The year 1936 saw the publication of two important books that helped to revive Morris's reputation, which had seriously declined in the previous decade. In her *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist*, May Morris was able to bring together two substantial volumes of her father's previously uncollected writings; and in his *Pioneers of the Modern Movement*, the young German art historian Nikolaus Pevsner was to claim Morris, most unexpectedly, as a hero of the Modern Movement that was emerging in Europe at the time, and this was brought to our recent attention by the exhibition *Modernism* at the Victoria and Albert Museum. This article will be devoted to Pevsner's contribution to the rebuilding of Morris's reputation.

Nikolaus Pevsner was born in 1902 in Leipzig, to Russian Jewish parents, but he converted to Lutheranism in 1921 and never drew attention to his Jewish roots.

He married Lola Kirlbaum in 1923, and they were to have three children. He was a scholarly boy and young man, and obtained a Ph.D from the University of Leipzig for a dissertation on the Baroque houses of the city, going on to research on Italian Mannerism. He worked as an Assistant Keeper at Dresden Museum from 1924 to 1929, and began to contribute articles on art to a Dresden paper. In 1925 he saw two buildings that were to have a tremendous effect on his intellectual life: the Dessau building by Walter Gropius and the pavilion at the Paris Exhibition by Le Corbusier, both striking examples of the new Modernist style. From this point on, Pevsner saw it as his mission to promote Modernism in every field, but particularly in architecture and design.

From 1929 to 1933 he lectured in Art History – an established academic subject in Germany long before it became one in Britain – at the
University of Gottingen, where he began to develop an interest in the relatively unstudied area of English art, particularly of the Victorian era. He visited England in 1930 for research purposes, but was unimpressed by the country and its shabby—non-modernist—buildings. At this point, he appears to have supported some of the principles of National Socialism, especially the Party's view that art should be subordinate to the national interest. Unlike many intellectuals of the 1930s, he never seems to have been influenced by Marxism. Nevertheless, in 1933 the Nazis prohibited those they defined as Jews from teaching in universities, and so Pevsner was forced to seek a post abroad. He came back to England, and was given a two-year fellowship in the Department of Commerce at the University of Birmingham to enquire into the state of British design, especially in the Midlands. He was also employed by Gordon Russell, to purchase fabrics for his business. From the beginning, Pevsner seems to have the valuable attribute of being able to convince possible employers of his knowledge and dedication. One of those he met was Frank Pick of the London Underground, who helped him to obtain a work permit. This enabled him to settle in England, and in 1935 his wife and three children came over from Germany to join him.

Thus it came about that Pioneers of the Modern Movement, with its challenging sub-title From William Morris to Walter Gropius, was published in English (which Pevsner came to write in very quickly and very well) by Faber and Faber in 1936. It was itself a pioneering book on the subject in England, though some similar ideas were being put forward by P. Morton Shand in the Architectural Review, to which Pevsner began to contribute in the same year. Pevsner's basic argument in Pioneers was that Modernism represented the appropriate style for the modern world, and that three elements had led up to it. These were, respectively, the ideas of William Morris, the technology of the Victorian engineers, and Art Nouveau. The use of new materials, particularly iron, steel and glass, followed by concrete, made all sorts of new buildings possible, and William Morris's insistence—following Ruskin— that art must serve the needs of the people as a whole rather than an elite group had shown in what direction art must go. Art Nouveau, though Pevsner disliked it for its extravagancies, had shown that a new style could be created with these new materials. This was the simple synthesis which Pevsner put over with missionary enthusiasm.
As far as Morris is concerned, Pevsner’s primary emphasis is on the social and cultural ideas put forward in his lectures. He sees these as following logically and inevitably from Morris’s decision to create the Firm in 1861, which he discusses with enthusiasm in his first chapter. For Pevsner, ‘This event marks the beginning of a new era in Western Art’. He goes on to argue that ‘The fundamental meaning of Morris’s firm and Morris’s doctrine is clearly expressed in the thirty-five lectures which he delivered between 1877 and 1894 on artistic and social questions’ (Pioneers, p. 15). Pevsner was one of the first to place a strong stress on the importance of these lectures; nearly all his supportive citations come from Volumes XXII and XXIII of the Collected Works. Thus Morris is presented as leading towards the Bauhaus: ‘We owe it to him that an ordinary man’s dwelling-house has once more become a worthy object of the architect’s thought, and a chair, a wallpaper, or vase a worthy object of the artist’s imagination’ (Pioneers, pp. 15–16).

However, for Pevsner this was only a part of Morris; his other part was ‘committed to nineteenth-century style and nineteenth-century prejudices’ (Pioneers, p. 16). Morris, unlike Walter Gropius, was guilty of ‘historicism’, looking backwards for his ideals, following Ruskin in his enthusiasm for the middle ages and for craftwork. Thus, ‘Morris’s Socialism is far from correct according to the standards established in the later nineteenth century: there is more in it of More than of Marx’ (Pioneers, p. 17). According to Pevsner, ‘One cannot, from his lectures, obtain a clear view of what he imagined the future to be’. ‘There is thus a ‘decisive antagonism in Morris’s life and teaching’ between his constructive and his destructive emphases (Pioneers, p. 17). He wanted to produce goods that everyone could use and enjoy, but his hostility to machinery – ‘The machine was Morris’s arch-enemy’ (Pioneers, p. 17) – meant that he could produce only expensive items for rich customers, in which he was followed by the Arts and Crafts Movement, which ‘brought a revival of artistic craftsmanship not of industrial art’ (Pioneers, p. 18). As far as the designs are concerned, in the second chapter Pevsner praises ‘Morris’s logical unity of composition and close study of growth in nature’ (Pioneers, p. 46), and illustrates the ‘Honeysuckle’ chintz. But he insists that Morris’s most important achievement was the ‘revival of decorative honesty’ in his designs (Pioneers, p. 46). Morris was thus a pioneer of the Modernism that Pevsner espoused, which had been embodied in the Bauhaus (which
had closed in 1933 under Nazi pressure): 'Morris laid the foundation of the modern style; with Gropius its character was ultimately determined' (Pioneers, p. 32). This unexpected argument was put with plenty of evidence, and was to play its part in the revival of Morris's reputation, though not everyone would have wanted to see his work in the context that Pevsner proposed for it. In 1936 Pevsner also published an article in German on Morris and C. R. Ashbee, whom he considered to be the most original of Morris's English followers. 6

In 1937 Pevsner published the results of his research on design in the Midlands for the University of Birmingham as An Enquiry into Industrial Art in England, in which he argued that 90 per cent of British industrial art was 'devoid of any aesthetic merit'. 7 As far as he was concerned, the British had totally failed to learn the lesson that Morris had wanted to teach them about the application of the best principles of design to the production of objects of everyday use.

In 1940 Pevsner was interned in a camp at Huyton, near Liverpool, but was freed as a result of pleas by Pick, Wedgwood, Morton Shand and Kenneth Clark. He then published Academies of Art, Past and Present, which had originally been written in Germany before 1933. In the Preface he explained his aim as to explore 'the changing relations between the artist and the world surrounding him' in an attempt to answer the question why the modern artist is 'so painfully severed from his public'. 8 'The problem was traced back to the Romantics, who had failed to see the 'pernicious effects' of their elitism, 'from which we are still suffering today' (Academies, p. 205). Art education had become an absurdity, to be rescued initially by Owen Jones and Henry Cole, and more effectively by Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement. When Morris taught himself tapestry-weaving, he learned the principles of design, and rediscovered the relationship of material to form:

It is therefore due to him and his indefatigable creative energy that a revival of handicraft and then of industrial design took place in Europe. The Modern Movement in design owes more to him that to any other artist of the nineteenth century, and it seems high time now after a universally accepted style in building and industrial art has at last been established, to recognise his supreme prominence for the history of art in its most general sense. 9
In particular, Morris is praised for the building of Red House and for the establishment of the Firm. Nevertheless, his hostility to the machine had meant that his enterprise and the following Arts and Crafts Movement – ‘a gentlemen’s enterprise’ – had failed to achieve their social aims, and the leadership had passed to Germany and the Werkbund. (Academies, p. 268, p. 269). In 1940 Pevsner also published an article in German on C. F. A. Voysey in which he stated (in the later English translation) that Voysey disliked Morris’s ‘atheism’ and ebullient temperament, finding him in every way ‘too sensual’. Pevsner went on to praise the liveliness of Voysey’s designs.

Pevsner was in London in 1941, apparently employed for a time as a road-sweeper in Camden, and fire-watching at Birkbeck College. An anecdote recorded by Stephen Games has Gordon Jackson, the Master of Birkbeck, saying: ‘I hear we’ve got a rather bright chap on the roof; I think we might invite him down’ (Games, Pevsner, p. xxxi). At all events, he was a Lecturer at Birkbeck from 1942 to 1959, as well as acting editor of Architectural Review in the absence of service of J. M. Richards from 1942 to 1945. In this capacity, he began to write a column called ‘Treasure Hunt’ under the pseudonym Peter F. Donner, in which he wrote in appreciative detail about the buildings of London as they could be seen by the passing (but perceptive) pedestrian. Around the same time, he met and impressed Allen Lane of Penguin Books, who made him General Editor of the attractive King Penguin series, and commissioned him to write An Outline of European Architecture. When the book appeared in 1942, Pevsner (whose mother committed suicide in Germany in that year) movingly dedicated it to his three children, in the hope that one day they would experience a world ‘safe for studying the achievements of all nations’. In its original form, the book contains 159 pages of text, with forty-seven black-and-white drawings in the text – including Norman Shaw’s Stores and Inn at Bedford Park and Voysey’s house at Colwall – and thirty-two black-and-white photographs, culminating in Gropius’s Model Factory for the Werkbund Exhibition of 1914. The final chapter deals with the period since 1760 – ‘Romantic Movement, Historicism and Modern Movement’ – and places Morris in the context established in Pevsner’s two previous books. He is praised for having linked Ruskin’s social and aesthetic theories ‘in the only way in which they could be successfully linked up’ (Outline, p. 139) by trying to make ‘the artist a craftsman
again'. But although this enterprise was inspired by admiration for medieval work, it was not imitative:

He recognised Historicism as the danger it was. What he did was to steep himself in the atmosphere and the aesthetic principles of the Middle Ages, and then create something new with a similar flavour and on similar principles. That is why Morris fabrics and wallpapers will live long after all applied art of the generation before his will have lost its significance. (*Outline*, p. 140)

Here perhaps we find a stronger emphasis than previously on Morris as a designer, but the discussion of Morris concludes with a familiar pronouncement – splendidly formulated – about his relation to the modern:

Morris's social-aesthetic theory as it was embodied in the many lectures and addresses he delivered from 1877 onwards will keep its life in history too. By trying to revive the old faith in service, by indicting the contemporary architect's and artist's arrogant indifference to design for everyday needs, by discrediting any art created by individual genius for a small group of connoisseurs, by forcing home with untiring zest the principle that art matters only, 'if all can share it', he laid the foundation of the Modern Movement. (*Outline*, p. 140)

But despite Morris – and Norman Shaw and Voysey, who are also praised and illustrated here – the Modern Movement did not develop in Britain: 'Britain had led Europe and America in architecture and design for a long time: now her ascendance had come to an end'. (*Outline*, p. 141)

In view of Pevsner's commitment to both Birkbeck and the *Architectural Review*, it is hardly surprising that the later years of the war saw no further significant publications. It should be noted that at this time the owner of the *Architectural Review*, Hubert de Cronin Hastings, was running a campaign in its pages; the aim of the campaign, as neatly defined by Bridget Cherry, was to 'offer the English picturesque tradition as a valid contribution to a modernism that was too stark to achieve broad public appeal'. She cites Hastings' article of January 1944 entitled 'Sharawaggi', together with articles on the Picturesque by Pevsner, and features by artists like John Piper which
‘celebrated aspects of the vernacular and its colourful embellishments’ which might modify or enrich ‘the pure white of early modernism’.

These developments were to have an important influence on Pevsner’s later attitude to English culture.

In 1945 Hugh Lane asked Pevsner whether he had any suggestions for further publications. Ambitiously, Pevsner suggested both the Buildings of England series, for which he is now so well known, and the multi-volume Pelican History of Art. To Pevsner’s surprise, Allen immediately agreed: “Yes, we can do them both”. And that was the end of the meeting’ (Games, Pevsner, p. xxxi). In the same year Pevsner began to give broadcasts for the BBC – he was to give seventy-eight talks by 1977. We can see him throughout his career as a great adult educationalist, wanting to share his views with as wide a public as possible. In 1946 he became a naturalised British citizen, continuing to teach at Birkbeck College, and serving on the editorial board of the Architectural Review.

Pioneers of the Modern Movement had become well known by 1948, when the Museum of Modern Art in New York decided to publish a new version, which came out in 1949 with the new title Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius. This is the title that it subsequently retained, and it can be seen as a more accurate indication of the book’s contents, although it reduces the grand claims that Pevsner had wanted to advance in 1936. In his brief Foreword, Pevsner thanks MOMA for having given him the chance to increase the number of illustrations from 84 to 137 and to make necessary corrections and additions, including the rewriting of one chapter. He makes no comment on his overall thesis or on the change of title.

Pevsner gave a radio talk, ‘From William Morris to Walter Gropius’, on the same topic at the time. In it he recalled showing a photograph of Morris to the elderly Gropius in the United States, and Gropius saying: ‘So that is Morris. I have never seen a picture of him. And yet I owe him so much’. Pevsner continues to emphasise Morris’s role as instigator of new attitudes, but hindered by his suspicion of the machine, so that he found himself, in terms of the well-known anecdote here cited by Pevsner, ‘serving the swinish luxury of the rich’. Pevsner presents Morris’s position as innately contradictory, and ends the talk with references to two of his followers, Lethaby – not hostile to machinery – and Voysey, ‘a wonderful man’, the ‘freshness and lightness’ of whose
patterns made ‘Morris’s chintzes and rugs appear gloomy and Victorian in their dependence on the Middle Ages and the Orient’ (Games, Pevsner, p. 39) – one of his few overt criticisms of Morris as a designer. But Pevsner’s story has a happy ending for his listeners: the creation of the Bauhaus.

Pevsner’s reputation continued to rise, and from 1949 to 1955 he was Slade Professor of Fine Art at Cambridge. He lectured on Matthew Digby Wyatt, and gave a radio talk on him in 1949 in which he suggested that he had perhaps exaggerated the originality of Morris’s criticism of early Victorian design; others like Cole, Redgrave and Wyatt had made similar points earlier. Pevsner ended his broadcast by stating the conflicting views of Wyatt, who believed that significant reforms could be achieved within society, and Morris, who believed that ‘a complete change of heart, if not a complete upheaval of society, would have to precede the re-establishment of an art worth having’, and by asking his audience ‘Who is right?’ (Games, Pevsner, p. 61). In 1951 Pevsner completed a series of radio talks on Victorian architecture with ‘The Late Victorians and William Morris’, in which he praised Morris for establishing the Firm, for his designs, and above all for his lectures. This talk ended with Pevsner in optimistic mood: the England of Henry Moore, the New Towns and the South Bank Exhibition was at last showing evidence of a modernist outlook (Games, Pevsner, p. 126).

It was in 1951 that Cornwall, the first volume of the Buildings of England series into which Pevsner was to put so much of his time and energy over the next twenty-five years, was published. It immediately established new standards for the guide-book treatment of architecture, and the series, now being revised and expanded, will remain a monumental achievement. From the point of view of the present discussion, attention will be given only to the treatment by Pevsner of works by Morris in the buildings considered, of which the majority are stained-glass windows. In this first volume we find his account of the fine church of St. Germanus at St. Germans, in which he gives high praise to the east window of 1896 by Burne-Jones and contrasts it with other Victorian stained glass:
To see such work executed by _Morris and Co._ after the many other Victorian windows in Cornish churches brings home most forcibly the value of William Morris's reforms. Here are clear outlines, pleasing patterns, and simple colours in sufficiently large expanses to be taken in individually. No overcrowding, no competing with the art of painting, and yet a sentiment that is wholly of the C19.¹⁶

This is judicious praise, showing Pevsner's appreciative response to a particular product of Morris and Co., and his grasp of the relevant criteria for judging work in a particular medium. More recently, claims have been made to put forward a case for other Victorian firms producing stained glass. Pevsner seems never to have doubted that the work of Morris and Co. was outstanding in its field. This can be seen in the 1954 _Cambridge_ volume, in which he discusses Bodley's All Saints, Jesus Lane, and the work by Morris and Co. in the chapel at Jesus College. In Bodley's 1864 church Pevsner notes that 'Bodley called _Morris_ in for the decoration, and indeed the walls have Morris stencilling in various sombre colours; the ceilings are charmingly, though quietly decorated by _Morris_'. He then goes on to the stained glass: 'Its date is 1865–6. It is surprisingly light in its general appearance, owing to the fact that the individual figures which had one panel each to themselves are surrounded by plenty of clear glass'. He notes that the designs are by Burne-Jones (then only about thirty years old), Morris and Brown.¹⁷ The reader is thus given detailed information, all the more impressive because the great survey of the stained glass of Morris and Co. by A. C. Sewter was not to appear until 1974–75.¹⁸ In discussing the work at Jesus College chapel, where Morris and Co. put in windows by Burne-Jones, Morris and Brown between 1873 and 1877, Pevsner again shows his powers of observation, the range of his relevant knowledge, and the sharpness of his critical eye:

The scenes by Brown are markedly different in colour (with clearer red, white, and yellow, and no blue and green). The difference between Morris and Pugin, or 1875 at its best and 1850 at its best, is most instructive. The aesthetic quality of Morris's work is no doubt higher, and besides it is very much more original. Pugin was satisfied, as he once said himself, to follow the best precedent. Morris looked on the Middle
Ages rather for guidance than for actual paradigms. But Pugin is more naive, and there is in Burne-Jones’s figures a touch of self-display which may get tiresome after a while.\textsuperscript{19}

The reader of Pevsner’s guides is kept alert by a certain unpredictability in the accounts given. Here, although he admires the Morris and Co. glass, Pevsner is also aware of the possibilities of decadence in Burne-Jones’s work. It will not be possible to consider all the references to Morris and Co. work in the Buildings of England volumes, but attention will be drawn, chronologically, to the most important.

The year 1955 was an important one for Morris studies. In it E. P. Thompson published his magisterial biography, establishing beyond all doubt – what had previously been disputed, by Pevsner among others – the extent of Morris’s engagement with Marxism.\textsuperscript{20} In the same year, the William Morris Society came into existence. In view of Pevsner’s enthusiasm for Morris and his scholarly reputation (he had been awarded a CBE in 1953), it is unsurprising that he was one of the three signatories – along with the typographer Stanley Morrison and the architect John Brandon-Jones – of the letter to \textit{The Times} which was instrumental in bringing the Society into existence.\textsuperscript{21} Pevsner was to serve on the committee from 1955 to 1979; according to the obituary by Hans Brill, the committee met in Pevsner’s rooms in Gower Street, and later in Bloomsbury Square, under his ‘genial chairmanship’.\textsuperscript{22} He was to lecture twice to the Society, in 1957 and 1959, but did not contribute to the Society’s \textit{Journal}, which was brought into existence by R. C. H. Briggs in the winter of 1961.

Finally, it might even be said as a postscript that William Morris was destined to become the best designer of the nineteenth century in all Europe at least where flat surfaces are concerned (that is in chintzes, wallpapers, and the like) because he was English and had grown up with a sensitive and intelligent appreciation of English traditions in design. Morris’s designs are paraphrases of natural growth. His observation of tree and flower was as close and intense as that of any English landscape painter. But his genius lies in the conversion of these observed data into perfectly fitting surface patterns. (*Englishness*, p. 107)

Once again, Pevsner is appreciative and cogent. But in his Conclusion he makes a more limiting judgment, although an interesting one. Associating Morris with the Domestic Revival in architecture and the idea of the Garden City, Pevsner remarks that the English national character, in gaining ‘tolerance and fair play’, has lost the ‘intensity’ that produces really great art. Thus Morris was more successful than Blake because his ‘revolution’ was an English one, ‘conducted in the field of design and linked up with domestic comfort and good sense’ (*Englishness*, p. 206).

In 1957 Pevsner gave a lecture to the William Morris Society and the Royal Institute of British Architects on ‘William Morris and Architecture’. As usual, Pevsner emphasises the qualities he admires in Morris, but also criticises what he sees as his inconsistencies. The opening of the lecture puts this across with considerable force:

> The fascination of any reading of William Morris, be it his letters or his lectures or any monograph on him, is to feel in the presence of an exceptionally powerful human being, a being with plenty of contradictions and incompatibilities, but all forged into one impetuous whole, forceful, wilful, single-minded.²⁴

Pevsner quotes freely and effectively from Morris’s lectures, and adds material from his letters that Philip Henderson had edited in 1950. He focuses on what he sees as Morris’s complicated relationship to the architecture of his own time, especially the Queen Anne revival. He remarks on the surprising fact that Morris never praises the work of Philip Webb, and shows that he was uncomfortable with Norman Shaw – and Shaw with him. He suggests that there were elements of
Spenglerian pessimism in his view of the contemporary world, but that he was temperamentally too active to be ‘paralysed by such thoughts’.

His negative attitude to the machine is seen as Victorian, but his emphasis on honesty and simplicity as pointing forward to the twentieth century.

The year 1958 saw the founding of the Victorian Society, of which Pevsner became a Co-Chairman. This meant that he became even more involved in work on the Victorian period. The Buildings of England series continued, with Shropshire in 1958. The account of the church at Meole Brace praises the Morris and Co. stained glass, remarking that that the windows in the apse are among Morris and Burne-Jones’s very best: ‘The total effect is rich, yet clear, the colours are not too strong or glaring’. By contrast, a window in the east of the south aisle, by Kempe in 1894, prompts the observation:

Although in most Victorian churches early Kempe glass stands out, Kempe is here – in this comparison with Morris in 1870 – exposed as yet another Victorian without any real understanding of what colouring for stained glass and designing for stained glass really means.

Pevsner’s career flourished, and he was made Professor of Art History at Birkbeck College in 1959, serving in that capacity for ten years. He became involved in many public activities associated with the arts, having developed a reputation for dedication and reliability.

By this time his work was often being reissued, and he sometimes contributed Forewords to new editions. In 1960 the Jubilee Edition of An Outline of European Architecture appeared, and Pevsner insisted that his commitment remained with the architecture of the Bauhaus by contrast with recent ‘fantasies’ (Outline 1960, p. 303). In the same year Pioneers of Modern Design was published by Penguin in the form in which it has become best known. Pevsner’s Foreword welcomes recent research on the period, but claims that, though it has ‘caused many additions and alterations, none, however [is], I am happy to say, of such a kind as to rock the structure of my argument’ (Pioneers 1960, p. 17). The Expressionist architects Gaudi and Sant’Elia have had to be raised from footnotes into the text, and there has been a deplorable resurgence recently of works by ‘fantasists and freaks’; but it remains ‘a happy thought’ for him that after twenty-five years the main thesis ‘did not call for recantation or revision’.27

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Pevsner’s 1961 broadcast ‘The Return of Historicism’ explains in some detail his dislike of recent developments in architecture: ‘Queer things are happening in architecture today’, like Oscar Niemeyer’s work in Brazil and Le Corbusier’s Ronchamp, works of ‘undisciplined individualism’ – though Pevsner does admit that perhaps Modernism had neglected ‘spiritual needs’. In the Northamptonshire volume of the same year, Pevsner discusses All Saints, Middleton Cheney, made for him into a place of ‘unforgettable enjoyment’ by the Morris and Co. glass: ‘it is so beautiful and so important that it deserves a detailed record’ – which Pevsner proceeds to provide. In a footnote he tells us that his account is based on ‘long letters’ from the rector, the Rev. C. E. Glynne Jones, and from Mr A. C. Sewter, the leading authority on Morris glass’. Pevsner clearly kept in touch with others working in the field of Morris studies, to the great advantage of the Buildings of England series.

Pevsner made another substantial claim for the importance of Morris, in relation to the international Paris exhibition entitled ‘Sources of the Twentieth Century’. A book based on the exhibition, *The Sources of Modern Art*, appeared in 1962, edited by Jean Cassou, Emile Langui and Pevsner, in a sumptuous heavyweight edition from Thames and Hudson with 456 plates, fifty-two of them in colour. Pevsner contributed the third section on ‘Architecture and the Applied Arts’, and gave another account of the sources of the International Style of the 1930s along the lines of his previous accounts, stressing the historical importance of Morris as innovator of the new attitude. The ‘simplicity and directness’ of Red House is praised, as is Morris’s genius as a designer reconciling nature and pattern in designs that are always ‘brimful of life’. Pevsner insists on the international influence of Morris’s ideas: ‘The message of William Morris was heeded everywhere’ (Cassou, *Sources*, p. 165). The British influence declined after 1900, but the ‘social awareness’ of Gropius was ‘ultimately derived from the Morris Movement’ (Cassou, *Sources*, p. 176). The essay ends with some reflections on the continuing separation, as Pevsner sees it, of high art from ordinary life (Cassou, *Sources*, p. 201).

Sadly for Pevsner, his wife Lola died in 1963. She had been the constant supporter of his work, especially on the Buildings of England. In the same year, the volume *Sussex* appeared, with its account of St. Michael’s, Brighton, the ‘delightful painting’ of the roof by Morris.
and Webb and the ‘exquisite’ stained glass by Morris and Co. In 1965 Pevsner became a Fellow of the British Academy, and in the following years he received many honorary degrees. But by now his ideas were becoming less fashionable. In a radio talk of 1966 ‘The Anti-Pioneers’, Pevsner admits his puzzlement that one of his former students, Reyner Banham, has given an account of modern developments which privileges the Expressionists over the more sober architects Pevsner preferred. He puts forward stalwart defence of his own position, insisting that the historian should aim ‘to discover and to convert, to convert people to what deserves to be appreciated’ (‘Anti-Pioneers’, p. 306). He is still disturbed by the lack of integrity that he finds in High Victorian and Art Nouveau design, as well as in the Expressionists. As Chair of the Victorian Society, he sees it as his responsibility to guide appreciation towards the disciplined architecture of Bodley and Pearson, although he is aware that younger members of the Society admire the kinds of designs that ‘irk me so much’ (‘Anti-Pioneers’, p. 306). In the 1966 volume Yorkshire: North Riding Pevsner discusses Bodley’s early church, St. Martin’s, Scarborough, decorated by Morris and Co. and does not hesitate to point out that although the pulpit is ‘A Pre-Raphaelite gem’, with its ten panels painted by Rossetti, Brown and Morris, the stained glass – ‘a remarkably large job for a small, newly established firm’ – has ‘not aged well, technically’. In the following year, in Cumberland and Westmoreland, Pevsner praised the Morris and Co. windows in Philip Webb’s St. Michael, Brampton: ‘The E window is glowing with gem-stone colours … One needs only to remember Clayton and Bell, or Heaton, Butler and Bayne, or even early Kempe, as one sees them in other churches, to appreciate what a revolution Morris glass was, with its clarity and intensity’.

The force of Pevsner’s influence at the time may be seen in the publication by Ray Watkinson of his William Morris as Designer by Studio Vista in 1967, with its Introduction insisting that, although Morris’s designs clearly belong to the nineteenth century, his thinking, as expressed in the lectures, points forward to the twentieth. From 1968 to 1969 Pevsner held the Slade Professorship at Oxford, giving the lectures that were to be published as Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century in 1972. Thames and Hudson published The Sources of Modern Architecture and Design in 1968 in their World of Art Library. This was, however, not a new book, but a reprint with mini-
mal changes and new illustrations of Pevsner’s contribution to *The Sources of Modern Art* of 1962. In 1968 Thames and Hudson also brought out, in two capacious and handsome volumes, a range of Pevsner’s essays and articles from 1938 to 1965 as *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design*, several of which have already been discussed. The range of Pevsner’s interests is shown by the fact that the whole first volume is devoted to pre-Victorian material. In the Preface, Pevsner expresses his gratitude to the *Architectural Review* – in which most of the articles originally appeared – and especially to its *spiritus rector*, H. de Cronin Hastings. Pevsner also thanks Allen Lane, ‘that great patron’, for commissioning the Buildings of England series, and then goes on to give his balanced reflections on the project: a ‘comprehensive compilation’ had been needed by ‘the layman and the scholar’, but ‘it is a compilation, and ... in the absence of first-hand research, it is a faulty compilation’. To those of us, both laymen and scholars, who have learnt so much from the Buildings of England over the years, this will seem unnecessarily modest. In 1968 Pevsner provided a new Bibliography for *Pioneers*, commenting that ‘This is all that seemed to me necessary’. The Bibliography shows that Pevsner kept up with recent work on Morris; it includes the books by Paul Thompson and Philip Henderson published in 1967 – Thompson’s is referred to as ‘all-round the best book up to date’.

The year 1969 may be seen as marking the height of Pevsner’s reputation. In it he was knighted for his services to art and architecture, received the Grand Cross of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, was awarded an Hon. D.Litt. by the University of East Anglia – and became a Vice-President of the William Morris Society. Fittingly, the volume of the Buildings of England for *West Kent and the Weald* also appeared, with a vivid and detailed account of Red House in which Pevsner shows his awareness of recent scholarship:

There is the fame of Red House, the status accorded it already by Lethaby as a pioneering building in which the revival of styles of the past was first abandoned, so that it became the first link in the chain that led to Gropius and modern architecture. But the recent researches of Mr Brandon-Jones and Dr Thompson have proved that Red House has been put in a false position: that the first product of Webb’s independent practice leant heavily on the style of his master, G. E.
Street, and even more on that of Butterfield ... What Webb did, and it was indeed a revolutionary step to take, was to make use of this easy, informal, pared-down style in a gentleman’s country house.  

In the first volume of his *Gloucestershire* in 1970, Pevsner wrote of the stained glass at All Saints, Selsley: ‘This is the glory of the church because here Bodley gave William Morris his first chance of executing ecclesiastical stained glass in the very year that the ‘firm’ was founded, 1861’. He went on to quote Paul Thompson’s description of what he considered ‘one of the very best of all the Morris windows’.

Pevsner’s final substantial engagement with Morris appeared in 1972 when the Clarendon Press published his Oxford Slade lectures as *Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century*. The book is international in scope, beginning with Walpole, Essex, Goethe and Schlegel, and concluding with Ferguson, Semper and Morris. In the Preface, Pevsner explains that the book ends with Morris, largely for the personal reason that my book of 1936 carries on from him with writers such as Van der Velde and those of the of the *Deutsche Werkbund*. But Morris is not only the pioneer of the twentieth century, he is also the consummation of the Gothic Revival and especially of Ruskin, and so I decided that it would be right and proper to end this book with Morris, as I had started my earlier book with Morris thirty-five years ago.

The final chapter on Morris occupies twenty pages, and has a useful bibliographical entry, again praising Paul Thompson, and remarking that ‘Much minor material will be found in the *Journal of the William Morris Society* (editor R. C. H. Briggs)’ (*Architectural Writers*, p. 269). In a neat formulation, Pevsner indicates what he sees as the superiority of Morris to Viollet-le-Duc; both were knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the Gothic, but Morris ‘ceaselessly worked towards tomorrow’ (*Architectural Writers*, p. 269). Pevsner gives a thorough and sympathetic account of Morris’s life and achievements, but although he refers to E. P. Thompson’s 1959 lecture ‘The Communism of William Morris’, he surprisingly follows Bruce Glasier – to whom he refers – in his view of Morris’s politics: ‘Morris may have called himself a communist, but he was not a Marxist’ (*Architectural Writers*, p. 278). Not that he was a Fabian – he certainly wanted ‘a real revolution’, but his
idea of it was ‘woolly’ (Architectural Writers, p. 279). He is praised for going beyond Ruskin in his ‘sense of the urgency of effective action’ (Architectural Writers, p. 281), for his foundation of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and for his work for Morris and Co. and in the socialist movement, but is held to have been ‘monumentally inconsistent’ as Peter Floud had recently argued (Architectural Writers, p. 285). Pevsner concludes, as we might expect, by arguing that Morris’s emphasis on ‘fitness for use’ points forwards towards Gropius and the Bauhaus, since Morris was both an end and a beginning. Van der Velde and Behrens turned to architecture ‘under the immediate impact of Morris’s published lectures. No wonder; for the impact of these lectures is irresistible even today’ (Architectural Writers, p. 289). It is to be hoped that Pevsner’s Oxford audience took to heart these eloquent words, evidence of his continuing admiration for Morris and his ideas.

The next major publication in which Pevsner was involved, The Anti-Rationalists: Art Nouveau Architecture and Design of 1973, was jointly edited by Pevsner and J. M. Richards, and consisted of articles from the Architectural Review in the period 1959 to 1968; as Pevsner notes in his Introduction, there was an irony for him in the whole project, because he had never liked Art Nouveau. He had indeed given it attention in 1936 in Pioneers, which might have accounted for the ‘public favour’ afforded to the book ‘over the last ten or twelve years’, but his enthusiasm had then been and still was for the Modern Movement, celebrated in the final pages of the book: ‘This end was an hommage à Gropius. The start of the book was my hommage à Morris. Both of them, I might say, mean as much to me now as they meant to me then’ (Anti-Rationalists, p. 1). For Pevsner, Art Nouveau had been significant only in so far as it led to the revival of handicraft and applied art on the Continent: What Morris had done for England, was done (under his influence) by the leaders of Art Nouveau in Belgium, Germany, France (Anti-Rationalists, p. 1). For Pevsner the movement had lacked the ‘higher moral values’ of the Arts and Crafts, namely its commitment to ‘honesty and simplicity’ (Anti-Rationalists, p. 2). He remained hostile to the wilful anti-rationalism of much architecture since the Second World War.

The same year, 1973, saw the reissue of the 1940 Academies of Art in a facsimile form by the Da Capo Press of New York. In his Foreword to
the Reprint Edition', Pevsner notes that, although it had been based on work he had done in Germany as long ago as 1930–33, he finds it 'unwithered'. He is still keen that there should be more research into 'the social history of art', by which he means the relations of 'the artist and the world surrounding him' (Academies 1973, p. vi). He has collected a number of remarks by various artists that support his view of the reactionary nature of the academies. These include a remark by Morris in Commonweal in 1890 in which he described the members of the Royal Academy as the 'worst selection of snobs, flunkeys and self-seekers that the world has yet seen'. This would suggest that Pevsner had continued to keep an eye open for striking formulations by Morris that he could use in his academic work.

Buildings of England volumes continued to appear. In Staffordshire in 1974 Pevsner discussed the wings of the triptych by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. at St. Edward, Cheddleton, and the stained glass showing 'the important development from 1864 to 1869, from an early to a mature style', culminating there in Burne-Jones's three large angels 'with their ruby wings and agitated drapery'. A note refers to the scholarship of A. C. Sewter; Pevsner likes to draw attention to the community of scholars. The Oxfordshire volume also appeared in 1974, and provides an attractive brief account of Kelmscott Manor, referring to Morris's own 'brilliant description of the house' in News from Nowhere. Pevnser effectively uses a quotation from Morris to emphasise his pleasure in the graduated roof tiles: 'It gives me the same sort of pleasure in their orderly beauty as a fish's scales or a bird's feather'.

In view of his continuing contributions to the appreciation of the work of the Victorian age, it was fitting that Pevsner was made a Life President of the Victorian Society in 1976. The same year saw the publication by Thames and Hudson of his 1970 Mellon Lectures, A History of Building Types. Ruskin and Morris make a characteristic appearance: 'Ruskin from 1849 and Morris from 1877 went round England preaching the gospel of truth and honesty in architecture and design' – a gospel that was to be transmitted to Berlage and Gropius. More amusingly, in the chapter on Hotels, Pevsner notes that 'one understands Morris's relief at finding himself in Florence in an old-fashioned hotel and not one where he would 'form part of the furniture of a gigantic Yankee hutch'.
This was to prove Pevsner's last book, as his health declined and his reputation was damaged by severe criticisms, especially by David Watkins in *The Morality of Architecture* in 1976. He continued on the committee of the William Morris Society until 1979, when ill health caused him to resign and he was given honorary membership by the Society. He died four years later. It is pleasant to be able to record that Princeton University Press produced an edition of his *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design* in 1982. From the material assembled in this account of Pevsner, it is evident that he was one of those who, with E. P. Thompson, Philip Henderson, A. C. Sewter and Ray Watkinson, played a highly significant role in the re-establishment of Morris's reputation and, particularly through the Buildings of England volumes, to the extension of popular knowledge of Morris's work. Pevsner's Morris is only one of the versions available to us, but it remains one of the most substantial and convincing.

NOTES

This is a revised version of a lecture given to the William Morris Society at Kelmscott House on 25 March 2006.

1 See, for example, the comment by G. H. Crow in the Special Winter Number of *Studio*, at the time of the Morris exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1934: 'For we have travelled almost irrevocably far from the everything he represented'. Crow, *William Morris: Designer* (London: Studio, 1934), p. 111.

2 Information about Pevsner's life used in this paper is drawn from the Introduction to Stephen Games, ed., *Pevsner on Art and Architecture: The Radio Talks* (London: Methuen 2002), pp. xv–xl. Subsequently referred to as Games, *Pevsner*. Games is also working on a biography of Pevsner.


5 *Pioneers*, p. 17. One might be inclined to ask, why not read *News*
from Nowhere along with Morris's lectures, to answer that question; but in general in this account I have limited myself to outlining Pevsner's point of view rather than critically engaging with it.


14 Games, Pevsner, p. 36; see also p. xxi.

15 Games, Pevsner, p. 38; the phrase is given as 'ministering to the swinish luxury of the rich' in W. R. Lethaby, Philip Webb and His Work, 1935; edited by Godfrey Rubens (London: Raven Oak Press, 1979), pp. 94–95.


21 See Martin Crick’s forthcoming History of the Society for a full account.


25 *Studies*, II, p. 116. The lecture concluded with the citation of a remark attributed to Toulouse-Lautrec: ‘Je crois que il n’y qu’ai regarder William Morris, pour avoir une reponse a toutes vos questions’ (II, p. 117). In a note to this 1968 edition, Pevsner mentions that the art historian D. S. McColl told him that as a young man he had been to a socialist meeting in the East End at which, just before the entry of the speaker, in came ‘Lady Burne-Jones and Oscar carrying a lily’ (Note 6; II, p. 272). Another Note mentions that Pevsner lost all his earlier Morris records during the war (Note 6; II, p. 272).


28 Pevsner, ‘The Return of Historicism’, in Games, *Pevsner*, pp. 271,
276, 277.


30 Jean Cassou, Emile Languis and Nikolaus Pevsner, editors, The Sources of Modern Art (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962), p. 27. Subsequently referred to as Cassou, Sources. In her William Morris: A Life for Our Time (London: Faber, 1994), Fiona MacCarthy notes the pervasive influence of Morris in Europe at the turn of the century, and quotes Gropius's 1919 proclamation of intent for the Bauhaus, which she describes as 'almost a paraphrase of Morris' (p. 604). Of Pevsner's argument about the relation of Morris to Modernism, she remarks: 'It is certainly an alluringly neat theory, up to a point convincing'. But she goes on to say that since 1936 Morris has 'slipped away' from classifications, concluding: 'Perhaps in the light of our own mellow post-modernist eclecticism we can accept Morris more easily as the conservative radical he really was' (p. 605).


39 Pevsner, West Kent and the Weald, Buildings of England
44 Academies 1973, p. viii. I have not been able to find this quotation, which Pevsner attributes to Commonweal, 12 April 1890.