

Editorial

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THIS IS MY FINAL ISSUE of the *Journal of William Morris Studies* as Editor. It has been my privilege to be Editor over the past six years and my thanks go out to all contributors, the Editorial Advisory Board, and Tom Tobin for his work on the *Journal's* webpages on the Morris Society website. If the *Journal* is a more solid, better looking publication at the end of my term than it was at the beginning then that is entirely due to the work of David Gorman, and its design and layout would surely not offend Morris. I have learnt a tremendous amount from the very varied and always interesting range of articles submitted for consideration; there are very few figures indeed who can inspire the sweep and diversity of subjects on which this *Journal* routinely publishes, and this is itself embodied in the handover of the Editorship, as it moves from an English Studies lecturer to an environmental scientist. My best wishes to Patrick O'Sullivan.

I would in particular like to single out one person for special thanks as I stand down, and that is Peter Faulkner. As Peter is Reviews Editor I have worked closely with him, and he has also acted as my link person to the Society's Committee when needed. He has contributed articles and reviews on a regular basis and the breadth and depth of his knowledge of Morris has long been a great enrichment of this *Journal*. In my first few years as Editor Peter remained resolutely without email, meaning that I would receive numerous letters from him, all neatly typed on William Morris Society headed notepaper, and I can confidently say that I have thus received more letters from Peter than from any other single person in my life! Letters are on my mind as this issue con-

tains three reviews of volumes III to V of William Fredeman's edition of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's letters. Rossetti wrote upwards of 200 letters a year, and it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that Peter used to do the same. The gentle art of letter-writing is indeed an art – one that is no doubt dying out – and Peter certainly knows how to craft a letter. I am delighted to say that he has transported these considerable skills into the not-so-gentle art of writing emails now that he has an Apple Mac.

One of the highlights of my time as Editor has been being able to use the *Journal* as a means of encouraging work on areas of interest: I have enjoyed being able to publish some contemporary creative responses to Morris, and issue 15: 4 (Summer 2004) on Morris and the Book Arts, which launched the *Journal* in its new format, is an issue of which I am especially proud. I am thus very pleased to be able to introduce another special issue, this time on 'Teaching Morris', and I discover that the first issue of the *JWMSI* I own is 11: 1 (Autumn 1994), which happens to be dedicated to the subject of education. I would thoroughly commend this issue to readers – it makes a very apt companion to this one. In inviting articles on 'Teaching Morris' I hoped to get a sense of where Morris was being taught, and how, thinking particularly about his presence within Higher Education courses.

What this snapshot has revealed is interesting. All submissions came from English Studies departments. Morris is being taught in universities in the USA, Canada, France and the UK, and *News from Nowhere* (*NfN*) is overwhelmingly the text chosen: David Latham, Philippe Vervaecke, Kathleen Maloney and myself all focus on it, although each of these four articles engages with this continually relevant work in different ways. David Latham, in a characteristically beautifully written piece, asks us to consider how *NfN* is a text about transformation and how 'the force of desire can turn the impossible dream into a probable reality'; Philippe Vervaecke tells us about *NfN*'s appearance on the French CAPES and *agrégation* programmes for trainee secondary school teachers of English; Kathleen Maloney discusses how *NfN* can be used not only to teach students about a particular period of time in the nineteenth century, but also as a means

of raising questions about what the value of history actually is; and my own article focuses on how I have taught *NfN* using the online space of a Virtual Learning Environment as a way of extending classroom discussion.

The articles I perhaps didn't expect, but which are as complementary as they are inspiring, are Elizabeth Miller's and Susan Jaret McKinstry's accounts of how we can teach Morris in a very vivid and tangible way by enabling our students to see and touch and respond to Kelmscott Press books. Motivated by these two pieces, in April 2007 I was able to take my own Masters class, who were taking a Special Author module on Morris and Wilde, to the Special Collections of Birmingham University, where a very enthusiastic librarian had unearthed all sorts of wonders from the stacks. My class was able to see Kelmscott books alongside the very different format of publications that were Morris's political writings. What we had been talking about in the classroom was brought to life in a very materially embodied way.

Todd Williams offers the only submission on teaching Morris's *Defence* poems. I am quite sure he is not the only person who is doing so, and his article testifies to how stimulating Morris's early poems can be in terms of acting as a springboard for students' creativity. What I am also sure of is that Morris will long continue to be taught: if the multi-faceted, multi-media work of anyone could be said to be its own course in lifelong learning, it is the work of William Morris. Those of us who know that an encounter with Morris's life, art and politics is transforming in the way that education, at its best, can be transforming, will want to pass on that vision to others. David Latham asks in the essay that follows, 'Where do we find our inspiration for thinking, for living, for improving the world? Not in the routine of our lives, but rather in the flight of our dreams: we find it self-referentially in the realm of the art we construct, the stories we imagine'. This is what Morris did: he articulated what the education of desire looks and feels like. It is the baton handed on to all of us in the twenty-first century who continue to think his work and ideas of the utmost value.