there is a bit of one’s life gone; and the world so much narrower to me because of it.<sup>7</sup>

Did the journey widen or narrow the world for Morris? Did his journal entries keep the events fresh in the present, or would the process of turning them into a narrative account distance Morris from his own experience? This problem of perspective – of finding a fixed or reliable position from which he could both accurately narrate his travels and evaluate the ways in which the experience of Iceland had changed him – was something which Morris represented differently at separate times. And so it is not perhaps surprising that, in recent years, scholars have debated the global or cosmopolitan impulse in Morris’s writing.

For example, in her account of what she calls his 'situated cosmopolitanism', Regenia Gagnier describes Morris's persistent depiction of humans as 'distinctly embedded in thick but always interdependent environments'.<sup>8</sup> Tanya Agathocleous, on the other hand, detects a contradiction in Morris's critique of global modernity, arguing that his 'focus on archaic local customs, dress and language' represents 'the local transcend[ing] the global', fixing place and race in a form of essentialism which does not sufficiently acknowledge cultural or ethnic diversity.<sup>9</sup> While much of this recent critical discussion has focused on *News from Nowhere*, his journeys to Iceland – long before Morris wrote his 'utopian' novel – saw him already attempting to understand the ways in which collective and individual identities could be sustained in an increasingly inter-connected world. What was it that anchored people to place, history and community when physical mobility was accelerating and the horizon of experience was expanding? And was there an ethical dimension to such anchoring, or, in Gagnier's terms, 'situatedness'?

Evaluating these wider concerns in relation to Morris's Icelandic travels is, of course, further complicated by his personal circumstances at the time of his first Icelandic journey. He left for Iceland shortly after he had taken a joint lease of Kelmscott Manor with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, thus leaving Rossetti and Jane alone (with the children and servants) for the summer of 1871, a circumstance which many have seen as his chief motivation for the trip. Morris, however, articulated other reasons for his journey. In a letter dated prior to his departure, in which he referred to himself as a 'stay-at-home', Morris wrote of Iceland: 'there is nothing to interest most people there but its strangeness and wildness; yet I have felt for so long that I must go there and see the background of the stories for wh: I have so much sympathy'.<sup>10</sup> Morris's journey, then, was framed by contradictory impulses from the outset: he envisaged Iceland as hostile and inhospitable – in terms of weather and landscape, as well as the physical hardship and rigours of travel there – but, at the same time, as familiar and welcoming, through his knowledge of Icelandic literature and through the experiences of kindness and generosity in Icelandic homes and communities which his journal would later enumerate.

Described by his daughter May as a man 'deeply-rooted in the home life',<sup>11</sup> Morris opens his *Journals of Travel in Iceland* with a lengthy description of his reluctance to leave British shores, devoting some pages to his journey from home prior to sailing from Scotland in a narrative pause or delay which registers a profound ambivalence about travel. A similar ambivalence is evident in the caricature drawn by Edward Burne-Jones after Morris's return from Iceland in 1871, entitled 'Home Again: William Morris sitting bored in an armchair', in which the intrepid traveller is once more safely ensconced at home but already looking bored and unsettled. Much of the humour here derives from the disjuncture between the caption, speaking of a restless desire for activity and movement, and

the sitter whose ample proportions seem perfectly matched by the over-stuffed chair on which he fidgets. Like the armchair, the upturned glass at Morris's feet indexically signifies domestic comforts – the well-stocked cellar of the Morris household was noted by contemporaries – but the sitter does not seem comforted by such cosy abundance now he is 'Home Again'.

The contradictions Burne-Jones's caricature mocked were also evident in Morris's *Journals*. Like other travel journals, these are rich in detailed observations of the landscape and encounters with local people, but previous scholars have also commented on the unusual features of Morris's account.<sup>12</sup> They are perhaps Morris's most introspective piece of prose writing and present an ambivalent narratorial perspective which shifts from an almost impersonal recording of scenes and events to direct addresses to the reader, from emotionally-charged positive representations of Icelandic culture and landscape to expressions of revulsion or alienation in response to the foreign terrain and the dangers of the journey. Morris often expresses a profound sense of homesickness, which Karen Herbert has described as a 'two-fold pull – backward to Kelmscott and the domestic and forward to Iceland and the heroic'<sup>13</sup> – provoked by moments when he had failed to register an emotional connection with a place he had so longed to see. While Morris's response to the Icelandic landscape is frequently framed by his knowledge of saga literature, the narratorial persona of the *Journals* emphasises the contrast between the heroic past and his own 'unheroic' mode of travelling as his physical and emotional resources are repeatedly tested by the hazards and hardships of the journey.<sup>14</sup> Throughout his account, Morris portrays himself as clumsy, unathletic and inept, prone to losing vital travel equipment – including the journal notebook itself at one point – and excessively concerned with domestic comforts, such that he becomes solely responsible for the cooking and provisioning of the touring party.

The unflattering depictions and persistent awareness of his own limitations in an environment which 'modern life [had] never reached'<sup>15</sup> did not, however, preclude Morris's attention to the hardships of life experienced by Icelanders, giving the *Journals* a strong sense of immediacy, grounded in the present of daily existence and events. As May Morris recounted in her Introduction, her father 'was moved by the Iceland of to-day as well as by the Iceland of the past, his interest keenly aroused by a place which the currents of commercial life swept by leaving it unchanged'.<sup>16</sup> Morris's awareness of the poverty and 'incessant privations of the Icelanders', moreover, was also grounded in the realisation that this remote, foreign place was subject to the intrusion of 'foreigners' – as May Morris terms them ('the French principally, I think', she continues) – whose superior marine technology allowed them to monopolise the 'abundant harvest of the deep-sea fishing', a resource the Icelanders could ill afford to relinquish.<sup>17</sup> First-hand observation strongly impressed upon Morris that late nineteenth-century

Iceland was unavoidably connected to an increasingly global maritime economy in which the islanders were poorly-equipped to compete. However mixed the motives may have been behind Morris's journey, then, his Icelandic travels were not an escape but a means to learn the *inescapability* of connections to others, near and far, for good or ill, through the physical circumstances of travel.

If the *Journals* depicted the limitations of self-reliance – in such a harsh environment, May Morris observed, 'rigorous hospitality [becomes] a necessity'<sup>18</sup> – they also, however, articulated Morris's desire for 'that thin thread of insight and imagination which comes so seldom to us, and is such a joy when it comes' which he associates with the solitary contemplation of the Icelandic landscape.<sup>19</sup> As Philippa Bennett has noted, *Journals of Travel in Iceland* at times registers Morris's unease with mountainous landscapes which mark an ambivalence about the sublime as a means to epiphany.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, these landscapes also seem to represent for Morris the transcendence of the self, or at least a heightened awareness of its limitations. Calling the self into question in this way also seemed to bring Morris back to a sense of connection with the world: the 'insight and imagination' he sought was not a solipsistic, inward-looking phenomenon but an imaginative awareness which could be shared and communicated through the literary rendering of his experience.

For Morris, there was a continuity of purpose, a desire to transcend what he saw as the temptation of self-absorption, in any location: just as travel was not a means of escape so, on his return to England, the domestic was not a space of retreat. Morris's 'Icelandic imaginary' at home was a means by which he sought to retain the insights he had gained on his journeys, with the result that at times he seems to describe a form of cognitive estrangement arising from this new perspective: he saw England framed by Iceland and the familiar now seemed lacking in comparison. In letters written on his return, the frame of reference for such comparisons is (understandably) often geographical or meteorological, but the differences he observes in the natural environments of the two countries allow him to continue thinking about his own altered sense of self. Iceland had given Morris a new frame of reference for describing not only the mundanities of weather or landscape but a new understanding of – and distance from – what he called 'ones [*sic*] grumbling life'.<sup>21</sup> On one occasion, as Morris described in a letter to Aglaia Coronio, the sight of the night sky at home recalled Iceland: 'tonight all my travel there [in Iceland] seemed to come back on me, made solemn and elevated in one moment, till my heart swelled with the wonder of it'.<sup>22</sup> In this instance, the sublime – represented by the 'wonder' of the solitary viewer, dwarfed by the scale and distance of the stars – brings Iceland and England together through the observer's emotional response ('my heart swelled'). Iceland, then, marked a watershed in Morris's self-understanding and his sense of how to engage with the world while at home, a response which went beyond the traveller's insights into

a new and different place, to become an aspiration to register an ethical relation which connected every domain of life, near or far. As Harvey and Press observe, after 1871 Morris seemed to be ‘a man increasingly eager to take part in the affairs of the everyday world’.<sup>23</sup>

Morris’s fascination with the material culture of the past was an important means by which he sought to maintain an ethical connection with the larger social world which began at home. He attended closely to the proximate without precluding awareness of a wider web of obligation, connection or influence, both past and present. The William Morris Gallery now includes over thirty items Morris brought back from Iceland (originally donated by Mary Lobb, after the death of May Morris), including silverware, an embroidered bodice, slippers, and carved horn objects, although it is known that he brought back a great deal more. The assumption that an interest in the archaic – in customs, dress and language – is synonymous with a kind of aesthetic detachment or cultural essentialism is, I think, challenged by Morris’s attachment to Icelandic material culture. Such artefacts bore the mark of the hands and lives of others – the craftspeople who had made them, the women and men whose everyday practices were shaped by their usage – and while they had been removed from their context of origin, they were not necessarily de-historicised by their relocation. Such traces of Icelandic culture were always for Morris a physical embodiment of relations between people, objects and landscape grounded in the specificity of time and place, and their presence in his own home was a daily reminder of alterity in the midst of the everyday. Morris’s focus on specificity and particularity was not at the expense of a global or cosmopolitan perspective, but provided a means of emphasising the differences as well as the connections between cultures within Victorian modernity and, more particularly, within the intimate spaces of everyday life.

For those who had remained at home, however, without the benefit of first-hand observation and cross-cultural encounters which the traveller had experienced, how were the ‘handicrafts of the Island’, particularly the silver-work and embroideries, to be understood and apprehended?<sup>24</sup> How did the rest of the Morris family – Jane, Jenny and May – respond to the traces of Icelandic culture, displaced from their original context of production and usage, and now encountered at home? Jenny and May Morris were already familiar with the literary culture of Iceland, but on their father’s return in 1871 he brought back ‘silver girdles’ and ‘embroidered bodices’ for his daughters to wear.<sup>25</sup> May’s recollections imply that such gifts were not merely dress-up items but were incorporated as part of ordinary dress and – given that the Morris girls were known for their unusual, if not eccentric, dress compared to more typical middle-class girls’ fashion – these exotic additions would not necessarily be anomalous with other elements of their attire.

Morris’s most valued gift to his daughters, however, was an Icelandic pony

named Mouse whom Morris had ridden during the first journey and who became much loved by the family. While a pony may be unremarkable as the object of a Victorian girl's affections, May's account of Mouse gives a powerful sense of his dislocation, as a 'lonely little beastie' who she imagined missed the 'frolic and incident and hard life' to which he was accustomed.<sup>26</sup> According to May, Mouse would habitually occupy a corner of the field with the best view of the road and its horse traffic, where 'he stood ... day-long with his head stretched forward, the very type of a philosopher who had known the world.'<sup>27</sup> In an anecdote related by Mackail, May further described the consequences of Mouse's loneliness in his new environment:

[Mouse] got enormously fat on our coarse thick plentiful English grass, with little to do; and I used to imagine him lonely, and yearning for the fun and clatter and hardships of his Iceland life among his friends. ... One day, when the hunt passed through our home-meadows, the excitement of horses and hounds was too much for the lonely philosopher; he threw up his head and, fat as he was, bundled over a hedge and actually followed the hounds a good way.<sup>28</sup>

Mouse's isolation at Kelmscott was, then, two-fold: not only separated from his native environment, he also suffered from isolation from others of his species. May does not, however, note any deficiencies in the family's treatment of the pony and she stresses that Mouse's life was far better than the more typical fate of imported Icelandic ponies – an underground existence working in British coal mines 'where they never saw daylight again'.<sup>29</sup> While the Morris girls may have learned some hard truths about the global traffic in animals through the gift of a pony, May's account also implies that the 'otherness' of Mouse – marked by his foreign origin and his species difference – provided some insight into what Donna Haraway calls 'ethical relating, within or between species'.<sup>30</sup> At odds with the concept of ownership, an ideal of reciprocity between human and animal is expressed through the child-like sense of a preternatural connection with the pony May described. 'He was no mere animal in the Kelmscott life', she recalled, 'but a personality, and we children often exchanged wistful glances with him, wishing the stupid barrier between three playmates might be removed'.<sup>31</sup> There is, nevertheless, an ambivalence in these recollections of Mouse, not least owing to their melancholy tone which gives a hint that there may not have been such a clear distinction between her father's benign appropriation of an exotic animal and the nefarious purposes of mine owners. In rare moments like these in her *Introductions*, there is the barest suggestion that the adult reflecting on her childhood experience may see things more critically than she did then but May refrains from any explicit criticism of her parents, especially her father.

At times in her introductions to her father's *Collected Works*, May offers a form of autobiography in which, paradoxically, the daughter forges a distinctive

self-identity through the influence of her father's forceful ideas and personality. It is a strikingly persistent feature of the Morris family dynamics that May shadowed her father's interests – in literature, design and politics – and so her shared affinity for Iceland was in keeping with this pattern of emotional identification. Icelandic culture permeated her daily life as a child, not only through what she could physically see or touch – from a pony to items of dress – but through the imaginative resources her knowledge of Icelandic literature provided. It was after her father returned from Iceland, for instance, that May recounts taking up the habit of 'roof-riding like Glam at Thorhall-stead' (from *The Story of Grettir the Strong* that her father had translated with Eiríkr Magnússon), by which she meant climbing astride the gabled roofs of Kelmescott Manor, much to her mother's distress.<sup>32</sup> Never restricted by narrow views of feminine decorum in her upbringing, May here shows how the imaginative resources of her literary education at home allowed her even further liberties in enlarging her scope of play activities to include the kind of physical adventuring more typical during this period of boys than girls. While she notes her mother's fears for her safety on this occasion, it is interesting that May does not record any reprimand for her re-enactment of heroic endeavours on the grounds of inappropriate feminine behaviour. During the late 1870s, when, as a teenager, May travelled to Italy for the first time with her mother and sister as the guests of the Howard family, May also employed an Icelandic frame of reference in order to push the boundaries of socially acceptable behaviour. Rosalind Howard confided in a letter that 'somehow the [Morris] girls do not take so kindly to Italy as I hoped & May the youngest said to-day she would rather be in Iceland!'<sup>33</sup> May had, of course, never been to Iceland, so her declaration – as well as being a rather adolescent response to the hospitality of others – was a statement of affiliation with her (absent) father while also distinguishing herself from her mother who was passionate about the beauties and benefits of Italy and who, after this first visit, returned regularly to escape English winters, sometimes accompanied by Jenny.<sup>34</sup>

Jane Morris's love of Italy did not, however, preclude her own attention to Icelandic culture. In two sketches which post-date Morris's travels to Iceland, Rossetti depicted Jane wearing Icelandic dress, doubtless gifts from her husband. Her long history of modelling for the artist necessitated wearing a variety of costumes so it is impossible to judge whether these Icelandic dress sketches reflected Jane Morris's everyday apparel or an exotic variation for the artist to capture. In the first, she wears an Icelandic blouse with its distinctive embroidery patterning, together with the kind of decorative silver work on the high-waisted girdle which was also typical of traditional Icelandic dress. Rossetti's sketch is almost ethnographic in that the focus seems as much on capturing the detail of the exotic elements of costume as the distinctive physical features of Jane Morris, as described by Virginia Surtees:

In Icelandic dress, three-quarter-length, [she is] seated on a sofa facing to front, wearing a long-sleeved embroidered bodice and a full skirt gathered at the waist into a metal girdle which rises to a pointed yolk fastened with ornamental clasps.<sup>35</sup>

The second sketch, however, much more impressionistic in style, was also very different in tone. This time, the folds and fullness of the Icelandic blouse echo the sinuous positioning of Jane's arms (one thrown back, above her head, the better to display the shape of her neck as she leans back against a sofa cushion with closed eyes), and the pose is more in keeping with other Rossetti sketches stressing the languorous sensuality of the sitter. Jane wears no belt or girdle, so the blouse falls in drapes more suggestive of a chemise or nightdress than day clothes. Clothed in signifiers of her husband's travels, Jane's dress symbolically represents Morris's absence from Kelmscott and, in these sketches, Icelandic dress thus became part of the currency through which the fraught emotional dynamics linking Jane, Morris and Rossetti were conveyed.<sup>36</sup>

If Rossetti's sketches cannot provide objective verification of Jane Morris's own feelings and attitudes, however, another association between her and Iceland sheds a somewhat different light on her connection with the island which so fascinated her husband. A letter she wrote during the summer of 1882 reveals that she was involved, together with Morris, in forming a committee for Icelandic famine relief (an extreme winter had been followed by a cold summer, devastating agriculture on the island). While the name of William Morris attracted more high-profile support, such as from the Lord Mayor of London and the Danish ambassador, Jane seems to have sought to raise subscriptions for the fund among her friends and acquaintances.<sup>37</sup>

This admittedly isolated reference to an interest in Icelandic affairs by Jane raises more questions than it answers. To what extent was Iceland an ongoing topic of interest and conversation in the household? How extensive was Jane's knowledge of Iceland? And how deep was her commitment to the cause? As is so often the case with aspects of Jane Morris's life, the remaining fragmentary evidence precludes full understanding from emerging. As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>38</sup> however, the degree to which Morris and Jane shared opinions, values and ideas has often been underestimated, as has her degree of engagement with current affairs and issues of her day, and it therefore seems unlikely that she would have involved herself in a campaign to which she had no personal sense of commitment.

For the women of the Morris family, then, Iceland remained an imaginary location: never seen or experienced first-hand, its presence was nonetheless felt in varying ways within the domain of everyday life. In her introduction to *Journals of Travel in Iceland*, May Morris described the impact of her father's journeys on

the family thus: 'Iceland, till then a spot on the map that one often forgot to draw in, ... and so far off it didn't matter ... became and has been ever since a real thing, at once overpoweringly beautiful and overpoweringly melancholy'.<sup>39</sup> Morris, we might say, 'drew' Iceland in for his family in two ways. First, he brought a distant and foreign location close to home and gave it a conscious proximity within a global perspective. At the same time, he 'drew' in Iceland in another sense: as an aesthetic construction imbued with an emotional resonance, embodied in the material objects he brought home as well as the stories to which he introduced his family. Previously unfamiliar cultural objects and practices were incorporated into a home environment where the aesthetic was always privileged and in which there was already an unusually heightened awareness of the contexts of production and consumption in daily life. We might say, then, that a dual perspective – in which domestic objects or homely practices were understood as connected to larger networks of cultural reciprocity – was encouraged in the Morris household, from the Red House days onwards.

Morris's 'Icelandic imaginary' was not, however, without its blind spots. His journals are silent on the question of Iceland's colonial status – an omission which is puzzling, given Morris's anti-imperialist, anti-nationalist politics, even prior to his conversion to socialism. And the presence of the melancholy Mouse, his adopted name suggesting that he has been reduced in scale by his transplantation to the bucolic ease of Kelmscott, may strike a discordant note with twenty-first century readers more sensitive to the ethics of animal well-being and the trade in exotic species. But while Morris aestheticised Iceland for his family, the meanings or connotations associated with this place were not fixed: from one perspective, Iceland could seem distant or insignificant; from another, it could also make home seem tame by comparison, lacking the grandeur of 'the terrible & tragic' which Morris found in Iceland, a reminder that perspective can shift dramatically according to one's location and awareness of the co-existence of other lives.

In a typically humorous letter to his family, Morris once described Kelmscott Manor beset by flooding and torrential rain as 'almost as good as Iceland on a small scale'.<sup>40</sup> The country home which May called their own 'Earthly Paradise' and which many others warmly described as a place of tranquillity and hospitality, is here compared with the wild terrain and unforgiving conditions of Iceland. While proximity to the river meant that Kelmscott Manor was (and still is) prone to flooding, Morris's image measured home against a wild and distant place in terms he hoped his family would find both amusing and reassuring (it's *almost* Iceland, but it's not). In a sense, Morris's immersion in Icelandic culture always provided a scale against which he could measure (and critically evaluate) both global modernity and English domesticity and understand the imbrication of the two. At the same time, it also provided a set of shared references and allusions which permeated the mundane aspects of family life, showing the ways in which

the ordinary and the exotic, the aesthetic and the workaday, the serious and the humorous, were always inter-related in the Morris household.

If nineteenth-century Iceland provides another instance of the ways in which Victorians appropriated foreign cultures, through the incorporation of the literature and material artefacts of other places in their homes, and the increasing scale of global travel and tourism, it also demonstrated the permeability of boundaries – of self, of nation – which such expanded horizons made possible. In the same year that May Morris had declared her preference for Iceland to a dismayed Rosalind Howard, Thomas Hardy – in the opening chapter of *The Return of the Native* – noted an emerging shift in the sensibilities of modern travel:

The time seems near, if it has not actually arrived, when the mournful sublimity of a moor, a sea, a mountain, will be all of nature that is absolutely in keeping with the moods of the more thinking among mankind. And ultimately, to the commonest tourist, spots like Iceland may become what the vineyards and myrtle-gardens of South Europe are to him now.<sup>41</sup>

*The Return of the Native's* complex exploration of the conflicting loyalties and ethical tensions which exist between home and abroad, between our place of origin and the appeal of the exotic, informs Hardy's prescience here concerning the relentless growth of adventure tourism for restless moderns. Even here, however, Hardy's association of the Icelandic landscape with 'thinking' through our emotional connections with spaces and our place in them, signalled by his description of 'the mournful sublimity of a moor, a sea, a mountain', brings us closer to a sense of the power of the 'Icelandic imaginary' for the Morrises to remind them that on a rapidly shrinking planet, nowhere was 'too far off to matter'. It is a reminder which remains salient in the twenty-first century.

## NOTES

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3. Jane Cooper summarises early examples in Jane S. Cooper, 'The Iceland Journeys and the Late Romances', *Journal of The William Morris Society*, Vol. V, no. 4, 1983–4, pp. 41–43. More recently, see Charles Harvey & Jon Press,

- Art, Enterprise and Ethics: The Life and Works of William Morris*, London: Frank Cass, 1996, pp. 68–82. (Afterwards Harvey & Press)
4. Suzanne Daly, *The Empire Inside: Indian Commodities in Victorian Domestic Novels*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011, p. 5. See also John Plotz, *Portable Property: Victorian Culture on the Move*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008, 288 pp., and Elaine Freedgood, *The Ideas in Things: Fugitive Meaning in the Victorian Novel*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.
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  9. Tanya Agathocleous, *Urban Realism and the Cosmopolitan Imagination in the Nineteenth Century: Visible City, Invisible Worlds*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 159.
  10. Kelvin, p. 132.
  11. *CW*, Vol. VIII, p. xviii.
  12. See, for example, Preston, and Karen Herbert, 'Travels Abroad in Iceland and Paris: Morris's Utopian Mapping', *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, Vol. I, 1992, pp. 24–29 (Afterwards Herbert). Also Frederick Kirchoff, 'Travel as Anti-Autobiography: William Morris's Icelandic Journals', in George P. Landow, ed, *Approaches to Victorian Autobiography*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1979, pp. 292–310. (Hereafter Kirchoff)
  13. Herbert, p. 25.
  14. Kirchoff, p. 294.
  15. *CW*, Vol. VIII, p. 15.
  16. *CW*, Vol. VIII, p. xxi.
  17. *CW*, Vol. VIII, p. xxi.
  18. *CW*, Vol. VIII, p. xxii.
  19. *CW*, Vol. VIII, p. 131.
  20. See Philippa Bennett, 'Rediscovering the Topography of Wonder: Morris, Iceland and the Last Romances', *Journal of William Morris Studies*, Vol. XVI, Nos 2–3, 2005, pp. 40. For Morris's changing perspective on the meaning of Iceland's mountains, see also Harvey & Press, pp. 75–76.
  21. To Charles Eliot Norton, October 17, 1871; Kelvin, p. 152.

22. To Aglaia Coronio, September 14, 1873; Kelvin, p. 198.
23. Harvey & Press, p. 80.
24. *CW*, Vol. VIII, p. xxi.
25. *CW*, Vol. VIII, p. xxviii.
26. *CW*, Vol. VIII, xxix.
27. *CW*, Vol. VIII, xxix.
28. Mackail, Vol. 1, pp. 274–275.
29. *CW*, Vol. VIII, p. xxix.
30. Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*, Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003, p. 50.
31. *CW*, Vol. VIII, p. xxix.
32. *CW*, Vol. VIII, p. xxix.
33. Rosalind Howard to Lady Stanley, December 10, 1878; Castle Howard Archives.
34. For more on the significance of Italy for Jane Morris, see Wendy Parkins, “‘That Venturesome Woman’: The Italian Travels of Jane Morris”, *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, Vol. 16, Fall 2007, pp. 66–87.
35. Virginia Surtees, *The Paintings and Drawings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882): A Catalogue Raisonné*, Vol. 1, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 179. (Afterwards Surtees)
36. Perhaps the best example is Rossetti’s portrait *Mrs William Morris (The Blue Silk Dress)*, to the frame of which Rossetti attached the Latin verse inscription which translates as: ‘Famous for her husband, a poet, and most famous for her face; so let this picture of mine add to her fame’. (Surtees, p. 176)
37. Frank C. Sharp & Jan Marsh, *The Collected Letters of Jane Morris*, Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012, p. 123–124.
38. See Wendy Parkins, *Jane Morris: The Burden of History*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013, pp. 99–109.
39. *CW*, Vol. VIII, p. xviii.
40. To Jane Morris, November 9, 1875; Kelvin, p. 276.
41. Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 10.

# Elizabeth Burden and the Royal School of Needlework

*Lynn Hulse*

William Morris's sister-in-law, Elizabeth (Bessie) Burden, remains one of the more elusive figures in the designer's circle. Praised by Philip Webb in 1880 for her skill 'in all types of needlework, from the most simple & rudimentary to the more particular and complicated', she was described by Morris as 'a first-rate needle-woman' with a 'complete mastery of the theory & practice of all kinds of needlework'. Yet, little of Bessie's output has been identified and even less is known about the details of her day-to-day working life. In this context, the recent discovery of correspondence illuminating Bessie's association with the Royal School of Needlework (RSN) provides a welcome insight into her career as a tutor of embroidery.<sup>1</sup>

The School of Art Needlework, as the RSN was originally known, was founded in November 1872 by Mrs Victoria Welby (1837–1912) with the twin objectives of reviving 'a beautiful and practically lost Art', impoverished by 'the universal substitution of printed or woven designs for hand-made decoration', and providing 'private and suitable employment for reduced or distressed Gentlewomen'.<sup>2</sup> The School opened over a bonnet shop at 38 Sloane Street, Kensington, where around twenty ladies were trained in needlework made exclusively for the home from good designs or old examples. Mrs Anastasia Dolby, whose 'thorough knowledge of the higher branches of decorative needlework [was] well known', was appointed teacher and superintendent;<sup>3</sup> a former embroideress to Queen Victoria, her publication *Church Embroidery, Ancient and Modern* (1867) was regarded in her own lifetime as an authoritative work on the subject.

Anthea Callen was the first scholar to note in print the connection between Bessie Burden and the RSN in the School's *Handbook of Embroidery* (1880).<sup>4</sup> Following Callen's lead, Jan Marsh speculated that Bessie may have begun her career at the School as a 'humble worker', rising quickly through the ranks to become a tutor,<sup>5</sup> but it is clear from Bessie's correspondence with Mrs Welby dating from the winter of 1872/73 that her relationship with the fledgling School operated on quite a different footing.

Responding to an invitation from the RSN to teach six hours per week, Bessie wrote to Mrs Welby on 21 December 1872 setting out her terms and conditions.<sup>6</sup> In addition to working for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., Bessie supplemented her income by teaching embroidery at the home she shared with her sister and brother-in-law at 26 Queen Square in Bloomsbury. Her normal hourly rate was 7s 6d for one pupil or 10s 6d for two, but she offered to instruct three or four pupils at the RSN's premises for 10s 6d per hour, making a total of 3 guineas per week. She refused however to take on more pupils without an extra charge and was not prepared to accept less money, 'as the teaching will interfere with my own work'. Bessie was willing to engage herself for one quarter or three months on these terms, after which the appointment might be renewed or terminated by mutual consent.

Appended to the letter is a rough draft in Mrs Welby's hand outlining the arrangement: three pupils twice weekly from 10.00 am to 1.00 pm (changed to 10.30 am–1.30 pm) for an initial period of six weeks; a requirement for Bessie to attend for interview at the School prior to commencing teaching; and a specimen of work to be sent out by post, presumably to indicate the kind of embroidery undertaken at the RSN. Ten days later, Bessie wrote from Clay Cross in Derbyshire, where she was staying with her sister Emma and her brother-in-law the Rev. Joseph Oldham. She agreed to the terms set out in the draft, though prior engagements on both sides meant that her interview could not occur until early February.<sup>7</sup>

The precise date on which Bessie's appointment commenced is not recorded, but she was soon attending the RSN on Tuesday and Friday mornings, having made the journey from her new lodgings at 100 Southampton Row, Russell Square. She appears to have been hired primarily in order to develop further the skills of pupils such as Mrs Davison, a widowed governess, who had completed the statutory course of lessons and 'passed satisfactorily as a painstaking and conscientious worker in crews' before joining Bessie's class.<sup>8</sup>

However, by the end of the third week in February relations between Bessie and the RSN had turned sour. The timing could not have been worse for the School. On the 18th of the month, Mrs Dolby died unexpectedly at the age of forty-eight after a brief illness at her home in Highgate, leaving Mrs Welby in sole charge. Two days later, Bessie requested an interview the following afternoon (Friday) either at the RSN or at Mrs Welby's home, 10 West Eaton Place. She was concerned about the School's decision to exhibit figures stitched by her pupils with her name attached because 'they will not be worked well enough'. Furthermore, she informed Mrs Welby that she did not intend renewing the arrangement with the RSN at the end of the six weeks, at least not on the same terms as before. She proposed instead to give only one lesson a week on the grounds that 'I find it so very inconvenient to leave my own work and I lose so much time by

feeling so fatigued afterwards that it is rather a loss to me than gain'.<sup>9</sup>

Mrs Welby's reply does not survive, but on Wednesday, 26 February Bessie wrote again, this time in response to a message received the previous day. She believed it had been sent on purpose by the afternoon rather than the morning post so that it would arrive after she had set off from her lodgings to teach at the RSN, otherwise 'I certainly should not have made my appearance there at all'. By this stage, relations had broken down irretrievably. At the heart of Bessie's grievance was the fear that displaying such inferior work would severely damage her reputation as a tutor of embroidery:

You must be well aware that you have no right to exhibit work with my name on it without my permission, and I beg to tell you at once that I strictly forbid you to do it. Why cannot it be exhibited simply as work executed at the School without having my name put on it at all? I am the best judge of my own pupils' work, and I do not consider them sufficiently advanced to do me credit or indeed to make their work worthy of exhibition at all. The exhibition of those figures worked as they would be by mere beginners (in my branch of the art) would do me a great deal of harm professionally and in order to prevent it I positively refuse to finish the course of lessons until after the opening of the Exhibition. You will please to understand that this is my final decision arrived at after having given the matter full consideration.<sup>10</sup>

Bessie was so dismayed by the quality of her pupils' work that she offered to break off the engagement altogether and to return the money she had already earned 'so laboriously'. Indeed, she was willing to make any other sacrifice in order to spare herself 'the intense mortification of seeing such work exhibited in the South Kensington [i.e. the South Kensington Museum] as the result of my training'. The display to which Bessie refers cannot be identified; at this stage the RSN may have been toying with the idea of showcasing examples of its work alongside the *Special Loan Exhibition of Decorative Art Needlework made before 1800*, hosted by the South Kensington Museum at the behest of the School in May 1873.<sup>11</sup>

On receipt of Bessie's letter, Mrs Welby set about drafting a lengthy rebuttal, informing her that it would be 'impossible after the letter you have thought proper to write to see you again at the School'. As for naming Bessie without her permission, Mrs Welby retorted:

... there never had been the slightest intention of attaching your name to the work for exhibition without your consent ... the number of lessons the pupils had received would have been carefully mentioned to guard against any idea of their having received any lengthened or complete training ... It would have been no advantage whatsoever to the School to mention your name on work exhibited

... the proposal was made solely with the object of avoiding any impression that the ladies of the School had worked the figure without some tuition.

Incensed by Bessie's high-handed attitude, Mrs Welby questioned the contribution she had made to the RSN:

I am obliged to state very distinctly that you have hitherto taught your pupils at the School nothing but what I could have taught them myself ~~and considerably less than I could have taught in the same time.~~<sup>12</sup>

Reflecting further on her final clause, Mrs Welby judiciously deleted it from the draft, but she reminded Bessie that the RSN had made every allowance to accommodate the fatigue she endured in travelling to the School, emphasising the fact that she was not alone in this regard: it was 'a disadvantage ... shared by most of the ladies'. She particularly regretted the tone in which Bessie had expressed her refusal to finish the course of lessons given that the RSN had offered to relieve her of one or two pupils. Mrs Welby's parting shot was to lay the whole sorry business before Princess Helena, President of the School.

Bessie's final letter, dated 22 March, thanked Mrs Welby 'for setting me free from my very fatiguing and unsatisfactory labours'.<sup>13</sup> She reiterated her grievance that the embroidered figure would, in the words of Mrs Welby, 'unquestionably be exhibited as my pupils' work', and repudiated the aspersion cast on her skills as a tutor: 'I consider the School extremely indebted to me for having introduced quite gratuitously a class of work utterly unknown there before'. The 'class of work' to which Bessie refers probably relates to the method of stitching employed in the series of twelve large figures designed by Morris for the dining room at Red House. (Figure 1) The figures were embroidered using a traditional late Medieval technique, in which the design, worked in a variety of stitches on a linen ground (including long and short, couching, darning and brick stitch in the case of the Red House series), was cut out and applied to a high quality fabric such as velvet or silk.<sup>14</sup>

On receipt of Bessie's letter, the RSN immediately closed ranks. Princess Helena's response, sent to Mrs Welby on 29 March, criticised Bessie's manners, but there is also a hint of the growing undercurrent of negativity towards the role played by artisans in the artistic direction of the School prevalent among certain members of the RSN Council in its early years:

As to Miss Burden, I think her behaviour simply outrageous. I never read so cool or impertinent a letter. It shows she can have no ladylike feelings for no lady or decently educated person would have penned such a letter. I am very glad you sent it to me to read. She is a good riddance and I am sure the little she may have taught has not fallen on unfruitful ground.<sup>15</sup>



*Figure 1. St Catharine from The Legende of Good Wimmen series of tapestries, designed by William Morris for the dining room at Red House, detail, ca 1860. Society of Antiquaries of London: Kelmscott Manor collections. Photograph: Lynn Hulse.*

However, that was not the end of the RSN's relations with Bessie.<sup>16</sup> Despite the brief setback brought on by Mrs Dolby's unexpected demise compounded by Mrs Welby's inability to manage the School effectively owing to an extended period of ill health, the RSN moved in July 1873 to larger premises at 31 Sloane Street in order to accommodate its burgeoning staff. By the beginning of the following year, the RSN was sufficiently well established to put on an ambitious display of work at its first world fair, the fourth London International Exhibition of Art and Industry, which opened in South Kensington in April 1874. However, the exhibits received a mixed response from the national press. On 10 April, Mrs Welby's local paper, *The Lincolnshire Chronicle*, praised the School for 'some really beautiful samples of what female fingers can achieve even in these modern and degenerate days'. The ladies newspaper, *The Queen*, was considerably less charitable in its critique:

Technicalities easily mastered, however complicated, are nothing; design is everything, and in this respect the exhibits on view, with a few exceptions, fail. The professional or unprofessional designers – for the school evidently scorn to be imitators, and try to be original – want to create a new style; and what is the result? An incongruous motley of indigested decorative ideas.<sup>17</sup>

Over the next few months, the RSN undertook various initiatives in order to improve the quality of its design portfolio, culminating in March 1875 in the creation of a special fund for the purchase of designs from eminent artists and the establishment of an advisory committee of gentlemen skilled in decorative work.<sup>18</sup> Shortly afterwards, Mrs Madeline Wyndham, a founding member of the RSN who was 'especially keen' on the School, wrote a fifteen-page letter to Mrs Welby from her sister's home at Hyères on the Côte d'Azur, setting out her recommendations for the artistic management of the institution.<sup>29</sup> One of the issues which particularly concerned her was the choice of candidate to oversee the production of crewel work:

There was another thing I wanted to speak to you so very much about & that is ... Miss Burden. You must not think me unkind about it because I know she behaved so badly but I know also that you are too much the true mother of a child sick school to mind that if you thought she would be the best person to teach now to mind the bygones & the more I see of her work the more I feel that she is the only person who knows how to work the crewel work.<sup>19</sup>

Mrs Wyndham was vexed by the RSN's lack of technical proficiency. In fact, she rated her own skills in crewel embroidery almost on a par with the best needle-woman at the School and better than many of the other workers. Even so, she told Mrs Welby, her own handiwork could not compare with that of Bessie, 'it is so far above any thing I can do or come near', citing two examples prepared by

her: a piano cover designed by Morris for Susan Baroness Wharnclyffe,<sup>20</sup> and a second piece, 'so beautifully prepared that I cannot go on with it till I get a few lessons from [Miss Burden]'.<sup>21</sup> In addition, Mrs Wyndham claimed that the RSN was so careless in preparing orders that many of its customers, including all of her neighbours in Cumberland, whose skills exceeded those of the School, were themselves correcting the work. She was convinced that the best solution was to persuade Bessie to return, no mean feat given the circumstances under which she had departed previously, but a necessary one in order to protect the RSN's reputation:

I feel that at all costs it would be such a good thing if Miss Burden could be got to undertake the teaching of 6 or 7 of our crewel workers & not leave them till she considers that they know how to work & arrange it so she must take a pride in it, & feel that the credit will be hers. It would be difficult to arrange but the difficulty ought not to daunt us because the result will be if we do not that all good workers like Lady Wharnclyffe will go to her to get their work prepared & we shall have all the riff raff of amateurs coming to us for cheap & badly prepared work which will be spread all over the world bringing disrepute on us.

Mrs Wyndham was hopeful that Mrs Welby would reach the same conclusion and not think her prejudiced in Bessie's favour, but in order to hammer home the point, she turned to the question of Edward Burne-Jones's involvement in designing for the RSN. She feared that the work-room mistress, Elizabeth Gemmell, was too inexperienced to interpret the artist's intention as regards the arrangement of colours and would give him 'so much trouble in looking after it that I do not think he would undertake another for us'. But if Bessie had 'the arrangement of it & the teaching of the workers on it', she believed it would be of immense advantage to the RSN for '[Miss Burden] has lived & been trained in his school of design & colouring for it is the same as Mr Morris'.

Mrs Wyndham's lengthy missive achieved the desired effect; on 26 July 1875, Bessie began teaching in the 'Artistic room' specially set aside for working the designs of Morris, Walter Crane and others in crewels, for which she received £150 per annum. The RSN Council was informed that Bessie was 'supposed to be the finest worker in the style in England'. Few details survive of her employment, but according to the School's *Handbook of Embroidery*, a variety of 'cushion' stitch (*opus pluvinarium*) dating from the Medieval period and found in the work of German, Flemish, Italian and French schools, was taught by Bessie and 'used under her direction in working flesh in some large figures', namely Walter Crane's *Complete Design for Decorating a Room with Hangings*, which formed the centre piece of the RSN's display at the 1876 Philadelphia International Centennial Exhibition. Known during the late nineteenth century as 'tapestry' stitch (Figure 2) because of its resemblance to woven tapestry, the stitch was rediscovered

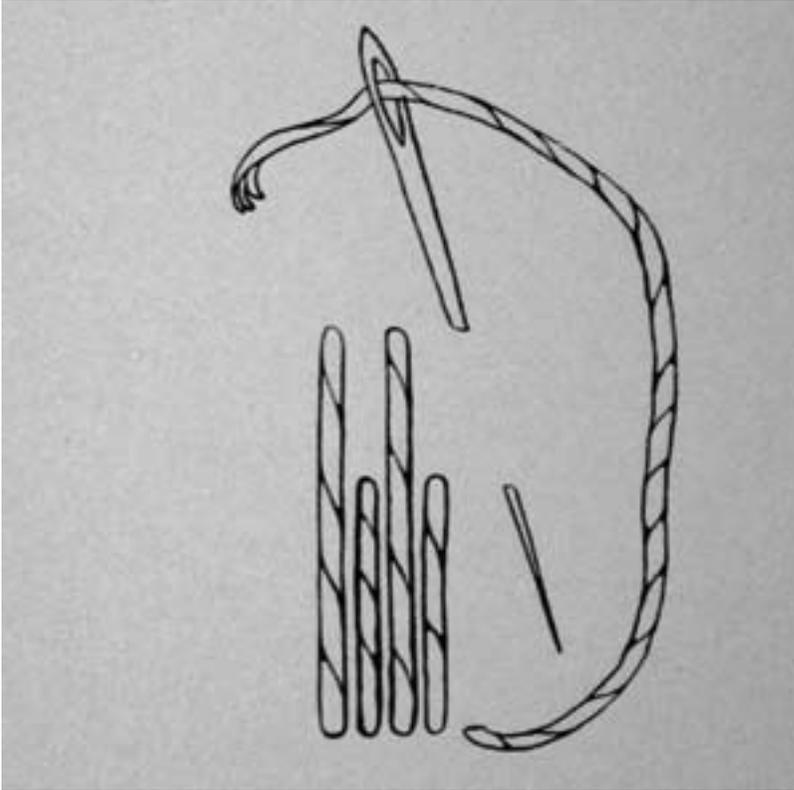


Figure 2. 'Tapestry Stitch', May Morris, *Decorative Needlework*, London: Joseph Hughes & Co., 1893, p. 36. William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest.

by Morris during the late 1850s and used to good effect in *The Legend of Good Wimmen* series (see Figure 1). Bessie's niece, May Morris, describes the method of working the stitch in her manual *Decorative Needlework* (1893):

This stitch is, like darning, used for filling-in broad spaces; but, unlike darning, it is solid back and front (though not identical), and instead of being rather frail and loose, is close and extremely durable. The worker aims at laying the stitches upright in rows, and when one row is done the next is laid with the stitches fitting close into those of the last row. This forms a laborious building-up of surface, simple enough where only a little shading or gradation of colour is wanted. Such

a method of work was formerly, and is still, a very favourite one for embroidering figures, and here it becomes difficult as well as laborious.

The stitch was renamed 'Burden Stitch' in the School's *Handbook of Embroidery* in recognition of Bessie's contribution; a woodcut showing the stitch was also included in the volume on the grounds that the RSN was frequently asked to describe it (Figure 3).<sup>22</sup>

The last recorded payment made to Bessie dates from April 1877.<sup>23</sup> The timing of her departure may have coincided with the re-organisation of the RSN in the summer of that year following a lengthy and heated debate on the future management of the School, which resulted in the dismissal of several key members. Despite the brevity of her appointment, Bessie's teaching undoubtedly contributed to the RSN's success both nationally and internationally during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The set of furnishings worked under her direction for the 1876 Philadelphia Exhibition received a Certificate of Award, and in the opinion of the American interior designer Candace Wheeler, 'sowed the seed' for the development of art embroidery in the United States. The 'Artistic room' continued to work with the leading designers of the Aesthetic and Arts and Crafts Movements, producing several notable figurative embroideries including Burne-Jones's portières *Musica* and *Poesis*, which were frequently copied.<sup>24</sup>

From Bessie's perspective, this correspondence reveals how little the RSN could teach her about art embroidery. She comes across as a prickly professional who refused to compromise her standards, and who was less than adroit in managing her aristocratic employers. Had she shown more finesse, she might have achieved a pivotal role in the running of the School.

## NOTES

1. Linda Parry, *William Morris Textiles*, London: V&A Publishing, 2013, p. 29 (subsequently Parry); Norman Kelvin, ed, *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, Vol. I: 1848–1880, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 561 (subsequently Kelvin). On a personal level, Morris had little time for his sister-in-law (*Ibid.*, p. 172); See, for example, the *Lamb and Flag* altar frontal worked in 1868 for the restoration of Llandaff Cathedral (Parry, p. 23) and the figures of *Lucretia*, *Hyppolyte* and *Helen* from *The Legende of Good Wimmen* series, designed originally for the dining room at Red House in ca 1860 and sold as a three-panel screen to George Howard, 9th Earl of Carlisle in 1889 (Tim Barringer, Jason Rosenfeld & Alison Smith, *Pre-Raphaelites: Victorian Avant-Garde*, exhibition catalogue, London: Tate Publishing, 2012, p. 185). An embroidered floral binding found on a copy of

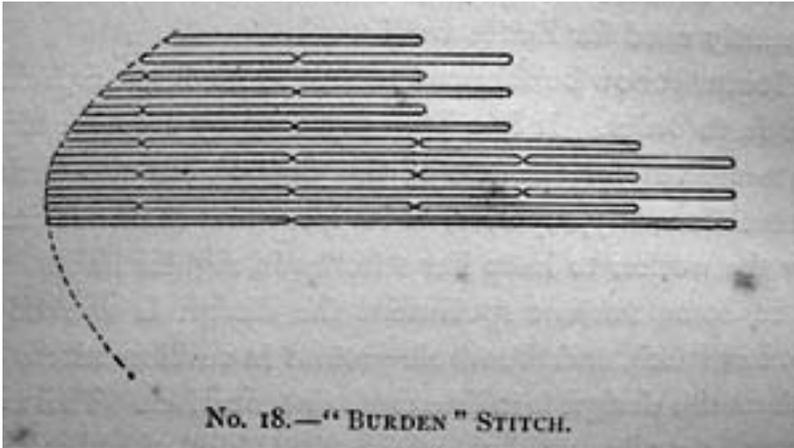


Figure 3. 'Burden Stitch', Letitia Higgin, *Handbook of Embroidery*, London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1880, p. 50. Photograph: Lynn Hulse.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Ballads and Sonnets* (1881), imitating the original gold stamped cover, has also been attributed to Bessie (National Library of New Zealand, REng ROSS Ball 1881); In 1880, Morris noted that Bessie had been employed for a number of years as an embroideress and 'arranger of such-like work', and was responsible for keeping 'troublesome & complicated accounts concerning designs, materials, & wages'; Kelvin, p. 561. In the 1881 UK census, she is described as 'Embroidress' (The [UK] National Archives [subsequently TNA] RG11/52/61/40); I am grateful to the Welby family for permission to publish material from their private papers (subsequently 'private collection').

2. Royal School of Needlework, Hampton Court Palace, Surrey, RSN Archive 136/5, Flyer for the School of Art Needlework, nd [October 1873]. For more information about the early years of the RSN, see my introductory essay to Letitia Higgin, ed, Lady Marian Alford, *Royal School of Needlework Handbook of Embroidery* (1880), East Molesey: Royal School of Needlework, 2010, p. 1–98 (subsequently Hulse).
3. Flyer for the School of Art Needlework, nd [October 1872]; private collection.
4. Anthea Callen, *Angel in the Studio: Women in the Arts and Crafts Movement 1870–1914*, London: Astragal Books, 1979, p. 101.

5. Jan Marsh, *Jane & May Morris: A biographical story, 1839–1938*, London: published by the author, 2000, p. III.
6. Elizabeth Burden to Mrs Welby, 21 December 1872 from 26 Queen Square, Bloomsbury; private collection.
7. Ditto, 30 December 1872 from The Vicarage, Clay Cross; private collection. Bessie had already informed Mrs Welby that she would be out of town for a fortnight from 23 December and was therefore unable to attend for interview before the latter's departure for Lincolnshire. Mrs Welby did not return to London until 3 February 1873.
8. At the time of the 1871 UK census, the building was occupied by Mary Amery, a widowed accountant, and her children (NA RG10/340/7/9). Within a decade, the singer Elizabeth Grundy and her family had moved into the property (RG11/321/6/7). Writing to Aglaia Coronio on 23 January 1873, Morris commented that one of the advantages of moving from Queen Square to Horrington House on Turnham Green Road was that the latter was too small for Bessie to continue living with the family; Kelvin, p. 176; RSN Archive 17, Admissions Register (1872–1922), p. 21. Mrs Davison thanked Mrs Welby in early February for sending her to Miss Burden; S. J. Davison to Mrs Welby, Thursday [6 or 13 February 1873]; private collection.
9. Obituary notice, *Liverpool Mercury*, 22 February 1873 (British Newspaper Archive, [www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk)); Elizabeth Burden to Mrs Welby, nd [20 February 1873] from 100 Southampton Row, Russell Square; private collection. In the archive at the William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow, is an empty envelope, postmarked 17 February 1873, addressed to Bessie at 26 Queen Square in Mrs Welby's hand and sent from her London home (PhJ902xxxix). The letter has not survived, but its contents must have fuelled Bessie's outburst; Bessie's letter ends with the comment that she had not seen Morris the Friday before and doubted whether he would have had much time to call on Mrs Welby. Keen to forge links with Morris, the School may have hoped that Bessie would act as go-between with her brother-in-law. In December 1872, the art furniture maker and RSN agent Henry Capel had approached Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. in order to enquire whether it would be interested in using outworkers from the RSN, but he received a negative response from George Wardle, the works' manager (Henry Capel to Mrs Welby, 13 and 17 December 1872 from 26 Great Titchfield Street, Langham Place; private collection).
10. Elizabeth Burden to Mrs Welby, Wednesday 26th [February 1873], from 100 Southampton Row, Russell Square; private collection.
11. In papers relating to the RSN for 1873, there is no record of a needlework exhibition being held at the South Kensington Museum. See also Eliza-

- beth James, *The Victoria & Albert Museum: A Bibliography and Exhibition Chronology, 1852–1996*, London: Fitzroy Dearborn in association with V&A Publications, 1998, 804 pp.; *Catalogue of the Special Loan Exhibition of Decorative Art Needlework made before 1800*, London: Chiswick Press, 1874, pp. v–vi (subsequently *Catalogue*). There is no mention of contemporary work in the catalogue or in the various newspaper reports of the exhibition; see, for example, *The Spectator*, 26 July 1873, pp. 951–952.
12. Mrs Welby to Elizabeth Burden, nd, from 10 West Eaton Place; private collection.
  13. Elizabeth Burden to Mrs Welby, 22 March 1873, from 100 Southampton Row, Russell Square; private collection.
  14. See Note 1; Parry, pp. 19–21; A. R. Dufty, *Morris Embroideries: The Prototypes*, London: The Society of Antiquaries, 1985, 52 pp. See, for example, the fragment from an altar frontal, 1470–1500, in Donald King & Santina Levey, *The Victoria and Albert Museum's Textile Collection: Embroidery in Britain from 1200 to 1750*, London: V&A Publications, 2001 rep., pp. 23 and 44.
  15. Princess Helena to Mrs Welby, 29 March 1873; private collection.
  16. Following her departure from the RSN, Bessie attempted to set up her own teaching establishment. On 13 April [1873 or 1874], she received a letter from Rossetti, sent from Kelmscott Manor, enclosing a postal order for an unspecified sum and offering to be 'a large Donor to your School' (William Morris Gallery J2098). The letter is not included in William E. Fredeman, ed, *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 9 vols, Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002–2010. The outcome of Bessie's enterprise is unrecorded.
  17. *The Queen*, Vol. 55, 25 April 1874, p. 335.
  18. RSN Archive 216, School of Art Needlework Minute Book, fols 74–75, 23 March 1875; Walter Crane, *An Artist's Reminiscences*, London: Methuen & Co., 1907, p. 164.
  19. Madeline Wyndham to Mrs Welby, nd [1875], from Sylvabelle, Hyères; private collection.
  20. In all probability, the 'Grand Pianoforte cover. Designed by Mr Wm. Morris. Ground Linen Worked in fine crewel worsted' cited in Lady Wharncliffe's list of embroidered work; Sheffield Archives Wh M 489, nd, late 19th century–1922. Also included are '2 Sofa backs worked in crewels on Russian Crash. Design taken from Morris's wall paper of Primroses and Columbines', 'one small cushion. Linen worked in yellow silks. Morris pattern' and '1 Long Sofa back. Worked in Silks on linen. Wm. Morris's design'. The latter may be identified as the 'Design for a Sofa-Back Cover' printed in Letitia Higgin, *Handbook of Embroidery*, London: Sampson Low, Marshall, Searle, & Rivington, 1880, p. 63, Plate 6 (subsequently Higgin). For more informa-

tion on this design, see Hulse, p. 44 and note 285. Lady Wharncliffe had served on the executive committee for the *Special Loan Exhibition of Decorative Art Needlework* (*Catalogue*, p. vi). She was married to Mrs Welby's cousin, Edward Montagu-Stuart-Wortley-Mackenzie, 3rd Baron Wharncliffe, who was a trustee of the RSN.

21. Both Morris & Co. and the RSN sold partially-worked kits with a small section of the design completed in the recommended technique as a guide for the customer to follow at home. (See, for example, the kit designed by May Morris, ca 1890s illustrated in Linda Parry, ed, *William Morris*, exhibition catalogue, London: Philip Wilson Publishers Ltd, 1996, p. 247, M.29); Hulse, pp. 27–28.
22. RSN Archive 119, Managing Committee Minutes (1875–1876), fol. 2. Bessie was paid £37 10s per quarter (RSN Archive 109, Receipts and Payments [1876–1877], entries dated 13 May 1876, 1st October 1876, 12 January 1877 and 12 April 1877): *Vice-President's Report to HRH the President and the Council of the Royal School of Art Needlework, for 1875*, London, 1876, pp. 2–3. According to the Admissions register, Bessie signed the certificate of three ladies trained at the RSN during the period 1875–77 (RSN Archive 17 pp. 108, 113 and 119); Higgin, pp. 49–50. Bessie may have first introduced the stitch to the RSN during February 1873; Hulse, pp. 40–41; May Morris, *Decorative Needlework*, London: Joseph Hughes & Co., 1893, pp. 36–37 (subsequently May Morris); W. G. Paulson Townsend, *Embroidery or The Craft of the Needle*, London & New York: Truslove, Hanson & Comba Ltd, 1899, pp. 96–97. The stitch is generally known today as 'brick' or 'brick satin' stitch; May Morris, *Ibid.*; The definition of Burden stitch described in Caulfeild & Seward's Victorian stitch primer as 'A variety of Cushion Stitch and Plain Couching, called "Burden", as it was used by a lady of that name at the South Kensington Needlework School [i.e. the RSN] for working flesh', differs from Higgin and May Morris in being worked over a foundation of horizontal laid lines, a technique still in use today. See S. F. A. Caulfeild & Blanche C. Seward, *The Dictionary of Needlework*, London: A. W. Cowan, 1887, 2nd edn, p. 56).
23. There is no evidence to support the view that Bessie became chief technical instructor of the RSN during 1880 (see Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris. A Life for our Time*, London: Faber & Faber, 1995, p. 360).
24. Candace Wheeler, *The Development of Embroidery in America*, New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1921, p. 107. In 1877, Wheeler set up the New York Society of Decorative Art, modelled on the RSN, and within a short space of time RSN-trained teachers were superintending schools of embroidery in cities across the country, including Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago and San Francisco; Hulse, pp. 37–39, Figs 18–19.

# The first Morris Society: Chicago, 1903–1905

*Florence S. Boos*

The first Morris Society (1903–1905), part of an Arts and Crafts movement in the American Midwest, antedated its longer-lived spiritual heirs in England, Canada and the United States by more than a half-century. Two sets of its *Bulletin's* original print run of a thousand copies remain, but its efforts to promote crafts, foster cooperatives, found a 'Morris Movement', and to offer lectures in settlement houses and elsewhere have been almost entirely forgotten.<sup>1</sup>

In the first *Bulletin*, a modest, neatly-printed, four page monthly newsletter which appeared during November 1903, its founders, among them Joseph Twyman (1842–1904) and Oliver Triggs (1865–1930), expressed these ambitious aims in more concrete terms: to encourage publication; organise an educational movement; maintain a museum, club-rooms and Morris library; and to encourage the founding of a larger network of workshops and schools of design, in keeping with the ideals of Chicago's Hull House and Northwestern University's Settlement House. This first issue listed seventy five charter members, and its successor in December forty nine more. Edmund J. James, former head of the University of Chicago's extension programme, and current president of the newly-founded Northwestern University (also located in Chicago), was the Society's first president, and its *six* vice-presidents included Ralph Radcliffe-Whitehead (recent founder of the Byrdcliffe Arts and Crafts Colony in Woodstock, New York State), William Ellis, co-founder of The Philosopher Press in Wausau, Wisconsin, and George MacLean, president of the University of Iowa, and an ardent defender of the creative arts as well as the experimental sciences.<sup>2</sup>

Triggs was the movement's secretary and its most active lecturer, and Joseph Twyman, a respected decorative artist and admirer of Morris, with whom he had become acquainted during a trip to England in 1883, its original *spiritus rector*. Other charter members included Gustav Stickley of the Craftsman Workshops, Richard Green Moulton, literary critic and University of Chicago Professor of Literary Theory and Interpretation, and Charles Zueblin, a socialist, University of Chicago sociologist and founder of Northwestern University's Arts and Crafts

style Settlement House. Sydney Cockerell sent a letter from England welcoming the new venture. This was printed as a separate, uncatalogued supplement to the March 1904 *Bulletin*, but is no longer extant.<sup>3</sup>

In the January *Bulletin*, Wallace Rice, a poet, anthologist and future literary collaborator of the famous Clarence Darrow, indicated the Society's potential, and its underlying ideals:

William Morris was emphatically a workman, and no one since the Carpenter of Nazareth has done more to exalt the dignity of handicraft. . . . It would seem on all these accounts as if the Morris Society, with members in all parts of the country, should be able to do something to bridge over the growing chasm between the classes and the masses by bringing the worker in literature and the finer arts into close contact with those whose concern is with the practical and essential arts, all working together for a common end. (pp. 3–4)<sup>4</sup>

The Society also organised a significant number of monthly lectures and what might now be called 'outreach' events—seventeen lectures on Morris's work and related topics were reported in the January issue, for example. Among the speakers listed were, as might be expected, Moulton, Twyman, Rice and Triggs, but also five women: Professor Cora McDonald from Colorado, Mrs Charles Zueblin, Mrs F.J. Hanchett, Mrs J.A. Wood, and Lillian M. Krinbill from Illinois. Dr Rachelle Yarros, an associate professor of obstetrics at the University of Chicago, who later became an author, settlement physician, and promoter of birth control, was an invited discussant in the Society's December meeting at the Art Institute. Twenty seven of the Society's one hundred and thirty nine original members were women who had joined independently, and thirty two more with their husbands. Mrs Martin Sherman of Milwaukee was the sole female among the original officers, but five women were members of its fifteen-member council. It also sought to foster ties with cooperatives, settlement houses, and Arts and Crafts ventures, among them the co-operative South Park Workshop Association and the Tobey Furniture Company (for whom Twyman had executed Morris & Co. designs), as well as sympathetic clergymen such as William J. McCaughan, pastor of Third Presbyterian Church, listed as scheduled to speak on William Morris on 15 January 1904.<sup>5</sup>

## JOSEPH TWYMAN

The *Bulletin* for December 1903 reported that during its first months the Society had helped establish a reading group in Montana and two branch-organisations in Ohio. In February 1904 it described 'a strong Morris movement' in Denver, Cañon City and Greeley, Colorado, which 'ar[ose] mainly from the lectures of

Eliza G. Kleinsorge of the Colorado State Normal School'.<sup>6</sup> Also during February, the *Bulletin* reported good wishes from the *Dial*, the *Artsman*, *Poet-Lore*, and the *Manual-Training Magazine*. The *Craftsman* meanwhile devoted a page and a half of its August 1903 issue to a description of the newly-formed Society's aims, as expressed by Joseph Twyman:

It seems to me that the day is nearer to the Morris Society period than that of the Shakespeare or the Browning; for William Morris wrote of Life and Work, of Beauty and Love, and lived all besides. We of today . . . are looking, hoping, working for that Brotherhood which makes men considerate of their neighbor, all occupations pleasurable as well as useful, and each one willing to do his part toward making the world cleaner in spirit, more lovely and more just altogether. In this endeavor surely we can turn to no fellowship more profitably than to that of William Morris. (p. 394)<sup>7</sup>

A British-born poet, decorative craftsman, and advocate of Morris's ideals for 'the lesser arts', Twyman emigrated to Chicago shortly after 1870, and during later years became the chief designer for the Tobey Furniture Company, for whom he created a memorial Morris Room with textiles, wallpapers, and Burne-Jones windows.<sup>8</sup> His death in June 1904 dealt the Society a near-mortal blow, for the *Bulletin* (July 1904, p. 2) noted that he had been 'its most efficient adviser and by far its most active recruiter'. Contributors to the memorial June issue explained why:

A friend has written . . . of the charm of Mr. Twyman's character. His friends and neighbors felt this quality, this unsophistication of spirit, the charm of modesty, of candor, and of enthusiastic love of the things in which he was most interested. [Rev. Frederic Dewhurst]

He gave to tools a new beauty. He loved his tools as a naturalist loves flowers. Through his work the hands of a master craftsman become the most wonderful creation . . . The influence of such men as William Morris and Joseph Twyman upon their times means an increasing eagerness of the people to possess the things that are beautiful and artistic . . . [Chicago *Record-Herald*]

In his own crafts, in encouraging the planting of trees and shrubs in cities, in conversation, and on the lecture platform, his enthusiasm, and yet almost childlike gentleness, made him very forceful and persuasive. He fought the unending battle against ugliness and sordidness in any form. [Dr. Martin Schütze, Chicago *Evening Post*]<sup>9</sup>

Plans were announced after his death to preserve the Morris Room as Twyman had created it, and to publish a small volume of his poems later in the year, but a proposal to bring out a volume of his essays or designs was never realised.<sup>10</sup>

## OSCAR LOVELL TRIGGS

Oscar Triggs, who assumed the Society's presidency after Twyman's death, had earned a PhD from the University of Chicago in 1895 for a dissertation on John Lydgate's 'Assembly of Gods', but his chief interests lay in the social and the social-ist implications of the Arts and Crafts movement. An instructor in the Extension Division of the University of Chicago's English department from 1895 to 1903, he had been a founding member of the Industrial Arts League in 1899 and an editor of the works of Walt Whitman and other literary figures. Triggs had lived in England for three years before earning his doctorate, and had taken the occasion to make at least two visits to Merton Abbey, where on meeting Morris he had 'felt in the presence of a vital personality, who was in love with labor and all the life of the world'.<sup>11</sup>

He was also the author of several books, among them *Browning and Whitman: A Study in Democracy* (1893); *The New Industrialism: Industrial Art* (1902), co-authored with Wilburn S. Jackson and Frank Lloyd Wright; *The Changing Order: A Study of Democracy* (1905); and *Chapters in the History of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (1902), published by the Bohemia Guild of the Industrial Arts League (Figure 1), from which the Illinois 'Daughters of the Revolution' (NB: *not* the 'Daughters of the American Revolution') extracted *William Morris*, a forty-six page pamphlet which appeared in 1905. During his *floruit*, Triggs seems to have been whirlwind of energy (Figure 2), and in the words of historian T.J. Jackson Lears, 'With his deep eyes, bushy moustache, and earnest manner, he became a familiar figure on public platforms throughout the Midwest'.<sup>12</sup>

Triggs's exposition of Morris's views and belief in their ability to transform art were forcefully expressed in *Chapters*, a synthesis of its subject which included essays on Carlyle and Ruskin, followed by an eighty-three-page study of Morris's life and ideals, interspersed with quotations from essays unavailable to most of his American contemporaries, and graced with a final tribute by Walter Crane. Triggs argued for the unity of Morris's political and artistic endeavours, animated by his conviction that 'an implicit socialism may be understood as always abiding at the heart of [Morris's] life', (p. 89) for 'without a definite socialism his craftsmanship would have been wanting its motive, and without material craft his art would have been attenuated to the merest symbolism of dream'. (p. 63)

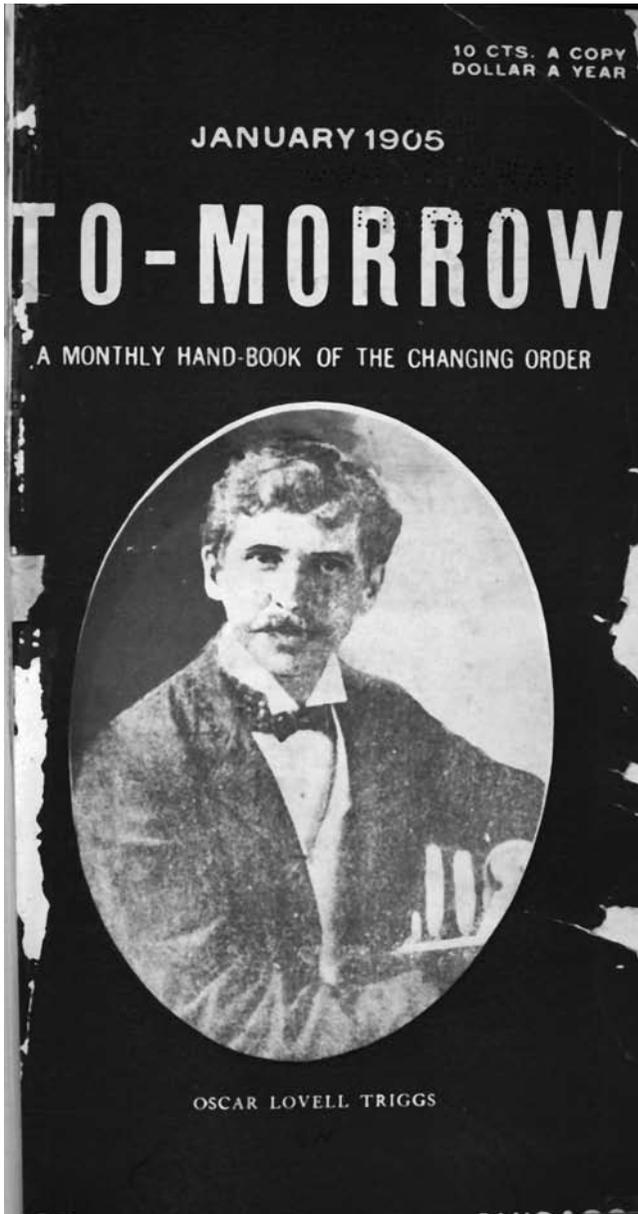
Unfortunately, Triggs was also the victim of undesired publicity. In October 1900, the ultra-conservative *Chicago Tribune*, and other newspapers, began to harass Triggs (married to the sister of Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of the Treasury), ostensibly after he had sardonically claimed that John D. Rockefeller (founding donor of the University of Chicago) was 'as great a genius as Shakespeare'. When in 1903 the *New York Sun* derided one of Triggs's lectures, he successfully sued the newspaper in a lower court, but the judgment went to appeal. Before the



Figure 1—Frontispiece of Oscar Lovell Triggs’s *Chapters in the History of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, Chicago: Bohemia Guild of the Industrial Art League, 1902.

New York Court of Appeals, future Supreme Court justice Louis Brandeis and his law partner Samuel Warren argued that ‘the articles in question ... are clearly defamatory in character and are libelous *per se*’, but the court was unmoved, even finding the attacks humorous, and Triggs was fired shortly after by the University of Chicago in February 1904 (Figure 3).<sup>13</sup>

The thirty-nine-year-old Triggs had therefore been deprived of his life work and his source of income, a blow which endangered the Society and its precarious resources. Even during better times, it had not been affluent: the May 1904 *Bulletin* reported that the Society had taken in \$523.00 during the preceding year, leaving a current balance after disbursements of \$80.59, with a worrisome \$355 of unpaid dues. In October the Society reported that membership for artists, craftsmen and teachers would henceforth be one dollar instead of five, and in February 1905 the *Bulletin* announced that at the next annual meeting the fee for full membership would be reduced for all. It was presumably obvious to everyone



*Figure 2 – Front cover of To-Morrow January 1905 with photograph of Oscar Lovell Triggs.*

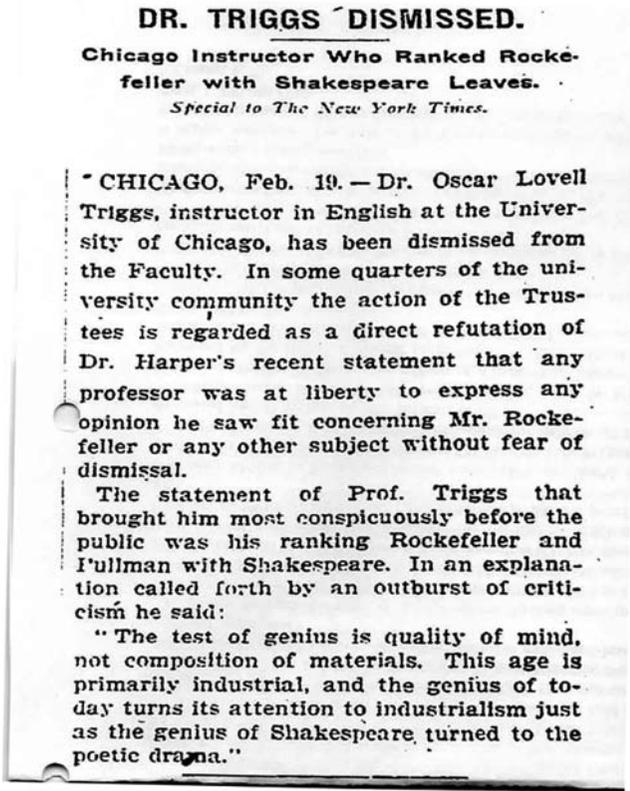


Figure 3 — Report from New York Times (Chicago, 19 February 1904) recording the dismissal of Oscar Lovell Triggs from the University of Chicago.

that a single dollar would not support an independent *Bulletin* and the Society's educational aims.

In the event, no annual meeting took place, and the last *Bulletin* in February 1905 (p. 1) reported that henceforth the Society would use *To-Morrow* (then edited by Triggs) 'as a medium of publication'. But the only such notice seems to have been an April 1905 announcement of an exhibition of Joseph Twyman's work arranged by the Chicago Architectural Society at the Chicago Art Institute. By April, the editorship of *To-Morrow* had been assumed by Parker H. Sercombe

(1866–1935), a former banker in Mexico, who had briefly shared Triggs's plans for a co-operative 'industrial college'.<sup>14</sup> The May issue announced that

Dr. Oscar L. Triggs [has] resigned his connection with the *To-Morrow* Magazine to take up new work in another field. In this number Parker H. Sercombe gives editorially an outline of his message to humanity. (p. 48)

With Triggs's departure, 'The Strange Case of Triggs', an article announced as 'forthcoming', in which the latter proposed to discuss 'the double personality wrought by the imps of publicity', failed to appear, and during ensuing months, *To-Morrow's* references to Triggs became less favourable. The August 1905 issue reprinted a somewhat condescending account of his lawsuit which included a sarcastically worded attack on Triggs as a plaintiff. A dismissive notice in December of his *The Changing Order: A Study in Democracy* reproved him severely for his alleged advocacy of 'race suicide' (birth control).<sup>15</sup>

As for Sercombe's forays into 'reform' in the new-model *To-Morrow*, these consisted largely of self-promotion, advertisements for his own printers' cooperative, and a general call for industrial education. Little or no mention of Morris, the Arts and Crafts, or socialism appeared in its pages, and its title morphed from *To-Morrow: A Magazine of the Changing Order* to *To-Morrow: A Magazine for Progressive People*, *To-Morrow: A Magazine for People Who Think*, and finally, *To-Morrow: A Rational Monthly Magazine*, before it disappeared entirely in 1909.<sup>16</sup>

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The founders of the 'Morris Movement' which flourished briefly in farthest America only seven years after Morris's death sought to emulate his efforts to foster art, labour, and education in an egalitarian society. This first Morris Society achieved its immediate goals in sponsoring lectures, distributing educational materials, and encouraging its members and affiliates to study relevant writings by Morris and kindred authors. Its desire for an edition of all of Morris's writings was fulfilled a decade later by publication of the *Collected Works* of 1910–1915. Like other short-lived cognate undertakings of the period, such as the Bohemia Guild, the Industrial Arts League, and Stickley's Craftsman Farms, the first Morris Society provided a meeting place for reform-minded art lovers, craftspeople of different occupations, and others attracted to ideals of fellowship and social justice.

When the William Morris Society as we know it today was initiated, in London in 1955, the U.S. in 1971, and Canada in 1981, it most unlikely that its founders gave much thought to any predecessors. Yet the 'Morris Movement' formed directly after his death had interpreted his ideals deeply, as efforts to intertwine

art, labour, and education in an egalitarian society. No colonial outlier but an autonomous band of artists and reformists, its legacy remained in the progressive ideals of a Midwestern Arts and Crafts tradition in the succeeding generation.<sup>17</sup>

NOTES

1. The nineteenth century *fin de siècle* saw the rise of an Arts and Crafts movement in the United States. The Chicago Arts and Crafts Society was founded in 1897 by Frank Lloyd Wright, the Industrial Arts League of Chicago in 1899 by Oscar Lovell Triggs and others. Cognate organisations included The Crafters (1901–1906), the Bohemia Guild of the Industrial Art League (1902–1904), the Chicago Ceramic Association (1892–1915), and the Craftsman's Guild (1900–1910). For an intellectual history of the movement, see Bruce Kahler, 'Art and Life: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Chicago, 1897–1910', unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana, 1986 (afterwards Kahler). The Morris Society is discussed on pp. 90–95. Print runs of the *Bulletin* may be found in the Newberry Library and the University of Chicago. Extant issues of *To-Morrow* (see below) are held at the Newberry Library, the University of Chicago Library, and the Chicago Public Library.
2. Its address was listed on its masthead from February 1904 onwards as issued at 5634 Madison Avenue, Chicago. At the time, this was Oscar Triggs's residence. George McLean (1850–1938), served as president of the State University of Iowa from 1899–1911.
3. Among Richard Green Moulton's books were *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* (1893), *The Literary Study of the Bible* (1895), and *World Literature and Its Place in General Culture* (1911). Zueblin was the author of *American Municipal Progress* (1902), *A Decade of Civic Development* (1905), and *The Religion of the Democrat* (1908). The Northwestern University Settlement was founded in 1891 in order to help the poor of Chicago's West Side; the present Arts and Crafts style building at 1400 West Augusta Boulevard, designed in 1901 by the architects Pond and Pond, has been designated a Chicago Landmark. An article by Zueblin's wife Rho Fisk Zueblin, which describes the couple's visit to Merton Abbey as her 'most hopeful and inspiring day in England', is discussed in Kahler, pp. 83–86; see also pp. 234–281.
4. Wallace Rice's remarks are most probably taken from his 18 December 1904 address on 'The Social Aspect of the Morris Movement', *Bulletin of the Morris Society* I, 2 December 1903, p. 1.
5. Cora Martin McDonald had been a history instructor and head of the Academic Department at the State University of Wyoming; an essay by her

- appears in *The Congress of Women*, 1893. Mrs Charles Zueblin (Rho Fisk Zueblin; see Note 3) was active in the University of Chicago Service League, comprised of women supporters of the Mary McDowell Settlement House. Lillian M. Krinbill was a primary school teacher in Princeton, Illinois, and Rachele Yarros a physician, advocate of sex education and birth control, later worker at Hull House, and author of *Modern Women and Sex* (1933) and *Sex Problems and Modern Society* (1935). Her husband Victor, an anarchist, was the law partner of the famous jurist Clarence Darrow, who later defended Oscar Triggs in his 1907 divorce case; *Bulletin*, November 1903, pp. 3–4, December 1903, pp. 3–4. Women members of the Council were Mrs H.M. Wilmarth, Mrs W. Franklin Coleman, Mrs A.D. Bevan, Mrs Emmons Blaine, and Mrs. W.D. MacClintock. Of eight committees, two were chaired by women: Membership by Mrs W. Franklin Coleman, and Library by Mrs. H.M. Wilmarth ... Mrs Wilmarth is listed as a 1907 vice-president of the Chicago Twentieth Century Club. Mrs Emmons Blaine (Anita McCormick Blaine) was a daughter of Cyrus McCormick and donor to the University of Chicago, which named the Emmons Simmons Hall after her deceased husband. Mrs MacClintock is reported as giving a lecture at the University of Chicago Women's Union in 1907; *Bulletin*, January 1904, p. 3. McCaughan was pastor of Third Presbyterian Church from 1898 to 1907. In a sermon commemorating the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of John Knox, he is recorded as commending Knox as a pioneer in proposing a system of general education, and for suggesting that church wealth should be divided into three categories: 'one third to be used to maintain the ministry, the second to care for the poor, and the third to educate the people'; Philo Adams Otis, *The First Presbyterian Church, 1833–1913: A History of the Oldest Organization in Chicago*, Chicago: F. H. Revell, 1913, p. 140.
6. The May 1904 *Bulletin* reported one hundred and seventy-five members, and noted its publications: five thousand leaflets, one thousand copies each of an article by William Ellis and letter from Sydney Cockerell, five hundred copies of a 'Program on the Life of William Morris' by Dr. Martin Schütze, and two hundred copies of 'A List of Books on Industrial Art', co-published with the Crerar Library (then independent; now a scientific and technological library operated by the University of Chicago).
  7. The editor of the *Craftsman*, George Wharton James, in turn lectured to the Morris Society in December 1904 (Figure 4). The *Bulletin* (December 1904, p. 2) reported that 'Mr. James has caught the vital spark of enthusiasm for art and humanity that made Morris great'.
  8. Dr Martin Schütze described the Morris Room in the June 1904 *Bulletin*: 'The chandeliers, curtain clasps, endirons, all in copper, and the carved mantel were designed by Joseph Twyman; the panels in the cupboard and

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DECEMBER, 1904

No. 2

LECTURE BY DR. O. L. TRIGGS

The lecture upon "William Morris and His Art," announced in the November *Bulletin*, was duly delivered on December 8 by Dr. O. L. Triggs to a thoroughly interested audience. The slides proved to be excellent, and, if only their interpreters be as well informed in the letter and as congenial with the spirit of the great Morris as Dr. Triggs showed himself to be on this occasion, future exhibitions of them will greatly promote the movement for which the Morris Society stands. The slides are at the disposal of any member of the Morris Society for one week at a charge of five cents per slide.

LECTURE BY GEORGE WHARTON JAMES

On December 15 the Morris Society was so fortunate as to secure another lecture upon Morris, this time from Mr. George W. James, so widely and favorably known as editor of *The Craftsman*. The lecturer devoted himself expressly to the personal aspect of the great poet, craftsman, and reformer; and thus showed in most interesting fashion the entire mental soil out of which the superlative traits of Morris could grow. The lecture will appear in full in the coming

Figure 4—Morris Society Bulletin, December 1904. Courtesy of the Newberry Library, Chicago.

over the mantel, painted by Miss Louise Twyman, his daughter, were under his direction. The hangings and wall paper are original Morris materials'. (p. 4) Joseph Twyman was the designer of Villa Louis, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, now a National Historic Landmark. For another description of the Morris Room, and Twyman's role in promoting Morris's ideals, see Kahl-er, pp. 73-75, 268-74. Twyman found Morris's art 'like a flash of lightning appearing in a heavy-laden, troubled sky; a flash so bright ... as to illumine

- the earth from then to now, and still on into an immeasurable distance of futurity'. (Kahler, p. 74)
9. From the funeral sermon by the Reverend Frederic E. Dewhurst, pastor of the University Congregational Church of Chicago, *Morris Society Bulletin*, June 1904, pp. 2–3. Other tributes were reprinted from the *Chicago Record-Herald* and the *Chicago Evening Post*, pp. 3–5.
  10. His *Poems* seems to have appeared in 1904. See J.T. White, 1906, *Cyclopedia of American Biography*, Vol. 13, p. 199.
  11. It was doubtless Triggs who, after Twyman's death, decided to incorporate the *Morris Society Bulletin* into *To-Morrow: A Monthly Hand-Book of the Changing Order*, of which he was then the editor. He disappeared from cultural history shortly thereafter, for reasons set out here and in the sequel to this article (Helsing, this volume pp.49–50). Triggs's PhD was published by the University of Chicago Press, 1895; Triggs, *The Changing Order: A Study in Democracy*, Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1906, pp. 127–28, as cited in Kahler, p. 83. For a discussion of Triggs's writings, see Kahler, pp. 76–83, 177–231. The son of a Methodist minister and his wife, Triggs was born on 2 October 1865 in Greenwood, Illinois. He spent several years on a farm in southern Minnesota, and earned a B.A. and an M.A. at the University of Minnesota before attending the University of Chicago.
  12. *Browning and Whitman: A Study in Democracy* was issued by the radical London publisher Swan Sonnenschein in 1893, *The New Industrialism: Industrial Art in Chicago* by the National League of Industrial Art, and *The Changing Order: A Study of Democracy* by C.H. Kerr, a Chicago publisher of labour-movement and socialist titles. The essay extracted from *Chapters* was also published in 1905 by the 'Oscar L. Triggs Publishing Co.' at 358 Dearborn Street, then Triggs's address. For the description of Triggs, see T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981, p. 67.
  13. *New York Times*, 20 October 1900. Another *Times* article, 'Prof. Triggs on Literature' (Chicago, July 17), found it newsworthy that Triggs had told a literature class that many hymns were 'doggerel' (For discussion of this incident, see Kahler, pp. 181–84). In the absence of evidence it is difficult to state the precise grounds for Triggs's dismissal. In *Worshipping Walt: The Whitman Disciples* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 279) Michael Robertson has claimed, achronologically, that Triggs was dismissed for including Whitman in his lectures during the 1890s. In 1905, *To-Morrow* cited an article noting that the publicity surrounding his court case was the cause of his dismissal (and the dates would seem to support this), but other newspaper articles claim that the publicity surrounding his Shakespeare/Rockefeller comparison (part of a critique of literary lionisation of past

authors) had been the motive.

Four years later, in 1907, after Triggs's divorce (see below), *The San Francisco Call* of 11 April 1908 ran an article entitled 'Triggs of Free Love Fame is Again Married' which reported that 'unconventional ideas relative to the subject of love of woman had brought about his exile', and caused him to be 'branded as an iconoclast'. In reporting his firing, the *New York Times* noted with amusement that the university's action contravened the claim of its president William Rainer Harper that 'any professor was at liberty to express any opinion he saw fit concerning Mr. Rockefeller or any other subject without fear of dismissal' (20 February 1905). As is made clear in Walter Metzger, *Academic Freedom in the Age of the University*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1961, Chapter 4, 'Academic Freedom and Big Business', Harper's claim was at least disingenuous. Whatever or whoever brought about Triggs's dismissal, a *Tribune* article of May 1906 quoted Triggs's wistful remark that he had been 'almost ruined for life by newspaper notoriety [much of it generated by the *Tribune* itself] ... I am not a sensationalist. I just want to live my life quietly and to do my duty and what good I can, but they won't let me'.

A contemporary analysis of the motives for these attacks appears in Upton Sinclair's *The Brass Check: A Study of American Socialism* (n. p., 1919). After noting that (on the basis of no evidence whatsoever) Triggs had been charged with promiscuity and even cruelty to his wife, Sinclair comments, 'No radical in America can be divorced without being gutted, skinned alive, and placed in the red-hot gridiron of Capitalist Journalism' (pp. 334–35). Sinclair had also interviewed Triggs, who remarked that 'no one could stand up against this kind of attack and retain a position in a conventional university ... It is a poor way to treat human material, but so be it'. (*Idem*).

For an account of the appeal, see Floyd Abrams, *Friend of the Court: On the Front Lines with the First Amendment*, New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2013, pp. 237–38. Triggs's was one of several notable apparently politically-motivated dismissals from the University of Chicago and other institutions during this period, prompting the founding of the American Association of University Professors.

14. The April issue included an essay by Triggs about William Morris's Oxford days, almost certainly designed as the first part of a series. It did not end with the statement that it was to be continued, however, and no further segments appeared. Sercombe appears in several accounts of banking, Mexico, and of patent disputes; see William Greenleaf, *Monopoly on Wheels: Henry Ford and the Seldon Automobile Patent*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011, p. 123, and John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolutions: The Americans in Mexico Since the Civil War*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, pp.

- 102–104. The ‘industrial college’ was to be located on Sercombe’s premises on Calumet Avenue.
15. ‘The suit for damages which Mr. Triggs (formerly editor of *To-Morrow Magazine*), brought against a New York paper on the ground that its factious criticism of him had been the occasion of his loss of a professorship at the Chicago University [as we have seen, this was likely not the case, but the reverse], has been accorded Mr. Triggs with six cents damages—and nothing more saturnine could have been devised. The scornful laughed deep in their throats; perhaps some members of the English Department with which the professor was once associated laughed too—they who had never been ridiculed, and know not the torment of it! . . . And now, in a current periodical, occurs a characterization, more clever and more cruel than anything that has yet been written about the little man. “A Triggs”, says the writer, “if we may attempt a definition, is a man who aspires to an egregiousness far beyond the limits of his nature. He is a fugitive from the commonplace, but without means of effecting his escape”’. (From *Reader Magazine*, ‘What They Say’, p. 50); ‘Nemesis got hot after Triggs when she ran him up against Sercombe Himself—calamity? I think so. But she biffed him below the belt when she allowed him to go into court because a penny-a-liner intimated that he was a geezer. Nobody can make you ridiculous but yourself. And the man who goes to law to get revenge is as big a fool as one who goes to law for money’. (‘The Informal Brotherhood’, p. 51)
16. After his dismissal, according to the *Tribune* (25 May 1906, p. 5) Triggs briefly wrote copy for a ‘Wabash Avenue furniture company’ (the Tobey Furniture Company at the corner of Wabash and Clinton Streets). On 11 April 1908 the *San Francisco Call*, which announced his marriage in 1908 to Ada Beall Cox (1869–1946), a former student in one of his courses who had obtained a postgraduate degree in social work at the University of Chicago, described Triggs as having settled in California, where he ‘is writing and farming’, and quoted his mother-in-law’s report that after his dismissal Triggs had ‘engaged in settlement work’ in Philadelphia and New York, and worked briefly for a newspaper in Canton, Ohio before moving to California. An article in the *Spokesman Review* (14 April 1908) noted that Triggs was the son of a Methodist pastor in Watsonville, California, and was ‘working out his farm ideas’ and writing in nearby Turlock, California.
17. Janette Knowles, ‘The Arts and Crafts Movement’, in *The American Midwest: An Interpretive Encyclopedia*, Andrew L. Cayton, Richard Sisson, & Chris Zacher, eds, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006, pp. 556–557.

# ‘A Vestibule of Song’: Morris and Burne-Jones in Chicago

*Elizabeth Helsinger*

Two narrow windows, either side of the doorway from street to vestibule, guard the main sanctuary of the Arts and Crafts interior of the Second Presbyterian Church of Chicago.<sup>1</sup> Morris & Co. stained glass is rare in the United States beyond the East Coast, but these windows are lovely examples of designs used multiple times by ‘the Firm’ in other commissions, primarily in Anglican churches in England. Burne-Jones’s slender, haunting female figures represent two virgin saints of early Christian Rome and Antioch martyred for their faith; Saints Cecilia and Margaret. Cecilia is dressed in deep blues; her body, forming the S-curve of medieval paintings, and shown in three-quarter view, stands against a background design of realistically-rendered, deep-green lemon-tree leaves with their fruit; blue-green grass grows under her feet. Margaret, robed in shades of deep red, and holding a green palm of martyrdom by her right side, strides toward the viewer. She is shown against a visually very different background of stylised foliage painted on diamond-shaped lozenges of clear glass. Each saint is accompanied by her identifying attribute. Cecilia, long invoked as a patron of music, carries a small portable organ. Beneath Margaret’s feet lies a magnificently-coiling dragon, reminding viewers that she has been miraculously disgorged from its satanic jaws; she was often invoked as protector by women in childbirth. Irregularly-shaped panes of richly coloured glass, in some places overpainted with delicate patterned detail, have been fitted together in order to construct both windows.<sup>2</sup>

What are these windows doing in a nineteenth-century Presbyterian church in the American Midwest? Why these particular saints? Indeed, why are Anglo-Catholic saints there at all? In what follows I wish to tease from the history of these windows a less familiar story about music as it unites Morris, Burne-Jones, and a church in Chicago. Morris & Co.’s prestige in visual design, together with accidents of circumstance which made these windows available, certainly played a large role in their transatlantic journey. Yet as I hope to show, it is particularly appropriate that Saints Cecilia and Margaret should stand in the vestibule of this

church, as lasting testimony both to the long friendship between their creators, and to the influence of Ruskin, Morris, and Burne-Jones in turn-of-the-century Chicago.

Saint Cecilia may today be most familiar in England from the poetry and the music she inspired during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as the *Ode to St Cecilia* first performed at the Musical Society of London's annual celebration of her name day, 22 November 1692. The music, by Henry Purcell, is probably better known than the text, by the Irishman Nicholas Brady. Brady's lyrics are based, however, on John Dryden's 'A Song for St. Cecilia's Day', written during 1687, and later set to music by George Frederick Handel. Handel's oratorio was composed for another London Musical Society's St Cecilia's Day celebration, in 1739. Brady's text, like Dryden's, invokes Cecilia as the presiding saint of a more than earthly music:

Hail! Bright Cecilia, Hail! Fill ev'ry Heart!  
With Love of thee and thy Celestial Art. [lines 1–2]<sup>3</sup>

Her 'Celestial Art' is inspired by a sacred harmony – the music of the spheres 'Who in the Heavenly Round to their own Music move' [line 28]. Cecilia's own instrument, however, is the organ:

With that sublime Celestial Lay  
Can any Earthly Sounds compare?  
If any Earthly Music dare,  
The noble Organ may. [29–32]

Brady's Saint Cecilia (and Dryden's) 'oft convers'd with Heaven', listening to 'Some Angel of the Sacred Choir' who 'Did with his Breath the Pipes inspire;/ And of their Notes above the just Resemblance gave' [34–37]. The organ which Cecilia plays is thus a sacred imitation, reproducing the sound which is ordinarily inaudible to mortal ears, of the moving celestial spheres. According to theory attributed to the ancient Greek mathematician Pythagoras to which these late seventeenth-century works allude, such resonance was thought to be derived from mathematical relationships which govern both the vibrations of musical tones and movements of sun, moon, earth, and stars. The celestial music imitated by the tones of Cecilia's organ therefore neatly combines ancient Greek science with the story of an angel-conversing Christian saint.

Visual representations of Cecilia almost always include some reference to music. While a number of Renaissance paintings depict her with a lute or viol (instruments common at the time), she is more frequently shown, as in the Burne-Jones window design, with an organ, often a small or portative instrument which can be held next to the body with one hand and played with the other. Probably the most famous image of this type is Raphael's 'St Cecilia' altarpiece,

widely reproduced in engravings.<sup>4</sup> Raphael's Cecilia is depicted at the moment when she supposedly turns away from earthly music in a kind of religious trance, as if moved by an unsounded music. She has let drop her arms, still holding her organ, while raising her head to heaven, and a cloud of angels who sing from an open book; other instruments lie discarded at her feet, as if she exclaimed, 'With that sublime Celestial Lay/Can any Earthly Sounds compare?'

Association of Cecilia with music does not however, enter her story until the late thirteenth century. Identification of her music with the organ may also be based on a creative misreading of a medieval text describing the crucial scene of the saint's communications with her guardian angel. One of the best-known and earliest accounts of her life is Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*, printed in Latin *ca* 1290, and in English by William Caxton in 1483. A few years later, Geoffrey Chaucer followed Caxton's text closely when, in *The Canterbury Tales*, he retold Cecilia's story as the 'Second Nun's Tale'. In Caxton's translation, the *Golden Legend* describes the relevant scene thus: 'and hearing the organs making melody, she sang in her heart only to God'.<sup>5</sup> The phrase translated as 'in her heart', or 'silently', is, in the Latin text, *organis*, which refers to the organ of human of speech or singing, the voice. During Cecilia's sacred conversation, she turns away from the musicians playing around her: she is speaking or singing with God alone. But Chaucer, following Caxton, seizes on the confusing term 'organ' in order to insert organ music into the scene and, moreover, to imply for that music a more direct role in Cecilia's trance:

And whil the *organs* maden melodie,  
To God allone in herte thus sang she.<sup>6</sup>

The sound of organ music in Chaucer's tale thus moves Cecilia to turn to celestial music: to the unheard music of the spheres, as Dryden, Brady, Purcell, and Handel would have it, or perhaps just to the silent conversation of her heart with God.

Morris and Burne-Jones shared an early enthusiasm both for the *Golden Legend* and for *The Canterbury Tales*; their several designs for Cecilia most probably reference these medieval versions rather than those of Raphael, Dryden, Purcell, or Handel. But the patron saint of music and her unlikely associate in Chicago, that other virgin martyr Margaret, held additional personal resonance for both men. If art was one ground of their long, close friendship and working partnership, music, particularly the older music of the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries, both sacred and secular, was another. Soon after the two met as undergraduates at Oxford, both joined the newly-formed Oxford Plain Song Society, whose initial meeting took place, for obvious symbolic reasons, on St Cecilia's Day, 22 November 1853. For several years, Morris and Burne-Jones (then plain Jones) regularly attended the Society's meetings, which brought together music-lovers with very

diverse church affiliations (or none at all), all dedicated to revival of early music. They also sang plain song at nearby St Thomas Church.

Burne-Jones was unusually sensitive to music. His tastes in later life were broad – from the street music of wandering Italians with their hand organs, to Meyerbeer and Wagner – but his boyhood exposure to cathedral music in his native Birmingham shaped a particular love for early music, both sacred and secular. Perhaps most important of all, before he had ever met Morris, he had encountered Georgiana Macdonald, a gifted musician of eclectic tastes who was to become his wife, and Morris's closest woman friend. Georgie's playing and singing soon became central to the circle around Morris, Burne-Jones, and Rossetti.

St Margaret and her dragon are not normally companions of Cecilia. But Margaret was the name of the Burne-Jones's only daughter (born 1866), whom he adored. Although he painted few portraits, his painting of his daughter is one of Burne-Jones's most lovely works.<sup>7</sup> It seems to embody his vision of beauty as a young, virginal, girl, just on the cusp of adulthood, and a little saddened by that knowledge (like Gerard Manley Hopkins's Margaret in 'Spring and Fall', perhaps). Margaret Burne-Jones was also the model for the face of a different Saint Margaret window, designed by her father for St Margaret's Church, Rottingdean, Sussex, where the Burne-Joneses owned a much-loved second home.<sup>8</sup>

Saint Margaret, while not as frequent a subject in the stained-glass work of 'the Firm' as Saint Cecilia, was nonetheless a popular figure. The design used in the Chicago window appears in a number of other places in England, including St Peter's Church, Bramley, Yorkshire (installed 1882), and Holy Trinity, Sloane Square, London (1894–5). In none of these examples, however, except that in Chicago, does Margaret stand beside Cecilia. Yet we know that Burne-Jones did envision his daughter Margaret in ways which link her to music. While his portrait of Georgiana shows their two adolescent children in the background gathered around Philip's easel (Philip too became a painter), he also made a careful family portrait drawing, probably during the later 1870s, which shows Georgiana seated at the piano with Margaret and Philip standing beside her, the three of them intent on the music open before them.<sup>9</sup> Margaret is also recognisably one of the white-robed young girls singing and playing musical instruments who slowly descend *The Golden Stairs* (1876–80), the monumental painting now in Tate Britain which for many is one of Burne-Jones's signature works.<sup>10</sup> Margaret held an important place in her father's visual conception of musical melody.

Morris too had discovered the pleasures of early music before he arrived at Oxford. He already knew something *via* his mother's family about the music still sung in Anglican Cathedrals: his maternal grandfather taught church music, and two uncles were 'singing canons' at Worcester Cathedral, and at Westminster Abbey. But Morris fell in love with revived early music while still a pupil at Marl-

borough, the 'new and very rough' school he attended during the late 1840s and early 1850s. Marlborough, which practised 'high' or catholic-inflected Anglicanism influenced by the Tractarian or Oxford Movement, had soon adopted in its chapel (where daily attendance was mandatory) musical and architectural tastes derived from the medieval church. As Morris's first biographer (Burne-Jones's son-in-law and Margaret's husband, J. W. Mackail) put it, 'the older church music appealed to him with a force only less than that of medieval architecture'.<sup>11</sup> Even before Morris left Oxford, he had visited and knew intimately the remains of gothic buildings all over southern England and northern France, where he not only viewed the celebrated medieval cathedrals, but also collected old tunes from at least one cathedral organist.

The two friends' early embrace of plain song – another term for Gregorian Chant – put Morris and Burne-Jones in the vanguard of changing musical as well as visual tastes.<sup>12</sup> Plain song – a form of musical chanting to a few reciting-notes, usually by male voices singing unaccompanied and in unison, not to a tune written in ordinary musical measures of equal time, but flexibly adapted to the rhythmic emphases and inflections required to sound, musically, the words of an individual text – had been the music of the medieval church throughout Europe. Its revival during the 1840s and 1850s in England was part of the larger Oxford movement, designed to restore some of the older faith and ritual practices of the medieval church to the contemporary Anglican Church.

The movement set out not only to reintroduce earlier beliefs and practises, but also the musical and visual beauty associated with older ritual. During the sweeping and often violently iconoclastic and anti-Catholic reforms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, most churches in England had been roughly stripped of architectural embellishments – and of their music. Unlike the great medieval churches which survived everywhere in Catholic countries such as France, Italy, or Spain, English churches during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were often austere expanses of grey stone, their former stained glass, sculptures, paintings, and textiles destroyed or defaced as 'popish'. The monks and priests who once conducted musical services where liturgy and psalms were not spoken but sung, who had also sung and even commissioned new music, were also gone. Except for the great, now-Anglican cathedrals which maintained trained boys' choirs, employed singing canons, and possessed organs, music in Anglican parish churches during the later seventeenth century was left largely to unaccompanied and often unled congregational singing, or sing-song recitation of metrical psalms. Other music – vocal or instrumental – was banished from reformed Calvinist churches as idolatrous, both in England and America.

During the eighteenth century this began gradually to change, first in wealthy, urban churches (where professional choirs and musicians were available), and then in smaller, rural churches (where volunteer choirs were eager to include

pieces they could sing, and local bands constituted from parishioners provided at-times musically-questionable accompaniment). But it was not until the later eighteenth and the early nineteenth century that music again became, slowly, a valued part of religious practice in England. Two movements were particularly influential: the Evangelical and, during Morris and Burne-Jones's youth, the Tractarian. Evangelicals both within and outside the Anglican church had, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, embraced the value of a more participatory music in worship. John Wesley discovered the uniting, arousing effects of congregational hymn-singing at open-air Methodist prayer meetings, and later, at indoor services, in the towns and villages of the south-west, and in the industrial midlands and north of England. Within the Anglican Church, too, Evangelicals accepted a new emphasis on spiritual expression through congregational singing, especially of hymns, many newly-composed in simple harmonies to accessible texts intended to encourage emotional commitment. There was resistance: until the second part of the nineteenth century, many more traditional Anglicans distrusted congregational participation, finding the new hymns too emotional, and associating them with the originally poorer and less-educated populations attracted by the evangelising Methodists. Some Tractarian-influenced Anglicans saw plain song as a less-emotional alternative especially well-suited to congregational singing (although in practice plain song, like more elaborate early choral music, often became the preserve of a trained choir). Nonetheless, under the combined influence of Evangelical and Tractarian interest, by the later nineteenth century church music occupied an important and well-accepted place, not only for its religious but for its aesthetic potential.

Although Morris and Burne-Jones soon gave up their initial intentions of entering the Church in order to dedicate themselves to Art, music continued to be important to both men. Morris first apprenticed himself to a leading gothic revival architect, but he also wrote carols and songs – poems, not music, but words to be sung to old tunes in fact or imagination. Burne-Jones, followed shortly by Morris, moved to London in order to study painting with Rossetti, where at frequent gatherings in their apartment at Red Lion Square, Georgie played and sang, with an expanding group of friends, ballads and other tunes from English and French collections of older music. According to a later account by an American visitor, Charles Eliot Norton (friend of Ruskin, patron of the Pre-Raphaelites, translator of Dante, and the first professor of fine arts at Harvard), ‘Mrs Jones’s music is of a rare sort, and not of the modern but of the former better English school. She will sing for an hour delightfully from Haydn, from Cherubini, from Bach, or will turn from these composers to the lighter style of the old Shakespearian and Ben Jonson songs, or the still older English airs and French chansons’.<sup>13</sup>

By 1860, the Morrises, Burne-Joneses, and Rossettis were all newly married; Morris and Jane’s Red House, in Bexleyheath, Kent, Philip Webb’s inspired

adaptation of medieval domestic architecture to far-suburban nineteenth-century London, drew them all together on long summer weekends. While Morris dreamed of establishing a working community of artist friends and their families, he, Burne-Jones, Rossetti, and their wives and friends set about designing and making furnishings. According to their later recollections, it was an idyllic time, with music and games all over the house and gardens interrupting the designing and painting and embroidering. From the couples' exuberant art making arose the firm which became Morris & Co. Perhaps recalling Georgie's music-making around the piano, Cecilia, with her organ and innumerable musician angels of all kinds, quickly became one of 'the Firm's' favorite subjects, stimulating a number of different designs.

Burne-Jones had already, before the founding of 'the Firm', designed in 1859 a rather charming small panel as part of a series for St Frideswide's Chapel at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.<sup>14</sup> The panel shows Cecilia (her halo is clearly labelled) serving as music tutor to the young St Frideswide, the Anglo-Saxon patron saint of Oxford and of the University. With its compressed spatial relations, simplified drawing, and kaleidoscope of strong colours, the window's consciously archaic feeling is at the same time strangely modern. The Firm's first Cecilia windows may have been a pair, Saint Cecilia and Saint Catherine, designed by Morris in 1865.<sup>15</sup> Two years later, Burne-Jones designed a single figure of Cecilia with her organ in a less archaic style. The window, realised in colour under Morris's direction, incorporated painting on glass (in the tinted panels which form the background) with the mosaic method of composing in coloured glass for the figure. This design was repeated at least once, in 1873, for Jesus College, Cambridge; another version, now at the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow, may have been made later but from that design.<sup>16</sup>

But Burne-Jones's best-known and most often repeated design for a sainted Cecilia – that of the Chicago window – dates from 1874–1875 when it was installed in a different part of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford.<sup>17</sup> Both the saint and the two musician angels in panels to her left and right are clothed all in white, the pallor of their robes, faces, and hands emphasised by narrow red halos and, for the angels, pale blue wings. They stand on a narrow strip of grass against a background of scrolling dark green leaves, the latter rather like those of the Chicago Cecilia. The expression on Cecilia's face is simple but particularly lovely, as are the delicately painted details of her hair, her gown, and her instrument. These features are equally visible in a version dressed in pale blue created for Whitelands College (then located in Chelsea, but now part of the University of Roehampton), around 1883 – although in the Whitelands example, the background consists of a figured pattern in deep blue, with crimson drapes below. In all three versions, Cecilia is the same slightly sad, abstracted, slim figure touching her slender fingers to the keys of her portable organ. In the Chicago version,

however, the colours are far richer than either at Oxford or Whitelands College. Cecilia's face and hands, like her organ pipes, seem to flush with life caught from the glowing blues and greens of her robe and her leafy surrounds. Although she still bears the label and the attribute of a saint, one is tempted to say that she has taken on a new identity with her changed surroundings: no longer the Catholic martyr, she is evoked now as the human patron of earthly music – religious, but not silent – of music like that which the visitor can expect to hear on entering the main sanctuary, itself a dazzling evocation in coloured glass of glowing figures in green and gold landscapes.

But there was another, more immediate pictorial influence on Morris and Burne-Jones's imaginations of Cecilia. In 1856, for an illustrated edition of Tennyson's early poetry, Rossetti produced a very strange drawing of the saint.<sup>18</sup> Here are Tennyson's lines:

Or in a clear-wall'd city on the sea,  
Near gilded organ-pipes, her hair  
Wound with white roses, slept St. Cecily;  
An angel looked at her.<sup>19</sup>

Rossetti's Cecilia is, like Raphael's and like Tennyson's, caught up in a musically-induced trance (her hands rest on the keys of her organ), but the angel-knight standing behind her, into whose arms she swoons, seems to be doing something more than just looking at her, as Tennyson's poem would have it. He leans forward to kiss (or in the engraver's awkward translation, to 'munch') her forehead. In the *Golden Legend*, Cecilia invokes her guardian angel – in that trance when she speaks to God in her heart – to guard her chastity, since she is about to be married. With the angel's help, she succeeds in converting to Christianity not only her husband, who then lives chastely but affectionately with her, but also his brother. Eventually the men are arrested and put to death, as is Cecilia, but not before a series of botched attempts – boiling, hacking, and so on – qualify her for true martyr status. A guard biting an apple nonchalantly in the foreground of Rossetti's design, however, seems to allude both to the fall of Eve, and that of Cecilia.

Rossetti returned to a very similar subject during the early 1860s: the design dates from the time of the music-making, house-decorating weekends at Red House. Rossetti designed *Music* for an early Morris & Co. commission; a series illustrating the story of King René and his wife on their honeymoon.<sup>20</sup> The artist takes advantage of one feature of the instrument the young Queen is playing: a so-called 'positive organ' whose operation requires two people, one to play the keyboard, and the other to stand behind it and pump the bellows. A music which takes two lends itself particularly well to depiction not of an ethereal heavenly

music but of an arousing and very earthly one. It reminds us that Red House at that time hosted three recently-married artists and their wives, who loved to design and make art, and to sing old French and English love songs.

At about the same time, Burne-Jones made his own design of a woman playing a positive organ while a winged, kneeling male figure works the bellows. It is a small image he painted for Georgie, *ca* 1863, inside the lid of a new piano given to her as a wedding present.<sup>21</sup> As he often did, Burne-Jones elaborated a number of fuller versions of this design during the coming years. Both a watercolour (1865) and an oil painting (1868–1877) are now titled *Le Chant d'Amour* (The Song of Love) and contain a third figure: a seated knight gazes with longing at the woman who plays the organ and sings with a dreamy, abstracted expression.<sup>22</sup> In the distance rises a dim, sunset-lit landscape of a moated but apparently deserted castle-city which floats on mist across the water, as if conjured up by the music but unreachable in reality, an apt image for the listening knight's unfulfilled (and perhaps unfulfillable) longings. Maybe these are the desires which Cecilia's young husband, sworn to honour her chastity in hopes of future heavenly bliss, may have felt.

In the watercolour, the winged figure working the organ bellows is masked and more resembles Cupid than Cecilia's guardian angel of chastity, but he also wears the crown of woven roses which, according to the *Golden Legend*, Cecilia's angel brought from Paradise to give to her newly-converted husband and brother. In the oil, the angel-Cupid – although he keeps his wings and his garland – has lost his blindfold, but his crimson robes and abstracted gaze do suggest that the music they make is more productive of erotic swoons of hopeless longing than the religious trance attributed by Dryden, Handel, and Raphael to the celestial music which Cecilia imitates. One might say that Burne-Jones's image is Cecilia's story from the imagined perspective of her husband, rather than that of Cecilia herself. The title, in fact, comes from the refrain of one of the old French love songs Georgie used to play:

Hélas, je sais un chant d'amour,  
Triste et gai, tour à tour.  
[Alas, I know a song of love,  
Sad and gay, turn by turn.]<sup>23</sup>

By the time he completed the oil, the image had probably acquired a new and different meaning for Burne-Jones, for during the late 1860s he began what proved to be a tortured affair with Maria Zambaco (who tried to kill herself when Burne-Jones decided not to leave his wife and children for her; he was found physically wrestling her to the ground when she tried to throw herself off a bridge). In a portrait of her which he painted after the stormiest days of their affair, she holds a small book of miniatures; the image on the open page is that

of *Le Chant d'Amour*. Georgie stuck by her husband with remarkable patience, and the marriage survived. But *Le Chant d'Amour* remains as testament to Burne-Jones's acknowledgement of the power – and aptness – of Rossetti's alternative reading of St Cecilia's story as one of music's power to express the prolonged state of postponed physical desire, understood not as a love for God but as passionately human.

But how did Cecilia and Margaret, apart elsewhere if associated in the life of their creator, come to Second Presbyterian? Morris & Co. normally worked on site-specific commissions for their stained glass; both colours and background patterns often varied from location to location, even when figure designs remained the same. Morris, together with Philip Webb, oversaw the making of windows from the artist's black and white drawings, and then Morris or Webb arranged them as compositions in coloured glass, designing the backgrounds. Individual installations differed not only in colour and background but in the windows which surrounded them, the size and placement of the windows, and, of course, the architecture and uses of the buildings in which they were placed. Thus the appearance and impact of each window inevitably depends not only on complex cultural and personal backstories, both for the image and its creators, but also the particularities of its setting.

However, the Chicago windows were *not* made for the church where they are now installed. In 1902, the Tobey Furniture Company of Chicago exhibited both windows in their William Morris Memorial Room, on the fourth floor of their large showroom building at Wabash and Washington Streets in downtown Chicago. The objects in this room had been chosen and arranged by designer Joseph Twyman, a long-time advocate for Morris & Co.'s designs, then working for Tobey's. Originally an Englishman, Twyman had arrived in Chicago around the time of the great fire of 1871, and had met Morris when he visited the workshops at Merton Abbey on a trip back to England in 1883, of which more below.

By the early 1900s, others in Chicago besides Twyman were enthusiasts for Morris and for the man who inspired him, the art and social critic John Ruskin. The Arts and Crafts movement begun by Morris & Co. was at the height of its popularity in the city – not least among those furnishing large new homes on Prairie Avenue, south of the downtown district, and attending Second Presbyterian Church a few blocks away. H.H. Richardson, the Boston-based architect of Glessner House (now the restored jewel of Prairie Avenue and the only remaining Richardson building in Chicago), had himself visited Morris's workshops in 1882, the year before Twyman, and subsequently recommended Morris & Co. products to clients, including John and Frances Glessner. In 1887 Harry Gordon Selfridge, the aggressive young manager of the retail division of Marshall Field's department store, and later the founder of the famous London store which carries

his name, acquired exclusive distribution rights to Morris & Co. art goods and wallpapers (along with Tiffany glass and Grueby pottery) as part of a move 'to attract the more select trade'.<sup>24</sup> Walter Crane, a gifted designer in his own right and a Morris disciple, lectured in Chicago on his visit to the city during 1891 (he also created two panels for the Women's Temperance Building at the soon-to-open Columbian Exhibition).

Oscar Lovell Triggs, who taught the 'new' poetry of both Robert Browning and Walt Whitman at the also then-new University of Chicago, was a committed evangelist for Morris's and Ruskin's ideas regarding the value of combining good design with dedicated craftsmanship. His book on the origins of the Arts and Crafts in England appeared in 1902, followed by a biography of Morris which included a detailed account of Triggs's own visits, probably during the later 1890s, to many Morris sites in England, including the Company's workshops at Merton Abbey.<sup>25</sup> Motivated not only by Morris's products, but by his ideas on craft, work, and beauty, in 1899 Triggs organised The Industrial Arts League in order to coordinate what he hoped would become an extensive network of craftsman's guilds and workshops.

One of these, the South Park Workshop Association, was active enough in 1904 to be mentioned, along with the Industrial Arts League, in a long article for the *Bulletin of the U.S. Department of Labor* on the revival of handicrafts in America which singled out Chicago as an early centre of the revival.<sup>26</sup> It also noted the activities of another of Triggs's projects: the William Morris Society of Chicago, which Triggs co-founded with Twyman in 1903. Triggs and his Industrial League were also in close contact with the Chicago Arts and Crafts Society founded in 1897 at Jane Addams's Hull House (a pioneering settlement house in a crowded immigrant district near the stockyards, south of Prairie Avenue). The Society held six annual exhibitions at the Art Institute, including work produced by those trained in its settlement workshops.

By 1903 – when Marshall Field's exclusive arrangement with Morris & Co. must have lapsed – the Tobey Furniture Company described its Morris Memorial Room across the street from Field's as 'one of the most beautiful rooms in the world'.<sup>27</sup> Tobey's also carried other Arts and Crafts furniture, including Gustav Stickley's 'New Furniture' collection which was stylistically similar Mission furniture from California. Such furniture, Tobey's advertisements noted, 'as would delight the soul of Ruskin and William Morris'.<sup>28</sup> The perfect complement to the 'simplicity combined with elegance' of this furniture, the advertisement suggested, were patterned goods from Morris & Co. 'We are the only house in the central west', they proclaimed, 'that shows the Morris fabrics – the wall papers, chintzes, velvets, etc., made at the Morris manufactory at Merton Abbey'.<sup>29</sup>

Morris's influence in America – and in Chicago – was not only aesthetic. Triggs's Industrial Arts League and Addams's Hull House were institutions deep-

ly committed to social reform, both looking to Toynbee Hall, the settlement house in London's East End inspired by the teaching of Ruskin and the example of Morris. Addams visited Toynbee Hall in 1888, the year before she founded Hull House, and with her partner, Ellen Gates Starr, established workshops there on the model of the Guild and School of Handicraft begun at Toynbee Hall by C.R. Ashbee, himself deeply influenced by Morris. Starr travelled to England in order to study with Ashbee, and he in turn visited Hull House in 1900.

By the mid-1880s, Morris was not only England's most gifted pattern designer, and the guiding force behind Morris & Co., he was also a committed socialist, convinced that to change consumer attitudes toward household objects, and the way in which they were made, would require a much more complete transformation in the social and economic order, by revolution if necessary. Morris had long insisted that the daily objects we live with should, and could, be both useful and beautiful – and moreover, that those who made them should be able to find pleasure in doing so. In many cases, he advocated recovering lost processes of hand manufacture by local associations of craftsmen in order best to achieve quality in the objects made, while improving the conditions of their making (although he was not, as is often believed, totally opposed to the use of machinery).

Addams, although inspired by Morris's vision of cooperative craft organisations wedding art to labour, in promoting their craft workshops to potential Chicago benefactors, stopped short of advocating his socialism, which would hardly have been popular with Prairie Avenue industrialists such as Glessner. (While Morris publicly protested in *Commonweal* regarding the death sentences given to those arrested as anarchists at the 1886 Chicago Haymarket Riots, Glessner – an executive at what would become the tractor giant International Harvester – urged no clemency.)

Triggs, however, promoted what he called the new spirit of 'cooperative individualism' based on locally-organised workshops, small businesses, and craft communities (he particularly admired the Rookery Pottery in Cincinnati and the Tobey Furniture Company). He looked for inspiration not only to Carlyle, Ruskin and Morris, but to Shelley, Browning, Whitman, and Tolstoy (disturbing enough, perhaps, but less openly hostile to capitalism).<sup>30</sup> Triggs's book on the Arts and Crafts movement (1902) bore the imprint of the 'Bohemia Guild' of the Industrial Art League, but his *The Changing Order: A Study of Democracy*, a collection of essays he considered the clearest articulation of his hopes for art and life in modern industrial America, was reprinted numerous times by Charles H. Kerr, a radical publisher in Chicago who advocated socialism.<sup>31</sup> As Florence Boos argues above, Triggs's eventual dismissal (in 1904) from his teaching position at the University of Chicago was probably connected to his real or suspected political views – or at the least, to his tendency to irritate the University's trustees and patrons by his outspoken remarks on modern industrial culture and society.

And Triggs was outspoken, in the classroom (delightedly reported in the *Chicago Tribune*), and in public lectures and articles. During an era of damaging strikes and suspected anarchist agitation, Chicago (and non-Chicago) businessmen were particularly sensitive to such remarks.<sup>32</sup>

Among Charles Kerr's other Chicago publications was a collection of socialist and union songs which he edited himself in 1901, reissued many times. This volume included five of Morris's 'Chants for Socialists', marching songs written to be sung to well-known popular tunes and used in order to gather, organise, and educate the working people to whom Morris was lecturing during the 1880s. Kerr's collection, in which no other writer of political lyrics is as well represented as Morris, was widely used as a song-book at both union and socialist events in the US well into the twentieth century; a lesser-known side of Morris's presence in America. Although Burne-Jones disapproved of Morris's socialist activities (mainly because they distracted him from Art), Georgie, their own Cecilia, was more sympathetic to his political views, and continued to support him. Neither Triggs's *Chapters in the History of the Arts and Crafts Movement* (1902) nor Morris himself directly preached violence, but Morris's socialist songs and writings would not have been the aspect of Morris – or of Triggs – which appealed to the University's patrons, or to Twyman, Richardson, Tobey's Furniture Company, or the 'more select trade' on Prairie Avenue, including members of Second Presbyterian.

At least some of the objects in Tobey's William Morris Room may have been acquired by Twyman during his 1883 visit to Merton Abbey. He later reported seeing there a window with Saint Cecilia 'gowned in sapphire blue and purpled shadows, all bedded in a bower of lemon leaves and fruits', which indeed describes the Cecilia later displayed at Tobey's (from where it was purchased for Second Presbyterian).<sup>33</sup> Twyman was apparently attracted to that window by a conversation he witnessed between Morris and his workers, regarding changes which Morris had requested: a different blue, and darkened foliage (Morris approved the new version Twyman saw). Was this the window Twyman purchased, and if so, for whom was it being made in 1883?

That is the year in which Burne-Jones agreed, partly as a favour to Ruskin, a close friend and patron, to provide (at considerable discount from 'the Firm's' usual prices) a series of windows with female figures for Whitelands Ladies Training College, Chelsea, an institution in which Ruskin was interested.<sup>34</sup> (Ruskin – who often addressed Burne-Jones with affectionate playfulness – asked him for 'some cheerful rectorial or governessial saints' with which to decorate the newly-built chapel, and specifically suggested Cecilia).<sup>35</sup> Whitelands was a progressive college, training young women to become teachers and governesses: martyrdom was presumably not on Ruskin's mind when he specified 'cheerful' models for these future teachers. Indeed, windows employing the same Burne-Jones designs

as those used in Chicago, for both Cecilia and for Margaret, were among the first installed at Whitelands (although there they did not stand side-by-side), beginning in 1885 – a row of tall female figures on alternating deep red and blue patterned backgrounds, all serene in countenance, although accompanied by symbols of their martyrdom. It is possible that the ‘Whitelands’ Saint Cecilia was already in the making in 1883; if so, and if Twyman bought the window he saw, then Morris & Co. made another for the College: its blues are lighter than those of the Chicago windows, and its background (deep blue scrolls on an almost black ground) is quite different.

By 1903 the Chicago windows had been purchased from Tobey’s by Franklin Darius Gray, a businessman and parishioner at Second Presbyterian, and donated to the church, probably at the request of Howard Van Doren Shaw, the Arts and Crafts architect of the redecoration undertaken after a devastating fire in 1900 destroyed much of the original interior. (The Gothic-revival church, on South Michigan Avenue in the newly-fashionable Prairie Avenue district, had been designed by James Renwick, another prominent East Coast architect, and completed in 1874.) Neither Shaw nor Gray were in search of just those two windows – they were simply what was on offer in Chicago. But Gray may have been attracted to the saints for reasons of personal association, perhaps not unlike those of Burne-Jones. He had recently lost his wife, Ann Olive Phelps Gray; the Cecilia window was dedicated to her memory by Gray and their only daughter. When Gray himself died a few years later, his daughter added a dedication to the second window, as if acknowledging, via the saint of childbirth, her lasting ties to her parents.<sup>36</sup>

There were other reasons why Cecilia might appear the appropriate saint, if saint there must be, for this church. In America, as in Britain and Ireland during the Reformation and the Civil Wars, many Presbyterians originally hewed to stricter Calvinist attitudes discouraging all sacred music other than metrical psalms (organs were not permitted).<sup>37</sup> But by the nineteenth century these formerly-austere denominations had, on both sides of the Atlantic, greatly extended the role of music in their services, even among many so-called ‘Old School’ Presbyterians, often of Scottish descent, who long resisted the revivalism of a New School. Gray’s father Silas had been an outspoken advocate for Old School Presbyterianism,<sup>38</sup> but Franklin Gray left his Connecticut home for rapidly-urbanising Chicago, where he settled in 1840, and became, during the latter part of the century, a successful banker. By the time Second Presbyterian was being rebuilt in 1900, Gray belonged to its established and prosperous urban congregation, which, like many others, had fully embraced the arguments of Ruskin, in his widely-read 1849 volume, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. According to Ruskin – who here was attempting to justify his own love of an art and a music originally associated with Catholicism to the strict evangelical Scottish church

in which he was raised – the ‘Lamp of Sacrifice’ *required* the celebration of God through music and art offered up in His service and to His greater glory. The invitation to Howard Van Doren Shaw, and the extraordinary care and expense lavished on the church’s glass, wood, and metal furnishings by some of the most talented American craftsmen, might also be taken as yet more evidence of the influence, not only of Ruskin, but of Morris, whose vestibule windows appropriately announce intentions to be fulfilled in the main sanctuary of the church itself. As a temple of advanced arts and crafts design, the church was intended as the setting for a congregational worship beautiful in both form and practice – appealing not only to the eye but also to the ear.

The Chicago windows, as I hope I have suggested, possess a rich and complex history which is musical as well as visual, personal as well as cultural. In their present form and setting, they bring with them the ghosts of many earlier realisations. Does the Chicago Cecilia invoke the virgin martyr of ancient Rome, or the ‘Bright Cecilia’ of Raphael’s altarpiece and of Dryden’s ode: she who heard the celestial music of the spheres when she conversed with her guardian angel? Is she the Cecilia of Alexander Pope’s *Ode*, another eighteenth-century poem which compares the saint favourably to the mythical Greek musician, Orpheus, who conjured the lost Eurydice out of the underworld back to earthly life via his music, only to lose her once again (as, of course, he would, sooner or later, have lost her) in death? Cecilia’s powers – and those of sacred music – are, according to Pope, both greater and more lasting than those of Orpheus. ‘His numbers raised a shade from hell,/ Hers lift the soul to heaven’.<sup>39</sup>

Or is she rather the medieval musician of the *Golden Legend* and of Chaucer’s Second Nun’s Tale: ‘hearing the organs making melody, she sang in her heart only to God’. Perhaps the Chicago Cecilia is closer to Rossetti’s subversive re-imagining of her passionately human love story, and to Burne-Jones’s subsequent paintings of Cecilia with her organ, her assistant angel-Cupid, and the longing, listening knight-lover caught in the hopeless desires of unfulfilled love. Or perhaps not. But she and her companion, Margaret, do carry with them the memory of a forty-year friendship of two artists built on a shared passion not only for medieval art but for early music, and of the beloved women who played and sang that music.

## NOTES

1. *St Cecilia* (1874) and *St Margaret*, stained glass with figures designed by Edward Burne-Jones for Morris & Co., these versions installed 1903 in the Second Presbyterian Church, Chicago; <http://www.2ndpresbyterianfriends.org/gallery3/category/1-windows.html> [last accessed 31 January 2014].

(Cecilia is the third image from the left, Margaret the fourth, in the top row.) For more on the history of these windows and the church, see ‘Burne-Jones Windows are International Treasure’, *The Herald (Friends of Historic Second Church)* Vol. 5, No. 2 (Summer 2011), pp. 1–2, and ‘Franklin Darius Gray – Donor of the Burne-Jones Windows’, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Fall/Winter 2011), both articles available *via* the website above. Besides the Morris windows in the vestibule, the sanctuary boasts nine by Tiffany and a number of others by important American Arts and Crafts glass designers. Angels are a conspicuous motif not only in the glass but in many other features of the arts and crafts interior. The church continues its tradition of hosting musical events; see the section ‘Sounds of the South Loop’ on the church’s website, above. I am grateful to the Friends of Historic Second Church for inviting me to speak about the windows; that lecture was the germ of this article.

2. On William Morris and the arts and crafts movement in America, particularly in Chicago, I have found the following useful: Judith A. Barter, *Apostles of Beauty: Arts and Crafts from Britain to Chicago*, Chicago and New Haven: Art Institute of Chicago and Yale University Press, 2009, 208 pp.; Sherry M. Richmond, ‘The Chicago Arts and Crafts Movement’, *Arts and Crafts Quarterly Magazine* (Spring 1994), pp. 24–28; Eileen Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris, and the Craftsman Ideal in America*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986, 294 pp.; Monica Obiski & Brandon K. Ruud, ‘Chicago and the arts and crafts movement’, *The Magazine of Antiques*, October 2009: <http://www.themagazineantiques.com/articles/chicago-and-the-arts-and-crafts-movement> [last accessed 1 September 2013]; and Wendy Kaplan, ‘America: The Quest for Democratic Design’, in Wendy Kaplan, ed, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in Europe and America*, New York and Los Angeles: Thames & Hudson and Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2004, pp. 246–283. The catalogue edited by Kaplan, *The Art That Is Life: The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875–1920*, Boston: Little, Brown, in association with Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 1987, 372 pp. is also helpful.
3. Text by Nicholas Brady after John Dryden, from the score by Henry Purcell, *Hail, Bright Cecilia*, ed. Edward Francis Rimbault, London: Musical Antiquarian Society Publications, 1848. Wikipedia, ‘Ode to St. Cecilia (Purcell)’, section headed ‘Text’, lines 1–2; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ode\\_to\\_St.\\_Cecilia\\_\(Purcell\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ode_to_St._Cecilia_(Purcell)) [last accessed 31 January 2014].
4. Raphael, *The Saint Cecilia Altarpiece*, Bologna: Pinacoteca Nazionale, 1516–1517. Image from Wikipedia, ‘*The Ecstasy of St. Cecilia* (Raphael)’; [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Ecstasy\\_of\\_St.\\_Cecilia\\_\(Raphael\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Ecstasy_of_St._Cecilia_(Raphael)) [last accessed 31 January 2014].
5. Modernised from William Caxton’s *Golden Legend*, ed, 1483, printed in *Originals and Analogues*, Part II, Chaucer Society, 1875 as William Caxton,

- 'The Life of Saint Cecilia', in *Golden Legend* (1483), on The Geoffrey Chaucer Page, texts prepared and maintained by Larry D. Benson; <http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/canttales/secnun/cecilia.html> [last accessed 31 January 2014].
6. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Second Nun's Prologue and Tale [The Seconde Nonnes Tale of the lyf of Seinte Cecile]*. Version based on the Middle English text in Larry D. Benson, ed, *The Riverside Chaucer*, Third Edn, Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1986, 1327 pp.], taken from The Geoffrey Chaucer Page: <http://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/teachslf/snt-par.htm> [last accessed 31 January 2014], lines 134–135. (Italics added)
  7. Edward Burne-Jones, *Margaret Burne-Jones*, 1885–6, oil on canvas, Private collection: <http://preraphaelitepaintings.blogspot.com/2010/08/edward-burne-jones-margaret-burne-jones.html> [last accessed 30 January 2014].
  8. Edward Burne-Jones, *Saint Margaret of Antioch*. 1895, stained glass (Morris & Co.), St Margaret's Church, Rottingdean, Sussex. Photograph by Jacqueline Bannerjee on the Victorian Web, ed George P. Landow: <http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/bj/glass/44m.html> [last accessed 31 January 2014]; Stephen Williams, 'Making daily life "as useful and beautiful as possible": Georgiana Burne-Jones and Rottingdean, 1880–1904', *Journal of William Morris Studies*, Vol. XX, No. 3 (Winter 2013), pp. 47–65, and 'A clear, flame-like spirit': Georgiana Burne-Jones and Rottingdean, 1904–1920', Vol. XX, No. 4 (Summer 2014), pp. 79–90.
  9. See <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/edward-burne-jones/portrait-group-of-the-artists-family> [last accessed 13 May 2014].
  10. See <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/burne-jones-the-golden-stairs-no4005> [last accessed 13 May 2014]. The face of the figure in profile at the top of the stairs is that of his daughter Margaret (*cf* the family group-portrait drawing, Note 8).
  11. J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, two vols, 1899 (Repr. New York: Dover Publications, 1995), p. 17. On Morris's family connections with music, see p. 3; for his participation in the Oxford Plain Song Society, p. 66. See also Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, New York: Alfred Knopf, 1995, pp. 10, 73, and David Everett, 'The ancestry of William Morris: the Worcester connection', *Journal of William Morris Studies*, Vol. XX, No. 4, Summer 2014, pp. 34–59.
  12. For the account of changes in church music in this and the following paragraph, I draw especially on Nicholas Temperley's invaluable *The Music of the English Parish Church*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979, 2 vols), and Bernarr Rainbow, *The Choral Revival in the Anglican Church 1839–1872*, London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1970, 390 pp.

13. Sara Norton & M. A. DeWolfe Howe, eds, *Letters of Charles Eliot Norton*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913, Vol. 1, p. 348.
14. Edward Burne-Jones for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., *St Cecilia teaching St Frideswide*[sic], stained glass, St Frideswide Chapel, Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford. Photographed by Lawrence OP and posted on Flickr: [http://farm9.staticflickr.com/8345/8207196249\\_62bc0f29d\\_b.jpg](http://farm9.staticflickr.com/8345/8207196249_62bc0f29d_b.jpg) [last accessed 2 February 2014].
15. William Morris for Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., *Saints Cecilia and Catherine*, 1865, All Saints, Coddington Church, Southwell & Nottingham Church History Project, The Church of England: <http://southwellchurches.nottingham.ac.uk/coddington/pchancelswin.jpg> [last accessed 3 February 2014]; probably the Cecilia used in 'the Firm's' display of stained glass at Kensington in 1864 (note from the website).
16. Edward Burne-Jones for Morris & Co. Designed for Jesus College Chapel, Cambridge ca 1873; this version (ca 1897) is currently in the William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow. Photographed by George Landow for the Victorian Web: <http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/bj/glass/50.jpg> [last accessed 2 February 2014].
17. Edward Burne-Jones for Morris & Co., *St Cecilia with angels*, 1874, stained glass, Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford: [http://farm4.staticflickr.com/3211/3049579861\\_766afe7d24\\_b.jpg](http://farm4.staticflickr.com/3211/3049579861_766afe7d24_b.jpg) [last accessed 2 February 2014].
18. For images of both the drawing (Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery) and the engraving, see the Rossetti Archive, (ed Jerome McGann), Exhibits and Objects, *St Cecilia*: [http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/s83\\_rap.html](http://www.rossettiarchive.org/docs/s83_rap.html) [last accessed 1 February 2014]. My readings of Rossetti's *St Cecilia* and *King René's Honeymoon*, and of Burne-Jones's *Le Chant d'Amour*, are indebted to Suzanne Fagence Cooper's fine article, 'Playing the Organ in Pre-Raphaelite Paintings', *Music in Art*, Vol. 29, Nos 1–2 (March 2004), pp. 151–70.
19. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 'The Palace of Art', in Christopher Ricks, ed, *The Poems of Tennyson*, Second Edn, 3 Vols, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, Vol. 1, pp. 436–456, lines 97–100.
20. Rossetti contributed this design, representing *Music*, to Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.'s *King René's Honeymoon* cabinet; other designs representing *Painting*, *Sculpture*, *Architecture*, and *Gardening*, together with smaller scenes, were by Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Ford Madox Brown, and Val Prinsep, all painted on the inlaid cabinet's wooden panels (1860–1862; Victoria and Albert Museum, London). In 1862, the four largest designs, including *Music*, were rendered into stained glass by Morris & Co. (also now in the Victoria and Albert Museum). A pen and ink wash drawing dated 1862 (Williamson Art Gallery and Museum, Birkenhead), and an oil version (1864, private collection) both use the same design.

21. Image by Edward Burne-Jones inside lid of piano given by him to Georgiana Burne-Jones, ca 1863; <http://gather-ye-rosebuds-while-ye-may.blogspot.com/2009/11/burne-jones-family-piano.html> [last accessed 2 February 2014].
22. Edward Burne-Jones, *Le Chant d'Amour*; Watercolour, 1865 (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston): <http://zoom.mfa.org/fif=sc2/sc25925.fpx&obj=iip.1.0&wid=568&cell=568,427&cvt=jpeg> [last accessed 2 February 2014]; Oil, 1868–1877 (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York): <http://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/ep/web-large/DP169639a.jpg> [last accessed 2 February 2014].
23. 'La chanson de Marie' (Air Breton, lyrics by A. Brizeux) in J.B. Wekerlin, ed, *Échos du Temps Passé*, 3 Vols, Paris: Durand & Co., London: United Music Publishers, n. d., original publication 1853–7, Vol. 1, pp. 109–11.
24. Robert W. Twyman, *History of Marshall Field and Co., 1852–1906*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1954, p. 107.
25. Oscar Lovell Triggs, *Chapters in the History of the Arts and Crafts Movement*, Chicago: Bohemia Guild of the Industrial Art League, 1902, 232 pp.; afterwards Triggs, *Chapters*. Triggs returned to the subject of Morris in *William Morris*, Chicago: Triggs Publishing Co., n.d. [1905], 52 pp.; afterwards Triggs, *Morris*.
26. Max West, 'The Revival of Handicrafts in America', *Bulletin of the Department of Labor*, Vol. 9, No. 55 (November 1904), pp. 1573–1622.
27. From a full-page advertisement for The William Morris Room of The Tobey Furniture Company included in Triggs, *Morris*, back cover.
28. Advertisement for Tobey Furniture Company, 1900 [seen on E-bay, 1 September 2013].
29. Advertisement for Tobey Furniture Company, as Note 27. The phrase in the preceding sentence, 'simplicity combined with elegance', is from a June 1902 advertisement for Tobey [seen on E-bay on 1 September 2013].
30. Triggs, *Chapters*, Appendix I: 'Proposal for a Guild and School of Handicraft, an address delivered at the annual meeting of the Industrial Art League in the Auditorium Hotel, Chicago, November 23, 1901', p. 189: 'co-operative individualism is the necessary working theory of a free workshop'. Triggs continues: 'I conceive of such a working guild as being the unit of social organization that pertains to an industrial commonwealth. I can foretell that such a workshop would grow into a kind of "industrial settlement", social in its motive, co-operative in its method, complete and self-supporting in its results'. (p. 194) In 1902, two years before his contract with the University of Chicago was terminated, Triggs's 'co-operative individualism' was evidently not a problem; the University's President, William Rainey Harper, was listed as a member of The Industrial Art League's Executive

- Board (Triggs was League Secretary). The League's President was Frank O. Lowden, son-in-law of George Pullman (the Pullman company in Chicago had been the target, during May 1894, of some of the most bitter strikes); see the account of the League with its officers in Appendix II, reprinted from Clarence Cook, *The House Beautiful*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902, 336 pp.
31. Charles H. Kerr re-published (1906, 1908, and 1913) Triggs's *The Changing Order: A study of Democracy*, Chicago: Triggs Publishing, 1905, 306 pp. By that time Triggs had ended his own ventures in Chicago, and moved to California. Kerr's current website advertises 'Subversive literature for the whole family since 1886'; <http://www.charleshkerr.com/> [last accessed 31 January 2014]. The publishing house, established in 1886 in order to promote Unitarian views of the rationality of religion, shifted its focus to support socialism and labour during the early 1890s, reflecting Kerr's radicalisation in the aftermath of the Chicago Haymarket riots of 1886. Morris's 'Chants for Socialists' were included in Charles H. Kerr, ed, *Socialist Songs with Music*, Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1901, [35] pp.
  32. Florence S. Boos, 'The First Morris Society: Chicago 1903–1905', (this volume, pp.35–48). The University's president, William Rainey Harper, apparently defended Triggs to the trustees. See Presidents' Papers, 1889–1925, Special Collections, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago; John Matthews Manly [then chair of the Department of English where Triggs was instructor] to Dean H.P. Judson, 1 March 1904. Triggs was notified in February 1904 that his contract would not be renewed. The *Chicago Tribune* (20 February 1904) attributed his dismissal to Triggs's 'liberal views' and 'unusual statements' in class and in public lectures, while the *Boston Transcript* (24 February 1904) reported that 'nothing in the history of the university has yet raised such a storm of protest as this action against an instructor who has been accounted the most popular on the faculty, alumni and students alike voicing surprise, horror and disgust', although the storm was apparently less in Chicago. For these references and the fullest discussion of Triggs's life and works I have found, see Bruce Kahler, 'Arts and Life: The Arts and Crafts Movement in Chicago, 1897–1910', PhD dissertation. Department of History, Purdue University, 1986, pp. 170–260, especially pp. 251–2.
  33. Twyman's recollections of his visit to Merton Abbey were part of an address given to the (Chicago) William Morris Society, reprinted as Joseph Twyman, 'The Art and Influence of William Morris', in *The Inland Architect and News Record*, Vol. 42, No. 6 (January 1904), pp. 43–45 (p. 43).
  34. Whitelands College has moved location several times, but is now part of the University of Roehampton. The windows from the chapel in Chelsea were re-installed in 2006 on its new Whitelands campus. For a description

- of the present installation, see English Heritage entry for Parkstead House (on the same campus), <http://list.english-heritage.org.uk/resultsingle.aspx?uid=1357675> [last accessed 1 February 2014]. A brief history of the college, with an image of another of the windows showing Saint Ursula, may be found at <http://www.roehampton.ac.uk/Colleges/Whitelands-College/History/> [last accessed 1 February 2014].
35. E. T. Cook & Alexander Wedderburn, eds, *The Works of John Ruskin*, 39 Vols, London: George Allen, 1903–1912; *Letters*, Vol. 36 (1909), p. 436. The first group of windows to be installed consisted of Saints Ursula, Agnes, Cecilia, Catherine, Dorothy, and Margaret.
36. According to at least one genealogical website, Isabel (or Isabelle, or Isobel) Gray may have been adopted; see <http://www.ebooksread.com/authors-eng/marcus-denison-raymond/gray-genealogy--being-a-genealogical-record-and-history-of-the-descendants-of-j-myra/page-9-gray-genealogy--being-a-genealogical-record-and-history-of-the-descendants-of-j-myra.shtml> [last accessed 13 May 2014].
37. For the history of church music in America, particularly among Presbyterians, see Paul A. Richardson, ‘Hymnody in the United States through the Mid-Nineteenth Century’, and Mel R. Wilhoit, ‘United States Hymnody from the Mid-Nineteenth to the late Twentieth Century’, both in Kristen L. Forman, ed, *The New Century Hymnal Companion: A Guide to the Hymns*, Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1998, pp. 125–135, 106–24.
38. See [ebooksread.com](http://www.ebooksread.com) (Note 36). Of Silas Gray, the site notes, ‘His polemic passages with the late President Taylor of Yale, when the controversy between the Old and New School Presbyterians was in progress [c. 1837], he espousing the cause of the former, attracted no little attention in the religious press’. [last accessed 13 May 2014].
39. Alexander Pope, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed Henry W. Boynton, Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1903, 672 pp.); [Bartleby.com](http://www.bartleby.com/203/30.html), 2011. [www.bartleby.com/203/30.html](http://www.bartleby.com/203/30.html), ll., pp. 133–134 [last accessed 3 February 2014].

# Reviews

*Edited by Peter Faulkner*

Rachel Holmes, *Eleanor Marx, A Life*, London: Bloomsbury, 2014, 512 pp, 16 b&w illustrations, Hbk, £25. ISBN: 9780747583844

Eleanor Marx, who was always known as ‘Tussy’, was an amazing person in many ways, and Rachel Holmes has recorded her life in great detail. I heard this biography read on BBC Radio 4 as ‘Book of the Week’ earlier in the year. Even in the abridged version, the depth of Eleanor’s vision, the tremendous pace of her constant activity, and the width of her acquaintance among the Socialist pioneers came over vividly.

Eleanor became a formidable intellectual, yet she had little schooling, picking up almost everything she needed from her father; for example, they began to read Shakespeare together when she was six. She learned much from the constant stream of visitors and refugees who somehow fitted into the Marxes’ home. She began working as secretary for her father when she was fifteen, and soon became his research assistant as he assembled the material for *Capital*. She spoke three languages, and at the age of eighteen left home to teach French in Brighton. Although she became ill and had to return to London, she had established her wish to be an independent personality. She did not wish to be known simply as ‘Karl Marx’s daughter’.

After her father’s death in 1883 she helped Engels with the editorial work needed for the posthumous volumes of *Capital*, and on her own produced further publications from her father’s manuscripts. As a committed Socialist she spoke on public platforms, sometimes with Morris, and if there was a strike or a dispute involving the trade unions she was there, helping to raise funds or writing to the press and politicians. It is worth pointing out that when there was a meeting of so-called ‘Marxists’, she already felt the need on occasions to correct their misinterpretations of her father’s ideas.

She had always kept up with contemporary literature, and had a secret ambition to follow a theatrical career. Her productivity was astounding; ‘Laziness is the root of all evil’, she said, and apart from her work as a socialist she found the

time to translate *Madame Bovary* and several plays by Ibsen. In fact, she pushed Ibsen's ideas about society, and particularly about the suppression of women, upon all who knew her. The first English reading of *A Doll's House* was held at her home. Shaw commented:

at the first performance of *A Doll's House* in England, on a first floor in a Bloomsbury lodging house, Karl Marx's youngest daughter played Nora Helmer and I impersonated Krogstadt at her request with a very vague notion of what it was all about. (p. 254)

It was a ghastly irony that the course of Eleanor's common-law marriage to Edward Aveling could be said to bear a resemblance to that play. As Rachel Holmes points out: 'The intense conflict and contradictions of contemporary marriage that Ibsen gave life to on the stage mirrored the struggles between Eleanor and Edward'. (p. 255) Nevertheless she always stood by Aveling and supported him, trying to ignore the fact that he was regularly unfaithful to her and helped himself to her money whenever he liked. He borrowed from everybody, including Morris and Shaw. It seems that when she finally found out that he had secretly married another woman she committed suicide, but Holmes points out that the evidence is inconsistent, and her friends believed that Aveling had murdered her when he found out that she was going to rewrite her will.

In her book Holmes gives many instances of Eleanor's meetings with Morris, but she does not make it clear how well they got on. Eleanor was for a while a member of the Democratic Federation and attended every meeting of the executive council from August 1884; then she co-operated with Morris against Hyndman, and joined with him to found the Socialist League. Engels wrote to her sister Laura:

There is this to be said in their favour: that three more unpractical men for a political organisation than Aveling, Bax and Morris are not to be found in all England. But they are sincere. (p. 233)

Aveling became the sub-editor of *Commonweal*, with Morris, of course, as editor. But in 1888 Eleanor quarrelled with Morris and the anarchists because she supported parliamentary representation and wished to put up a candidate. When this proposal was outvoted she resigned from the Socialist League, and only saw Morris on a few public occasions thereafter.

Eleanor does not appear, I had assumed, in Mackail's *Life of William Morris*. On the other hand, Morris does appear in Rachel Holmes's biography of Eleanor Marx. There is a considerable difference in emphasis. Who is right? Then I remembered the words of Ray Watkinson, a former President of our Society: 'Whenever you have a problem about Morris, the answer is always to be found in Mackail. Trust Mackail'. So I turned again to Mackail, and found that Eleanor

was there, indexed as one of the Avelings. Mackail uses a letter of Morris to describe how the three of them made the famous joint visit to Oxford, when the students cat-called and one threw a stink bomb; Eleanor is not mentioned because she did not speak. While Mackail may or may not have known Eleanor Marx, I think he did not regard her as being of enough importance to include her in his *Life*. Nor does Fiona MacCarthy define her as a friend of Morris's, though she does give more factual information than Mackail. May Morris, on the other hand, is described by Holmes as Eleanor's 'close friend' (p. 254); she took part in the reading of *A Doll's House* mentioned above, and played Christine Linde. In addition she showed her affection by giving Eleanor many articles from Morris & Co. to furnish her home, though it is not made clear how these were received. May also helped Eleanor with parties for destitute children.

Because Eleanor appears to have known everybody in the Socialist movement of the time, the book is particularly valuable for its insight into her contemporaries; I particularly recommend its account of how Engels ('the General') appeared to a young child. Holmes concludes her book by reminding us:

Many of the freedoms and benefits of modern democracy Britain inherited for the twentieth century and beyond ... were a direct result of the work done by Eleanor Marx and women and men like her. The eight-hour day. The outlawing of child labour. Access to equal education. Freedoms of expression. Trade unions. Universal suffrage. Democratically selected parliamentary representation, regardless of class, religion, gender or ethnicity. Feminism.

To live with Eleanor for a while is to have an opportunity to remember how we got here, where the democratic liberties we enjoy came from. And at what price we let them go. (p. 448)

*John Purkis*

Christopher Newall (with contributions by Christopher Baker, Ian Jeffrey & Conal Shields), *John Ruskin: Artist and Observer*, Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada and London: Paul Holberton Publishing, 2014, 376 pp., £37.50. Pbk. ISBN: Canada 9780888849199, UK 9781907372575. *Published in conjunction with the exhibition 'John Ruskin: Artist and Observer' organised by the National Gallery of Canada and the National Galleries of Scotland, and presented in Ottawa from 14 February to 11 May 2014, and in Edinburgh from 4 July to 28 September 2014.*

'John Ruskin: Artist and Observer' was a superb and surprising exhibition accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue. Both the exhibition and the book

offer revelations about Ruskin as an observer of the human and the natural world. We can find throughout evidence of William Morris's mentor.

The exhibition charted the course of Ruskin's life with a selection of one hundred and forty works of art on paper – drawings and watercolours. Ruskin's varying interests emerge through the work, revealing a conflicted and brilliant man, wrestling with aesthetic issues within the tumultuous mid-nineteenth century. In this intimate Ruskin, we see the contradictory burgeoning of modernity. Like Morris, Ruskin spent his life coming to terms with a modern civilisation which was self-aware and self-destructive as no previous culture. This exhibition displayed Ruskin's trials by presenting his private life of observation.

I saw the exhibition in Ottawa on a bleak, late-winter day full of energetic snowflakes. On such a day, visual details are subtle and require careful attention – one must look as Ruskin looked, steadily and precisely. The first room of the exhibition brought with it some of the nuance of the outside – a small room with pencil drawings set against muted, blue-grey walls. Once adjusted in this visual narthex, the three subsequent rooms expanded into teeming detail. Without such acclimatisation, the visitor might have been overwhelmed by the volume of detail, the scale of Ruskin's productivity, and the visual presence of his determination. When I sat down during the later spring with the catalogue, I began to grasp the order imposed by the exhibition on the complexity and diversity of Ruskin's work and life. In this brighter light, the sympathetic and sensitive presentation of his art provided evidence of a life spent looking for and finding truths about our visual and created environment.

In a sense, the catalogue reads like an illustrated biography with extensive annotations. The four essays (by Newall, and contributors Christopher Baker, Conal Shields and Ian Jeffrey) serve as a general introduction to the main catalogue beyond. Newall begins with an introduction of Ruskin's obsession with understanding by recording observations, giving an overview of his use of drawing as a method of comprehension. He suggests that these works are contradictory as art in a formal sense, commenting that 'in the first place, their variety of type and technique ... would make them unimaginable as the work of an artist of the period seeking to earn his living', and second, their thematic intensity 'places a gulf between them and the work of most amateur artists'. Newall's conclusion is that though 'drawing was an invaluable stimulus to an ever greater knowledge ... the work of art that resulted was, to [Ruskin's] perception, of no intrinsic significance'. (p. 20)

Christopher Baker's essay explores Ruskin's connection to Scotland. Ruskin's family was from Edinburgh; it was of course in Edinburgh that Ruskin gave his four important lectures in November 1853 which were to make such a marked impression on the young Morris; it was in Scotland that the emotionally confused Ruskin lost his wife Effie to his friend Millais, who was painting the famous

portrait in Glenfinglas; and it was in Scotland that Ruskin's passion for geology found an opportunity for its most intimate expression.

The main interest of the third essay, by Conal Shields, is the relationship between Ruskin's drive for observation and his internal emotional state. The twenty-first century would offer a litany of terms for Ruskin's psychological turmoil which ended in his madness. Fortunately, both in this essay and throughout the catalogue (with one notable exception discussed below), there is no anachronistic analysis and any psychological discussion is limited to the interaction between Ruskin's emotional variability, his drawn observations and his resultant discoveries.

The last essay, by Ian Jeffrey, turns to Ruskin's relationship with daguerreotypes. The exhibition included some examples of this early photographic method which at times offered Ruskin support and at others annoyance at mechanical modernity. He admired the level of detail possible via photographs, and Ian Jeffrey concludes that Ruskin was stymied by his inability to better the daguerreotype for accurate observation. There is an unasked question lingering over this essay, recurring throughout the catalogue: what if Ruskin had concerned himself less with the duty of accuracy and more with art-making as creative impression?

For the reader, as for all those who have been inspired by Ruskin, this book shows his life to have been a bounty of enlightenment. The catalogue of the drawings and watercolours in the exhibition is broken into seven sections delineating Ruskin's life of interests: Architectural Detail and Ornament, Buildings, Towns and Topography, Geology and Foregrounds, Mountains and Skies, Nature Studies, Figures. Within each section, the works are introduced chronologically. This arrangement was less obvious in the exhibition than it is in the catalogue – a function of the singular linear path of a text with its discreet chapters compared to wandering through a series of rooms. It was a pleasure in coming to the catalogue after the exhibition to see this chronology emerge via the work as a visual biography. For those interested in Ruskin as inspiration to Morris, this is where the collection will be most appealing. We see the course of Ruskin's life seven times, each time passed through a different lens. In each instance we see a many-shaded progression from a joyful apprehension of space, material and the process of making, through to an acquiescence of falling short of perfection.

It was in 'Architectural Detail and Ornament' that I most thought of Morris. These images include the eponymous stones of Venice. The drawings vary from plain graphite on paper – clean, often precise inspection of interiors, spandrels, capitals – to more developed ink-wash and watercolour impressions of some broader scenes and some tighter details. My favourite was a careful graphite, watercolour and body colour (an opaque water-based paint) *Spiral Relief* from the North Transept Door of Rouen Cathedral. Though from later in Ruskin's life (1882) the work calls out a love of workmanship, a care for detail and a passion

for a fading age in which labour and beauty are allied. There are many other fine examples of Ruskin's calm brilliance. One such is *Study of a Piece of Brick, to Show Cleavage in Burnt Clay* (1871). This is a superb encapsulation of a world – like an Alpine version of Saint-Exupéry's asteroid – complete with a forest of moss and an exposed cliff of sandy brick. Of the relationship between nature and English manufacture, one would be hard pressed to find a more articulate statement.

The geological section of the catalogue, in which this watercolour is found, contains some of the most loving studies. In fact, Newall repeatedly emphasises Ruskin's fascination and aptitude for geology, especially in Switzerland. Ruskin is cited as famously commenting that had he not discovered Tintoretto in Venice, his major work would have been entitled *The Stones of Chamonix*. (p. 351) 'But Tintoret [*sic*] swept me away into the "mare maggiore" of the schools of painting which crowned the power and perished in the fall of Venice'.

The catalogue is full of such remarks. It is an indication of the absorption of its authors that their text blends so seamlessly with Ruskin's writings. In places, but for the punctuation, the reader could not tell the difference. The jubilant, romantic style makes the book a pleasurable and entertaining read, as well as being informative via its rigorous research. The style does become slightly carried away at times – for example when we are told that in Venice Ruskin enjoyed the periphery of the town 'perhaps to escape the madding crowds of San Marco'. (p. 210) But this is largely forgivable, especially in a work about Ruskin, where an austere style would be far less apposite.

The writers are slightly overindulgent in what could be called Freudian analysis of some of the drawings. We hear repeatedly of 'unfulfilled sexual desires, seen for example in the observation of geological forms unwittingly suggestive of female genital anatomy'. (p. 23) This theme recurs, usually unconvincingly, and yet the qualification that the academic who originally developed this thesis 'now has doubts about it' is provided only as a footnote. (p. 63) Ruskin may have been sexually confused, but it would have been mortifying for him to think of such things directly. For a study which makes such sensitive use of Ruskin's personal materials, it is surprising and uncharacteristic to see this clinical reading applied.

But this is a digression. Just as Newall's reference to Hardy bears some truth of Ruskin's contradictory feelings about Venice, so too may this psychological analysis of his drawings. Ruskin was composed of delicate layers of opposing inconsistencies. If his passions were joined by sexual instincts, it was from under a thick Victorian veneer of emotional constriction. The contradictions wrapped up in these various implications are emblematic of the broader dichotomies which defined Ruskin, made clear in the work of this excellent catalogue and exhibition. From them we discover the Ruskin who coined the phrase 'pathetic

fallacy' in order to instruct artists away from sentimentality and anthropomorphism, and yet we find him set against clouds like an army, playing with the Alps until the mountains broke through 'calmly in the midst of anger'; (p. 60) Ruskin famously insisted that artisans should be allowed to think for themselves, but his drawn designs for the 1854 Oxford Museum (p. 102) are highly detailed and instructional. His texts are rational, balanced, pedagogical, yet his drawings are obsessive, passionate and often incomplete; his written emphasis on technique is belied by his obvious desire to achieve something transcending technique.

*Ruskin Artist and Observer* reveals a man wrestling with profound issues not only of art and representation but of cultural value and observable understanding of our world. The fact that he was also struggling with his own conflicting passions and vicissitudes is palpable in the art. For the scholar and viewer of this work within the complete *oeuvre*, this makes Ruskin an embodiment of modernity.

*Leopold Kowolik*

Keith Hanley & Brian Maidment, eds, *Persistent Ruskin. Studies in Influence, Assimilation and Effect*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 215 pp., 2013, 15 b&w illustrations, Hbk, £60.00. ISBN 9781409400769

The complex and expansive nature of John Ruskin's work necessarily provokes a range of responses. He was Eurocentric, but highly influential in Japan and India, opposed democracy while championing education for working people, and adopted a critical position which was simultaneously anti-capitalist, counter-revolutionary and Christian. *Persistent Ruskin* is a stimulating collection of essays which addresses some of these tensions and contradictions.

The mismatch of Ruskin's ideas with the mid-Victorian working class is analysed by Lawrence Goldman in a thoughtful and convincing essay. Using a specific dispute between Ruskin and T. J. Dunning, a leading Trade Unionist, Goldman shows that rejection of orthodox Political Economy isolated Ruskin from workers and unions. As Chartism declined during the 1860s, labour activists sought to make themselves credible within the mainstream reform movement, but Ruskin's agenda was too radical to help consolidate this position. His individualism can also be traced in St George's Museum, which he established in Sheffield in 1875. Marcus Waithe shows that Ruskin dedicated much of his energy to capturing images of Venice as 'preserved traces of irreversible destruction'. (p. 51) Part of Ruskin's purpose is explained by his desire to evoke the contemporaneous loss of cultural heritage, interesting in the context of the foundation of SPAB by Morris and others at about the same time. Rachel Dickinson counters

the facile characterisation of Ruskin as the ‘embodiment of Victorian misogyny’ (p. 53) in a fascinating chapter which traces his unorthodox approach to gender. Ruskin’s involvement with Winnington Hall, a residential school in Cheshire, shows that he encouraged progressive female education, and while Dickinson concedes that Ruskin concurred with the ‘separate spheres’ doctrine, she argues that his understanding of it was far more progressive and nuanced than many commentators have acknowledged.

Brian Maidment highlights the extent to which Ruskin used periodicals as outlets for his writing, and goes on to assess three journals which had Ruskinian allegiances, expressed through both their content and physical appearance. The ‘failure’ of Ruskin’s early writing is pursued in Francis O’Gorman’s detailed contextualisation of his support for the Pre-Raphaelites. He argues that Ruskin’s interventions were motivated by a sense that his early writings had failed: he had not secured understanding of Turner’s work and had little success ‘in transmitting the redemptory meanings of a crumbling Venice’. (p. 82)

Peter Yeandle provides a sketch of the ‘Ruskinian’ dramatist Henry Arthur Jones, paying particular attention to his play *Wealth*, witnessed by William Morris and George Bernard Shaw on its first night in 1889, while Andrew Leng traces a critique of Ruskin in Roger Fry’s art-historical writing. Fry’s attempt to reinstate Raphael’s *Transfiguration* as a canonical work of art is seen as a conscious attempt to overturn Ruskin’s condemnation of the same painting. Beginning with his interest in Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus*, Anuradha Chatterjee discusses Ruskin’s attitude to clothing and suggests that it infused the way in which he understood architecture. While Ruskin showed little interest in convenience, he believed that women who wore the right clothes could ‘symbolise the moral integrity of their body as well as that of society’. (p. 134)

Chatterjee then examines the ways in which Ruskin used textile analogies to describe architectural decoration and how terms such as ‘chaste’, ‘fair’ and ‘pure’ align his approach to architecture with that of textiles and female beauty. Melissa Renn provides a fascinating glimpse into art education during later nineteenth-century America. She discusses the rivalry between Charles Herbert Moore (a follower of Ruskin) and William Morris Hunt (influenced by the French ‘Barbizon’ painters) and the subsequent debate between ‘Barbizon Boston and Ruskinian Harvard’. (p. 146) Hers is an enlightening essay which gives a good sense of Ruskin’s legacy in a specific context. Another is offered by Mark Stiles who describes Ruskin’s influence on the building trade in Sydney. While architects read the *Seven Lamps of Architecture* and the *Stones of Venice*, they were more interested in architectural development than social reform. Labourers were far more interested in *Unto this Last* and *The Crown of Wild Olive*, as this gave them ways of arguing for the rights of labour, although the ideas of the Ruskin and the British Fabians were abandoned in about 1900 in favour of a more radical

Marxist agenda.

Tony Pinkney's Chapter: 'Ruskin, Morris and the Terraforming of Mars' takes an intriguing look at *News from Nowhere*. He argues that it was written at a pivotal moment and is one half of two influential Utopian models. While Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* presented a 'centralised, urban, highly technologised future', (p.173) *News from Nowhere* was an explicitly Ruskinian counter-argument. Pinkney sees Morris's novel as progressive but problematic: how could Ruskin's Gothic-derived Utopianism be transformed into an alternative future which possessed some credibility for the late nineteenth century? Symptoms of this dilemma are evident in the boats powered by a strange unexplained power source, and the character of Boffin the Golden Dustman: both signal the misfit between Ruskinian Gothic and a credible future. Pinkney argues that the questions raised by *News from Nowhere* were developed in interesting ways in the science fiction of the 1960s and 1970s. Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* and Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* are interpreted with these themes in mind, but the series which articulates these ideas the best is Kim Stanley Robinson's Mars Trilogy. Pinkney claims that in this series: 'the most advanced texts of the postmodern science-fictional utopian tradition that Ruskinian ideals of anti-dualistic, unalienated labour continue to have their enduring impact even today, with the interplanetary scientist having replaced the Gothic craftsman as that ideal's most persuasive contemporary embodiment'. (p. 178) What is more, Morris's work is at the root of this tradition: *News from Nowhere* 'contains within itself the science-fictional seeds of all the utopias' published after 1890. (p. 178)

Keith Hanley places Ruskin's career within the Judaeo-Christian tradition of cultural dissemination. Ruskin's self-imposed exile from the norms of Victorian society and his biblical education made his authorial stance and attitude analogous to that of a prophet or missionary. Although from one perspective Ruskin might be seen as a Eurocentric cultural imperialist, Hanley demonstrates the profound influence of his ideas in Japan during the early twentieth century, and India during the 1950s. Ghandi's translation of *Unto this Last* was subject to major deletions, condensations, simplifications and omissions, but retained Ruskin's central critique of capitalism.

There is plenty of good, original analysis in this book and those seriously interested in Ruskin should read it. Some interesting themes emerge, such as the mismatch between Ruskin's mid-Victorian writing and his late nineteenth-century audience, and the idea that his agenda was too radical to fit neatly into mainstream reformist ideas. Gaps are inevitable in a book such as this, perhaps the largest being the lack of attention paid to Ruskin's influence on the physical world. Authors discuss architecture, paintings and theatre, but most of the analysis is centred on the literary productions of Ruskin or those influenced by him. As Morris's career shows so well, Ruskin's influence on the physical appearance

of Victorian Britain is arguably one of his most prominent areas of influence, and some analysis of Ruskin's material legacy would have enriched this collection.

*Jim Cheshire*

Yisrael Levin, *Swinburne's Apollo: Myth, Faith, and Victorian Spirituality*, Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013, viii + 167 pp., Hbk, £60. ISBN 9781409430469.

William Morris once remarked to Sidney Cockerell that, 'In Religion I am a pagan'. To contemporary ears, this might well connote little more than that Morris was uninterested in matters of religion, and that his preoccupations were very much of a this-worldly nature. It is certainly true that Morris lost his Christian faith at Oxford without any apparent struggle, and that the creeds he adopted during his adult life – whether of aestheticism during the 1850s and 1860s, or the Socialism of the 1880s and 1890s – bear little enough relation to the Christianity of mainstream Victorian culture. But, as an increasing body of scholarship is showing, we need to be cautious about eliding non-Christian nineteenth-century world views with twentieth- and twenty-first century agnostic rationalism.

A few decades ago, the idea of a book on 'faith' and 'spirituality' in the work of Morris's lifelong (if not particularly close) friend Algernon Charles Swinburne might well have seemed simply laughable. We may not have known much about Swinburne, but we knew that he was perhaps the most vituperative, most notorious antitheist of the whole grand tradition of dissent against Victorian bourgeois complacency. Today, in comparison with other poets of comparable stature, we still know shamefully little about Swinburne. Although his reputation reached its nadir well over half a century ago, significant publications concerning him continue to come at a trickle, rather than as the free-flowing stream which would be required for us to gain a really well-rounded picture of this paradoxical and many-faceted figure. Yisrael Levin's is the most important critical monograph on Swinburne since Margot K. Louis's *Swinburne and his Gods*, published some twenty-four years ago. And although Levin's work does not quite bear comparison with that of Louis, or that of her equally illustrious predecessors Jerome McGann and David Riede, it nevertheless makes a significant contribution to our understanding of both the poet and his world – and particularly of the still-emerging field we might call 'alternative Victorian spiritualities'.

That Swinburne was a devotee of Greek literature and of all things Hellenic is not news; he is one of the most famous of all Victorian Hellenists, and as a young man amazed his contemporaries with his facility both for reading and composing

Greek verse, and indeed for capturing what was seen as the 'spirit' of Greek tragic poetry in his first masterpiece, *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865). What Levin succeeds in teasing out is the extent to which Swinburne's Hellenism, and in particular as it related to the deity Apollo, was more than simply a literary trope. In his first chapter, Levin explores the place of 'Apollo in the Nineteenth Century'. He points out that for many Victorians who had lost or were losing their Christian faith, Apollo could easily function as a kind of substitute Christ – one requiring only poetic belief.

The popularity of Apollo was further increased by the work of the eminent German mythographers Ottfried Müller and F. Max Müller. In particular, Max Müller's *Comparative Mythology* (1856), which viewed all mythologies as 'essentially solar mythologies that depict humanity's and nature's response to the sun's diurnal and seasonal progress', (p. 20) exerted a widespread influence – including on Morris, as critics of *Sigurd the Volsung* have long realised. Swinburne's most important poetic predecessors in Apollonian devotion were Keats and, especially, Shelley, whose 'Song of Apollo' melds poetic and religious belief in a way which more materialistically-minded Victorians rarely followed: for Arnold, and for Barrett Browning, for example, Apollo remains essentially a literary device.

The next two chapters chart the development of Apollonian imagery in Swinburne's earlier work: first, *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865) and *Poems and Ballads* (1866), and then the political volumes *Songs before Sunrise* (1871) and *Songs of Two Nations* (1875). Yet, while these volumes – and especially *Poems and Ballads* – have absorbed much of the scholarly interest in Swinburne's work, they are almost peripheral to Levin's thesis. Apollo in these poems remains what he was for so many of Swinburne's contemporaries: a mythological character. However, by the time the two political volumes were published, Swinburne had already made his great Apollonian breakthrough, in a work written in 1868 but not published until 1878 – his elegy for Baudelaire, 'Ave Atque Vale' (1868).

With this poem, Swinburne's Apollonianism passes from the mythological to the mythopoeic. That is, in the terms which Levin takes over from Riede's discussion, it ceases simply to recount myths generated in the past, and begins to create its own, drawing on those ancient myths and yet distinct, an original response to the poet's experience of the world. Such mythopoeia, as both Riede and Levin suggest, is characteristic of the Romantic poets, but had come to seem all but impossible in the industrial, utilitarian England of the mid-nineteenth century. In 'Ave Atque Vale', Apollo, the god of the sun and the god of poetry, is not only (as he was to the Romantics) an ambivalent, bittersweet source of artistic inspiration; he is a father-figure, to Baudelaire and by extension to all poets. Swinburne thus makes Apollo an analogue not of Christ, as was usual, but of the Christian God the Father.

From these relatively modest beginnings, Swinburne's Apollonian myth blos-

somed over a number of years, perhaps reaching its zenith (to use an appropriately solar term) in 'On the Cliffs' (1880), a brilliant though labyrinthine poem in which the god's presence is moderated through 'a poetic environment where Apollo's presence is manifested in a convoluted matrix of mythopoeic figures' (p. 104), principally a bird and the poet Sappho (which two figures are closely identified with one another). In this and other poems, Apollo becomes for Swinburne not just a figure whose story is to be told, but a presence to be felt, awed by, and even interacted with.

Levin goes on carefully to trace Swinburne's developing response to the figure and the presence of Apollo in a series of works of the 1880s – including, pleasingly, 'Off-Shore', a remarkable poem hitherto virtually ignored by criticism. He notes, though, that in his final period during the 1890s, Swinburne turns away from Apollo as a source of inspiration. In what is arguably the greatest poem of that decade, 'A Nympholept' (1894), the 'presiding god' is not Apollo but Pan. The point is not, however, a 'replacement' of one god with another (in the way that the speaker of the 'Hymn to Proserpine' [1866] regrets the usurpation of the old gods by Christ), but rather Swinburne's growing sense of the inadequacy of all spiritual systems, and the primacy of the immediate, nympholeptic moment.

Another, more banal but perhaps not wholly inapposite way of saying this is that Swinburne, like so many other Victorians, came to realise that a god in whom one does not believe can never ultimately replace one in whom one does. The various new-minted nineteenth-century religions – of art, humanity, republicanism, and indeed Socialism – while they were and may still be valuable as sets of ideas, all ultimately proved inadequate when they came to be seen by some as substitutes for actual metaphysical systems. Viewed this way, Swinburne's Apollonianism makes him seem less distant than he might otherwise appear from the concerns of his contemporaries. It may also, perhaps, help to make him a more human figure than perhaps he has sometimes seemed. Crucially, though, work such as Levin's also makes it clear that ideologies such as Swinburne's Apollonian poetics can and should be viewed seriously as alternative spiritualities. To speak condescendingly, as critics of earlier generations did, of the 'Victorian muddle about God', is both unfair to the rigour of Victorian spiritual exploration, and blind to humanity's tendency to make gods for itself in every age, including our own.

Yisrael Levin is to be commended for his patient and careful reading of Swinburne, and especially of the later work – a task which is not easy, but which is ultimately one of the most rewarding experiences in late-Victorian studies. There can now be no doubt, in my view, that it is on Swinburne's later work that his reputation as a great nineteenth-century poet must stand. My most significant regret is that Levin has for the most part confined his discussion to those later poems which are already comparatively well-known, rather than delving more

frequently into the byways of Swinburne's mature *oeuvre*. Nevertheless, this is a significant and very welcome addition to Swinburne criticism. If it encourages its readers to explore further, it will have performed a valuable service.

*Richard Frith*

Oliver S. Heal, *Sir Ambrose Heal and the Heal Cabinet Factory 1897–1939*, Wetherby, West Yorkshire: Oblong Creative, 2014, 396 pp., 586 illustrations. Hbk. £58. ISBN 9780957599239.

My aesthetic education began soon after the end of World War II, when my father would take us 'up to Town' so that we could visit the National Gallery (for Art) and Heal's (for Craft). I was therefore favourably inclined to the subject of this book before I saw it, and I can now happily declare the book to be a splendid one, for which Oliver Heal and Oblong Creative deserve the highest praise. It is a large (and heavy, thanks to the quality of the paper), 330 x 240 mm, with a dust-jacket in colour showing a Mansfield 235 fumed-oak wardrobe from 1898, an excellent example of Arts and Crafts work of the time.

Oliver Heal is the grandson of Sir Ambrose Heal (1872–1959), and has had access to a wide range of material which he has organised into a clear and illuminating account. The firm originated with John Harris Heal, from Wiltshire, who set up a feather-dressing business in London in 1810, moved it to Tottenham Court Road in 1818 and to its present site in 1848, by which time it had developed into a bedding factory. It extended its range during the nineteenth century, but only achieved its high status as the result of the leadership of Sir Ambrose, as I shall refer to him, in order to distinguish him from the author of this book. Heal shows Sir Ambrose to have been a remarkable man, designer and retailer, patron of the arts, scholar and author, who 'expanded the firm and turned it into a major force in British design development in the first half of the twentieth century'. (p. 3) He was evidently a complex person, talented, serious, competitive, uncompromising, a great organiser, winning respect rather than affection. He was highly successful; indeed, the design historian John Gloag wondered in 1953 whether any other furniture designer had had 'such an individual and far-reaching effect'. (p. 3) Yet, Heal tells us, he has received little attention recently. Heal seeks to restore his grandfather's reputation, in particular by giving a full account of the work of Heal's Cabinet Factory, located within the business, from 1897 to 1939.

Sir Ambrose was, like Morris, educated at Marlborough; he then spent six months in France, and returned to take up an apprenticeship with James Plunkett, a respected Art Furniture manufacturer in Warwick. He started work at

Heal's Bedding and Upholstery workshops in 1893, and in 1895 became a salesman there, and married Rose Rippingale, who was twelve years his senior. His closest friend at the time was his cousin Cecil Brewer, who encouraged his interest in architecture and design; Brewer designed the Mary Ward Settlement in Tavistock Place (1898) and was a member of the Art Workers' Guild. He also designed the attractive Voyseyesque house, the Fives Court at Pinner, where Heal began his married life, although Rose sadly died in 1901. Ambrose remarried in 1904, to Edith Todhunter, the daughter of the Irish playwright and friend of the Yeats family. He was thus very much part of the aesthetic world of the time, and the Arts and Crafts movement.

This can be clearly seen in the decoration of the two houses in which he lived, both of which were significant enough to be shown in *Country Life*; first Brewer's Fives Court (which incorporated an area in which he could play fives, one of his favourite competitive games). There was a squash court at the next house, the late medieval Baylins, near Beaconsfield, to which the family moved in 1919. This building was restored with advice from the SPAB, and later extended by the architect Edward Maufe, whose wife Prudence was Ambrose's mistress and a close colleague at Heal's. MacDonald Gill painted the oak beams, and Sidney Barnsley was commissioned to provide a fine oak dresser. In these houses, Heal was able to pursue his design work, and also to write scholarly books on London trades and tradesman, which were – as the illustrations show – produced to high typographical standards. He made a substantial collection of books from private presses, including the Kelmscott Press.

In connection with Ambrose's membership of the AWG from 1906, it is mentioned that he 'maintained that he had known William Morris', (p. 34) but unfortunately no revelations follow. Heal's scholarship is usually impeccable; so it is a pity that Morris – acknowledged as a source of inspiration for Ambrose – is said to have started 'the Firm' in 1861 from his home in Red Lion Square rather than from Red House. But Fiona MacCarthy is appropriately quoted as saying that 'At Morris and Co., as at Heal & Son later, the great selling point was the sense of a personal artistic control'. Sir Ambrose was involved in efforts to revive the Arts and Crafts movement after the financial failure of the 1912 exhibition, and was an early and active member of the Design and Industry Association, whose logo he designed in 1915. He was knighted for 'services to industrial arts and crafts' in 1933, and received the accolade of Royal Designer for Industry in 1939.

The second part of the book is called 'Retail is Detail', and shows conclusively how effective Ambrose was in this sphere. Heal describes the handsome shop that Cecil Brewer built in Tottenham Court Road, later extended by Sir Edward Maufe, and replacing the Italianate building of 1854, as 'a testament to A.H.'s vision'. (p. 264) The building, in its combination of elegance and practicality, exemplified Sir Ambrose's positive qualities. The delightful colour poster of 1928

by R.P. Gossop (p. 54) offers a floor-plan showing the wide range of products available, as well as the Bedding Factory with which the family business originated, and the Mansard Gallery, in which important exhibitions of art and design were arranged by Prudence Maufe, and attracted much public interest. The account of what the shop was like during the 1920s is enlivened by references to *Service*, a play about a store very like Heal's, written by Dodie Smith, who, I was surprised to learn, worked at the shop from 1923 to 1932, had an affair with Ambrose, and wrote about these matters in her autobiography. Staff at Heal's were encouraged to dress informally and interact with customers; she apparently 'purchased an orange shawl with a border of magenta roses, to be worn with a magenta dress and flat green shoes'. Sir Ambrose's response was that 'If she wants to dress up as a Polish peasant there seems to be no reason to stop her'. (p. 57)

Altogether, it is clear that Sir Ambrose succeeded in taking Arts and Crafts ideals into the business world. Although Heal quotes Pevsner on three occasions, he does not mention that in *Pioneers of Modern Design*, Pevsner praised – and illustrated – the wardrobe shown at the Paris Exhibition of 1900, which for him embodied a spirit akin to that of Voysey: 'the close atmosphere of medievalism has vanished. Living amongst such objects, we breathe a fresher air'. (The wardrobe is illustrated here on p. 159, where it is noted that Ambrose told a committee in 1907 that the Exhibition had been 'of no benefit to the firm'). It is notable that Pevsner goes on to state that 'Even more important historically than such exhibition pieces of Heal's was their production for the ordinary market', which he dates to the 1898 catalogue of Heal's Plain Oak Furniture. Heal is thus placed by Pevsner firmly within the developing tradition of modern design.

However, the author suggests that the idea of retail is still regarded with suspicion in academic and artistic circles, and this is the reason why Sir Ambrose's reputation is lower than it should be. He argues that Sir Ambrose should be celebrated as much for his development of the firm as for his design work; but he also demonstrates in the third part of the book how wide-ranging and high-quality the work at 'The Cabinet Factory' was; this section, occupying 146 well-illustrated pages, gives a full account of the factory's impressive output from 1895 to 1939. We are shown a man who showed great distinction in a number of roles. Heal concludes modestly that his work will 'provide a solid foundation for future studies', and goes on to claim that, 'taking everything together, it seems indisputable that A.H. was an important figure in the realms of furnishing, retailing and design in the early part of the last century'. (p. 267) It is a claim that the book amply justifies.

There are six appendices of supplementary information, including one on 'A.H. as Author', a substantial Bibliography and a good Index. The 586 illustrations, including many in colour, give the reader a good sense of the range and quality of the work of the company and of Heal's contribution to it. It is difficult

to see how this piece of work could have been better done; I can only recommend it enthusiastically. The price is necessarily high, but the book is invaluable.

*Peter Faulkner*

Virginia Chieffo Raguin, *Stained Glass Radiant Art*, Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2013, 112 pp. Pbk US\$20. ISBN 9781606061534.

*Stained Glass Radiant Art* is a short introduction to stained glass, based on the collection of the J. Paul Getty Museum, acquired in 2003. Virginia Chieffo Raguin is a distinguished scholar of stained glass and the author of one of the well-known general studies of the medium.

The book adopts a thematic approach which assumes no prior knowledge from the reader. The three main sections describe the process of manufacture, the function of stained glass within an architectural context, and the influence of artists and patrons. Shorter sections follow which describe patterns in collecting stained glass and issues relating to conservation and display.

Despite being aimed at a wide audience, *Stained Glass Radiant Art* does not shy away from the insights of cultural history: this is no simple chronological survey of stained glass. Raguin goes to considerable lengths in order to stress that a glazing scheme was 'a corporate enterprise dependant on a patron'. She stresses that stained glass can 'transform our experience of space', (p. 9) and sees it as comparable to contemporary installation art in its ability to respond to lighting conditions and the physical interaction of viewers. In a similar way, the book stresses that medieval and Renaissance stained glass was not seen as a 'minor art' (a theme close to the heart of William Morris) but was a medium which attracted the best artists of the period. Several interesting comparisons are offered which connect stained glass to manuscript illumination and panel painting. One of the best aspects of the book is the sustained attention given to the technical aspects of glass painting. Raguin works hard to describe the ways in which glass painters achieved subtle effects in their resistant medium via graduating and modifying coats of enamel wash and silver stain.

However, the book encounters difficulty in relating a balanced history of stained glass, concentrating as it does on just one museum collection. From the evidence presented, it would appear that most of the Getty collection dates from the late-medieval period or the Renaissance; many illustrations of earlier windows are photographs of those in gothic cathedrals. As a result, much of the book concentrates on the later periods, which could leave the reader with the misleading impression that stained glass reached its peak during the Renaissance. Later stained glass barely merits a mention, and statements such as 'only toward the

end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries was stained glass considered an art in its own right and a subject worthy of scholarly investigation' is a contentious claim and arguably a distortion of the attention paid to stained glass from the mid-Victorian period onward. (p. 90) When Raguin discusses post-Renaissance culture, it is in the context of explaining the ways in which collecting stained glass has partly determined what we see in museums today. The book does not concern itself with the revival of stained glass during the nineteenth century, and does not mention William Morris or any of the other major figures of the Victorian revival.

The production values are good, and the photographs of the museum objects excellent, although a couple of the *in situ* images are less accomplished. People who buy this book as a supplement their visit to the Getty museum will probably have purchased just what they need: it will aid comprehension and appreciation of this collection. As a more general introduction to the history of stained glass, the book is less satisfying, and probably not the best way to build a balanced perspective on the subject.

*Jim Cheshire*

Roger Fieldhouse & Richard Taylor, eds, *E.P. Thompson and English Radicalism*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013, 258 pp. Hbk, £65. ISBN 9780719088216

How to do justice to E.P. Thompson? Renowned historian, prolific journalist and essayist, lecturer, socialist and peace campaigner, he also published a novel (*The Sykaos Papers*), and a collection of poetry. Thompson was one of the principal intellectuals of the Communist Party in Great Britain after the Second World War, and although he left the party in 1956 over the Soviet invasion of Hungary, he remained a Marxist, playing a key role in the first New Left in Britain during the 1950s. He was a vocal left-wing critic of the Labour governments of 1964–70 and 1974–79, and an active member of CND. During the 1980s he played a crucial role in the formation of the European Movement for Nuclear Disarmament (END), and became the leading intellectual of the peace movement.

Published to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Thompson's most famous book, *The Making of the English Working Class*, this collection of essays explores in some detail the diverse range of activities and interests of this 'passionate and romantic polymath'. (p. 1) While it is not a biography of Thompson, it does present a coherent, almost chronological account of his intellectual and political activities. It is argued that there was an essential unity and coherence to Thompson's work, and that this is signified by the title of the book, which deliberately links Thomp-

son and 'English radicalism', defined as 'that particular English tradition, dating approximately from the seventeenth-century Civil War (with traces back to the fourteenth-century Peasants' Revolt), which emphasises freedom, equality and democracy, within the framework of the law'. (p. 2) Thompson, they say, was a 'quintessentially English radical' who named Vico, Marx, Blake and Morris as his chief theoretical inspirations.

The most interesting aspect of the book for members of the Society is that it clearly emphasises the influence of Morris upon Thompson, and in so doing brings us to a greater understanding of Morris himself. For Morrisians Thompson is best known for his magisterial biography of Morris, first published in 1955. The book was originally intended to be a short article, building on the earlier work of Robin Page Arnot, in which Thompson aimed to reclaim Morris as a Marxist revolutionary; both from those on the right who had effectively ignored his political activities and emphasised instead his literary and artistic life, and those on the left who had attempted to portray him as an ethical or a sentimental socialist. But Thompson was seized by Morris, or as he later said, Morris 'claimed him', and when *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* was eventually published it was over 800 pages long. Thompson joined the William Morris Society immediately it was formed, as member No. 61, and remained a member until his death in 1994. On 4 May 1959 he lectured to the Society in the Hall of the Art Workers' Guild on 'The Communism of William Morris'. During the interim he had, like many others, broken with the Communist Party, and he now re-assessed Morris's Communism. This proved to be an important staging post on the way to his much revised biography, published in 1977. The subsequent publication of this lecture by the Society in 1965 is still an excellent short introduction to Morris's politics, and to his contribution to Marxist theory.

Morris, we are told, led Thompson 'intellectually towards a broader, more liberal interpretation of Marxism'. (p. 8) David Goodway reinforces this in Chapter 3, with a stimulating discussion of what he regards as the key section of Thompson's biography, the fourth and final part, 'Necessity and Desire', and this point was confirmed by Thompson himself in his lecture to the Society. While acknowledging Morris's profound debt to Marx, he admits that he was originally wrong to suggest that Morris's moral critique of society was dependent upon Marx's economic and historical analysis. 'That is not the way in which I look upon the question now. I see the two as inextricably bound together in the same context of social life. Economic relationships are at the same time moral relationships; relations of production are at the same time relations between people, of oppression or co-operation; and there is a moral logic as well as an economic logic, which derives from these relationships. The history of the class struggle is at the same time the history of human morality'. (*The Communism of William Morris*, p. 17) Thompson insists that Morris's analyses are a necessary

complement to those of Marx, because without them the concept of ‘the whole man’ becomes lost, as happened with the later Marxist tradition. It is therefore Morris who led Thompson to his rejection of orthodox Communism, and to his realisation that the overthrow of capitalist class power would not of itself lead to a Communist society: ‘the construction of a Communist community would require a moral revolution as profound as the revolution in economic and social power’. (*Ibid.*, pp. 18–19)

This debate is the source of Thompson’s ‘Socialist humanism’, a key theme illustrated throughout the book, and given detailed analysis in Chapter 6 by Kate Soper. It refers to a libertarian communism; Thompson’s attempt to rescue the ‘moral imagination’ from the ‘philistinisms’ of both social democracy and of Stalinist communism; from the deadening process of bureaucratisation. He recognised that both socialism and capitalism could become obsessed with economic growth at the expense of other human values. It also encompasses Thompson’s emphasis upon human moral autonomy, and his assertion of the authentic Marxist dialectic of human beings as both ‘made’ by historical circumstances and active in their making. This discussion fed into his analysis of social class and his rejection of static, sociological definitions of the concept. For Thompson, ‘class is defined by men as they live their own history’ (*The Making of the English Working Class*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963, p. 11), and he focused on the circumstances people found themselves in, their interactions and struggles, during which they came to an understanding of their identity as a class. In other words, the process of struggle leads to the discovery of class and class-consciousness; class struggle comes before class.

Thompson is probably best known today for his historical work on British radical movements during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and in Chapter 4 Theodore Koditschek gives an illuminating account of Thompson’s Marxist history. *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), still in print fifty years on, is widely regarded as a canonical work of social history, and according to Professor Eric Hobsbawm ‘almost certainly the most influential single book of history in the Anglo-Saxon radical Sixties and Seventies’. Thompson’s intention, he said, was ‘to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the “obsolete” hand-loom weaver, the “Utopian” artisan, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity’. (p. 13)

Previously social historians had focused on the tangible – wages, strikes, living conditions, the Chartist movement – but Thompson was much more concerned with what he referred to as ‘human experience’. His detailing of workshop customs, communal rituals, failed conspiracies, popular songs, and other fragments of social history alone make his book a riveting read. But running through it was also a searing indictment of capitalist exploitation, and a refusal to accept that capitalism was inherently superior to other economic and social models.

Koditschek acknowledges the ground-breaking nature of the work, suggesting that it opened up an 'unexplored continent of history', (p.71) but he also points out its omissions, and suggests that others of his works, notably *Customs in Common*, have better stood the test of time. Nevertheless, he argues that historians of other times and places will be rewarded by reading Thompson. 'His sensitive explorations of the subtle dialectic between structure and agency can provide, if not a model, at least an inspiration. They reveal a master historian at work, and show some of the possibilities for applying theory to the complex, messy arenas of irrepressible human action and entangled human affairs'. (p. 90)

Thompson was never a conventional historian, and elsewhere in the book I was particularly drawn to Roger Fieldhouse's Chapter 2 on 'Thompson: the adult educator', which recounts his seventeen years working in the Department of Extramural Studies at the University of Leeds. It is the account of his teaching which is fascinating, variously described as inspirational, stimulating and challenging: 'It is as advocate, innovator and practitioner of a "bottom-up" approach to adult education, always valuing his students' contributions and enthusiastic to learn from their experiences, that Thompson as teacher should be remembered'. (p. 43) Living in Halifax, and working largely in the industrial towns of the West Riding of Yorkshire, Thompson was able to gather much of the material which eventually emerged as *The Making of the English Working Class*, and in Chapter 3 David Goodway examines the way in which this book grew out of Thompson's day-to-day work at the University. Thompson acknowledged his debt to the members of his tutorial classes in his preface, and I for one am left regretting the fact that I was not a student of his. From Leeds he moved to the University of Warwick in October 1965, as Director of the Centre for the Study of Social History, but resigned just six years after taking up the post, disgusted at the commercial turn the University was taking. His resignation was accompanied by a lengthy pamphlet outlining his intellectual and political objections to the University's direction, and pouring scorn on 'the species *Academicus Superciliosus*', the academic staff who, he said, were defrauding their students.

Thompson, like Morris, was no mere theorist or polemicist, but an activist too. He played a pivotal role in the early New Left's attempt to create a new political and social movement (Chapter 8), and in the peace movement (Chapter 9). Unlike most Marxists, he did not believe that the campaign for peace should be subordinate to class conflict and the attainment of socialism: they were both part of the same struggle to create a truly democratic and just society. After 1956, again like Morris, he became increasingly suspicious of orthodox political parties and the State. He wanted a new social movement to undermine the orthodoxies of both East and West. In *END*, says Richard Taylor, 'his inimitable combination of moral passion, scathing polemic and a "feel" for the popular mood of concern over the mounting nuclear and political threat acted as the catalyst for a new,

mass international movement'. (p.189) His was also a concern that free, informed public debate and human rights were being undermined. Michael Newman suggests that Thompson's ideas are still relevant today, that his work forces debate, while Richard Taylor argues strongly that the revolutions of 1989 and beyond in Russia and Eastern Europe owed much to the political activists of END and to their campaigns for peace and human rights.

The editors and contributors to this collection of essays make clear that they are admirers of the man and his work. These are generally sympathetic analyses, but this is far from being a hagiography. Thus it is suggested that Thompson possessed sentimental loyalty to pre-1956 Communism, an irrational aversion to George Orwell, that he underestimated the importance of gender, race and ethnicity in his studies of the English working-class, that there was a form of cultural nationalism in his work, a romanticism about elements of the past, and that he was difficult to work with. Nonetheless this 'man of many parts' exerted a profound influence; his work and example retain a contemporary resonance as we once again face rising tension between East and West. William Morris spent fifteen years of his life struggling to create a revolutionary tradition within a society unripe for revolution; Thompson 'with all his might . . . struggled to keep open the common footpaths of radical inquiry', and to present alternatives to bureaucracy, the impersonal power of the state, and the subordination of human values to the pursuit of economic growth. Romantics both, revolutionaries both, one cannot understand Thompson without reading Morris, and anyone interested in Morris and his legacy would benefit from reading Thompson.

In conclusion, the editors include three examples of Thompson's writing 'as illustrations of Thompson's inimitable style', always 'rich, erudite and engaging'. (pp. 3–4) These are taken from *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), *The Peculiarities of the English, I* (1965), and *Warwick University Ltd* (1970). If readers are not yet convinced of the need to read Thompson, then these extracts should surely lead them to do just that.

*Martin Crick*

Ruth Levitas, *Utopia as Method*, London: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2013, 268 pp.  
Pbk, £19.99. ISBN 9780230231979.

In 2011 Michael Truscello made a documentary *Capitalism is the Crisis* (available online) which challenged the idea that the 2008 crash exposed imperfections in an otherwise healthy system, and promoted radical alternatives to capitalism. Ruth Levitas's book is framed by a similar set of concerns. She identifies a pressing need for social change and argues that market instability, growing inequality, loss

of public services, financial mismanagement and ecological disaster can only be resolved via elaboration of alternative ways of living. Utopia meets this need and the aim of the book is to show how, via its elaboration as the Imaginary Reconstitution of Society (IROS).

The book is organised in three sections. Each presents a series of important arguments. The first develops the idea presented in Levitas's earlier *The Concept of Utopia*, which outlines utopia as method. The argument relies on a particular concept of utopia which Levitas interprets as a universal desire for a better way of living. The concept of utopia as desire generates a hermeneutic method of inquiry, and is linked to prefigurative or transformative practices, and to the holistic sketching of alternative societies.

The second section presents an account of the development of sociology as an academic discipline, and argues that institutionalisation led first to a turn to science, and away from utopia, and subsequently to a revival of interest in utopia via a postmodern lens. This return, while welcome, wrongly treats utopia as a goal, and encourages the anti-utopians' embrace of utopia. For Levitas, steering sociology back towards a conception of utopia as method facilitates a 'push forward to a less cautious and more imaginative engagement with possible futures, in which utopia is understood as a creative form of sociology'. (p. 149) The final section, which examines IROS as method, contains three parts. The 'archaeological mode' interrogates ideas of the good society by the excavation of social and economic policies, the 'ontological mode' is about the subjects and agents of utopia and raises issues of wellbeing, flourishing and happiness, while the 'architectural mode' turns to questions of institutional design. Levitas does not treat these aspects of IROS independently. Not only are questions of human flourishing intimately linked to conceptions of institutional design: both must also be subjected to archaeological critique. As a method, then, IROS is about uncovering the assumptions which underpin social alternatives. 'The method of utopia' as IROS, Levitas argues, is 'the construction of an integrated account of possible (or impossible) social systems as a kind of speculative sociology'. (p. xiv)

The purpose of developing this framework is not just to recommend a particular approach to utopia and to sociology – in the furtherance of IROS – but also to advance a particular set of principles. Central to these is what Levitas refers to as the 'ethic of grace'. In the first part of the book she turns to Paul Tillich in order to define grace as 'the reunion of life with life, the reconciliation of the self with itself'. (p. 13) Towards the end, she discusses grace with reference to the work of Roberto Unger:

Acts of grace entail refraining from attacking another's exposed or heightened vulnerability. ... This echoes some vernacular uses of the terms grace, gracious and graciousness, which include the practice of passing over or covering for the

weaknesses or social lapses of others rather than exposing or confronting them, thus collaborating in a mutual process of saving face. (p. 188)

Grace is embedded in utopia as method, and features at every level of Levitas's analysis. The results are mixed. While grace serves as a vehicle to explore some rich ideas about being, it also serves to weaken the analytical force of utopia as method and muddy the relationship with IROS. On the one hand, the concept of utopia as desire (on which the framing of utopia as method draws) is 'analogous to a quest for grace'. (pp. xii–xiii) Since grace is already part and parcel of utopia, it is not surprising to find that it emerges as a 'recurrent theme' when utopia is used as a hermeneutic method. (p. 14) On the other hand, utopia as method is concerned with 'the potential institutions of a just, equitable and sustainable society which begins to provide the conditions for grace'. (p. xviii) In this sense, it appears to be identical to IROS rather than a route to it, for IROS, too, is 'always essentially an attempt to establish the institutional basis of the good life of happiness, and the social conditions for grace'. (p. 65)

The range of Levitas's reading is impressive. Bloch, Bauman, Rawls, Rorty, Erik Olin Wright and Michael Young are just some of the authors who feature in the text. Her analyses are not only distinctive but also help carry the broad arguments of the book. The resonance she finds between her ideas and those of other authors fleshes out perfectly the secular humanist values which inform her thinking and a commitment to their realisation which is compelling. Nevertheless, her tendency to reference multiple sources in succession sometimes threatens to ride roughshod over important philosophical differences, for example between Martin Buber's I-Thou relationship, Morris's principle of fellowship, John McMurray's conception of mutual recognition and Emmanuel Levinas's transcendent Other. (p. 187) Moreover, the richness of the discussion can make unraveling the dimensions of utopia as method quite difficult.

Such problems are exacerbated where Levitas avoids explicit commentary, as she does from time to time in Morris's case. Morris occupies an important place in the book and is a presence throughout. He appears as a pioneer of utopian sociology, alongside Edward Bellamy and H.G. Wells, and, by his understanding of art's transformative role, as an exponent of 'the possibility of grace'. (p. 215) Yet it is not clear how far Levitas wishes to endorse Paul Meier's account of Morris as orthodox Marxist, which paints him as an advocate of proletarian dictatorship (p. 80), and if so, how this Morris fits either with Absensour's view of Morris as an exponent of the 'utopian marvelous' who wanted 'to awaken and energize desires so that they might rush toward their liberation' (p. 114), or Phillippa Bennett's reading which points to 'the desire to reclaim wonder'. (p. 196) Levitas offers a description of *News from Nowhere* in the book's second section, as well as an account of Morris's utopianism at the end. And discussions along the way suggest

that utopia as method allows for the possibility of different interpretations (with the possible exception of Jameson's 'flat-footed literalism'). (p. 121) Moreover, she finds the commonality of Absensour's Morris and Bennett's visionary in their attempt to express the 'existential depth' of humanity which Levitas treats as an idea of grace. But this raises another question: if the hardwiring of grace into utopia makes the interpretation of particular utopias and romances secondary to the project of IROS, what role does utopian or dystopian writing play in the elaboration of utopia as method?

The privileging of sociology, freed from both the straightjacket of 'science' and the idea of utopia as a totalising blueprint, provides one answer. The story Levitas tells of sociology's evolution, principally in UK academic institutions, underplays the influence of Althusserian structuralism and resistance to American historical sociology documented by Craig Calhoun. However, Levitas's main point is to show how the explosion of publishing outside academia – notably feminist utopian fiction – revitalised sociological traditions and promoted utopian sensibilities in sociological theory. The resulting fusion provided 'a way of reading utopia that engages with the actual institutional structure of the present and the potential institutional structure of the future'. (p. 126) Her conclusion reserves an important place for the analysis of utopian writing. Creative works which 'push the limits' of 'possible imagination and imagined possibility' are the mainstays of critical sociology. (p. 125) But not everything goes, because the value of utopias is assessed by the standards of utopia as method and the commitment to IROS. Notwithstanding her criticism of Jameson, Levitas thus argues that utopias should be read literally – though not exclusively so – because '[w]ithout a certain element of closure, specificity, commitment and literalism about what would actually be entailed in practice, serious criticism is impossible'. (p. 125) This view implies a narrowing of IROS's compass of utopian writings. It is not clear that an outlandish, satirical work such as *bolo'bolo* can find a home in this project, notwithstanding its cultural significance. Nor is it clear that heterotopias sit well within IROS's field.

IROS provides plenty of space for practical utopian experimentation. 'Occupy', for example, is mentioned at several points in the text. But Levitas's desire to enter into the imaginary reconstruction of society classifies utopia in a particular way and to meet her specific purposes. It is not a coincidence that her final reflections on reconstruction are UK-centric, even though she finds examples of practical utopias across the world. As a call for development of an imaginative and critical approach to sociology, *Utopia as Method* is powerful. But the binding of utopia, understood as method, to sociology, seems less persuasive.

Ruth Kinna

# Notes on Contributors

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# 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 the following guidelines when submitting articles and reviews:

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