

WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY IN THE UNITED STATES

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2009



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On the cover: Edward Burne-Jones, *Self-Caricature in the Studio at 17 Red Lion Square*. Ink, [1856]. Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library.

William Morris Society in the United States, P.O. Box 53263, Washington, DC 20009. Website: www.morrissociety.org; blog: <http://morrissociety.blogspot.com>.

A LETTER TO MEMBERS

This has been another busy and successful year for the Society. Some of the highlights of the year are summarized below:

April 2008. Peter Trippi delivered a lecture on J.W. Waterhouse and the theatre at the Grolier Club.

May 2008. Margaretta S. Frederick, curator and governing committee member, provided for members a tour of the Bancroft Collection of Pre-Raphaelite art at the Delaware Art Museum. Members also attended a lecture given that afternoon by Debra Mancoff, noted Pre-Raphaelite scholar, on floral symbolism in Pre-Raphaelite art.

May 2008. The society launched its blog, *News From Anywhere* (morrissociety.blogspot.com), providing current news of events and activities of interest and a link to the society's website.

November 2008. The society, with other groups, presented a staged reading at the Grolier Club of Virginia Woolf's only play, *Freshwater*, which depicted some of the late Victorians known by her family. This event was sold out.

December 2008. As usual, the society sponsored two sessions of academic papers at the Modern Language Association annual convention, held this year in San Francisco.

ANNUAL GOVERNING COMMITTEE MEETING

The annual meeting of the society governing committee is usually held in conjunction with the annual Modern Language Association convention in December, where we also hold two sessions on topics concerning William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites. This year's MLA conference was in San Francisco. Since most of the committee's members are from the East Coast or Midwest, we decided for everyone's convenience to hold our meeting in November in New Haven, CT during the conference of the North American Victorian Studies Association, taking place at Yale University.

It should be noted that next year's MLA conference will be back on the East Coast in Philadelphia, and that the MLA has moved their event to the first part of January rather than a few days after Christmas. This should make attending our annual meeting more convenient for many members.

Our meeting was lively and productive. Among the topics discussed were the society's membership numbers and financial condition; our new non-profit status and its impact on the responsibilities of the governing committee members; and our plans for 2009 and 2010. We also discussed our *Newsletter* and our efforts to name a permanent editor to oversee its content and production.

One decision made at our meeting was to make some changes in our membership categories, although the basic membership (\$45 for individuals) remains the same. You will see these new membership categories on the renewal form enclosed with this *Newsletter*.

OTHER NEWS

We are happy to announce that our governing committee members contributed several thousand dollars to the society in 2008. These additional funds will be used for the society's operations, particularly in meeting our ever increasing costs for publications and mailing, and for our sponsorship of various events. We hope that ongoing contributions from our committee and from the general membership will allow us to continue, and eventually endow the fellowships program. All members are encouraged to consider making donations to support the society.

[Continued on page 4]



**Vernon Lushington: Pre-Raphaelite, Friend of William Morris
and Father of “Mrs. Dalloway”
Talk by David Taylor**

Thursday, 12 March 2009 · 6 p.m., reception to follow
The Grolier Club, 47 East 60th Street, New York

Sponsored by the William Morris Society in the United States, the American Friends of Arts and Crafts in Chipping Campden, the Stickley Museum at Craftsman Farms, and the Victorian Society in America.

Tickets (\$12 for members of the sponsoring groups, \$18 for others) may be purchased from the society's website www.morrissociety.org or by sending a check to William Morris Society, P.O. Box 53263, Washington, DC 20009.

Although he was a friend and colleague to many famous artists, authors, and activists, the lawyer and positivist Vernon Lushington (1832–1912) remains virtually unknown today. In “Vernon Lushington: Pre-Raphaelite, Friend of William Morris, and Father of ‘Mrs. Dalloway,’” historian David Taylor will draw upon previously unavailable materials from the Lushington archive to shed light on the interesting and influential figure who arranged the first meeting between Edward Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti and who visited with William and Jane Morris at Kelmscott Manor. Taylor will also discuss the connection between the Lushingtons and the Stephen family. After the death of Mrs. Lushington, Vernon's three daughters (above) were taken under the wing of Julia Stephen, wife of Leslie Stephen and mother of Virginia Woolf. Vernon Lushington's eldest daughter, Kitty, became the model for the title character of Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). The Lushingtons also spent summers with the Stephen family at Talland House in Cornwall, which provided the setting for the Ramseys' summer home in Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927). Letters in the archive offer insight into Woolf's fiction.

David Taylor is a historian, writer, and lecturer living in Cobham, Surrey. A Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, Taylor has published several works on the history of Cobham and presented lectures to the Virginia Woolf Society, the Pre-Raphaelite Society, and the William Morris Society. Vernon Lushington is the subject of Taylor's doctoral research.

A special thank you: We would like to acknowledge and express our grateful appreciation to life member Anne M. Gordon for her generous gift of books to the library of Kelmscott House. Now available to students and scholars for their research, the volumes include the following Kelmscott Press editions in fine condition: George Cavendish, *Life of Thomas Wolsey* (1893); J.W. Mackail, *Biblia Innocentium* (1892); and Thomas Clavow and William Morris, *The Floure and the Leafe and the Book of Cupid* (1896).

2009 AND BEYOND

We are still in the beginning stages of planning for our hosting in July 2010 of the international meeting of the William Morris Society at the Delaware conference, "Useful & Beautiful." Much more information will be provided next year as we draw close to this important event.

As we look forward to next year, we invite you as always to participate and contribute to our efforts. We always welcome submissions for the *Newsletter*, notices of events for the website or blog, and any suggestions or recommendations you may have for our organization. We also urge you to enlist friends or colleagues with an interest in Morris and his circle as members. There is a place on our website to join, and we would be happy to provide you with some of our printed membership brochures.

Fran Durako

President, William Morris Society in the United States

UPCOMING MORRIS SOCIETY EVENTS

**Vernon Lushington: Pre-Raphaelite, Friend of
William Morris, and Father of "Mrs. Dalloway"**
Talk by David Taylor
Thursday, 12 March 2009
Grolier Club, New York

A talk by British historian David Taylor on the eminent Vernon Lushington will be next in the series of New York events organized by the William Morris Society in the United States with our co-sponsors, the American Friends of Arts and Crafts in Chipping Campden, the Stickley Museum at Craftsman Farms, and the Victorian Society in America. Scheduled for Wednesday, 12 March, 6 p. m. at the usual venue, the Grolier Club (47 East 60th St., between Park and Madison avenues), Taylor's illustrated presentation can be seen as a follow-up to previous lectures and to last fall's reading of Woolf's *Freshwater*. For Lushington had connections

to William Morris, the Pre-Raphaelite circle, the arts and crafts movement, and to Bloomsbury. More details will be found elsewhere in this *Newsletter*. Tickets are \$12 for members of the sponsoring groups, \$18 for the general public, and may be purchased from the Morris Society website, www.morrissociety.org, or by sending a check for the appropriate amount to William Morris Society, P.O. Box 53263, Washington, DC 20009.

Call for Papers: Morris Society Sessions at the MLA Annual Convention 2010

As a sequel to the Morris Society session on "William Morris's Early Friends and Associates" held in December 2008 at the MLA convention in San Francisco (a report on which will appear in the next *Newsletter*), the Morris Society will sponsor a companion session on "William Morris's Later Associates" at the next convention, to be held in Philadelphia. (Note that the MLA has changed the schedule; the 2009 conference will take place during the first week of January 2010. Future conventions will follow this pattern.) The four speakers are: Eleonora Sasso, Pescara, Italy, "William Morris, Ford Madox Ford and the Celebration of Simplicity"; Paul Acker (St. Louis University), "Charles Fairfax Murray's Collaboration with William Morris"; Jude Nixon (Oakland University), "Sons of Odin: Carlyle, Morris, Watts-Dunton—Icelandic Mythology and Antiscrape"; and Zachary Weir (Miami University), "Thomas Wardle's 'Wild Silks of India': Morris and Imperial Design."

We also invite members and others to submit proposals for a second session: "Music and the Pre-Raphaelites: Sound, Lyric and Harmony," to consider the importance of music and other auditory phenomena in the lives and work of Pre-Raphaelite artists and writers. Please send one-page abstracts by 15 March 2009 to florence-boos@uiowa.edu.

We will also hold a Morris Society social event during the January 2010 convention, to be announced in the next *Newsletter*.

RECENT SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

Virginia Woolf's *Freshwater*
A Reading at the Grolier Club, New York
19 November 2008

Nothing helps like publicity, and when the publicity comes in the form of the *New Yorker*—watch out! You just might succeed beyond your wildest dreams. This was the case with the reading of Virginia Woolf's play, *Freshwater*, co-sponsored by the society, which took place at the Grolier Club on Wednesday, 19 November.

In a “sidebar” appended to the listings in the magazine’s 22 September issue Hilton Als mentioned the event in the context of the Grolier’s Bloomsbury exhibition, *The Perpetual Fight*. The result was an instantaneous and immense clamor for tickets. Such was the public demand that seats had to be held back for members of the host groups. In the end a “sold out” notice was posted on our website, dozens were turned away, and more than two hundred turned up to give the Grolier a full house (and a technical violation of the fire code). It was a wonderful evening. Woolf’s send-up of her aunt, the photographer Julia Margaret Cameron, and her friends Ellen Terry, G.F. Watts, and Alfred Tennyson (not to mention a porpoise, Queen Victoria, and Terry’s would-be lover, John Craig) reads stiffly on the page. But as read—really performed—before an audience the play came alive and was so uproariously funny that at times laughter threatened to stop the proceedings. Director Arthur Giron (his play about Voltaire is opening in New York as you read this) had assembled a truly stellar group of professional and amateur actors (all volunteers) for the occasion and the result was, in a word—magic. Even the fabled impromptu reading of *Freshwater* by Woolf herself and her friends could not have been half so amusing. After the play, members of the society and the other groups joined the cast for an upstairs party, held appropriately in the Grolier’s Morris Room. (Thanks to all who made this happen: Arthur Giron, our member Elaine Ellis and Arts and Crafts Tours, Laura Reilly, Liza Vann, the Grolier Club staff, and the representatives of the co-sponsoring organizations.) *Freshwater* brought us a lot of enjoyment and attention. There is already talk of a future dramatic presentation with the same participants and sponsors.

[For those who missed the reading there is a chance to see *Freshwater*, 15 January–15 February, in a fully staged production by the Women’s Project, New York, www.womensproject.org.]

2008 Morris Society Fellowships

Dr. Michaela Braesel of Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich and winner of the 2008 Joseph R. Dunlap Memorial Fellowship, has sent the following report:

Although I had to postpone my journey to London, for which I will use the grant from the Joseph R. Dunlap Memorial Fellowship, I pursued my research concerning William Morris’s illuminated manuscripts.

My research on illuminated manuscripts gained a new aspect in connection with issues of authenticity for an essay I was invited to write by the *Canadian Journal of Aesthetics*. The aim was to show that Morris first—like so many of his contemporaries—tried to copy mediaeval examples. He then realised that the mediaeval ways of decorating a written page were not suited for

modern texts. So he tried to find a form of illumination that was suited to his own time, that was authentic for his own time. For this he varied elements he found in mediaeval manuscripts like borders, line fillers, and decorated initials, but combined them with elements of stylised nature that were modern and are not to be found on the pages of the old manuscripts. This combination of inspiration through art history and of contemporary elements shows clearly for the medium of illuminated manuscripts how Morris understood the idea of a living tradition, which he articulated so often in his lectures on pattern and the decorative arts. Tradition is to be seen always as a point of departure for a contemporary art, an art that is deeply linked with a common past but that does not copy these works.

Illuminated manuscripts also figure in an essay on the painted furniture of Morris and his circle which will be published in the *Münchner Jahrbuch für Bildende Kunst* for 2008. Here it was the aim to show how Red House was conceived as a sort of modern workshop, and at the same time as a place where the values of the artistic community were displayed. Illuminated manuscripts figured in contemporary publications on the culture of the Middle Ages, equipped with plates in chromolithography that show parts or details of illuminations, mostly pieces of furniture, vessels, and costumes. The forms of the furniture depicted served as an inspiration for the designs that Morris conceived, and the colours of the miniatures stimulated the colour schemes of the furniture.

Of particular importance was the *Romance of the Rose* in the British Museum (MS Harley 4425). One of the miniatures served as a model for the laying out of the gardens of Red House and Morris sketched details of this miniature in one of his notebooks. Illuminated manuscripts also showed Morris and his artist friends ways to combine a three-dimensional figurative model without creating a three-dimensional picture space with deep background. They took the flat patterned backgrounds from the miniatures of the manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that were the favourites of Morris’s mentor John Ruskin; an example of this can be seen on the King René’s Honeymoon cabinet in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The early furniture of Morris is painted with figure scenes narrating stories or depicting moments. In this narrative quality they not only resemble the frescos of the Italian town halls and churches that depict common values and fears, but also the narrative cycles in illuminated manuscripts. Narration was an important part of Morris’s artistic imagination, whether in the form of texts or of painting—illuminated manuscripts had the unique advantage that they combined both. This makes it plausible why, especially in his early years,

Morris was interested in this art form, apart from the attractiveness of colour and the contemporary fashion for illumination.

Morris's illuminated work will be briefly mentioned in the final section of another work to be published next year. Here I investigate the position book illumination had from the first mention of particular illuminators by Vasari in the middle of the sixteenth century to the art historic evaluations of book illuminations in the early nineteenth century. Morris figures as an example for a new way of looking at illuminations, for a shift in favourites from the Flemish illumination of the sixteenth century to earlier eras due to a shift in the use of book illumination by the decorative arts and the related questions that these posed to the visual arts.

I had to postpone the journey to London, but I will go there in Spring 2009 to finish the research on Morris's manuscripts and will then report from my studies there.

EXHIBITIONS OF NOTE

Paintings from the Reign of Victoria: The Royal Holloway College Collection, London

1 February–12 April 2009

Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, DE

Paintings from the Reign of Victoria: The Royal Holloway Collection, London, an exhibition of sixty paintings from the collection of Royal Holloway College outside of London, will be featured at the Delaware Art Museum 1 February through 12 April 2009. The collection was formed between 1881–1883 by the Victorian entrepreneur, Thomas Holloway, as part of the endowment for the women's college he founded and built in 1879. Holloway's collection offers some of the most important paintings of the Victorian period, encompassing the full range of subject matter, including scenes of urban life (William Powell Frith's *Railway Station*), historical events (John Everett Millais's *The Princes in the Tower*), landscapes (John Brett's *Carthillon Cliffs*), and contemporary events (Edwin Landseer, *Man Proposes, God Disposes*). Thomas Holloway's belief in the power of art as a teaching tool inspired him to assemble this collection. He bought paintings with an established provenance, almost entirely from auction, and was not afraid to pay the highest prices. The result is an encyclopedic representation of Victorian art, including examples of every phase and development of the period. It is a veritable time capsule of British visual culture of the 19th century, from academic to avant garde, including the work of Royal Academy presidents like Frederic, Lord Leighton (academic) and Pre-Raphaelite artists such as John Everett Millais (avant-garde). As such, *Paintings*

from the Reign of Victoria: The Royal Holloway Collection, London provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to view the Delaware Art Museum's Bancroft Collection of Pre-Raphaelite Art within the broader context of Victorian Art. A broad range of exhibition-related programming will be offered including lectures, films and a book club. Please check the museum's website for more details. www.delart.org.

The Virtues of Simplicity: American Arts and Crafts from the Morse Collection

17 February–1 May 2009

Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art, Winter Park, FL

The museum's new exhibition of American arts and crafts furnishings and decorative art will illustrate the origins of the movement in Great Britain and the United States through examples from the Morse collection. Of particular interest are works representative of Northeast and Midwest makers, such as Gustav Stickley. More information: www.morsemuseum.org.

The Arts and Crafts Movement: Promised Gifts from the Collections of Max Palevsky and Jodie Evans

Until 8 March 2009

Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Los Angeles, CA

The Arts and Crafts Movement is a celebration of the promised gift of 45 decorative arts objects from Max Palevsky and Jodie Evans's collection. The exhibition highlights eighteen representative examples of the American and European arts and crafts movement, including furniture, glass, ceramics, and metalwork by designers such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Greene and Greene, Henry Van de Velde, and Charles Rennie Mackintosh. More information: www.lacma.org.

Artistic Luxury: Fabergé - Tiffany - Lalique

7 February–31 May 2009

Legion of Honor, San Francisco, CA

Artistic Luxury: Fabergé, Tiffany, Lalique is the first comparative study of the work of the three greatest jewelry and decorative arts designers at the turn of the twentieth century: Peter Carl Fabergé, Louis Comfort Tiffany, and René Lalique. Their rivalry found its stage at the 1900 Exposition Universelle in Paris—the only exhibition where all showed simultaneously and where the work of each was prominently displayed. Some of their most elaborate designs for the Paris fair are reunited for the first time in a gallery recreating the am-

bianche of this opulent exposition. More information: www.famsf.org.

The Munich Secession and America
24 February–12 April 2009
Frye Art Museum, Seattle, WA

Radically changing the manner in which artworks were presented in exhibitions, the Munich Secession (and subsequent Vienna and Berlin Secessions) laid the foundation for the emergence of divergent forms of modernism in twentieth-century art, from abstraction to realism. Drawing on extensive holdings of the Frye as well as loans from Europe, this exhibition will represent two generations of artists: Secessionists such as Franz von Stuck, Fritz von Uhde, Ludwig Dill, and Hugo Haberman; and those artists who preceded them, such as Franz Lenbach and Friederich von Kaulbach, illustrating the diversity of avant-garde techniques and philosophies. More information: fryemuseum.org.

The Artistic Furniture of Charles Rohlf's
6 June–23 August 2009
Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI

A protean artist, actor, and furniture-maker dedicated to the primacy of individual expression, Charles Rohlf's (1853–1936) called his unprecedented designs “artistic furniture.” His inventive forms and imaginative carving combined many influences, from the naturalism of art nouveau styling to the pared-down oak forms that hallmarked the arts and crafts movement. This first major exploration of Rohlf's work reveals his success in Europe as well as America, and traces his influence on other designers including Gustav Stickley. More information: www.mam.org.

William Holman Hunt and the Pre-Raphaelite Vision
14 June–6 September 2009
Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, MN

Despite intense interest in Pre-Raphaelitism, Holman Hunt has not been the subject of a one-man exhibition since the 1969 retrospective at the Liverpool Art Gallery. This exhibition looks at the origins of Hunt's vision, rooted in the economic, cultural, and spiritual milieu of Victorian England. It examines the meaning of Pre-Raphaelitism as defined by Hunt, who claimed he founded the movement and believed he was the only one who remained true to its principles. It will explore the lengths to which Hunt went to give his works verisimilitude, whether contemporary or historical, by including some of his studio costumes and props, his palette and brushes, photographs, and letters. More information: www.artsmia.org.

A New and Native Beauty: The Art and Craft of Greene and Greene
14 July–18 October 2009
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

This ambitious exhibition presents a survey of architects Charles and Henry Greenes' lives and careers over a 90-year period. Representative objects, including examples from the best-known period of their work between 1906 and 1911, explore the evolution of their unique design vocabulary. The show features 140 objects from The Huntington, the Gamble House, and other private and institutional lenders. Many of the works have never before been seen by the public. Included are examples of inlaid furniture, metalwork, art glass windows and light fixtures, and architectural drawings and photographs. Travels to Renwick Gallery, Washington, DC (13 March–7 June 2009) and to the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA (18 October 2009–26 January 2010).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Morris Session in Cambridge, July 2009

A panel devoted to Morris will be held during “Past vs. Present,” a conference jointly sponsored by the North American Victorian Studies Association (NAVSA) and the British Association for Victorian Studies (BAVS), to be convened at Churchill College, Cambridge, UK on 11–15 July 2009. Catherine Maxwell of Queen Mary College, London will chair a session with three speakers, two of whom are Morris Society members: Phillippa Bennett (University of Northampton) will speak on “William Morris's *A Dream of John Ball* and *News from Nowhere*”; Caroline Arscott (Courthauld Institute) on “William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones: The Unity of Matter”; and Florence Boos (University of Iowa) on “*The Defence of Guenevere*: Morris's Eternally Recurrent ‘Pasts.’” More information may be found at the conference website, www.victorians.group.cam.ac.uk.

Seeking Members' Views

Mark Samuels Lasner continues to maintain our website and recently inaugurated blog. We invite announcements and news and will try to post material in the appropriate place (and we also solicit responses to earlier postings for our blog). Letters to the *Newsletter* editor are also welcome, as well as essays, reports on Morris/Pre-Raphaelite/arts and crafts-related sights and exhibitions, and other relevant material. Personal accounts of *how* and *why* you became interested in Morris are especially wanted for our series (started in the previous issue), “My William Morris.” We hope to have a new

Newsletter editor soon; in the interim please send materials to Florence Boos, florence-boos@uiowa.edu or to the society's mailing address, P. O. Box 53263, Washington, DC 2009.

Kelmscott Press Books On-Line:

The Morris Online Edition (www.morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu) has grown this year. It now includes texts of Morris's major poems and prose romances, essays and/or links to articles about each work, and page-turning images of the Kelmscott Press editions of *The Defence of Guenevere*, *The Life and Death of Jason*, *The Earthly Paradise* (8 volumes), *Love Is Enough*, *Poems by the Way*, *The Glittering Plain*, *The Wood Beyond the World*, and *The Water of the Wondrous Isles*. We've also posted scans of the entire text of *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* (1856).

When complete, each edition should have a newly-edited text, supplementary materials such as maps, glossaries, notes, contemporary reviews and literary criticism, and images and transcriptions of manuscript drafts. Essentially finished editions include *The Defence of Guenevere*, *The Life and Death of Jason*, and book I of *Sigurd the Volsung*; editions in progress include the Icelandic diaries (Gary Aho), "Four Unpublished Tales from the Earthly Paradise" (David Latham), and "List of Morris's Poems," a checklist of drafts, unpublished and published poems (Florence Boos).

Kim Maher, an art history major at St. Ambrose's College in Moline, IL, is now working half-time to prepare Kelmscott Press and other images for the Online Edition. During the coming year we plan to add more critical and supplementary material, as well as images for *Sigurd the Volsung*, *A Dream of John Ball*, *News from Nowhere*, and other prose romances. Eventually we hope to include images of manuscripts and page-turning versions of first and other important pre-Kelmscott editions for each of Morris's works.

17 RED LION SQUARE COMES TO LIFE AT THE DELAWARE ART MUSEUM

Wanda Simons

The well-known, massive Morris/Rossetti decorated chairs permanently on display at the Delaware Art Museum are currently joined (until 30 January) in another part of the museum by one-twelfth scale versions. The miniscule chairs are in a depiction of the 17 Red Lion Square studio shared by William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones from 1856 to 1859. The goal of miniature artist Wanda Morris Simons was to place the museum's

chairs in context and to reunite with them in miniature other extant pieces likely to have been in the aspiring artists' flat, including the sturdy, round table and barrel chair now in British museums. The display aimed to give a greater understanding of the environment in which the Morris/Rossetti chairs were originally used.

To re-create the studio interior, Simons worked primarily from the Burne-Jones sketch first reproduced in Georgiana Burne-Jones' *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones* (1904, reproduced on the cover of this *Newsletter*), the museum's replica of one of the chairs (generously created by the conservation department of Winterthur Museum and Country Estate), and photographs and descriptions found in the catalogue edited by Linda Parry for the Victoria and Albert Museum's Morris centenary exhibition (1996). Along with the chairs and table, flickering candles and the "tumble, rumble and jumble" described by Burne-Jones, all is seen in miniature. Yes, even the lizard is there, too!

Simons' imagination also came into play: she interpreted the still "missing" giant settle and other parts of the room not shown by Burne-Jones. And for fun, a wombat peeks from a basket even though there is no evidence that one ever visited the site. The sketch's figures are left out of the miniature in order to emphasize the importance of the chairs.

Many amazing coincidences helped this little display come to life. Simons's research led her to Mark Samuels Lasner, who provided Burne-Jones's original sketch from his extensive collection. Not only was he willing to lend it to the museum, but as several works on paper were about to be rotated, it proved possible to hang it as an adjunct to Simons's room. (Thanks to Margaretta Frederick, curator of the Delaware Art Museum's Pre-Raphaelite Collection and a member of the Society's governing committee, for making this happen.)

The miniature setting was created for the Delaware Art Museum's third *Masterpieces in Miniature* exhibition, for which miniaturists working in one-twelfth scale interpret mostly two-dimensional works of art in three dimensions. In the 2008–2009 show, the Morris/Rossetti chairs display was one of nine remarkable miniatures, most based on artworks in the museum's collection.

Interior, display, and graphic designer Wanda Morris Simons has been creating crowd-pleasing and award-winning miniature displays for over a decade. Her previous works for the Delaware Art Museum's Masterpieces in Miniature were Louis Comfort Tiffany (2006–2007) and Isabella and the Pot of Basil (2007–2008). Simons is a new member of the William Morris Society and notes that she has tried to trace her family tree to William's, with no success to date.



Wanda Simons's miniature version of the studio at 17 Red Lion Square
on display at the Delaware Art Museum

PRE-RAPHAELITE PAINTINGS IN MOSCOW

Anna Matyukhina

The year 2008 in Russian cultural life was marked by an exceptional event—the exhibition *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites and Russian Paintings* took place in Moscow in May. More than twenty rare works, including thirteen by Victorian artists, were brought by Christie's and put on display at the Tretyakov Gallery.

The State Tretyakov Gallery, named after Russian businessman and patron of art Pavel Tretyakov (1832–98), who donated his own private collection of Russian art to the city of Moscow in August 1892, is one of the most famous depositories of Russian fine art in the world. Its collaboration with Christie's auction house started in March 2007 when *Solomon's Wall* by the nineteenth-century realist Vasily Vereschagin was put on display before an April sale at the Vereschagin Hall of the Tretyakov Gallery of some of this artist's works from its collection. That exhibition lasted two weeks and aroused the intense interest of the public. *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites and Russian Paintings* is the second joint project of the Tretyakov Gallery and Christie's. It was not unexpected that Christie's decided to organize a pre-auction exhibition of Russian avant-garde artists in a Moscow gallery, but it may seem strange for Victorian pictures destined for a London sale to be put on display next to paintings by Natalya Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, Vladimir Baranov-Rossine, Vasily Shukhayev, and Natan Altman.

On the other hand, it was stressed by the organizers that first of all they hoped to revive the principles laid down by the founder of the gallery, Pavel Tretyakov, who inherited a collection of Western European paintings from his brother. Sergey Tretyakov bequeathed the art to Pavel so that both collections could be exhibited together and the Russian portion handed over to the nation in 1892. (It is worth mentioning that the only picture from an artist of the Pre-Raphaelite circle to be found in Russia—Alma-Tadema's *Fredegonda and Praetextatus*, now in the State Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow—derives from Sergey's collection, his last acquisition. Pavel got it from Paris after his brother's death.)

Secondly, quite a lot of Russian artists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites, and one of them was Mikhail Nesterov, which gave an opportunity to draw a parallel between paintings offered to the public by Christie's and works by Nesterov at the so-called Nesterov Hall next to the rooms where temporary exhibitions are held. Moreover, the impressive facade of the gallery itself in a peculiar Russian fairy-tale style was designed

by Viktor Vasnetsov, a leader of the Russian Revival influenced by William Morris's ideas.



According to Tatyana Karpova, the exhibition curator from the Tretyakov Gallery, the Pre-Raphaelites are, so to speak, “familiar strangers” for Russians. This is true since their works are popular due to reproductions, but there have been very few exhibitions of their works, and their works are almost totally unrepresented in the collections of Russian museums apart from the Alma-Tadema already referred to, two other paintings by Alma-Tadema in Pavlovsk, and a tapestry made at Merton Abbey in the State Hermitage collection. As for the pictures displayed by Christie's at Tretyakov Gallery, unfortunately there were only two proper Pre-Raphaelite works among them—a moving *Wedding Cards* by Millais, painted in 1854 and considered to be related to his love for Euphemia Gray, John Ruskin's wife at that time, and *Fortuna; Fama; Oblivion; and Amor: The Triumph of Love, or Amor Vincit Omnia* by Burne-Jones, painted in 1871. The rest were by associated artists such as Waterhouse, Leighton, Tissot, Albert Moore, Dicksee, Alma-Tadema, and John Collier. Collier's *The Sleeping Beauty*, dated 1921, was especially interesting as an example of the longevity of Pre-Raphaelite ideals in the twentieth century. But the focus of the exhibition was a picture that was not for sale—Waterhouse's *St. Cecilia* from the Andrew Lloyd Webber collection—the most expensive Pre-Raphaelite painting in the world

Of course it is impossible to judge the Pre-Raphaelites by thirteen paintings, however important they are (just as it is absolutely impossible to judge the works by great Russian landscape painter Isaak Levitan as a whole by one of his landscapes included in the Russian section of this exhibition), but the exhibition gave a flavor of the Pre-Raphaelites and the Victorian era and thus became a unique chance for Russian visitors to feel themselves removed from daily life and absorbed in the Pre-Raphaelite dream.

Anna Matyukhina is curator of the New Acquisitions Department of the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia.

PORTABLE ELECTRONIC BOOK READERS: DESIGNED NOT BY ARTISTS BUT BY ENGINEERS

Bonnie J. Robinson

Many of William Morris's works have been converted to electronic books and are now available on both the Sony Ebook (launched in September 2006) and the Amazon Kindle (launched in November 2007). Within sixty seconds, readers may purchase and download *The First and Second William Morris Omnibus*, *Morris's Early Romances*, *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems*, *A Dream of John Ball*, *Hopes and Fears for Art*, *Signs of Change*, and numerous other titles, including his *Chants for Socialists*. Thus twenty-first century readers have new and innovative opportunities for enjoying Morris's works.

What can we make of this juxtaposition of William Morris and these portable electronic book readers? Critics of both the Sony Ebook and the Kindle deplore their e-ink's ghosting as it refreshes and "turns the page," their lack of a backlight, and their overly-sensitive "next/prev" buttons and awkward ergonomics. A few reviewers note their font limitations; for example, the Kindle has only two fonts, Caecilia and Neue Helvetica (both from Linotype). While readers cannot select which font to use, they can select from six font sizes. A few reviewers also note the fact that both devices have one layout, that is, forced justification with no hyphenation, a layout that leads to unpredictable groupings of words and letters, with differing spaces between both.

Critics praise their storage capacity—these devices can hold up to 200 books (more through USB cards)—their portability in that they weigh 10 oz, their being viewable in direct sunlight and usable in portrait or landscape orientations. Their popularity is growing; in fact, Kindle is once more out of stock, probably due to Oprah's having recently proclaimed it her favorite thing in the world.

We can evaluate these devices by applying to them the standards Morris himself might have applied, standards he expressed in "The Ideal Book" (1893). By these standards, Morris would have accused the users of these devices of "malice prepense—[being] determined to put [their] eyes in [their] pockets whenever [they] can."¹ Far from being beautiful objects, these portable readers fail to offer "clearness of reading" according to almost all of Morris's criteria for an ideal book. First of all, the content does not determine the book's (display) structure. On these portable electronic book readers, all of Morris's books look exactly the same as "a dictionary, a collection of statesmen's speeches, [or a] treatise on manures."

Also, the "pages" are not clear and easy to read due to their engineer-designed type; they often have not only spaces between the letters but also equal and/or inconsistent lateral spacing. Their layout is the supposedly only occasional view of "one page at a time," with no available proportion of word to margin, especially if a reader magnifies the type size to extra-large. In taking advantage of the only design choice available to them, readers thus can make the mistake of producing "large paper copies"—which Morris is "clean against"—in the reverse by having large type on small "pages." Its display screen does not "show itself for what it is" but instead is described as "electronic paper," even though it has no substance as paper. What it has is a 166 dpi resolution in four levels of grayscale. As Morris notes, "a grey page is very trying to the eyes."

And while these devices do "lay quietly while you are reading them," that does not mean that they "giv[e] you no trouble of body, so that your mind is free to enjoy the literature which its beauty enshrines." Far from enshrining beauty, these portable readers display all the physical qualities of "such hurried and unimportant work as newspaper printing." Morris's texts deserve more appropriate shrines, even in the twenty-first century.

Bonnie J. Robinson is professor of English at North Georgia College and State University, Dahlonega, GA.

1. William Morris, "The Ideal Book" (1893), <<http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1893/ideal.htm>>. All subsequent quotations are taken from this site.

WOMBAT LOVE

Thad Logan

In a September 1869, letter to Jane Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti wrote: "What do you think! I have got a wombat at Chelsea come the other day . . ." He enclosed drawings of the wombat by his assistant Henry Treffry Dunn, and offered the following playful bit of rhyme as a postscript:

Oh! how the family affections combat
Within this heart; and each hour flings a bomb at
My burning soul; neither from owl nor from bat
Can peace be gained, until I clasp my Wombat!

While the hyperbole of the verse, and the feminine rhyme, establish this as a comic moment, Rossetti is representing the wombat as an object of desire, exactly parallel to the beloved lady in the tradition of Italian love poetry. At the same time, the wombat is a possession, something Rossetti has "got," much as he has got blue and white china, or the curiously wrought fabrics and jewels that serve as props in so many of

the paintings of this period. And it was something he considered quite splendid: “the wombat,” he wrote, on finally clasping it, is “A joy, a triumph, a delight, a madness.”²

Rossetti, then, had a little wombat—or more precisely, he had two wombats (a second, bought to replace the original, died even more quickly). He also had a Canadian woodchuck or two. But the identities of all these merge into *the* wombat, “Rossetti’s wombat”—which is the title of a 2002 article by Angus Trumble that taught me a great deal about wombats, and the title of a new book by John Simons.³ In an authoritative early article on the subject (this one was titled “Rossetti *and* the Wombat”), Michael Archer noted that “although the wombat’s sojourn at Cheyne Walk was brief, it gave rise to a remarkable corpus of myth.”⁴ In our own time, bits of information (and misinformation) about Rossetti’s wombat are scattered liberally about the blogosphere. Ford Maddox Brown was apparently the source for a still-circulating rumor that the wombat was the model for Lewis Carroll’s dormouse; this was impossible, since *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* was published before the wombat came to live at Cheyne Walk. Known for collecting all things “rich and strange,” including interesting human specimens like Algernon Charles Swinburne, Rossetti began to acquire a menagerie soon after moving into Tudor House. William Michael lists among Rossetti’s collection, as well as the “two successive wombats,” “a Pomeranian puppy named Punch, a grand Irish deerhound named Wolf, a barn-owl named Jessie, another owl named Bobby, rabbits, dormice . . . an ordinary marmot, armadillos, kangaroos, wallabies, a deer, a white mouse with her brood, a raccoon, squirrels, a mole, peacocks, wood-owls, Virginian owls, Chinese horned owls, a jackdaw, laughing jackasses, undulated grass parakeets, a talking grey parrot, a raven, chameleons, green lizards, and Japanese salamanders.”⁵

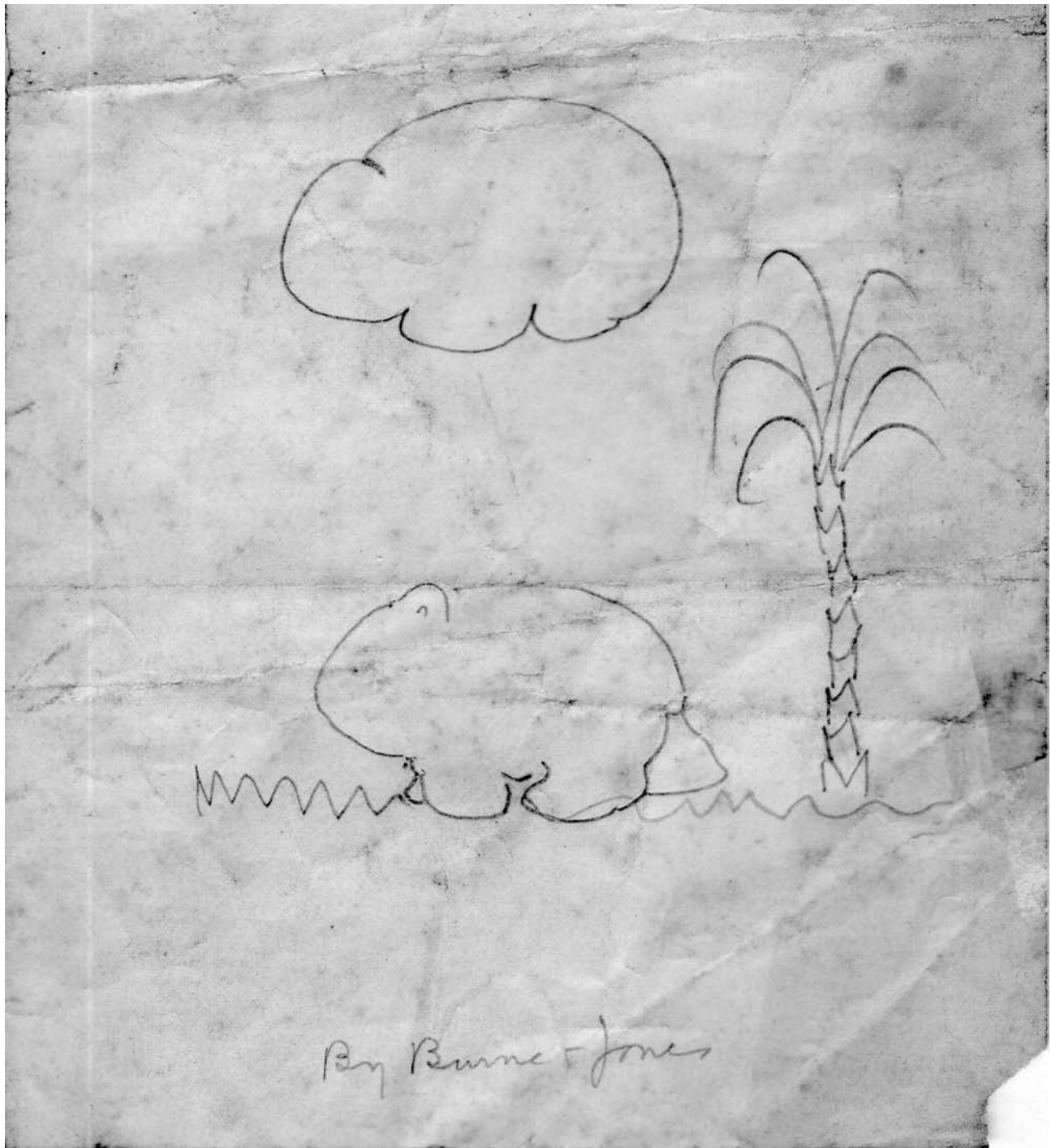
While collecting unusual creatures is frequently adduced as a sign of Rossetti’s eccentricity, keeping private zoos—whether for fun or profit—was actually fairly common in Victorian Britain, as Harriet Ritvo’s influential book *The Animal Estate* has shown us.⁶ For Ritvo, the gathering and displaying of exotic animals is part of a broader cultural work of conquest and domination on the part of the British ruling class. Rossetti’s collection included a number of what we would now call “exotics,” most of which were obtained through animal importer and dealer Charles Jamrach, and it can certainly be read as a local exercise of imperial power. It’s also likely that the animals were subject to what would now, in Britain at least, amount to something like criminal neglect. Even William Rossetti, at the end of the catalogue of creatures I just cited, notes rather grimly that “persons who are familiar with the

management of pets will easily believe that several of these animals came to a bad end.”⁷ Certainly, the rate of attrition was high: we do know, however, that a veterinarian was called in to attend to the original wombat, who nonetheless perished within two months of its arrival. However, there is no doubt that Rossetti, in his way, was enormously fond of animals, and William takes pains to point out (perhaps with a memory of Robert Buchanan’s stinging attack on his brother as “aesthetic”) that “he had no particular liking for an animal on the mere ground of its being ‘pretty’—his taste being far more for what is quaint, odd, or semi-grotesque.”⁸

What seems most to have impressed visitors to Tudor House, however, was the permeable boundary between human and animal in Rossetti’s world: the wombat (or possibly the woodchuck) evidently did often sleep on the table in the dining room, for instance, and James McNeill Whistler enjoyed repeating a tale that it slept in the *épergne* and died from eating a box of cigars left out after a dinner party. According to Angus Trumble, Rossetti told William Bell Scott of a visit from Ruskin during which the latter attempted to articulate his project for utopian social change while a wombat nuzzled under his waistcoat. William noted in his diary on Tuesday, 22 February 1870 that “Gabriel called in Euston Square: his raccoon, which had been lost for a fortnight or more, was lately discovered living in a drawer of the large wardrobe which stands outside the studio door.”⁹ In this sense, Rossetti’s collection of exotic animals was quite different from that of the typical Victorian zoo, where, as Ritvo argues, the confinement of animals to small cages was part of the spectacle of domination that the zoo staged for its visitors. Tudor House, on the other hand was a veritable Liberty Hall, where inter-species encounters were the order of the day. Of course, there was about all this a certain pleasure in flouting the niceties of conventional decorum, and in this sense Rossetti and his wombat might put us in mind of Gerard de Nerval walking a lobster in the streets of Paris. (It doesn’t bark, he is reported to have said, and it knows the secrets of the sea.) But there’s more to this story than a desire to *épater le bourgeois*.

From childhood, the four Rossetti siblings (Gabriel, Christina, Maria, and William) had frequented the zoo in Regent’s Park, newly opened to the public in 1847.

In an article written after her death for the *Atlantic Monthly*, William Sharp offers his “Reminiscences of Christina Rossetti,” and among them is her report to him that “her first real excitement away from home-life and the familiar aspects of the streets of Western London, was afforded by a visit she paid with Gabriel to the Zoological Gardens. The two amused themselves, after their first vivid interest, by imagining the thoughts of the caged animals.”¹⁰ Letters exchanged by



Edward Burne-Jones, *Wombats*. Ink, [ca. 1865].
Mark Samuels Lasner Collection,
on loan to the University of Delaware Library.
This little-known drawing derives from the Rossetti family collection.

Christina and William often noted visits to the zoo, in London and elsewhere, and several times explicit mention is made of wombats; as the Pre-Raphaelite circle came into being, new friends were introduced to the delights of “the wombat’s lair” in Regent’s Park. A telling anecdote related by another of Christina’s biographers, Mackenzie Bell, is further evidence of how important these visits to the zoo were to the Rossetti family, as well as giving us an intriguing glimpse of sibling rivalry:

I suggested [says Bell, in an exchange of letters with William Michael] that “perhaps the great fondness of Dante Gabriel for all animals and not less for animals with something grotesque or eccentric about them might have caused his sister, when arranging in her mind what forms her ‘goblin merchantmen’ were to assume, to recollect the strange animals, such as the wombat and the ratel—which, if it had not been for her brother’s predilection, probably would never have come under her notice—But he answered immediately: “It would be a mistake to think that Christina caught from Gabriel a fancy for odd-looking animals—She had it very early herself—She knew Wombat and Ratel at the Zoological Gardens: Gabriel never possessed a ratel, nor a wombat until several years after Christina wrote ‘Goblin Market.’ It was Christina and I who jointly discovered the Wombat in the Zoological Gardens—from us (more especially myself) Gabriel, [Sir Edward] Burne-Jones, and other wombat enthusiasts, ensued, such is my reminiscence and belief.”¹¹

It seems that the wombat arrived at the London zoo in 1857. The first wombat in Europe was probably the one sent (preserved in spirits) from Sydney, Australia, to the naturalist Joseph Banks in 1800. (There were wombats in Paris, evidently, from the early years of the century as well.) Explorer George Bass described the wombat in a lengthy letter to Banks. The wombat, he writes, is “a squat, thick, shortlegged, and rather inactive quadruped, with great appearance of stumpy strength, and somewhat bigger than a large turnspit dog.” Bass goes on to describe their encounter as follows:

When up with him that he might not be hurt, I snatched him off the ground and laid him along my arm like a child. He made no noise, nor any effort to escape, not even a struggle. His countenance was placid and undisturbed and he seemed as contented as if I had nursed him from his infancy. I carried him for more than a mile and often shifted him from arm to arm and sometimes, to ease my arms, laid him upon my shoulders. But he took it all in good part. At last being obliged to secure his legs whilst I went into a copse to cut a new species of wood his anger arose . . . he whizzed with all his might, kicked and scratched most furiously and snipped off a piece from the elbow of my jacket with his long grasscutters. Our friendship was at an end; for although his legs were untied in a few minutes, he still remained implacable and ceased to kick and scratch only when he was exhausted.¹²

The wombat’s docility and placidity, which can turn suddenly to fury, has been described by many who know it: the creature, it seems, combines in its stumpy

self the varied temperaments of the Rossetti siblings, both the “calms” (as they were known within the family), William and Maria, and the “storms,” Gabriel and Christina.

It’s interesting that the features of the wombat noticed by early naturalists are very similar to those which appealed to the Rossettis. They are also features which evoke that set of human responses associated with cuteness. So far, the best explanations of the “*awwwww*” factor seem to be those originating in the work of Konrad Lorenz, for whom those features we call “cute” are those shared by infants of many species, notably a large, rounded head, low-set eyes, small ears, a flat nose, an awkward gait, and a soft curved body.¹³ According to Lorenz’ theory of cute, a certain biologically determined set of visual cues evokes in us an instinctive desire to nurture—a desire I’m going to call “maternal” (with the caveat it isn’t necessarily located in a female body), in order to think about the wombat’s role in the psychic economy of the Rossetti family and the Pre-Raphaelite circle. A lovely drawing by William Bell Scott, made in 1871, shows us the wombat as a baby being mothered by Rossetti. Scott’s drawing—which Rossetti kept in his bedroom until his death—wonderfully illustrates William Michael’s description of his brother “sit[ting] with either [the wombat or woodchuck] in his arms by the half-hour together, dandling them paunch upward, scratching gently at their cheeks or noses, or making the woodchuck’s head and hind-paw’s meet.”¹⁴

The most famous wombat images, however, depict the portly marsupial in the context of a very different kind of romance. First, there is Rossetti’s pencil drawing of Jane Morris with a leashed wombat at her side, both adorned with haloes. As far as I have been able to determine, we don’t know the exact circumstances of the drawing’s production, although we do know that it was a gift from Rossetti to Jane, and that after her death it passed to her daughter May; what is clear, however, is that the original announcement of the wombat’s arrival in Chelsea was made within the context of a series of letters to Jane written while she was taking the cure at Bad Ems in the company of her husband. In a letter in July of 1869, less than two months before the triumphant announcement “I have got a wombat,” Rossetti speaks of his love for Mrs. Morris, and his certainty that “dear Top” will not “mind” his doing so, adding “I can never tell you how much I am with you at all times. Absence from your sight is what I have long been used to; and no absence can ever make me so far from you as your presence did for years. For this long inconceivable change, you know now what my thanks must be.”¹⁵ The coming of the wombat, then, coincides with a new phase of the relationship between Gabriel and Jane, a relationship begun over ten years

before, and in this context it seems clear that the wombat depicted with Jane is not a rather cruel caricature of William Morris, as some critics have suggested, but a visual evocation of Rossetti's devotion to Jane, representing her mastery over him. It is after all his wombat. And he actually shared many of the wombat's characteristics, such as its tendency to sequester itself, its nocturnal ramblings, its tubbiness, and even its eye problems. On the other hand Rossetti named his wombat Top. Perhaps the wombat can simultaneously figure both of the corpulent male bodies that "spaniell'd" the tall and beautiful Jane.

There is a second, more familiar drawing that was also given to Mrs. Morris—produced, sadly, within two months of the first—in which a weeping Rossetti mourns the wombat's death. In this best-known of the two wombat caricatures by the artist, a quite comfortably rounded Rossetti bends to mourn his mirror image—his comic double—in the expired, supine beast. Perhaps the weeping poet pictured here is mourning not only his lost wombat but also his own inadequacy as a Petrarchan lover—an inadequacy perhaps compensated for, in fantasy at least, by a certain adorable cuddliness. Both the wombat drawings made by Rossetti around this time could, then, be seen as visual love letters to Jane, using the wombat iconographically, as Victorians supposedly deployed a secret "language of flowers." If one thing the wombat does in both is figure Rossetti himself, however, I'm going to suggest that there is perhaps another, latent message in the drawing depicting its death. The monument in the background (dated November, 1869), and the scene of mourning, might remind us of another death that had taken place some years earlier, that of Rossetti's wife, and we might see a tacit—almost certainly unconscious—reference to that event in this image, particularly since Elizabeth Siddal Rossetti's grave was opened in October of 1869. It's not, I think, far-fetched to think that Gabriel's love for Jane, a love we have reason to think was newly reciprocated around this time, might have been entangled with memories of his long relationship with Elizabeth Siddal, memories which he might well have wished to put to rest. It's possible, maybe even likely, that Jane herself—who certainly knew Lizzie—might have had mixed feelings about becoming her successor in Gabriel's affections. Could it not be, then, that in this little drawing, precisely through the silliness of its presentation of death and mourning, Rossetti was, at a subliminal level, assuring himself, and Jane, that his love for Lizzie was well and truly dead at last? Whether this seems plausible or not, it's certainly true that the intensity of the whole Rossetti family's attachment to wombats suggests they have a curious symbolic resonance that it is intriguing to explore.

A member of the English department at Rice University, Thad Logan is the author of 'The Victorian Parlour: A Cultural Study'. She has published articles on narrative, domesticity, and material culture. Her current projects include Pre-Raphaelite art and literature and fin de siècle studies.

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MAY MORRIS'S TALK ON HER FATHER

Edited by Florence S. Boos

May Morris drafted the following text—marked “corrected by J. W. MacKail” in another hand—in 1934, four years before her death, and the William Morris Gallery later acquired it (as J191, A1/1946) in 1946. I have reprinted the manuscript's five folio pages and appended a scan of the elegantly penned original.

May's view of Morris as “a happy man” was just, but her celebratory description of a life “unhindered by disappointments” and enriched by “generous and unclouded friendships” elided the sorrow of his gifted elder daughter's decline from epilepsy, and the stoic forbearance needed during Dante Gabriel Rossetti's affair with Jane Morris at Kelmscott Manor.

I have been asked to speak to you about my Father William Morris, poet, decorative artist and pioneer of the Arts and Crafts movement, champion and protector of ancient buildings, master-printer[,] preacher and prophet[.]

You may ask, Can a man give his mind to such varied occupations and be successful in all? William Morris could; he had great vitality and energy, and it has often been said that he lived the life of three ordinary men. If you go round the Exhibition opened to-day at the Victoria and Albert Museum to celebrate his Centenary, I think you will be struck by the infinite variety of the work done by him and his friends and the high excellence of it. You'll see tapestries, stained glass, embroideries, tiles, furniture, and printed books – a very museum of modern craft-work. I want you to picture the group of young men and women who, with my Father in their centre, originated their work, about the time of the Great Exhibition of 1862. Their story is rather like a fairy-tale; they were so happy and so young, the two families Morris and Burne-Jones were newly married; and all were busy decorating the house the poet was building among the apple-orchards of Kent. These early experiments in furnishing more or less decided my Father's career as designer and decorator; but he did not work alone. All the friends must help: the women made embroidered hangings, the men painted tiles and the furniture was designed by Philip Webb who was the architect of the house and Morris's close friend. / Rossetti and Burne-Jones, the professional artists of the circle, painted pictures on the walls and panelling; the rooms were alive with happy workers, the garden gay with flowers and altogether Red House was slowly being made[,] as Burne Jones said[,] “the beautifullest place on earth.”

It was holiday time that first summer of the building, and friends would come down for Sunday; Swinburne

the young poet with his mop of red-gold hair, Rossetti and Madox Brown the elders of the group, Philip Webb with his dry humour, and Arthur Hughes the painter whose charming illustrations of fairy-tales were an endless pleasure to the children a few years later. / There were many others, all friends together, full of laughter, and my Father the host always the victim of the men's absurd practical jokes.

Youthful days cant last—except in memory—but the work done was serious and became tradition, laying the foundation of the Arts and Crafts movement in England, a monument which has struck deep roots in every Teutonic race.

Later I remember my Father, an older man, designing chintzes and wall-papers by day, and writing at night, turning some of the famous world-stories into modern verse in a volume which he called the *Earthly Paradise*. In between the tales are verses about the Months which reveal his feeling for the beauty of the Earth in all its seasons—mostly the quiet country of England; while the verses for June describe the upper waters of the Thames long loved and now the place chosen for his country home. It was a peaceful life for some years, with the same friends around him and the work of the firm of Morris and Company growing in fame. But as time passed he began to question what seemed to be the contradictions in his life. For his great hope in the future was for “an art made by the people and for the people as a joy to the maker and the user,” and yet the goods he made were beyond the means of simple people. As the questioning pressed on him more and more, he turned towards Socialism, and preaching on the Democracy of Art became a part of his life.

Now he became a familiar figure at Socialist meetings when the movement was new and strange in England. The peaceful days were gone, and I don't think that the Socialist “Comrades” quite realized how much the man who loved his own work was giving up for the faith he held. But it had to be, and at last he was worn out by the strain; the latter years were spent quietly in printing fine books, collecting priceless MSS and writing romances of wonder and adventure[.]

Morris lived a life of work unhindered by disappointments, and enriched by generous and unclouded friendships: surely, though he died before his due time, he may be called a happy man, leaving as he did such a memory in the hearts of those who knew him[.]

Florence S. Boos, vice-president of the William Morris Society in the United States, is professor of English at the University of Iowa.

Opposite: May Morris, Autograph manuscript of her talk on her Father, [1934]. William Morris Gallery, London Borough of Waltham Forest.

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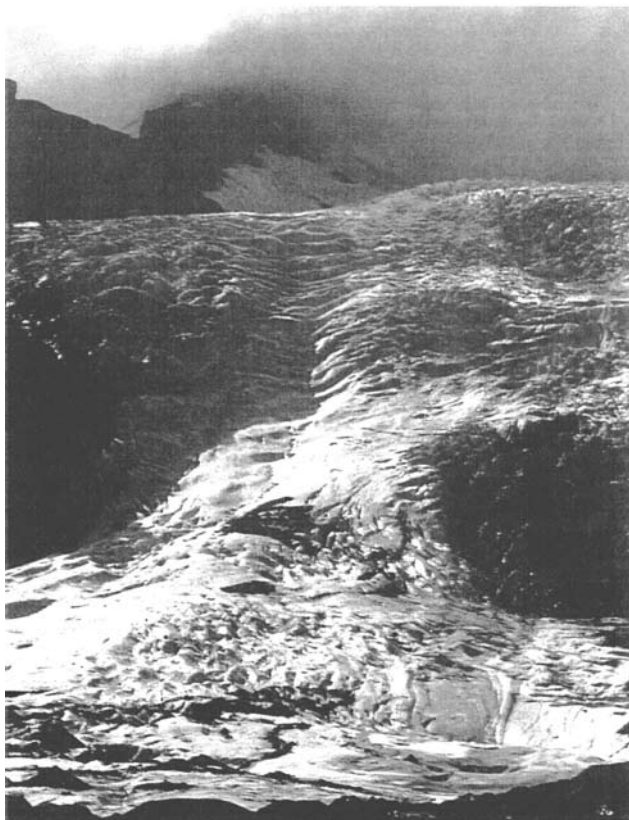
: Man: Morris collected by J. W. Mackail

I have been asked to speak to you about my Father William Morris, poet, decorative artist and pioneer of the Arts and Crafts movement, champion and protector of ancient buildings, master-printer and preacher and prophet

^{You} ~~one~~ may ask, Can a man give his mind to such varied occupations and be successful in all? ~~That~~, William Morris could; ~~at any rate~~ ^{he} had great ^{and} energy, ~~great vitality~~, and indeed it has often been said that he lived the life of three ordinary men. ~~I think~~ if you go round the Exhibition opened to-day at the Victoria and Albert Museum to celebrate his Centenary, ^{I think} you will be struck by the infinite variety of the work done by ~~him~~ ^{him} and his friends and the high excellence of it, ^{you'll see} tapestries, stained glass, embroideries, tiles, furniture ^{and} printed books - a very museum of modern craft-work. I want you to picture the group of young men and women who, with ^{my Father} ~~him~~ in their centre, originated this work, ~~say~~ about the time of the Great Exhibition of

MORRIS, ICELAND, AND ALCOA: AN UPDATE

Gary L. Aho



In my article, “Morris, Iceland, and Alcoa” (*William Morris Society in the United States Newsletter*, Spring 2006), I recalled Morris’s love for Iceland and his two trips there in 1871 and 1873, and I presented a few of his memorable descriptions, particularly of the “great glaciers” and of the greatest of them all, in fact the largest glacier in Europe, Vatnajokull, “an ice tract as big as Yorkshire.” So formidable is its weather and terrain that Vatnajokull was rarely visited, even up into modern times. Only reindeer, a rare breed of goose, and errant sheep from steads in the lower valleys, ventured onto the eastern highlands, foothills for Vatnajokull. But this all changed a few years back, in 2002, when Alcoa initiated the massive Karahnjukar Hydropower Project, one involving several dams (the biggest, the highest in Europe, has made a twenty-two-square mile lake) and some forty miles of tunnels that pull the lake’s water to turbines whose magic creates electricity, which

is then transmitted to a large, state-of-the-art smelter on the northeastern coast, at Reythafjordur.

I had a chance to visit the site of the main dam in 2003 where work, very impressive work with giant bulldozers and earth-movers (their cabs were forty feet off the ground), was well under way. And by 2006, when I wrote the article, the project was nearing completion. Despite some set-backs due to horrible weather and a few bad accidents—at least one death was reported—Alcoa was predicting that the smelter would open on schedule, in 2007. And so it did, and it is now approaching Alcoa’s goal: to produce 344,000 metric tons of aluminum annually. I commented in that article on several protests in 2005, a few on-site, which hindered Alcoa’s work, a bit. More importantly they drew the attention of ecologists and critics of global capitalism.

One significant reaction, an incisive polemic, was penned by the Icelandic novelist, Andri Snær Magnason. His book, *Draumalandid: Sjalfshjalparbok Handa Hraeddrir Thjod*, appeared in 2006. [Now available in English: *Dreamland: A Self-help Manual for a Frightened Nation* (Citizen Press, 2008)]. It quickly became a bestseller, with some 18,000 copies sold. Given Iceland’s population of 300,000, that would be equivalent to 18,000,000 copies in the United States. An *Iceland Review* piece (19 February 2007) pointed out that “Magnason is not only raging against Icelandic politicians, but also taking on the aluminum giant Alcoa. He’s mad as hell. And he’s not going to take it anymore.” Magnason told the *IR* writer that

Ninety percent of Iceland’s geothermal areas and glacial rivers are under the scope of the government to be harnessed for aluminum smelters. There’s a belief that Icelandic society cannot grow or flourish without becoming the biggest aluminum smelter in the world. The type of brainwashing taking place around these issues—that’s why I wrote the book.

Magnason has become a leading spokesman against Alcoa and the Icelandic politicians and bankers who borrowed huge sums of money to pay for the dams, tunnels, turbines, power lines, and the like—all that supports and feeds the smelter, the only unit in the gargantuan project that Alcoa itself paid for. And of course Alcoa owns all of the metal that the smelter produces. Those stacked ingots, those long tubes, those tight rolls of sheet aluminum, Alcoa ships it all (or 95% of it; spinsters on Alcoa’s web-page make much of the processed aluminum that might be used in Iceland) to factories in Europe, China, and the United States, and that’s where the aluminum industry creates the high-paying jobs, not in Iceland, as the Alcoa promoters implied when they were touting the project to Icelanders, back at the turn of the century.

Other reactions have taken the form of meetings and protests, particularly during the Summer of 2007, under the banner “Saving Iceland.” A group so named

held its first conference, “Global Consequences of Heavy Industry and Large Dams,” on 7–8 July, in a green dale near Reykjavik. Its *Declaration*, “made in consensus by dozens of people attending,” was given to the press and posted online. I quote here its opening paragraph and several excerpts from the page-length document:

We are gathered in Olfus, Iceland. We are people from more than fifteen different countries and five continents. We are here to share our experiences of heavy industry, dams, transnational companies and other expressions of globalization, in Iceland, in Brazil, in Denmark, in Canada, in England, Germany, India, Trinidad and Tobago, and many other countries. We are not professional protesters. Unlike the well-paid corporate lobbyists and spindoctors that try to sell you heavy industry, none of us gets paid to be here. We are ordinary people. We are teachers, nurses, youth workers, students, shopworkers, fathers, mothers. We are here because we care. The Icelandic wilderness is unique. It is the largest in Europe and one of the few wild places left on this continent. Its beauty and uniqueness and fire and ice are a heritage we must preserve and must defend. It is the heritage and responsibility and privilege of all Icelanders, and all Europeans, and all humans.

We are global citizens in opposition to global companies.

We find it remarkable that in all our countries, we see and suffer from trans-national companies following the same blueprint. All around the world, in north and south, in present and past, the same ugly picture, in grey and black. We see the same patterns wrought by corporations. Patterns of ecological devastation: of total disrespect for human rights, of the destruction of communities, of the corruption and manipulation of governments, of creating an unhealthy environment, . . .

We stand in solidarity with each other. We have a common struggle against enemies such as ALCOA.

Icelanders, do not forget what these foreign companies have done in the past and are doing now. . . .

Inform yourself. Make up your own mind. Do not stay sitting on the fence . . .

What is this all for? You Icelanders pride yourselves for not having an army, but 30% of aluminum is produced for the military, . . . for tanks, for missiles. Will you let your wilderness be destroyed so that countries can bomb each other?

Why more aluminum? Why more dams? What kind of world will we end up with and what will we become?

I think William Morris would have admired this Declaration’s sturdy rhetoric, its disdain for corporate and capitalist establishments, its urgent calls for informed action and for working together—in Fellowship.

A colorful and charismatic American comedian-activist, Bill Talen, attended the conference and signed this “Saving Iceland” *Declaration*. Talen calls himself Reverend Billy, and he is the leader of what he calls “The Church of Stop Shopping.” He has held raucous revival meetings at Disneyland, in Times Square and

other commercial venues around Manhattan, as well as at Wal-Marts and Starbucks across America. These meetings are recorded in his prize-winning documentary, *What Would Jesus Buy?* In it we see him leading a gospel choir (two dozen strong) on a cross-country bus trip across the United States, stopping at malls to preach on the imminence of the “Shopocalypse,” on the evils of consumerism, on the immorality of the Iraq war, and the like. A few days after the “Saving Iceland” conference, on 11 July, Reverend Billy led his choir, in bright red robes, into Kringlan, a large and rather staid shopping mall in Reykjavik. There they sang lustily, attracting curious and friendly crowds. When they started shouting “Down with Alcoa!” and “No dams,” and the like, Kringlan’s supervisors called the police, and then there was a dust-up, a few arrests. Some short and entertaining videos of this confrontation are available on the “Saving Iceland” website.

On 16 July, several hundred protesters, with banners and flags, marched down Snorrabraut, one of Reykjavik’s main thoroughfares, and five protesters were arrested.

At another protest, on 27 July, a British activist and environmental scientist, Miriam Rose, was arrested and ordered to pay a fine of 100,000 Icelandic kronur, or go to jail. She chose jail and remained there for eight days. Then, a few months later, she was invited to the Reykjavik Academy to speak at a symposium whose theme was “Fundamental Values in Society.” She said, “I was threatened with deportation from Iceland for my part in actions against the heavy industry policy of your government . . . told that I may be expelled from Iceland for a minimum of three years as my behavior constituted a threat to the fundamental values of society.” She then asked: “What are the fundamental values of Icelandic society? It seems that free speech, equal rights and the right to protest are not amongst them . . . the rights now apparently operable are associated with heavy industry and right-wing politicians bowing to the dictates of global corporations,” and so forth. Rose went on this vein, in a generally sensible series of accusations, apparently well received by a few dozen listeners. The speech, the symposium itself, got minimal press coverage.

Such meetings and protests, most of them during the Summer of 2007, often drew more participants from abroad than from Iceland. Friends in Reykjavik have told me that a majority of Icelanders seemed indifferent to Alcoa and its activities in the eastern highlands. Or they approved: why shouldn’t Iceland share in the wealth and prestige of the burgeoning global economy? Why indeed? But in the past few months, the global monetary crisis has brought Iceland more than its share of woes, and attitudes toward Alcoa, though it’s not directly responsible for the crisis, have

shifted considerably. And Icelanders are now protesting, loudly and vociferously. Thousands gathered outside the Parliament this past November and pelted the building with rotten fruit and vegetables. Their anger at the politicians and bankers who brought on the crisis extends to Alcoa, whose advocates now speak with muted voices. Plans for future dams and smelters have been put on hold.

Bjork, the waif-like singer, actress, dancer—perhaps Iceland's most famous export in the past two decades—spoke on her country's present problems a few weeks ago at an important conference in Brussels, one sponsored by CoolPlanet.

Here, in her simple and compelling English, are a few excerpts from that speech:

After touring for eighteen months I was excited to return home ten weeks ago to good, solid Iceland and enjoy a little bit of stability. I had done a concert there earlier this year to raise awareness about local environmental issues—especially sustainable alternatives to aluminum smelters . . . but I still felt it wasn't enough. So I decided to contact people all over the island who had attempted to start new companies, and I was conducting workshops when the economic crisis hit. . . . Young families are threatened with losing their houses, and elderly people with losing all their pensions. Around this Christmas they expect 10-20 percent unemployment. This is catastrophic. Gigantic loans, it was revealed, had been taken from abroad by a few individuals and without the full knowledge of the Icelandic people. Now the nation seems responsible for having to pay them back. . . . Iceland is a small country. We missed out on the industrial revolution and my hope was that we would skip it completely and go straight to sustainable hi-tech options. . . . There is a wonderful characteristic in the Icelandic mentality—fearlessness, with an addiction to risk-taking to the point of being foolhardy. I'm not sure the stock market is the right place for these characteristics. In music-making, story telling, and creative thought, this risk-taking is a great thing. . . . We can use this economic crisis to become totally sustainable. Teach the world all we know about geothermal power plants. It may take longer to build and deliver profits but it is solid, stable and something that will stand independent of the rollercoaster rides of Wall street and volatile aluminum prices. And it will help Iceland remain what it is best at: Being a gorgeous, unpredictable force of nature.

Bjork's optimism is engaging. Her comment on Icelandic "fearlessness" reminds me of a Morrisian characterization of the Icelandic sagas. In a letter to a socialist colleague, he said he loved these narratives for "their worship of courage—the great virtue of the human race."

And here's another quote from William Morris, one to cap my short update of Alcoa in Iceland, this from an editorial in *Justice*, in 1884:

The grip of the land-grabber is over us all; and commons and heaths of unmatched beauty and wildness have been enclosed . . . jerry-built up by speculators in order to swell the ill-gotten revenues of some covetous aristocrat or greedy money-bag.

The scornful rhetoric here captures Alcoa's motives in venturing into those eastern highlands, putting its "grip" on that unique Icelandic wilderness, only ten years ago. Icelanders will need the reckless courage of saga heroes to get clear of the financial mess the speculators have landed them in, in these last parlous months of 2008.

Gary L. Aho, professor emeritus of English literature, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, is working on Morris's Icelandic diaries for the Morris Online Edition.

BOOK REVIEW

Fran Durako

Caroline Arscott, *William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones: Interlacings* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008)

When first hearing of this new book by Caroline Arscott, a senior lecturer at London's Courtauld Institute of Art, I was quite eager to obtain a copy. William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones were famously great life-long friends after meeting at Oxford University in 1853, and collaborated through the years on the design and production of textiles, wallpaper, furniture and stained glass at Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. (later Morris & Company); and, finally, on many of the magnificent books produced at the Kelmscott Press until Morris's death in 1896. It is thus almost impossible to write about one without the other. The enormous output of writings published for more than a century about the two men and their circle include much about their relationship, connections to each other, and the work they did together. Arscott's book promises to offer a fresh perspective on the "points of overlap between their interlaced artistic projects" and the "interconnections in theme, allusions and strategy between their work. The result is a book that is scholarly, extensively researched, and often provocative in its exploration of the author's theories.

After the introduction, the book is structured into eight chapters that alternate discussion of the work of each man, focusing on Morris's designs and the paintings of Burne-Jones. Two of the chapters on Burne-Jones use his *Perseus* and *Briar Rose* series as vehicles for the author's analysis. In the other two about Burne-Jones the author analyzes his view of Morris as evidenced by his many caricatures of his friend, and ends with a discussion of his work in stained glass. Two of the chapters on Morris examine the influence of the nineteenth century's opinions on, and practice of, physical education, and of primitive societies and their art. The others analyze how his designs incorporate the

sustance and imagery of the human body, and how his designs related to fishing, an activity he enjoyed.

In the exploration of her views, Arscott devotes much discussion of the aspects of nineteenth century culture and science that she believes relate to her analysis of their impact on each man's art. In her chapter on Morris titled "The Gymnasium," for example, she goes back to his college years, where he was a student of Archibald MacLaren, then the gym instructor who later wrote extensively on physical education and on particular sports. Several pages are spent discussing MacLaren's theories and programs as they relate to the human body and, she argues, on Morris's views on the nature of the body and the processes of life. When discussing Burne-Jones's *Perseus* series, she states that Burne-Jones was always "interested in the motif of knights in armor." After a discussion on the development of his art through an examination of this series, she carries his interest in armor to a lengthy analysis of the developments in armaments in Victorian England before continuing with further discussion of Burne-Jones' art. Somehow, this discussion includes a long paragraph on the Arnold Schwarzenegger film, *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* and how the pairing of *Perseus* and *Andromeda* parallels a contest between two androids in this movie.

Arscott offers an interesting view of the meaning and intent of the caricatures of Morris done by Burne-Jones over the years. She posits that his caricatures are a vehicle for analyzing (or psychoanalyzing) their re-

lationship. She discusses how Morris is presented as energetic and sturdy, while Burne-Jones's self-caricatures show him as weak and pallid. She cites Stephen Wildman's and John Christian's suspicion that these reveal a hostile edge to the depiction of Morris (p. 155). The chapter also discusses the revulsion, mingled with fascination, which Burne-Jones had for obese women, noting that Morris's bulkiness in the caricatures may relate to "fat female forms." Also discussed is Burne-Jones' great interest in tattoos, after which Arscott returns to an analysis of Morris's textile designs and their overlay with the work of Burne-Jones.

As someone who is not in the academic world nor a scholar in the field, I confess that I left this book with little understanding of the author's arguments and analysis, and how they elucidate and prove her theories. But for this lay reader, Arscott's book proved to be too arcane, and the linkages she sought to establish between the two artists and their respective works, or between the two men and outside influences seemed to me to be sometimes dubious and strained.

In order to provide a fair balance to this review, I invite other readers of this book to offer an alternative review or commentary to be published in the next *Newsletter*.

Fran Durako is the proprietor of Kelmscott Bookshop, Baltimore, MD, and president of the William Morris Society in the United States.



William Morris, his daughters Jenny and May, and members of the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League, [ca. 1885–1889]. Inquiry: When was this picture taken?

THE LAST WORD

The socialist Richard speaks to his wife as they look from a hilltop at the world's financial capital:

Shall we be glad always? Come closer and hearken:
Three fields further on, as they told me down there,
When the young moon has set, if the March sky should darken,
We might see from the hill-top the great city's glare.

Hark, the wind in the elm-boughs! From London it bloweth,
And telleth of gold, and of hope and unrest;
Of power that helps not; of wisdom that knoweth,
But teacheth not aught of the worst and the best.

Of the rich men it telleth, and strange is the story
How they have, and they hanker, and grip far and wide;
And they live and they die, and the earth and its glory
Has been but a burden they scarce might abide.

Hark! The March wind again of a people is telling;
Of the life that they live there, so haggard and grim,
That if we and our love amidst them had been dwelling
My fondness had faltered, thy beauty grown dim.

This land we have loved in our love and our leisure
For them hangs in heaven, high out of their reach;
The wide hills o'er the sea-plain for them have no pleasure,
The grey homes of their fathers no story to teach.

The singers have sung and the builders have builded,
The painters have fashioned their tales of delight;
For what and for whom hath the world's book been gilded,
When all is for these but the blackness of night?

How long, and for what is their patience abiding?
How oft and how oft shall their story be told,
While the hope that none seeketh in darkness is hiding,
And in grief and in sorrow the world groweth old?

WILLIAM MORRIS, excerpt from "The Message of the March Wind," originally part of "The Pilgrims of Hope," later reprinted in *Poems by the Way*, (1891)