

## Editorial and Introduction

*Rosie Miles*

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to this special issue of the *Journal of William Morris Studies* on Morris and the Book Arts. How appropriate it is, therefore, that this should also be the first to bear the marks of the excellent design work of David Gorman. In true Morrisian spirit I hope you are able to take as much pleasure in the quality of the designed page as you are the content.

The William Morris Society has recently seen the deaths of several members who had particular interests in the Arts of the Book and it is thus fitting that they should be acknowledged here. Joseph Dunlap was the founder of the William Morris Society in the USA and subsequently became its Vice-President. A full obituary will follow in the Winter 2004 *Journal*, but this Editorial allows me to remember here his considerable contribution to the study of Morris and the Book. For it was back in 1971, in *The Book That Never Was* (Oriole Editions), that Dunlap reminded us that Morris's keen interest in the production and publication of his works *as books* long preceded the establishment of the Kelmscott Press in 1891. *The Book That Never Was* focused on Morris's failed attempt to produce an illustrated edition of *The Earthly Paradise* in the 1860s, the Victorian 'golden age' of book illustration. In 1972 Dunlap's PhD dissertation, 'The Road to Kelmscott: William Morris and the Book Arts Before the Founding of the Kelmscott Press' (Columbia University) provided the first major critical account of Morris's development as a calligrapher and illuminator, from his early attempts in the mid-1850s through Morris's sustained work on numerous calligraphic manuscripts from the late 1860s to the mid-1870s. An article arising from this, 'Morris and the Book Arts Before the Kelmscott Press', appeared in a special edition of *Victorian Poetry* on Morris in 1975, and in 1976 Dunlap contributed the 'William Morris: Calligrapher' chapter to *William Morris and the Art of the Book* (Pierpont Morgan Library; ed. Paul Needham). In this latter chapter Dunlap noted how Morris started experimenting with calligraphic scripts and letterforms whilst writing the manuscripts for *The Earthly Paradise*. As ever with Morris, one activity is never very far away from another.

An obituary of typographer John Dreyfus follows this Editorial.

What this obituary perhaps doesn't highlight is his interest in the Kelmscott Press and the other Hammersmith presses. Dreyfus contributed two articles to the fine printing journal *Matrix* on these topics. The first, in 1991, was 'A Reconstruction of the Lecture Given by Emery Walker on 15 November 1888'. Walker's lecture, which used lantern slides of enlarged typefaces, inspired Morris to think of designing his own type and was the impetus to the founding of the Kelmscott Press. The second, 'The Hammersmith Hot-house: Private Presses Beside the Thames' (*Matrix* 16, 1996), considered the creative typographical activities which resulted from the network of friendships of T. Cobden-Sanderson, Edward Johnston, Eric Gill and Douglas Pepler.

John also gave the annual Kelmscott Lecture for the William Morris Society in 1986 on 'Morris and the Printed Book'. As contemporary typography was then seeing the emergence of technology that could digitise typefaces, he again used Walker's trick of enlarging typefaces to compare examples of Morris's original designs for his Troy type, the variations produced in the actual punch cut, and then the type digitised. Ten years later he contributed the chapter on the Kelmscott Press to the V&A's catalogue which accompanied their centenary Morris exhibition.

Other enthusiasts for Morris and the Book Arts sadly no longer with us are Peter Holliday, an enthusiastic follower of calligrapher Edward Johnston and practised artist and craftsman himself, Lionel Selwyn and, of course, Ray Watkinson.

Articles in this issue span Morris's relationship to and with the Arts of the Book from the beginning of his adult career as a poet to the end of his life and beyond into his legacy in the twentieth century. Two significant scholars of Morris and the Book in the 1980s and '90s deserve mention, not least because several of the essays that follow are indebted to one or both of them. William Peterson's gathering of Morris's various lectures on the Book in the 1890s in *The Ideal Book* (University of California Press, 1982) made more widely available a distinctive body of Morrisian writing. The influence of Morris's thought on the conception, design and layout of the Book, so that the object produced is a thing of pleasure to the eye and the touch as well as to the mind and spirit, has been greatly influential. In his major study published nearly ten years later, *The Kelmscott Press: A History of William Morris's Typographical Adventure* (Clarendon Press, 1991), Peterson memorably writes: 'Morris's ideas, like his ornamented books, are richly suggestive. When he appears to be writing about typographical matters, he is in reality examining how we ought to live'.

The other significant influence on studies of Morris and the Kelmscott Press into the new millennium is Jerome McGann, whose *The Textual Condition* (1991) and chapter on Morris's 'Materialist Aesthetic' in *Black Riders: The Visible Language of Modernism* (1993) have offered suggestive ways of approaching the kinds of artefacts that Kelmscott Press books are. McGann has made us aware that we must read the multivalency of these works – the energies of their interweaving of the various Arts of the Book.

Elizabeth Helsinger's article, 'Lyric Colour: Pre-Raphaelite Art and Morris's *The Defence of Guenevere*' offers a philosophical exploration of the meanings of colour in the nineteenth century and specifically how it is used to express 'the effects of strange intensity' in the work of the Pre-Raphaelites and in Morris's early poetry. Still staying with *The Defence* volume, Michaela Braesel focuses on 'The Influence of Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts on the Pre-Raphaelites and the Early Poetry of William Morris'. Braesel charts in detail the revival in interest in illuminated manuscripts in the mid-nineteenth century, fuelled by the Gothic Revival, and attempts to account for the relationships between Pre-Raphaelite art and poetry and extant illuminated manuscripts in the British Museum.

Damian Judge Rollison and Jessica DeSpain both offer readings of specific Kelmscott Press books. In 'The Kelmscott *Shelley* and Materialist Poetics' Rollison considers the relationship between the 'otherworldly aspirations' of selected works by Shelley and the very physical textuality of their embodiment and presentation within the Kelmscott *Shelley*. DeSpain argues in 'A Book Arts Pilgrimage: Arts and Crafts Socialism and the Kelmscott *Chaucer*' that the design of the *Chaucer* provides its own commentary to the original text of *The Canterbury Tales* which enables the reader to critique the capitalist society within which the book has been produced. She also provides a thought-provoking account of her own 'pilgrimage' to see a copy of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* in the library of Salisbury House, Des Moines, Iowa. Just as a book such as the *Chaucer* is 'beyond reading' (to quote the title of Jeffrey Skoblow's recent essay on the Kelmscott Press in *The Victorian Illustrated Book*), so, for just about all of us, is it also beyond possession, and thus any encounter with this and many other of the Kelmscott books is likely to take place in the public space of the library or special collection. DeSpain's careful noting of this event raises interesting questions about the kind of ritual experience that a 'reader' goes through when engaging with the Kelmscott *Chaucer* (with its attendant association of reverence), as well as issues about surveillance of which Michel Foucault

would be proud. How too does this modern-day experience of the *Chaucer* fit with the original intention of these books that they should revolutionise the reading experience for all?

Douglas Schoenherr provides a helpful brief note on Burne-Jones's famous phrase about the Kelmscott *Chaucer* being a 'pocket cathedral', and its origins with John Ruskin, and Thomas Tobin concludes the 'Kelmscott' section of this issue with a lively account of how 'the idea of the Great Man Morris' was produced in the pages of periodicals in the last years of the nineteenth century in 'Saint Morris: The Last Days of the Kelmscott Press in the Late-Victorian Media'.

Tobin's comments on several books clearly influenced in their design by the Kelmscott aesthetic after Morris's death lead well into the next two articles, which consider Morris's reception and republication in the twentieth century through the format of the illustrated book. In 'Illustrating Morris: The Work of Jessie King and Maxwell Armfield' Rosie Miles considers two significant editions of Morris's poetry published pre-World War I, and Robert Coupe, whose *Illustrated Editions of the Works of William Morris in English* is also reviewed in this issue, provides an up-to-date postscript offering details of further illustrated editions he has since discovered. Finally, Morris's influence is also seen in Mary Catherine Johnsen's article on Rachel McMasters Miller Hunt, a patron and collector of Arts and Crafts fine printing in the USA in the first half of the twentieth century.

Both McGann and Skoblow have written of the Kelmscott Press as precursive of modernist techniques and concerns about the Book. The twentieth century also witnessed the development of the Artist's Book, which is highly self-conscious about the material, physical, constructed nature of the book-as-object, and Morris's thinking about the Book paved the way to such enterprises. But whither Morris and the Book into the twenty-first century? McGann is also leading the way in encouraging scholars in the Humanities to be thinking about the possibilities of digitising texts, be they written or visual – or both (see, for example, *The Rossetti Archive*: [www.jefferson.village.virginia.edu/rossetti/index.html](http://www.jefferson.village.virginia.edu/rossetti/index.html)). Do Morris's ideas about the Book still have a currency as we start to learn new ways of experiencing text in a virtual environment? It is already possible to obtain a virtual edition of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* (see [www.octavo.com](http://www.octavo.com)), so what does it mean to 'read' such a 'book'? We are in an era when the physical and the virtual co-exist in terms of the publishing of texts, and I would imagine that this is likely to be the case for some time to come. The possibilities of the virtual are having an impact on the world of the material book, and they are no

doubt here to stay. However, it is with a twenty-first century physical book that I would like to conclude this Introduction. If you would like to see what happens when contemporary (and no doubt digital) skills in book design are brought to bear on Morris's organic aesthetic consider the 'artist's book' that is the catalogue to David Mabb's current exhibition and installation on Morris at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, UK. Designed by Nicole and Petra Kapitza it is a thing of modernist beauty.