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According to *The William Morris Chronology*, between December 1877 and January 1896 William Morris gave well over five hundred lectures and political addresses, the vast majority of them (more than four hundred) during the years 1883–1890, when he was active in the (Social) Democratic Federation and the Socialist League. During this time, he lectured often in the Midlands, the North and Scotland, but most often, of course, in London – in Hammersmith, in Hyde Park, or in the East End, that mortar of humanity and political ideas. In this issue, Rosemary Taylor reviews this period in Morris’s political life, and in particular discusses the various locations in which he delivered his speeches (including several which do not appear in the *Chronology*), and explores the link between Morris’s political activities, and the environment of the old East End.

*News from Nowhere*, of course, has long been a source of inspiration to Morrisians, but maybe not quite in the way described in this issue by Tony Pinkney, who imagines William Guest’s visit to the future taking place as a result of his being summoned by one of the spiritualist séances fashionable even in some left-wing circles during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Éva Péteri, of the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest, describes how Morris not only constructed his own narratives, but also used traditional stories, in this case from Hungary – the education by example of his nobles by the medieval king Mathias Corvinus – in order to illustrate his own ideas regarding the value of ‘useful work’. Finally, Peter Faulkner compares various versions by Burne-Jones and Morris of the legend of the Sleeping Beauty, or here, the ‘Briar Rose’, to draw out yet another socialist lesson.

As well as the latest instalment of David and Sheila Latham’s invaluable Morris bibliography, we also review a substantial number of books, the first on Morris’s own socialism, and the next two on the lives of two of his contemporaries, the maverick laird and Liberal MP Robert Cunninghame Graham, who was at Bloody Sunday, and the novelist George Gissing, who admired Morris’s poetry and the Arts and Crafts, but who disagreed with Morris on the need for socialists to make links with working people. We then consider books on the historiography of communism, and the use of early Romantic ideas, mainly those of Cole-
ridge and the young Wordsworth, in order to develop a new economics more sympathetic to the modern, dynamic economy.

The influence of Morris on contemporary crafts, and on the appearance even of many modern homes, continues, and three books on this general topic are also reviewed here. Last, we consider books on Alton Towers, past and present, and on modern memorial brasses. Finally, it must be recorded that we also carry an obituary of Lionel Young, whom I remember as a prominent member of the Society when I joined during the early 1990s.

Meanwhile, Morris continues to beckon us on. It was recently reported (Guardian, 17 August 2009) that Chinese villagers had stormed a local factory which they believe has poisoned six hundred of their children with lead, a problem with which Morris was all too familiar.

A case of lead poisoning reported in the press this week is worth a little notice by workmen generally ... That man was killed by being compelled to work in a place where white lead was flying about, and that no precautions were taken to prevent him dying speedily. A shilling a week was the handsome sum given to the poor man thus murdered in compensation for his being killed ... An exaggerated example of the way in which the lives of the working people are played with. Under present conditions, almost the whole labour imposed by civilisations on the ‘lower classes’ is unwholesome; that is to say that people’s lives are shortened by it; and yet because we don’t see people’s throats cut before our eyes we think nothing of it (‘Notes on Passing events’, Commonweal, 23 October 1886; The William Morris Chronology, p. 170)

As we clearly see, globalisation, far from making us all stupendously rich, as continually promised by its advocates, has merely exported certain problems, in this case both pollution and poverty, elsewhere. To a scientist, this is something which, as simple thermodynamics, ought to be self-evident, but clearly it is not, even though, many years ago now, Barry Commoner explained it quite succinctly in the second of his laws of ecology – ‘Everything must go somewhere’.

The task does not become easier with the passage of the years, but Morris, thankfully, is an example from whom we can all draw strength.
Obituary: Lionel Young
1918 – 2009

Martin Crick

On 12 March 2006 I drove down to Dover in order to interview Lionel (Leo) Young as part of my research for a 50th anniversary history of the William Morris Society. I travelled with some trepidation, for in correspondence Lionel had made clear his opposition to any such history being written at this time. He feared that it would open up still recent wounds caused by the disputes over the future of Kelmscott House. Indeed I was warned by several past and current Committee members to expect some very forceful opinions. Moreover he firmly believed that any history of the Society should be dated from the formation of the Kelmscott Fellowship by May Morris and others in 1918, and not from 1955, in order to emphasise the links with Morris himself.

My fears were unfounded. Lionel and his partner Jenny welcomed me to their flat overlooking the sea on a beautifully sunny day, and after an excellent lunch Lionel and I spent several hours discussing his memories of the Society and his admiration for William Morris. Although still forthright in his opinion that the Committee had been wrong in its decisions concerning Kelmscott House, he clearly regretted the hostility which had developed. Occasionally too I caught a glimpse of the 'political' Lionel Young, Communist Party member and committed Socialist to the end. Lionel had spent considerable time preparing for my visit in order to assist my work. I came away with ten voluminous and meticulously organised files of correspondence, minutes and Society ephemera, which are a testament to the dedicated work Lionel did for the Society, and his considerable contribution to its development.

Lionel Young was born in London on 14 September 1918 at Endsleigh Gardens, Bloomsbury, the son of Walter James and Alice Mary Young. Walter was a member of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), and a conscientious objector during the First World War, imprisoned for his beliefs. He was also a Quaker and Lionel attended the Society of Friends boarding school at Safron Walden in Essex, before going to work in the City. He enlisted in the Royal Air Force on 20 May 1940 and, although he never talked about his war experiences, was
clearly a man of exceptional courage. He flew some thirty-two combat missions as a gunner and wireless operator in Wellington bombers, and was decorated for bravery.

Whilst stationed at Calais in 1945, he met his future wife Marcelle. They were married in 1950 and had four sons. After the war, Lionel found employment with British European Airways at Heathrow Airport, working in the Engineering Base as an Administration Officer. He was fluent in French and German and therefore also undertook technical and commercial translations for them. A work colleague told him of an advertisement for a part-time position with the William Morris Society, and in October 1964 he was appointed as General Secretary to the Society, working fifteen hours per week assisting the then Secretary Ronald Briggs, and the Treasurer Freeman Bass.

Where and when Lionel first became interested in William Morris is unclear. It is not unreasonable to suppose that his father, as an ILP member, would have been very familiar with Morris’s work, and that he introduced his son to Morris. Lionel did tell me that he read *News from Nowhere* as a schoolboy and that it was the most important book he ever read. When he took up the post with the Society he was not a member, but he joined shortly thereafter. His initial active involvement lasted until he resigned in April 1969, ostensibly because he was increasingly burdened with work in his full-time employment and because he moved house to a location further from the office at Kew.

There is no doubt, however, that he had had a somewhat fraught working relationship with Ronald Briggs. Briggs had run the Society almost single-handedly since 1956, and was a forceful and strong-willed character. Lionel, similarly strong-willed, complained of being lectured to and felt that his opinions and suggestions were ignored. Furthermore, Briggs expected the same dedication to the Society which he himself demonstrated, leaving Lionel to remonstrate that his wages didn’t even cover the mileage involved in carrying out his duties. ‘You may’, Lionel told Briggs on one occasion, ‘simply wish to replace me with someone who is perhaps less opinionated and long in the tooth.’

Lionel remained an ordinary member of the Society for the next ten years; momentous years for the Society. In 1970 it was bequeathed Kelmscott House, William Morris’s London residence. The House however was in disrepair, and a separate Trust was set up in order to administer it, ostensibly under the control of the Committee. The Trust established a William Morris Centre there in 1975, providing fellowships and bursaries for visiting scholars, but was under-capitalised from the outset, and a financial crisis ensued which eventually caused the Trust to lease the majority of the house, leaving the Society with premises in the basement. The resulting furore led to the resignation of Briggs and other long-serving members of the Committee, and a legal battle which failed to regain control of the House for the Society.
The Committee which took office in May 1980 found a Society in disarray and in considerable financial difficulties. It also found itself without a treasurer, and Lionel Young stepped into the breach the following month. He was to hold the post for the next eleven years. Shortly after his appointment he retired from full-time employment at BEA, and although he worked for them and other firms on a part-time basis, he was able to devote considerable time and effort to the Society’s affairs. He worked assiduously and successfully to stabilise its finances, and there is no doubt that the Society owes him a massive debt of gratitude for the way in which he reorganised the finances and then controlled them with prudence and sound administration. He also flew to New York in 1980 in order to review arrangements with the US Society, which was seeking a measure of independence, and he was able to institute procedures to the benefit of both parties.

Whilst Lionel’s accounting skills were invaluable, his experience of management and committee procedures also served the Committee well, and he was responsible for drafting a new constitution. In 1990 personal difficulties forced him to tender his resignation, but the Society was unable to find a replacement and he continued in post until the tragic death of his wife in August 1991 made it impossible for him to carry on. The Society recognised his contribution by electing him a vice-president in February 1992. For his part Lionel felt that he owed a great deal to the Society and its members, particularly for the fellowship which he had experienced. ‘Had I never experienced that fellowship and contact with like-minded friends the future would seem black indeed’, he said at the time of his resignation. Happily a very long-time friend, Jenny Griffin, met up with Lionel on an increasingly frequent basis, and they set up home in Dover, spending sixteen contented years together. He also took the time to study Italian, passing his GCSE at the age of sixty-five.

That sense of fellowship which Lionel had enjoyed whilst working for the Society undoubtedly encouraged him to return to play an active role in its affairs within two years of his resignation. He became editor of the Newsletter in June 1993, a post he filled with distinction until April 1997. In March 1995 he became a Trustee of Kelmscott House, but it was in this role, sadly, that a breach with the Society occurred. After the legal battles of the early 1980s, relations between the Kelmscott House Trust and the Committee of the William Morris Society had gradually improved. The Society still hoped to regain control of the House but a change in the law in 1993 gave tenants the right to renew the lease indefinitely. This left the Society with little hope of acquiring the house, but in March 1996 the then tenant, the playwright Christopher Hampton, decided to sell the lease, and he gave the Society ‘first refusal’.

This led to divisions in the Committee. The majority felt that even attempting to raise the required funds was impractical. Others, including Lionel, thought that the Society should make every effort to regain control of the house. When
the lease was eventually sold to new tenants the bone of contention then became the use to which the Society’s now considerable assets should be put. Lionel wanted this money to be ring-fenced for use in the future to buy back the lease. The majority however did not see this as either feasible or desirable, and they eventually won the day, dissolving the Kelmscott House Trust in 2002. Lionel was one of four Trustees who issued a pamphlet entitled *The Kelmscott House Trust thrice wronged*. He had a strong emotional attachment to Morris, and hence to Kelmscott House. ‘For us Morrisians’, he wrote, ‘Kelmscott House is not just a building, a piece of property … (we) treasure the House and want it to be used by the Society in the very long term.’ He became very hostile to the Committee and the dispute caused him to sever a number of long-term friendships. However his continued interest in and support for the Society’s activities was evident when I spoke to him. He had been a pillar of strength during some very difficult years for the Society, and when he resigned as treasurer in 1991 Ray Watkinson paid tribute to him as ‘A true Morris man’. This would have pleased Lionel more than anything.
‘The City Of Dreadful Delight’
William Morris in the East End of London

Rosemary Taylor

In December 1888, William Morris, designer, poet, artist and writer, and above all socialist, took strong exception to Henry James’s description of London. In a robust article, Morris attacked the American novelist:

Mr Henry James, the American novelist, has been writing an ingenious paper on the impression made by London on his feelings; but as a matter of course, his view of the monstrosity is taken from the standpoint of the superior middle-class person, who looks upon the working classes as a useful machine, and, having no experience of their life, has not the imagination enough to realise the fact that the said machine is composed of millions of men, women and children who are living in misery …

It is this from which is born the ‘dreadful delight’ on which clever but dull Mr James expatiates so ingeniously …

I should like a view of London from a quite different kind of man from the clever historian of the deadliest corruption of society, the laureate of the flirts, sneak and empty fools of which that society is most composed, and into whose hearts (?) he can see so clearly. I should like the impressions of London given by one who had been under its sharp toothed harrow …

But he should not be a man born and bred in the slums, not even ‘used’ to them, not a man born poor anywhere, but someone who once lived in a pleasant place with hope beside him. From him I should like a true tale of the City of Dreadful Delight.¹

The East End of London, the City of Dreadful Delight, was to be Morris’s political arena for six eventful years, as he formulated his socialist ideals and sought to impart them to working people. He travelled extensively around the country during these years, often taking in two and sometimes three meetings a day.² But he returned to the East End, making regular appearances at working-
men's clubs and in Victoria Park, lecturing and addressing the 'East Enders', as he liked to call them, always with the feeling that somehow he was not really getting his message of socialism across and deeply conscious of the great class divide which separated him from them.

The name of William Morris crops up frequently in accounts of the work of East End activists such as Annie Besant and Eleanor Marx, and of events such as Alfred Linnell's funeral (1887), the Match Girls' Strike (1888), and the London Dock Strike (1889). However, the local history enthusiast who seeks details of Morris's activities in the East End within published accounts of his life and work, meets with disappointing results. There is barely a passing mention, even in a recent, definitive work, and it was this which prompted my search for William Morris's East End connections. What I have gleaned, mainly from Morris's letters to friends and family, from his Socialist Diary, and from Commonweal ('Notes on News') is presented here, not as a critique of Morris and his work, but in celebration of the justified claim that 'William Morris was here in the East End'.

William Morris was born in 1834 at Walthamstow, then a suburban village on the edge of Epping Forest. It was, in Morris's own words, 'once a pleasant enough place, but now terribly cockniwed and choked up by the jerry-builder'. The modern postcode for Walthamstow (E17) places it within 'East London', although not, strictly speaking, the 'East End' of London.

As a commercial enterprise, Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., established ('the Firm', established in 1861) was eventually a great success, and as Morris and Co. (from 1875), continued to trade until 1939. But for Morris, its great failure lay in its inability to cater for anyone but the rich. 'I don't want art for a few, any more than education for a few or freedom for a few'. Gradually, his questioning of the nature of the relationship between art and society, led him into social action, and ultimately, to socialism.

Morris joined the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.), founded by Henry Mayers Hyndman in June 1881, on 13 January 1883. In a letter to the exiled Austrian socialist Andreas Scheu, dated 15 September 1883, he wrote: 'It must be understood that I always intended to join anybody who distinctly called themselves Socialists, so when last year I was invited to join the Democratic Federation by Mr Hyndman, I accepted the invitation, hoping that it would declare for Socialism.'

By June 1884, Morris had established the Hammersmith branch of the S.D.F, but Hyndman's autocratic manner and attitude was soon to alienate his fellow socialists, amongst them Eleanor Marx and her common-law husband Edward Aveling. Together with a few other like-minded socialists, they broke away to form their own group, the Socialist League. On 30 December 1884, Morris became editor of its weekly paper Commonweal, with Edward Aveling as sub-editor.
The Socialist League was soon actively spreading its message throughout the East End, and it was these activities which led to Morris's appearances, which continued intermittently for six eventful years. The League focused its activities on the East End at least partly because Morris believed that the huge mass of workers living in poverty had been crushed by the system into such a state of apathy and indifference that it was necessary for socialists to go amongst the people, rather than to expect the people to come to them. At first, Morris expressed his views in lectures given in working men's clubs. He read Karl Marx's writings and ‘suffered agonies of confusion of the brain’. He confessed, ‘...in my position of a well to do man, not suffering from the disabilities which oppress a working man at every step, I feel that I might never have been drawn into the practical side of the question if an ideal had not forced me to seek towards it’.

Commonwealth gives the dates and times of the many meetings held throughout the following year (1885). Whilst the headquarters of the League was located in Hammersmith, a major branch was established at the spacious Mile End Radical Club at 108 Bridge Street (now Hamlets Way), off Burdett Road, and a further branch opened at 110 White Horse Street, just off Cayley Street, Stepney. White Horse Street is now a lane running alongside the eastern boundary of St Dunstan's Churchyard, and the area has been cleared of all housing.

Weekly open air meetings were organised outside the Salmon and Ball public house in Cambridge Heath Road, Bethnal Green on Sunday mornings, and in Victoria Park, Bow, in the afternoons. The pub lies diagonally opposite St John's Church, at the junction of Bethnal Green Road and Cambridge Heath Road, and adjacent to Bethnal Green underground station. Volunteers distributed the four-page leaflet What Socialists Want written by Morris, and made house-to-house calls with lists of future meetings. Another popular spot for the League's open air meetings was Mile End Waste, which lay opposite Trinity Almshouses and Charrington's Great Assembly Hall. Here, the space between the road and the buildings which lined it, allowed for fairly large audiences.

One of the earliest references to Morris in the East End was a visit on 8 April 1884 to St Jude’s Church, Commercial Street, Whitechapel, where he gave a speech at the opening of the Fourth Annual Art Exhibition. The Vicar was Augustus Barnett, who had taken on St Jude’s in 1872, at the age of 28. With his wife Henrietta, Barnett set to work in the ‘worst parish in London’. He believed that the influence of intellectual and talented young men would have an uplifting effect on the minds and morals of the inhabitants of East End slums, and to this end he appealed for University undergraduates to spend some time working to improve the lot of their less fortunate brothers and sisters in and around Whitechapel.

One result of Barnett’s labour was the founding of the University Settlement, Toynbee Hall, named after Arnold Toynbee, a young, idealistic Oxford under-
Barnett organised the first art exhibition in 1881, with G.F. Watts pictures, and Morris fabrics. Other artists, such as Holman Hunt and Walter Crane, soon joined in this annual attempt to bring art to the masses. The success of the exhibitions, which also attracted the attention of prominent art lovers from the West End, brought a demand for larger premises. Therefore, in 1886 three additional rooms were added, which in their turn proved to be inadequate. Barnett campaigned vigorously for funds for suitable exhibition space, and turned to the public for contributions. Thus was laid the foundations for the now famous Whitechapel Art Gallery, built 1898–1901.

William Morris addressed meetings at the ‘Tee-To-Tum’, a coffee house at 166 Bethnal Green Road on two occasions in 1884, in January and in April. During the following year, he increased his forays, speaking in March at the Radical Club at 110 White Horse Street, Stepney and again in May. He wrote to Georgiana Burne-Jones of a meeting he had addressed on 27 May 1885.

On Sunday I went a-preaching Stepney way. … My visit intensely depressed me as these Eastwards visits always do; the mere stretch of houses, the vast mass of utter shabbiness and uneventfulness, sits upon one like a nightmare; of course what slums there are one doesn’t see. You would perhaps have smiled at my congregation; some 20 persons in a little room as dirty as convenient and stinking a good deal. It took the fire out of my fine periods, I can tell you; it is a great drawback that I can’t talk to them roughly and unaffectedly. Also I would like to know what amount of real feeling underlies their bombastic revolutionary talk.

He concludes with these melancholy words, ‘I don’t seem to have got at them yet – you see this great class gulf lies between us’. 10

Morris made his first appearance in Victoria Park, Bow on 26 July 1885. But it was via incidents in Dod Street, Limehouse, which attracted unwelcome police attention and landed Morris in court, that his role as a socialist and champion of the working class was given wider coverage in the media. Morris had become embroiled in the exploits of the Free Speech Vigilance Committee, formed with the S.D.F., the Socialist League and the Radical Union to defend their right to speak at what had become a traditional spot, the corner of Piggot Street and Dod Street at Limehouse. This densely populated factory area of East London was usually deserted and quiet on Sundays, and the open space afforded an ideal venue for open air meetings. Several prominent socialists addressed the crowds, including Edward Aveling, Eleanor Marx, and Lewis Lyons, the Jewish Tailors’ Trade Union leader.

On 20 September 1885, at the end of a meeting, the police launched a violent attack on the speakers, arresting and charging eight men, among them Jack Williams11 and Lewis Lyons. The hearing was set for Tuesday 22 September. Morris wrote to Jane, ‘I did not go either to the East End meeting or the Parks on Sunday:
but, as you will see by the papers, I felt bound to go to the police court today. My
adventure there is pretty well told by the Daily News and the Pall Mall I send
you’.  

At the Thames Police Court, Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx gave evidence
on the men’s behalf; nevertheless Lewis Lyons was sentenced to two months
imprisonment. Morris, as he mentions in his letter above, was amongst the pub-
lic in the court who cried ‘Shame’ when the sentence was passed. He immediately
found himself under attack, as the police turned their attentions on him, and
two hours later he was in Thames Police Court in front of the magistrate on the
charge of disorderly conduct. When the magistrate, Mr Saunders asked, ‘Who
are you?’ Morris replied, ‘I am an artist and a literary man, pretty well known, I
think, throughout Europe’. This reply evidently impressed Mr Saunders, who
dismissed the charges against Morris.  

The episode served only to strengthen the Committee’s resolve to defy the
law, and the next Sunday an estimated crowd of sixty thousand people turned
up in Dod Street in order to hear Aveling and Eleanor Marx, amongst others,
speak. So great was the gathering that it spilled over into East India Dock Road
and down West India Dock Road. This time the police kept away, on the orders
of the Home Secretary, who did not want an incident which could be used to the
advantage of the Government’s opponents during the run up to the elections,
which were being held in November of that year.  

Victoria Park was a popular spot for Sunday orators, and amongst them could
be seen the unmistakable figure of William Morris. On 26 July 1885, Tom Mann,
one of the leaders of the 1889 ‘Dockers’ Tanner’ Strike, saw Morris on what was
to be the first of several visits to the Park. He was being heartily applauded by his
audience of workers, but to Mann’s mind Morris looked ‘the picture of Bluff King
Hal’.  

Notwithstanding Mann’s reference to Morris’s regal appearance, the latter
was aware that he presented a somewhat di

erent pro
gle to the young working
lads who frequented the Park. In a letter to his daughter Jenny, dated 30th March
1887, Morris wrote:

Last Sunday it befell me to go to Victoria Park (beyond Bethnal Green) to a meet-
ing. Now I have mounted a cape or cloak grey in colour so that people doubt
whether I be a brigand or a parson; this seemed too picturesque for some ‘Arrys’
who were passing by and they sung out after me, Shakespeare – Yah!  

Morris was again in the Park on 11 October 1885, no doubt with the memories
of Dod Street fresh in his mind. There had been some dissension amongst the
socialists and radicals over the order of speakers at Limehouse, which was not
fully resolved. The dispute could be the reason Morris wrote to Scheu, a few days
later, on 16 October:

‘THE CITY OF DREADFUL DELIGHT’
It’s all right; I am to lecture on Sunday next. I suppose we shall try the Park again, and I will go if I am well enough; but I can’t get rid of my sciatica and now I have a cold to boot … I don’t know if you saw about Sunday’s Victoria Park meeting; I suppose it might be called a success; but after all as far as the League was concerned we were taken in; for ’twas a Federation meeting and there was I in a van with the whole gang – including Hyndman. 

Soon after, Morris fell ill with severe gout in both feet, and was bedridden for several weeks.

Morris made only one visit to the Park in 1886, on 8 August, after which he wrote to his daughter Jenny:

… and then away Eastward Ho to Victoria Park rather sulky at having to turn out so soon after dinner. Though Victoria Park is rather a pretty place with water (dirty though) and lots of trees. Had a good meeting there also spoke for nearly an hour altogether in a place made noisy by other meetings, also a band not far off. Whereby I was somewhat hoarse for our evening lecture which was Shaw’s, not mine, and very good.

Morris was a regular visitor to Victoria Park in 1887 and addressed the crowds there no fewer than five times, on 27 March, 21 May, 23 July, 21 August and 11 September. On Wednesday 30 March, he noted in his diary:

On Sunday (27 March) I gave my ‘Monopoly’ [a set speech, with the full title of ‘Monopoly: or How Labour is Robbed’, which he delivered on several occasions] at the Borough of Hackney Club, which was one of the first workmen’s clubs founded, if not the first; it is a big club numbering 1,600 members: a dirty wretched place enough giving a sad idea of the artisans’ standard of comfort: the meeting was a full one, and I suppose I must say attentive; but the coming and going all the time, the pie-boy and the pot-boy was rather trying to my nerves: the audience was civil and inclined to agree, but I couldn’t flatter myself that they mostly understood me, simple as the lecture was. This was a morning lecture over about two o’clock: I went afterwards with poor Vandenhout to the Hackney Branch as I had to speak at the ‘free-speech demonstration’ in Victoria Park. Dined on the way off three pence worth of shrimps that I bought in a shop, and ate with bread and butter and ginger beer in a coffee shop, not as dirty as it looked from outside.

I went afterwards to the Demonstration on Free Speech in Victoria Park: as a demonstration it was a failure, I suppose enough fuss hadn’t been made about it: but it was a good Sunday afternoon gathering the crowd very quiet and attentive 300 or 400 I should suppose.

The Free Speech Demonstration was held at 3.30 pm in Victoria Park, under the auspices of the Hackney Branch Socialist League, in order to celebrate the release
from prison of James Allman, one of their members. 
In August 1887 Morris again wrote to Georgiana Burne-Jones:

It is a beautiful bright Autumn morning here, as fresh as daisies; and I am not over-inclined for my morning preachment at Walham Green but go I must, as also to Victoria Park in the afternoon. I had a sort of dastardly hope that it might rain. Mind you, I don't pretend to say that I don't like it in some way or other, when I am on my legs. I fear I am an inveterate word-spinner and not good for much else. 20

However, his enthusiasm for speaking in the Park now began to diminish and he came to dread such occasions. He was in the Park in September 1887, but did not return there until May the following year.

The activities of the Socialists and the Radicals were being viewed with increasing misgivings by the government. The Victorian ruling class believed that they were confronted with the most serious danger to public order since the Chartist uprising of 1848. The Times had praised the execution of the Chicago anarchists, and spoke enviously of the United States where the police carried revolvers and used them without mercy at the first sign of resistance.

The culmination of the Socialists’ struggle for the right to free speech came on ‘Bloody Sunday’, 13 November 1887, when three people died and over two hundred others were injured, some seriously. Three hundred demonstrators were arrested, amongst them two Members of Parliament who later received prison sentences for their part in the event. Eleanor Marx, who was in the thick of action at Parliament Street, said: ‘I have never seen anything like the brutality of the police; the Germans and Austrians who know what police brutality can be, said the same to me.’ 21

Briefly, the events which led up to those shameful days in November and December 1887 were as follows: The Metropolitan Federation of Radical Clubs had planned a series of demonstrations and marches in order to protest against Government policies towards Ireland, and the continual harassment of open air speakers by the police. Marches were broken up amidst great violence by the police, marchers were refused entry into Trafalgar Square, and on 8 November, public meetings in the Square were banned. 22

William Morris, speaking on behalf of the Socialist League, responded to the ban by proposing the setting up of a Law and Liberty League in order to defend the right of free speech. On Sunday 13 November thousands of people converged on Trafalgar Square, 23 which was guarded by four thousand policemen standing
in ranks four deep, and three hundred mounted police with batons. Behind the
police were three hundred soldiers with fixed bayonets, and in support was a bat-
talion of Life Guards. William Morris and Annie Besant addressed the marchers
on the need to resist all attempts to gag free speech. They marched along with
George Bernard Shaw, and were lucky to escape being attacked, but Cunning-
hame Graham, MP for North West Lanark, John Burns MP, and Hyndman, were
beaten up. Burns and Graham, though bloodied and cut, were later sentenced
to six weeks imprisonment.

A total of three hundred were arrested that day and one hundred and twenty
six charged and sentenced to anything from a fortnight to six months hard labour.
Seven men went before the Surrey or Middlesex Assizes; all received sentences,
one being sentenced to a year’s imprisonment. One man received five years penal
servitude at the Central Criminal Court. In all one hundred and sixty people
were sent to gaol. Of the over two hundred people who were injured, some seri-
ously, three later died of their injuries.

The following Sunday the police were out again in force, charging their horses
at the crowds which had collected in Trafalgar Square. A Mr W. Green of 17
Fairfield Row, Bow, who was Secretary of the Bow Branch of the Amalgamated
Society of Carpenters and Joiners, wrote:

People were being knocked about recklessly. Those that ran in front or were com-
pelled to run in front were met by this line of policemen who struck out right and
left. I saw one knocked down insensible from a full butt punch in the face … I
assisted him to a cab.24

Alfred Linnell, a law clerk, should not have been walking about the streets on
that cold and foggy Sunday afternoon, but he had nothing better to do. He was
a lonely and rather unhappy man. His wife had died, and as he could not look
after his three children, two boys and a girl, whilst working in London, he had
sent them to relatives. They in turn sent the unhappy children to the workhouse
school in Mitcham. On Sunday, 13 November, Linnell took a walk up the road
in order to see what was going on in Trafalgar Square.

In Northumberland Avenue he suddenly found himself being charged by
a police horse, which trampled upon him, smashing his thigh bone. Linnell
was left writhing on the ground until some of the bystanders lifted him gently
and carried him to Charing Cross Hospital. After two weeks of agony, he died
on 2 December. Neither his children nor his two sisters and their families were
informed of his injury, and by the time they found him, it was too late.

The Law and Liberty League found in Linnell a martyr for their cause. They
took over all the arrangements for his funeral, which was held on Sunday 18
December; they were supervised by Annie Besant. The cortege began from Great
Windmill Street and was headed by a scarlet banner, with a brass band playing
Handel’s ‘Dead March’ from Saul. Fifty wand bearers, veterans of the Chartist agitation, walked ahead of the open hearse, which carried the words emblazoned on a shield ‘Killed in Trafalgar Square’. Over the coffin flew the red flag of the Socialists, the green flag of the Irish, and the red, yellow and green flag of the Radicals. The coffin itself was draped in black and carried a brass plate with the inscription:

Alfred Linnell, aged forty-one. Died December 2 of injuries inflicted by the police in Trafalgar Square, November 20, 1887.

Annie Besant paced slowly on the left of the hearse, with W.T. Stead, Herbert Burrows and Cunninghame Graham. On the right walked William Morris, Robert Darling of the Irish Land League, Frank Scott of the Salvation Army, and James Seddon. Following in a coach with Linnell’s family were Dr Richard Pankhurst and his wife Emmeline, and John Burns MP. Eleanor Marx rode in one of the other coaches. The Rev. Stewart Headlam, the controversial clergyman from St Matthew’s Church, Bethnal Green, officiated. According to Annie Besant, the steps of St Paul’s Cathedral were black with spectators: ‘The chimney pot hats stayed on, but all others came off as the coffin went by’.

It was estimated by some sources that more than 100,000 people followed the cortege. The route took the mourners through Coventry Street and Cranbourne Street, and then they were diverted to Long Acre, Covent Garden and the Strand, up Fleet Street and on to Aldgate, Whitechapel Road and Mile End Road to the City of London and Tower Hamlets Cemetery. It was half past four, raining and dark by the time they reached the entrance, to discover that the main gate was guarded by a hundred policemen; the procession had to squeeze through the narrow path, now called Hamlets Way, and enter from a side gate.

Linnell’s grave is situated in Square No. 73 close to the entrance on the right hand side of the cemetery. The plot was paid for by the Law and Liberty League. The walls of the grave were decorated with holly and evergreens. By the aid of a lantern and in an increasing downpour, the Reverend Stewart Headlam read the burial service. William Morris spoke of Linnell’s relative obscurity in life. He said:

Our friend who lies here has had a hard life, and met with a hard death; and if society had been differently constituted his life might have been a delightful one. We are engaged in a most holy war, trying to prevent our rulers making this great town of London nothing more than a prison. I cannot help thinking that the immense procession in which we have walked this day will have the effect of teaching a great lesson.

By matchlight, the choir sang ‘A Death Song’ composed by Morris and set to music by Malcolm Lawson. Copies of the song were printed in an eight page
pamphlet with a cover design by Walter Crane and sold all along the route for the benefit of Linnell’s orphans.

What cometh here from west to east awending?  
And who are these, the marchers stern and slow?  
We bear the message that the rich are sending  
Aback to those who bade them wake and know.  
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,  
But one and all if they would dusk the day.

We asked for them a life of toilsome earning,  
They bade us bide their leisure for our bread,  
We craved to speak to tell our woeful learning,  
We come back speechless, bearing back our dead.  
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,  
But one and all if they would dusk the day.

They will not learn; they have no ears to hearken.  
They turn their faces from the eyes of fate;  
Their gay-lit halls shut out the skies that darken.  
But lo! this dead man knocking at the gate.  
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,  
But one and all if they would dusk the day.

Here lies the sign that we shall break our prison;  
Amidst the storm he won a prisoner’s rest;  
But in the cloudy dawn the sun arisen  
Brings us our day of work to win the best.  
Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,  
But one and all if they would dusk the day.  

The press attacked Morris for his role in the funeral, but as a result of the publicity he became a recognised champion of the workers all over England.  

On 17 June 1888, Morris was once again seen in Victoria Park when he appeared on the platform with Mrs Taylor, and other members of the Socialist League. He was one of the star attractions in the Park, and the authorities began to fear a recurrence of the Trafalgar Square incidents. The East End was now a hotbed of political turmoil, as unions struggled to assert their right to speak for the workers, alongside the Anarchists, the Socialist League and the Social Democratic Federation, all of which had set up branches in various parts of Tower Hamlets, all with the noble purpose of bringing political and social awareness to the masses.

18
The Metropolitan Board of Works, which controlled the Park, secured the consent of the Home Secretary to a by-law forbidding collections to be made in the Park. Since this was a popular way of augmenting funds, the Socialist League took the initiative and called a protest meeting on 10 June at 3.30 pm. The main speaker was Annie Besant, who was greeted enthusiastically by a crowd of around two thousand. After her address she made a collection to ensure that her name was taken down. However, the by-law was not enforced.

On 15 June 1888, at a meeting of the Fabian Society, Mrs Clementina Black lectured on her researches into female labour. During the discussion H.H. Champion revealed that Bryant and May’s Match Company paid out enormous dividends to their shareholders, whilst denying their workers a fair wage. Annie Besant and Herbert Burrows went to Bow in order to interview some of the girls. They were horrified by their findings: A girl of sixteen earning four shillings a week, living with her sister who earned good money, about eight or nine shillings a week. Out of the girl’s earnings, two shillings went towards the rent of one room and she lived on bread and butter and tea, for breakfast and dinner.

Annie Besant immediately published an article in The Link on 23 June, on ‘White Slavery in London’. Three days later, she and Burrows stood at the factory gates handing out leaflets to the girls as they came out. Bryant and May’s threatened Annie with libel action, and demanded that the girls sign a statement refuting the allegations made in the article. They refused to do so, and three girls were sacked. On 5 July, the whole factory downed tools, and 1200 girls from the wood matchmaking department and three hundred from the box making department, marched out on strike.

This was not the first time the girls had struck. In 1886 they had attempted a strike over a wage cut, as well as unhealthy working conditions. During the recession of the 1880s, the company had cut its labour costs; any opposition or infringement of the strict work rules, resulted in fines which reduced their already minimal take home pay. The girls also lived in dread of developing ‘phossy jaw’, or necrosis of the jawbone, a debilitating disease caused by ingestion of yellow phosphorus, which caused intense pain and disfigurement, and sometimes even death. The illness reduced the rate of production, and sick girls who could not fulfil their quota would be sacked.

Annie Besant took charge of strike proceedings. On Sunday 8 July, she organised a meeting at Mile End Waste, where Herbert Burrows, Stewart Headlam and Clementina Black addressed the crowds. She also organised a delegation of twelve girls to the House of Commons, and continued to press their cause as a
national issue in letters to the newspapers, whilst organising collections to support the girls during their struggle.

The Strike, and the proceedings of the House of Lords Sweating Committee, prompted a joint radical anti-sweating demonstration on Sunday 22 July in Hyde Park, in which both the S.D.F. and the Socialist League groups from East London participated. The march began at Beckton Road, Canning Town, traversed East India Dock Road, then turned right on to Burdett Road where it was met by the Limehouse branch of the S.D.F. It then moved on to Mile End Waste where it was met by the Bethnal Green Socialist League, the London Tailors and Machinists Society, and the Berner Street International Working Men’s Club.

The march continued picking up groups on its way to Hyde Park where platforms were arranged around the park from where speakers such as John Burns, George Bernard Shaw, Herbert Burrows and Annie Besant addressed the crowd. No. 6 platform was occupied by the Socialist League, and William Morris moved the resolution that:

This meeting, while protesting against the extortion practised under what is known as the sweating system, points out that this is a necessary result of production for profit, and must continue until that is put end to, and it therefore calls upon all workers to combine in order to bring about the Social Revolution which will place the means of production and exchange in the hands of the producers.\(^\text{30}\)

Bryant and May, greatly embarrassed by this unwelcome publicity, caved in and ceded to the strikers’ demands. The strike has gone down in history as the first successful strike by women, organised by a woman.

On 18th November, a huge demonstration was organised by the Socialist League in Victoria Park, in commemoration of the first anniversary of the execution of the Chicago Martyrs. Lucy Parsons, the widow of one of the anarchists, addressed the crowd. The conservative *East London Observer* (24 November 1888) described the proceedings:

Two extemporised platforms in the shape of excursion vans were placed in position round which immense crowds soon congregated. The chief attraction at the one was Mrs Lucy Parsons, the wife of one of the Chicago anarchists who met his death at the hands of the law. She was a dark – almost mulatto – looking woman, attired in black, and her utterances, displaying a limited knowledge of grammar, were listened to with the deepest attention. At the other platform the cynosures of all eyes were Mr William Morris and Mr Cunninghame Graham. From both these platforms such arrant nonsense was cast forth about the ‘down-trodden working men’ and ‘tools of the wealthy’ which, of course, was cheered to the echo.\(^\text{31}\)

The above extract leaves us in no doubt as to where the editor’s sympathies
lay. (Incidentally, Morris describes Mrs Parsons as being of American Indian appearance, with speech that was pure Yankee!) This apart, the above newspaper account is at variance with the following letter Morris wrote to Jenny on 17 November:

I am going to Nottingham tonight to lecture tomorrow and have got to finish my lecture before I go, so I have not much time to write a long screed.

So, despite the newspaper’s assertions, Morris was not in Victoria Park on 18 November.

The Berner Street International Working Men’s Club, which joined in the Hyde Park rally, was already well known to William Morris. In 1884, a Society of Jewish Socialists had set up an International Workers Educational Club and its founders became patrons of the radical Yiddish newspaper Der Arbeiter Fraint. In February 1885, the club took over premises at 40, Berner Street (now Henriques Street), described as a narrow slum thoroughfare off Commercial Road, where they now called themselves the International Workingmen’s Educational Association. No. 40 was an old wooden two-storey building; the club room could hold about two hundred people and contained a stage. The predominantly Jewish club was open to Socialist League branches, and Morris lectured there to mixed ethnic groups. On Tuesday 27 March 1888, his play, The Tables Turned, or Nupkins Awakened was performed there, as part of a benefit concert in aid of the Yiddish radical newspaper Der Arbeiter Fraint.

Morris addressed the Berner Street Club on 2nd February 1886, 22 September 1888, and again on 8 June 1890. On 17 June his Tables Turned was repeated to a crowded house at the Princes Square Club, after which recitations and songs both in English and German, as well as dancing, continued to a late hour. The Socialist League was a great deal more sympathetic to its alien comrades than the S.D.F.

On 9 April 1889, Morris was again at Commercial Street, this time delivering a lecture illustrated by lantern-slides on ‘Gothic Architecture’, at a meeting sponsored by the Guild and School of Handicraft, in the lecture room of Toynbee Hall for students of the University Settlements scheme. The Guild and School of Handicraft had been set up at Toynbee Hall by C. R. Ashbee, an ardent admirer of Morris, and one of the pioneers of the Arts and Crafts Movement in England. He was later to buy Morris’s printing press, when it was put up for sale after the latter’s death.

Edward Thompson makes the point that, despite Morris’s earnestness in trying to fill the role of the active agitator and propagandist, he often felt that his reputation as a poet and artist-designer hindered his progress. However, his wealthy middle-class background provided an even greater divide. It would be true to say he did not really understand the people he most wanted to reach. The
working classes had hitherto been viewed from a distance, but the socialist in him now wanted to reach out to the workers who would form the foundation of the Socialist Party. But his forays into the East End only served to underline the intellectual and spiritual deprivation of the worker and this knowledge filled him with a sense of shame: ‘a sense of shame in one’s own better luck not possible to express – that the conditions under which they live and work make it difficult for them even to conceive the sort of life that a man should live.’

On 8 June 1890, the fifth anniversary of the Berner Street Club, the hall was colourfully decorated and illuminated and packed with workers in their holiday attire accompanied by their wives and children. At half past five, after tea was over, William Morris, in his capacity of Chairman, gave the signal for the speeches to begin. He opened the meeting with a brief but informative speech, praising the club for its endless dedication, and observing that English comrades could take an example from it. Jewish immigrants had not come to England for fun, but were driven here by despotism and discrimination, with the tragic experience of leaving their homeland and arriving here with the hope of finding a quieter and humane life. Instead they found the terrible sweating system. New troubles began for them, and they sank into further depths of despair, until the International Working Men’s Club brought renewed hope to the hearts of Jewish workers – the message of Socialism. Morris’s words, we gather, were well received.

Later, an interval collection was announced by Morris, following which May, his daughter, and Sergius Stepniak went around with the plates, whilst the choir of the Hammersmith branch of the Socialist League sang Morris’s lyric: ‘Down among the Dead Men’. The sum realised was £2 6s 5d. Tables were then withdrawn, and dancing commenced.

The brutal treatment of Jews and the pogroms in Russia brought a fresh stream of refugees to London. Commonweal and Der Arbeter Fraint announced a meeting on 1 November 1890, organised by the Club in the Great Assembly Hall at Mile End, in order to protest against the persecution of Jewish comrades in Russia. An impressive line-up of speakers was announced, but on the Thursday before the meeting, Charringtons withdrew their permission for use of the hall, probably on the instigation of Samuel Montagu and Herman Adler. The demonstration took place instead outside on the Waste, and attracted a massive audience. Along with William Morris were Eleanor Marx, Edward Aveling and Cunninghame Graham. This was to be Morris’s last known appearance in the East End.

One of the highlights of the Socialists’ calendar was the excursion to Epping Forest, the vicinity of Morris’s birthplace. The outing was organised by the Socialist League, and attended by various groups, but it is not clear whether Morris actually attended these excursions. Besides singing, revelry, songs in different
languages, dances and games, there were speeches, and a great deal of literature was sold. There were also a large number of police both mounted and on foot, waiting for an opportunity to perform their duty. One of the constables tried to coax a young member of the League into selling him a ticket for refreshments so that he could make an arrest for illegal trading.41

The above events describe only those occasions on which William Morris was known to have addressed the public or participated in meetings in the East End of London. Commonweal regularly listed dates and events organised by the Socialist League, and it is possible that Morris attended some of these occasions, but was not mentioned by name.

Although we know, for instance, that in the first performance of The Tables Turned, or Nupkins Awakened, Morris himself took the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury, it is not clear from the announcements listing the dates of performances by The Commonweal Company at 40 Berner Street, advertised in Commonweal, for instance on 28 January, 4 February, 14 March and 27 March 1888, whether he continued to take this role in some or any subsequent performances.42

By 1890, the Socialist League had fallen victim to internal dissensions. Morris and others left, forming the Hammersmith Socialist Society from the Hammersmith branch of the League. From that year onwards, his forays into the East End ceased. He was becoming increasingly unwell, and his newly established Kelmscott Press occupied much of his attention. However, his socialist fervour never ceased, despite his failing health.

When William Morris died on 3 October 1896, his family doctor said of him ‘he died a victim to his enthusiasm for spreading the principles of Socialism’.43 The East End of London can say with justifiable pride that they were privileged to have shared in that enthusiasm.

**CHRONOLOGY OF WILLIAM MORRIS’S APPEARANCES IN THE EAST END**

**NOTES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 January 1884</td>
<td>166 Bethnal Green Road, Tee-To-Tum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 April 1884</td>
<td>St Jude’s Church, Commercial Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 April 1884</td>
<td>166 Bethnal Green Road, Tee-To-Tum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 October 1884</td>
<td>Limehouse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9 November 1884  13 Redman\'s Road Mile End
11 January 1885  Hoxton Academy Schools, Hoxton
29 March 1885  110 White Horse Street, Stepney Socialist League
24 April 1885  Academy Schools, Hoxton
24 May 1885  110 White Horse Street, Stepney Socialist League
26 July 1885  Victoria Park
8 August 1885  Stratford Branch SL
16 August 1885  Exchange Coffee House, Pitfield Street, Hoxton
1 September 1885  Swaby\'s Coffee House, 103 Mile End Road, near
22 September 1885  Victoria Park
11 October 1885  Stepney (before magistrate
24 January 1886  Hackney Branch Rooms, 23 Audrey Street,
11 July 1886  Hackney Road
2 February 1886  International Workingmen\'s Education Club, 40
5 June 1886  Stratford Branch SL
8 August 1886  Victoria Park
24 August 1886  Mile End Branch Socialist League, 108 Bridge
13 October 1886  Congregational Schools, Swanscombe St, Barking
10 November 1886  Broadway, London Fields, Hackney
6 March 1887  Hoxton Branch SL, 2 Crondel Street
13 March 1887  Hackney Branch Rooms, 23 Audrey Street, Hackney
27 March 1887  Borough of Hackney Club, Haggerston
27 March 1887  Victoria Park
24 April 1887  Morley Coffee Tavern Lecture Hall, Mare Street,
21 May 1887  Hackney Road
21 June 1887  Victoria Park
12 June 1887  Hackney Branch Rooms, 23 Audrey Street, Hackney
3 July 1887  Broadway, London Fields, Hackney
23 July 1887  Victoria Park
21 August 1887  Victoria Park
21 August 1887  Globe Coffee House, High Street, Hoxton
‘THE CITY OF DREADFUL DELIGHT’

11 September 1887  Victoria Park
25 September 1887  Hoxton Church
27 September 1887  Mile End Waste
18 December 1887  Bow Cemetery, Southern Grove (now Tower Hamlets Cemetery)
27 March 1888  Napkins Awakened performed at International Workingmen’s Education Club, 40 Berner Street. Morris did not take part, as he was in Scotland at the time.
17 April 1888  Mile End Socialist Hall, 95 Boston Street, Hackney
17 April 1888  Workingmen’s Radical Club, 108 Bridge Street, Burdett Road
16 June 1888  International Club, 23 Princes Square, Cable Street
17 June 1888  Victoria Park, Morris and Mrs Taylor
30 June 1888  Epping Forest Picnic
22 September 1888  International Workingmen’s Education Club, 40 Berner Street
9 April 1889  Toynbee Hall
27 June 1889  New Labour Club, 5 Victoria Park Square, Bethnal Green
8 June 1890  International Workingmen’s Education Club, 40 Berner Street
1 November 1890  Mile End Waste


21. Kapp II, p. 228. Accounts of Bloody Sunday may also be found in Thompson, pp. 488–91, and in MacCarthy, pp. 567–70.


23. Kapp II, p. 226

24. Kapp II, p. 236.

26
'THE CITY OF DREADFUL DELIGHT'

25. Kapp II, p. 240 attributes an estimate of 120,000 to 'some journalists'.
26. Morris’s speech is given in Thompson, pp. 494–5, and in MacCarthy, pp. 572–3.
28. MacCarthy asserts that from this time Morris became Socialism’s ‘grand old man’. (p. 573)
30. Taylor (p. 210) mentions this meeting, but makes no reference to Morris, and records that it was the ‘match girls’ who voted for a resolution calling for the formation of the Matchmakers’ Union. Salmon, Journalism (p. 201), following LeMire (p. 273), records that ‘Morris gave an open-air speech at an anti-sweating demonstration sponsored by various socialist bodies in Hyde Park’. Morris wrote about the victory of the ‘match-girls’ over ‘the blameless firm of Bryant and May’ in Commonweal, 28 July 1888 (Salmon, Journalism, pp. 438–9).
35. Salmon, Journalism, pp. 158, 205–6, and 228 confirms these as scheduled dates, but suggests that Morris did not attend the second event as he was at Kelmscott Manor.
37. Thompson, p. 434.
38. LeMire, p. 284; Salmon, Chronology, p. 228.
40. LeMire, p. 284; Salmon, Chronology, p. 233.
41. ‘I have not seen the place now for many years except once, when we Leaguers went a-pleasuring to High Beech’; James Redmond, ed, News from Nowhere, or an epoch of rest. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970, Chapter III, p. 13. Salmon, Chronology, p. 150 also states: 19 July 1885: Morris gave an open-air speech on the occasion of the ‘Revolutionists Excursion’ to Epping Forest . . . sponsored by the International Club of London.
42. Pamela Bracken Wiens, ‘The Reviews Are In: Reclaiming the Success of


*Author’s note: This article is dedicated to the late Mary Cable, long serving member of the East London History Society, who introduced me to the William Morris Society.*

*The editor would like to thank Peter Faulkner for his extensive help in preparing this article for publication.*
News from Nowhere as Séance

Fiction

Tony Pinkney

It is a familiar characteristic of utopia as a genre that we meet the traveller to the place before we encounter the new society itself. Thomas More bumps into Raphael Hythloday in Antwerp, and only subsequently hears about the latter's adventures on the island of Utopia; Julian West introduces himself to us in Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward, and then proceeds to narrate his adventures in the transfigured Boston of the rest of the book; William Guest returns to Hammersmith after a Socialist League meeting, and next day wakes up in the new post-revolutionary world of Morris's Nowhere.

Having met such characters, we instantly bond with them and accept their narrative perspectives. We respond positively to all that is energetic or colourful about the utopian narrator – More's Raphael and Morris's Guest are particularly memorable instances – and become involved in whatever problems or perplexities they undergo. Because this identification takes place so early, our interest, once the travellers have actually arrived in utopia, remains locked within it, confined within the categories of the individual subject. We need first of all to know how this new society impacts upon these chosen individuals, how it excites, baffles, disturbs and transforms them. We inhabit not just the emotional reactions of the travellers to utopia (which can be very intense indeed, as with the nervous breakdown which Julian West undergoes during his early days in the new Boston), but also the intellectual decoding operations by which they strive to make sense of it – their attempts to explain to themselves their own arrival there and their efforts to grasp the strange new social customs and structures they see around them.

All this makes for good reading, but it entails something of a constitutive contradiction in the genre itself. Utopia, which aims like no other literary genre to give us a glimpse of a genuinely collective and cooperative political future, seems narratively bound by the device of the individual subject as it seeks to do this. Form seems to run athwart content here, as if utopia can transcend the bad old society semantically but not syntactically. The vision is collective but not the literary means that render it, and what I aim to do in this essay is to defamiliarise
this situation, to think matters the other way round, to consider the utopian traveller from the viewpoint of the new society, not the latter from the bemused and incredulous viewpoint of the visitor.

If we can find a means of turning utopias round 180º in this fashion, a new set of questions comes into focus. Why does the new society receive a visitor? Why does it need one? Why these particular visitors? What do they actively contribute to, rather than passively receive, from the new world? Is there some lurking deficiency within the apparently perfect society which somehow requires that contribution? If so, in what way are those societies, at the end of each book, different – and presumably better – for their having been there? We are certainly in the realm of political paradox here too. For how is it, after all, that the representative of the bad old society can somehow make the good new one (which we initially took to be perfect) better? Can it be, if such intervention from the past is needed, that utopia was not in fact quite so utopian after all, that it was more of a self-problematising ‘critical utopia’, in Tom Moylan’s useful term? In the conventional reading of the genre from the perspective of the individual narrator, the utopian travellers helpfully mediate the brave but basking new world to a readership still caught up in the categories of the old one; they modestly serve utopia, giving it currency beyond its own shores. In the perspective I wish to work towards, which begins from the collective new society, not from the traveller, the latter’s very presence in the new world in the first place is unsettling. It suggests that all is not quite well, that there are inadequacies here which need addressing; the traveller as it were brushes utopia troublingly against the grain as well as learning from it and helping propound it.

A GENERIC HYPOTHESIS

How, then, do we arrive at such a reversal of the utopian reading experience, how loosen the grip of such charismatic narrators as More’s Raphael and Morris’s Guest on our imaginations? This seems to me the place at which the generic hypothesis of ‘séance fiction’ comes into play. The term was first mooted by Patrick Parrinder in a fine paper delivered at the 1990 centenary celebration of the serial publication of News from Nowhere; and I shall endeavour to develop it beyond Parrinder’s purposes in that particular essay. Rather than generalise it out in relation to utopias at large, I shall stick closely in what follows to News from Nowhere itself. My hypothesis can be quite baldly stated: in a moment of political need, the inhabitants of Morris’s Nowhere have convened a séance at the Hammersmith Guest House in order to summon the spirits of the powerful dead, and the image which flashes up before them at this moment of danger (to borrow Walter Benjamin’s phrasing) is none other than William Guest himself.
On the surface level of the text, naturally, Dick, Bob, Boffin and Annie are as baffled to see Guest as he is to meet them; but, as I have already said, I am trying to remain faithful to the underlying collective necessities of the new society, not the individual narrative perspectives of its inhabitants. My hermeneutic wager is that personal puzzlement at that level does not rule out the notion of a deeper collective summoning.

Even so, to call News from Nowhere a work of ‘séance fiction’ may seem to override too brusquely the genial, sunlit secularism of the text itself. I therefore want to evoke briefly some relevant contexts which might strengthen this generic hypothesis for us. First, there was a strong interest in séances and spiritualism in Morris’s own personal and political circles. Georgiana Burne-Jones records mysterious table-turning episodes in her girlhood: ‘Our removal to London put an end to these séances, but none of us ever understood the things we saw at them.’

Fiona MacCarthy writes: ‘The occult was a bond between Janey and Rossetti, who used to go to séances together. Janey had a definitely spiritualist tendency, giving vivid accounts of ghost activity at Kelmscott: mysterious carriages being driven to the house’. And on at least one occasion Morris himself attended a séance, even if the experience does not seem to have been a great success. Burne-Jones recalled that ‘Once I went with Mr Morris to a séance at a house where we dined first with the medium, which I always thought was a mistake.’

John C. Kenworthy claimed in 1897 to have once ‘asked Morris his opinion of the so-called “psychic phenomena,” upon which “spiritualism” rests. “I once had a dream,” he [Morris] said, “that spiritualism was true, and it was the worst dream of my life.”’

But in News from Nowhere, I shall suggest, spiritualism is true and this is fortunate indeed for the Nowherians.

Second, there was a general affinity between spiritualism and political radicalism across the nineteenth century. As Russell and Clare Goldfarb put it in their Spiritualism and Nineteenth-Century Letters, which anticipated so much later scholarly work in this area: ‘Robert Owen, Horace Grealey, Albert Brisbane, and Margaret Fuller were among those interested in both the theories of Fourier, the French socialist, and spiritualism. Brisbane went to séances with Andrew Jackson Davies, and Robert Owen’s son, Robert Dale, published books on his belief in spiritualism. Socialist communities attracted spiritualists and spiritualist communities welcomed socialists’. If political activists could frequent séances, so too, third, and remarkably, could séances be convened for explicitly political rather than personal purposes. The Goldfarbs refer us to an extraordinary ‘séance held at the White House on 23 April 1863, when the party included the Lincolns, the Messrs. Welles, Stanton, and a medium, Charles E. Shockle … the spirit spoke with Washington, Lafayette, Franklin, Wilberforce, and Napoleon, all of whom expressed different ideas on the conduct of the war.’ It is a political séance of this kind which I shall, in effect, take News from Nowhere to be.
Moreover, since *News from Nowhere* is a Marxist utopia, we should recall, fourth, the structural affinities between Marxism and the darker literary genres. For as Chris Baldick has finely demonstrated in his *In Frankenstein’s Shadow*, Marxist writing is haunted from its inception by a dark underbelly of Gothic imagery. In Marx’s own works, Baldick remarks, ‘some of the most gruesomely archaic echoes of fairy-tale, legend, myth, and folklore crop up in the wholly unexpected environment of the modern factory system, stock exchange, and parliamentary chamber: ghosts, vampires, ghouls, werewolves, alchemists, and reanimated corpses continue to haunt the bourgeois world, for all its sober and sceptical virtues’.7

Fifth, a generic shift in utopias in the nineteenth century seems, almost of itself, to put spiritualism and séances on the agenda. Raphael Hythloday visits a utopia contemporary with himself; he travels spatially not temporally. But once utopia is projected into the future as the result of political transformation, as it is in Bellamy and Morris, the narrator becomes a time traveller, rematerialising in a distant future which postdates his or her own death. Since this is not technologically inspired time travel, à la H.G. Wells, the resources of ‘para-science’ must be drawn upon to generate a plausible narrative of temporal displacement. Bellamy’s Julian West, for instance, is mesmerised into a sleep so deep that it lasts one hundred and thirteen years. Thus even a utopia as relentlessly rationalistic as *Looking Backward* finds itself drawn to the dubious margins of science, evincing a fascination with mesmerism comparable to Matthew Arnold’s ‘The Scholar Gipsy’ or Robert Browning’s ‘Mr Sludge, the Medium’. It may even be that Bellamy’s century-long mesmerised sleep leaves its trace on *News from Nowhere* itself, for Guest awakes ‘in a hazy and half-awake condition, as if I had slept for a long, long while, and could not shake off the weight of slumber’.8

**WILLIAM GUEST AS GHOST**

Time travel in Morris is either the flimsiest of wish-fulfilments – Guest yearns to see the new society and then obligingly wakes up in it – or, if we adopt the defamiliarising perspective I am recommending here, it is the result of a collective albeit unconscious séance by the Nowherians assembled in Hammersmith Guest House. Let us try this reading experiment. We must at once revalue our interpretation of the book’s opening pages. To identify with Guest is to take the Socialist League meeting and underground train journey home as the realist norm; to begin from the collective experience of the new society, however, is to reverse this hierarchy. We must take Hammersmith Guest House as our realist norm, and see the first chapter as some indeterminate spiritualist limbo inhabited by the restless...
ghost of William Guest.

Our memories of that opening chapter are indeed, I would imagine, of empirical irrefutability, of the ‘hot room and the stinking railway carriage’ (p. 4); how indeed, one might wonder, could the text be more compellingly substantive or generate more of Roland Barthes’s *effet du réel* (‘reality effect’) than *that*? And yet there are interesting slippages at work here which already begin to unsettle and even dematerialise the drab realities of the political meeting and the oppressive journey home. The question of narrative viewpoint is germane: an anonymous ‘friend’ (never further specified) narrating the experiences of another ‘friend, a man whom he knows very well indeed’, and eventually deciding to recount them in the first person, ‘since I understand the feelings and desires of the comrade of whom I am telling better than anyone else in the world does’. (p. 5) Are we dealing with one narrator or two here? Is Morris playing a teasing game with his readers, or is some more unsettling kind of character doubling going on, as it does later in *Nowhere* itself, when Guest finds Old Hammond’s face ‘strangely familiar’, as if he had seen it before in a looking-glass (p. 53), or when Henry Morsom turns out to be ‘another edition’ of Old Hammond? Bernard Sharratt has written well of the ‘peculiarly ambivalent’ response of the reader to the opening page of the text, of the ‘pattern of oscillations’ which thereafter never quite settles back down.9

This narrative unsettling continues, in both minor and major ways. Country and city merge unexpectedly in the midnight riverside scene, and banal urban detail begins to deliquesce: ‘as for the ugly bridge below, he did not notice it or think of it, except when for a moment … it struck him that he missed the row of lights down stream’. (p. 4) Well, is the bridge there or not? Has some utopian refashioning of the nineteenth-century river already set in, ahead of Guest’s ‘official’ awakening in the new society, rubbing out the metallic ugliness of the suspension bridge if not quite yet replacing it with its transfigured version ‘out of an illuminated manuscript’? (p. 8) Or was the urban scene in fact never as massively material as it appeared in the first place, serving more as an Eliotic ‘objective correlative’ for Guest’s disturbed mental state rather than as an immutable historical backdrop? The journey home on the underground is relevant here too. If on the face of it nothing could appear more compellingly real than the unpleasing sights, sounds and smells of this trip, we need only recall T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets* to realise how quickly, in this context, the empirical can metamorphose into the symbolical or mythical. For Eliot, the underground railway is a Dante-esque underworld, inhabited by the spirits of those who, never having been truly alive in the first place, could never truly die thereafter. And in Morris, too, such metaphoric over-writing is busily at work, as the empirically observed ‘carriage of the underground railway’ mutates eerily into a ‘vapour-bath of hurried and discontented humanity’ (p. 3) which emits the terrifying, Sartrean message that *l’enfer c’est les autres.*
If the empirical actualities of the London scene waver and oscillate in these opening pages, so too do Guest’s behaviour and emotions. The man who initially takes no part whatsoever in the League’s discussion (why, one wonders?) subsequently enters it with extraordinary violence and ‘finished by roaring out very loud, and damning all the rest for fools’. (p. 3) The man who ‘stewed discontentedly’ on the train home as he mentally catalogues all the arguments he had failed to find in the debate itself achieves a well-nigh epiphanic moment of calm on the riverbank only to plunge into a traumatic spiritual crisis as he awakes in the middle of the night in:

that curiously wide-awake condition which sometimes surprises even good sleepers; a condition under which we feel all our wits preternaturally sharpened, while all the miserable muddles we have ever got into, all the disgraces and losses of our lives, will insist on thrusting themselves forward for the consideration of those sharpened wits (pp. 4–5).

This restless and destructive self-analysis perhaps points towards the kind of catastrophic breakdown which threatens Julian West during his early days in Bellamy’s new Boston. If Nowhere represents an ‘epoch of rest’, what William Guest needs rest from is not just the competitive hurry of the nineteenth century but also from the extraordinary emotional turbulence which inhabits him, for he is certainly, to borrow a fine phrase from Four Quartets, a ‘spirit unappeased and peregrine’. In the new world (which is where I believe we already are in this first chapter) the spirit of Guest haunts his old venues, restlessly replays old failed debates, is caught in an excruciating Freudian repetition-compulsion, both personally and politically. What, one already wonders, could liberate this tormented soul from his wheel of fire?

Meantime, on the same site, a gathering of utopians is taking place: Dick, Bob the weaver, Annie, Boffin the Golden Dustman. The utopians have built their new Guest House on the site of the lecture-room of the Hammersmith socialists in official commemoration of their courageous political forbears, but do they also sense the ‘unofficial’ energies which inhabit this space, the fierce longings – ‘If I could but see it! if I could but see it!’ (p. 4) – which cling to it as tenaciously in the utopian present as they did two centuries ago? As Guest later crosses Trafalgar Square he abruptly experiences ‘a phantasmagoria of another day’ (p. 41), and it may be some related phantasmal sense of his own lingering historical presence that has prompted the gathering at the Guest House. For if ‘the ghost of London still assert[s] itself as a centre’ (pp. 33–34), so too may the ghost of Guest, centripetally assembling the young utopians for a purpose they are not able to formulate consciously to themselves.

It is noteworthy, certainly, that historians predominate in this gathering: Bob is working on his volume about the ‘peaceable and private’ history of the nine-
teenth century, Boffin writes reactionary novels (Dick’s epithet), and even Annie has found a ‘pretty old book’ to read and wants to press on with it. In a society that is, by and large, devoted to the sensuous pleasures of the immediate present, an unusual number of devotees of the past have come together; or, as Patrick Parrinder memorably puts it, News from Nowhere ‘transports us to the future so that we can take part in a rolling symposium of the Society of Antiquaries’.10 True, they all have their ‘official’ reasons to be in the Guest House; Bob, for instance, will take on Dick’s ferrying, both to toughen himself up physically and to free Dick to help out with the up-river hay-making. But below the threshold of utopian consciousness is it not arguably the raging spiritual presence of Guest which compels them here? And they in turn, once a certain ‘critical mass’ of antiquarianism has been reached, allow him the crucial breakthrough from purgatorial longing and repetition to renewed actuality in the Nowherian present.

Religion in any formal sense may be absent from the new society, but the latter clearly still preserves its sacred sites where we would expect powerful spirits to be present and occasionally to emerge;11 and it is my wager in this essay that one of these is Hammersmith Guest House. Later in the book, Clara evinces a spiritualistic sensitivity worthy of any nineteenth-century medium when she says to Old Hammond: ‘You have been talking of past miseries to the guest, and have been living in past unhappy times, and it is in the air all round us, and makes us feel as if we were longing for something that we cannot have’ (p. 136). ‘In the air all round us’: this surely is where Guest is, in all his pain and isolation, in the opening chapter of the book. That chapter, I propose, is not chronologically prior to the Hammersmith Guest House gathering – either the night before, as Guest experiences it, or some two centuries ago, as the calendar would have it. Its relationship to the utopians in the Guest House is more ‘spatial’ than temporal; it exists in another dimension of anguished being, not a day or a week or a century before. At the level of their collective unconscious, the utopians are Heathcliff aching for the lost spirit of Emily Brontë’s Cathy to return; and Guest in chapter one is that spirit clamouring at Lockwood’s casement window for admission. The distance is small enough between his ‘If I could only see a day of it!’ and her ‘Let me in – let me in!’ In the white space between chapters one and two the casement opens, the threshold becomes permeable, and Guest descends and enters.

NEEDS IN NOWHERE

If, as I have suggested, we approach utopia from the collective perspective of the new society rather than from the wondering individualist viewpoint of the visitor, then we will begin to ask what need in the new world has conjured this figure from the past to its side. If it is his violently unassuaged longing which makes
him still available to be invoked in the first place, there must also be something unassuaged, something deficient, in utopia itself which requires his presence and ministrations – which is to say that utopia may not be quite so utopian after all. What, then, is this gap on Nowhere’s side which William Guest might fill? What has he to offer it, rather than it him? Raphael Hythloday arrives with a whole cargo of potential gifts for the inhabitants of Thomas More’s Utopia, from which he then offers them a set of classical texts, some vague information about printing and paper-making, and detailed knowledge of Christianity. What gifts, we now need to ask ourselves, does Guest bring to his new world, and why does it need them? In Morris’s late romance The Wood beyond the World, the sinister Lady tells Golden Walter that he must ‘earn thy guesting’ (emphasis added);¹² and so too must William Guest in Nowhere.

We will not find much to help us with these questions in Chapter II, ‘A Morning Bath’, which is a wholesale reversion to the individualist perspective. Wonder and astonishment are its keynotes; and Guest is the visitor who is startled and delighted, like Adam at the moment of his creation, by all he sees. More promising is Chapter III, where Guest enters the gathering at the Guest House. The traffic is now two-way: not just him questioning utopia, but it interrogating him and articulating its own needs in the process. As we piece together the various local needs which Guest serves in Nowhere we shall witness the emergence of a major structural flaw in the new society, which it will then be the visitor’s crucial function to stitch back together if he can.

Let us begin with the first set of needs which Guest encounters in Nowhere: the research requirements of Bob and Boffin. If the former tramples over the protocols of neighbourly manners in his eagerness to extract information from the nineteenth-century visitor, the latter approaches Guest looking ‘as happy as if he has just got a new toy’. (p. 21) The antiquarians have assembled in a historically charged site, and the potencies of that site have been released; their research needs are met as the Ghost of Socialism Past incarnates himself before them. Guest offers both Bob and Boffin a unique source of firsthand historical information, crucial to them as social historian and historical novelist respectively. What they want is not a chronicle of official events, such as might be provided by James’s Social Democratic History (referred to later as Guest and Dick traverse Trafalgar Square), but rather the intangibilities of history as lived immediately upon the pulses, a sense of the texture of life below the threshold of official historicity. Bob is writing not about the publicly observable political conflicts of the late nineteenth century, but rather about its ‘peaceable and private history’ (p. 20), a zone of experience not formally documented and liable to fall into oblivion with the passing of each generation.

We need to resist Dick’s brisk dismissals of Bob and Boffin’s historical researches as regressive bookwormishness. Bob, at least, is a social historian engaged on a
democratic mission of recovery; his mode of research, that is to say, is fully consonant with the values of his socialist society. The natural history of Epping Forest and the kind of cultural pleasures and economic benefits it gave its nineteenth-century users are perfectly appropriate topics of historical inquiry, even if they are necessarily less dramatic than the compelling narrative of civil war which occupies the middle chapters of *News from Nowhere*; and Bob is a sufficiently competent historian to recognise a uniquely qualified witness the minute he comes across him. Old Hammond later remarks that the younger inhabitants of Nowhere have little time for his tales of the past, but this does not seem to be borne out by the opening chapters in the Guest House. Keen historians have assembled on a site built precisely for commemorative purposes, and the ‘new toy’ they unconsciously summon into being is a revenant from the past who can appease like no other their cravings for historical information. Even much later in the book Guest still seems to be serving ‘research’ functions in Nowhere. At Bisham, he, Dick and Clara encounter a young man who ‘had stayed at home to get on with some literary work … he kept on pressing us to stay over and over again’. (p. 163) Though the nature of the episode is not fully clarified, it is at least possible that this young writer is as keen to lemon-squeeze Guest dry of relevant historical information as Bob and Boffin were.

However, the historical needs of Bob the weaver and Boffin the dustman are not in fact satisfied in Hammersmith Guest House, not through any reluctance on Guest’s part, but because they encounter a formidable counterforce in the person of Dick Hammond, who kicks Bob in warning underneath the table, scolds him for his bad manners in tenaciously questioning Guest, and unceremoniously dismisses Boffin before the latter has managed to utter even a phrase or two to the visitor who excites him so much. Why then such peremptory interventions on Dick’s part here – including, in that kick, the one act of violence between utopians which we actually witness (as opposed to just being told about)? Guest himself later has a brush with this less genial side of Dick’s character when the latter refuses to let him change his old clothes for new ones: ‘I saw I had got across some ineradicable prejudice, and that it wouldn’t do to quarrel with my new friend.’ (p. 35).

Dick’s heavy-handed interventions in the Guest House are, at one level, a simple plot function, the injection of a principle of narrative mobility into the tale. Without the prohibition he effectively issues here, *News from Nowhere* might have ended where it began, around a table in the Hammersmith Guest House, after interminable discussions in which Bob and Boffin drained Guest dry of nineteenth-century information while he, in turn, elicited from them essentially the same story of the new society that Old Hammond gives him later. At the most basic narrative level of the text, Dick has to stop this from happening; he must transplant Guest physically to Bloomsbury so that the utopia becomes a practical
survey of the new society en route, not just a discursive exposition of it in situ.

But Dick is a less disinterested servant of the generic demands of Morris's utopia than this account might suggest. For in taking Guest to Bloomsbury, he is also self-interestedly serving purposes of his own, as his gathering 'thoughtfulness' on the journey across London later suggests. Old Hammond may contrast the playing and kissing of the utopians with his own tales of the past, but the kissing, in Dick's case, is not going too well at present. His separation with Clara seems firmly entrenched and he, unlike her, has not found another sexual partner. Moreover, the tale of sexual tragedy he tells Guest as they wend their way across London - 'a mishap down by us, that in the end cost the lives of two men and a woman.' (p. 35) - suggests that all may not be well with sexual relations across Nowhere at large, despite the genial everyday comradeship between men and women we have witnessed at the Hammersmith Guest House. For Dick to transport Guest to Bloomsbury is to salvage his own sex life from stasis as well as the text, bringing him and Clara opportune together in the British Museum more rapidly than Old Hammond himself could have contrived. Dick's insistence on Guest's needs, on the authoritative exposition Old Hammond can offer the visitor to utopia, neatly dovetails with his own.

One of Guest's minor functions in this new society is thus to bring the estranged lovers back together, and it may be some obscure inkling of the catalytic role he is to play here which prompts Dick to attach himself so firmly to the new arrival on that June morning in his offer to 'be the showman of our new world to you.' (p. 11) In the conversations between Guest and Old Hammond before lunch there is a surprising amount of friction, considering that the two characters are on the same side politically; they are constantly needling each other, making move and counter-move in what looks more like a war of nerves than an equable exposition of the principles of the post-revolutionary society. I am inclined to relate these tensions to the claims that Old Hammond later implicitly makes about the reunion of Dick and Clara. When the two lovers reappear at lunchtime Hammond 'looked on them like an artist who has just painted a picture nearly as well as he thought he could when he began it.' (p. 99)

Such complacency indicates that, in the old man's view, he himself has played the crucial role in bringing Dick and Clara back together, and this certainly appears to have been his long-term game plan; he has lodged Clara and her children with his daughter precisely in order to keep her on hand for an eventual reunion with his young kinsman. On the other hand, at the very last moment, the very day before Old Hammond finally summoned Dick to Clara, Dick has turned up under his own steam, through Guest's good offices. In terms of being the catalyst of sexual reunion, William Guest has clearly pipped his elderly interlocutor at the post, somewhat tarnishing the final triumph of his matchmaking strategems. In the political conversation which follows, Guest and Old Ham-
mond respond to each other ‘crustily’, ‘peevishly’, ‘somewhat nettled’ and so on, with an emotional intensity that seems excessive in relation to the overt political subject matter under discussion. It therefore seems to me that we should take their competing claims in relation to Dick and Clara, the war of catalytic precedence they are playing out here, as funding the emotional undercurrents of the subsequent political debates between them.

At any rate, by the time Guest returns from Bloomsbury with the reunited partners in tow, his sexual function in Nowhere has come very close to the surface of consciousness for all concerned. Clara’s decision on the ride back to Hammersmith that Guest should at last acquire new clothes might be interpreted as a gesture of gratitude on her part for his role in bringing her and Dick back together, and a similar acknowledgement is perhaps made more generally later that day, for ‘we had quite a little feast that evening, partly in my honour, and partly, I suspect, though nothing was said about it, in honour of Dick and Clara coming together again.’ (p. 140) It is ironic indeed that it is the loveless Guest, who had returned to an apparently empty house in Hammersmith, who can bring the estranged utopian lovers back together again. Yet it may be the very intensity of his frustrated sexual desire, displaced into utopian political longing in his famous cry ‘If I could but see a day of it!’, which propels him into the twenty-first century in the first place or, rather, keeps him raging restlessly for two centuries in a limbo spirit world from which he can be summoned to meet the future society’s needs as required. The sexual reunion of Dick and Clara is, for the ancient Old Hammond, a largely cerebral affair, a matter of complex moves and counter-moves which enhances an egoistic sense of mastery on his part – ‘So I managed it all.’ (p. 56) But for the desperately yearning Guest, who himself finds Clara an attractive woman, the stakes are altogether more personal, even if he is not consciously aware of them at this point in the text. If he can be the catalyst of restored sexual happiness for Dick and Clara, then this may be a token of the possibility of later fulfilment for himself.

STRUCTURAL FISSURE: SENSES VERSUS INTELLECT

In the opening chapters of Nowhere, then, Guest serves both historical and sexual functions. Such are the purposes for which, in this séance-orientated reading, the new society has summoned him into being, prompted by some unerring impulse from its collective unconscious. But, crucially, such functions are incompatible: Dick needed to kill off the historical exchanges with Bob and Boffin in order to remove Guest to the British Museum so that he might catalyse the reunion of the estranged lovers. It is not only a principle of narrative mobility which interrupts the Guest House conversations; significant thematic issues are also coming into
play. For if there is a tension or incompatibility between Guest’s historical and sexual functions, between the intellectual and bodily gifts he can bestow upon the new society, then that tension seems in fact to inhere deeply within Nowhere itself, in the opening chapters of the book. Guest himself, wrong though he is about so much else in the new world, instantly spots the telling contrast between Dick’s formidable physique and Bob the weaver’s slighter and paler frame; and Dick at once develops this, contrasting his rugged outdoor work to Bob’s sedentary weaving and mathematics. In principle, these might simply be alternate life-styles within utopia, peaceably co-existing on the spectrum of enhanced human possibilities that socialism makes possible. But evidently this is not the case. Bob certainly recognises the animus behind Dick’s attack on his intellectual pursuits: ‘it is clear to me that this is a kind of revenge for the stupidity of that day [the nineteenth century], which despised everybody who could use his hands. But, Dick, old fellow, Ne quid nimis! Don’t overdo it!’ (p. 20)

We should not see such ‘overdoing’ as a mere character foible on Dick’s part. It is rather, I would suggest, the index of a profound structural split within Nowhere itself. A society which has officially overcome all the dichotomies of capitalist culture, so that in its opening pages Dick’s ‘work’ on the river is indistinguishable from play, is yet deeply fissured within itself. The initial visual contrast and accompanying emotional tensions between the hyper-athletic Dick (who enjoys nothing more than an hour or two’s work with a pickaxe to pass the time of day) and his pallid and spindly friend Bob are further developed in the contrast of the younger and older Hammonds at the British Museum. The formidable young athlete is counterposed to his ancient cerebral relative: on the one hand, a figure who seems to concentrate all the physical vitality of the utopian world in his own person, and, on the other, one who is now so ancient and immobile that he seems to be more of an artefact within the museum than an active custodian of it.

In short, Nowhere is structurally split down the middle between body without mind (Dick) and mind without body (Old Hammond); a ‘sundering flood’ of its own flows through it, to borrow a powerful metaphor from Morris’s late romances. It is true that one can produce some countervailing evidence to this account; Dick after all impresses Guest at one point as being a ‘man, who read Shakespeare and had not forgotten the Middle Ages.’ (p. 49). But such complexities operate at the level of the individual character and do not, I believe, affect the overall deep-structural account of Nowhere I am offering here. This structural split is then powerfully thematised by Old Hammond himself in a passage I have already alluded to and which can now be given its full weight in announcing the incompatibility of sensuousness and intellect, the present and the past, in this society: ‘though it is pleasant enough to see these youngsters moving about and playing together so seriously, as if the whole world depended on their kisses (as indeed it does somewhat), yet I don’t think my tales of the past interest them
much. The last harvest, the last baby, the last knot of carving in the market place,
is history enough for them.’ (p. 54) One wonders just how dismissive the tone of
those last two words actually is.

It is this structural fissure in the utopian society which it is Guest’s mission
to heal, which will be the task whereby he ‘earns his guesting’. He is, in Walter
Benjamin’s terms, ‘a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger’. Historical
materialism, Benjamin argues in his ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History’,
‘wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to men single-
gled out by history at a moment of danger’.14 Benjamin’s phrasing here usefully
opens our eyes to a sense of crisis or emergency in News from Nowhere which the
sunlit neighbourliness of much of Morris’s text can all too easily obscure from us. But there are enough expressions of unease and apprehension in Nowhere,
sufficient old grumblers and Obstinate Refusers, to make us grasp that all is not
quite well; and the acts of sexual violence ‘off-stage’ narrated by Dick and Walter
Allen give a sharper focus to this pervasive discontent. Later in the book, Ellen, as
if she were one of the foreseeing old women of Morris’s late romances, is acutely
aware of future dangers which may lie in store for the Nowherians, for ‘we may
be bitten with some impulse towards change, and many things may seem too
wonderful for us to resist, too exciting not to catch at, if we do not know that they
are but phases of what has been before; and withal ruinous, deceitful, and sordid.’
(p. 194) The text boldly extrapolates here from the piecemeal dissatisfactions we
have witnessed earlier; occasional dyspeptic comments about the lack of colour
or competition in contemporary life now seem, followed through to their logical
conclusion, to threaten the very basis of the socialist culture of Nowhere.

In thus highlighting the underlying political emergency to which Guest’s
arrival in the future is a response, Walter Benjamin’s sixth thesis illumines Mor-
ris’s utopia, but Benjamin’s own model of the recurrence of the past here, based
as it is on Marcel Proust’s mémoire involontaire, is too passive for our purposes.
Guest doesn’t just involuntarily ‘flash up’, as Proustian memories famously do at
the taste of a madeleine. He is, rather, in my séance-orientated reading of the text,
actively summoned into being, conjured back into substance and activity from
the purgatorial limbo he has hitherto been fruitlessly inhabiting. Consciously,
the utopians may be surprised to see him; unconsciously, he is their invited guest,
for if they are slowly sliding into crisis, they at least retain enough collective wis-
dom to know how to deal with the emergency too. They cannot, it appears, deal
with it head on, but they have found an agent from the past who can, in mediated
form, handle it for them. We need to recall that remarkable séance at the White
House in April 1863, in which the spirits of Washington, Lafayette, Wilberforce
and Napoleon were summoned in order to advise President Lincoln on the con-
duct of the American Civil War. It is a less dramatic but still pervasive crisis which
afflicts Nowhere, and which prompts it to summon its tutelary spirit, William
Guest. We are used to the convention in contemporary science fiction whereby a society in danger may, through time travel or some mechanism of cryogenic suspension, call back a figure from the past in order to solve its problems or fight its battles for it; R.A. Lafferty’s novel Past Master (1968), in which the citizens of a future utopia transport Sir Thomas More from the past to deal with their difficulties, affords a memorable instance. In Morris’s low-tech utopia, however, séance replaces science.

THE REMAKING OF ELLEN

How, then, does Guest exercise his political efficacy in utopia? The answer, as Patrick Parrinder has indicated, lies in the river journey which occupies the final third of the text, and more particularly in Guest’s relationship with Ellen. Parrinder gives us a trenchant account of Guest’s ‘political function in Nowhere’ in these chapters: ‘His function, in her eyes, is to halt any further erosion of the collective memory, since those ignorant of history are condemned to repeat it’. This is broadly correct, but I don’t think it captures as precisely as it might Guest’s salvational function in relation to Nowhere’s crisis, nor does it allow for the full complexities of his relations with Ellen. If Nowhere calls Guest into being, so too does he, in turn, summon Ellen into existence; for prior to his advent she is locked in a state of restless emotional limbo analogous to his own back in nineteenth-century London. As she confesses to Guest, ‘I must tell you … I have often troubled men’s minds disastrously. That is one reason why I was living alone with my father in the cottage at Runnymede.’ (p. 188) ‘Disastrously’ is a strong word indeed by Nowherian standards, and takes on a sombre colouring in the light of the jealous sexual violence and manslaughter we have heard of elsewhere in the book. ‘Often’ is still more disturbing. No doubt anyone might be caught up in a sexual tragedy once or twice in a lifetime, but the recurrence of such situations surely suggests some culpability on Ellen’s part, as if she relishes the piquancy of such complications when they do happen and perhaps even actively seeks them out. Certainly this Ellen is more a symptom of Nowhere’s crisis than any kind of possible solution to it. She has at least moved a step beyond such sexual delinquency by immuring herself at Runnymede, though the old complications to some extent still recur, since she is required to deal with ‘two or three young men who have taken a special liking to me, and all of whom I cannot please at once.’ (p. 184), and Clara certainly still sees her as a potential sexual threat. But life at Runnymede merely puts Ellen’s life and energies into suspension; it offers no redemptive new direction for them. Internal exile at Runnymede has the air partly of a moral choice of Ellen’s own and partly of a collective sending of her to Coventry on Nowhere’s side; and her grandfather accordingly has an ambivalent...
status too, being at once kindly companion in her brave decision, and something of a prison warder whose job it is to make sure that society’s edicts are enforced.

Guest’s initial task in relation to Ellen is simply to galvanise her back into action, to restore her to herself, to give her the energy to break out of the enclosure at Runnymede and to begin a process of social reintegration. I have suggested elsewhere that these chapters of Nowhere are best read in the narratological light of Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale*: Guest then metamorphoses into the Proppian quest-hero who battles with the villain (grandfather) in order to liberate the princess (Ellen) and who then flees upriver with her. ¹⁶ I shall not repeat the detail of that extended analysis here, but only wish to emphasise that what Nowhere has done for Guest he in his turn has done for Ellen, summoning her out of limbo into substance. Guest is no longer just the passive object of a séance, but also its active subject.

As Guest and Ellen travel up the Thames together a mutual process of transformation occurs. The physical exercise of the rowing imparts to Guest a vigour he has not felt before; his feelings towards Ellen deepen towards sexual desire; and he begins to relax and settle more fully into the utopian world he has entered. No longer marked out as an interloper by his Victorian clothing, Guest seems well on the way to becoming a full participant in the new society, as does Julian West in *Looking Backward*. Ellen’s being also dilates. A physical sensuousness which seemed in relative stasis at Runnymede now develops to the full, though in the direction of a benign celebration of natural beauty rather than the messy sexual entanglements of her earlier career. Yet at the same time she becomes more fully aware, through Guest, of the necessity of history, of modes of extended intellectual consciousness beyond the immediately sensuous. Not that she has been wholly unhistorical before his advent, having had lessons from Old Hammond himself and apparently belonging to some sort of group – ‘those of us who look into these things’ (p. 192) – which has disagreed as deeply over the prehistory of the Revolution as the Socialist League meeting at the beginning of the book did over its Morrow. But in Guest’s company Ellen’s grasp of the political importance of historical consciousness to her culture takes a qualitative leap forwards.

Ellen’s enigmatic and vivid energies are highlighted by the text from the moment she first appears in its pages, but under the tutelage of Guest on the upper Thames they at last take on more positive form, marking her out as the utopian resolution of that Eliotic ‘dissociation of sensibility’ which earlier characterised Nowhere. As sensuously energetic as Dick Hammond, Ellen is simultaneously as historically alert as his elderly relative in the British Museum. She thus fuses senses and intellect, potentially reintegrating her culture (and, in the process, herself back into it) in the feast at Kelmscott at the close of the book. Ellen is what I am inclined to term a ‘second generation’ utopian, a figure of altogether more stature and complexity than Bob, Dick, Boffin or Clara; she is testimony that this
'epoch of rest' has after all not stopped growing, and that it may well now have the inner resources it needs to deal with the crisis we have seen creeping up on it. Ellen, one might argue, is the objective absence from the initial Hammersmith Guest House gathering which leads to the necessity of Guest's summoning in the first instance. As she takes her rightful place in the Kelmscott community at the close of the book, his work in Nowhere, which is the active moulding of the fully adequate utopian personality in Ellen, is now done; he has indeed handsomely 'earned' his guesting.

THE EXORCISM OF WILLIAM GUEST

So far this is a benign account of the Guest-Ellen relationship. There are, however, emotional undercurrents in these chapters of the book which are more unsettling, more eerily in keeping with a séance-orientated reading. It is not just that Guest soberly educates Ellen into a new maturity beyond her earlier sexual proclivities. He certainly does this, but in the process she projects into him, with extreme intensity, that propensity for sexual disturbance which had caused her to be incarcerated in Runnymede in the first place. She disturbs his mind disastrously, in ways Old Hammond had shrewdly predicted much earlier in the book: ‘the inexplicable desire that comes on a man of riper years to be the all-in-all to some one woman … the older man caught in a trap.’ (pp. 57–8) Guest's developing but impossible love for Ellen has to be seen, I think, as a fierce exorcism of her capacity for sexual disaster into him. He takes the full brunt of it from her, but perhaps also absorbs it more widely from the society at large, internalising within his own longing self that ‘evil and feverish element’ round about him which had characterised the earlier sexual tragedies of the book and from which he does not seem able to escape. (p. 166)

Once this sexual poison has been fully exorcised out of Ellen and into Guest, she and her culture have no further use for him. He fades rapidly from her consciousness, and the gathering at Kelmscott church reverses the good work of the Hammersmith Guest House, banishing back to the past the Benjaminian image which the utopians had called up. As Guest’s anguish in these pages attests, he returns not only to the class torment of the nineteenth century, but also now bears within himself the sexual torment of the twenty-first – which can thereafter, one trusts, resume more placid relationships between men and women. Guest’s initial role in catalysing the reunion of Dick and Clara was only, it now appears, a scratching of the surface of the sexual problem in Nowhere. More fundamentally, and at great cost to himself, he has had also to exorcise the sexual disturbance which had separated them (and others) in the first place. No wonder, then, that the first extended discussion between Guest and Old Hammond is of love and
sexuality (rather than, as in more classical utopias, of politics or economics), since so much of his task in Nowhere will reside precisely in this troubled dimension of human being.

The episodes on the upper Thames are thus a dark exorcism as well as a genial maturation, and I think one can develop this account further. The Nowherians need ultimately to exorcise not just Ellen's sexual disturbingness but Guest himself. As I have noted, Guest gains a new confidence on the river; ‘I was, as it were, really new-born.’ (p. 164) He becomes physically stronger, even physically boastful, and ‘taking the sculls, set to work to show off a little.’ (p. 182) Such increased muscular vigour prompts a sharp initial sexual jealousy of Dick's relationship with Ellen, though this rapidly dissipates. Guest’s more vigorous will in this stretch of the text even, I suggest, has its impact on Ellen. It binds her to him sufficiently for her to make the offer to Guest to live with her and her grandfather when they move to the north. I suspect we must conclude that, in making this proposal, Ellen's own mind has been disturbed disastrously; it would be a hopeless dead end both for her and for her culture. As the utopian resolution of the dissociation of sensibility which afflicts her society, Ellen clearly has henceforth a major role to play within it. She can at present only conceive that role in terms of a fecund maternity – ‘I shall have children; perhaps before the end a good many’ (p. 194) – but we should probably view this suggestion as a biological metaphor for the wider social influence which she will hereafter transformatively exert in Nowhere.

But this wider social role, whatever it is (and we would need a sequel to News from Nowhere to fully demonstrate it to us), is clearly going to be stopped in its tracks if she immures herself with Guest and grandfather in an exile ‘by the Roman wall in Cumberland’ even more thorough than that which she had endured at Runnymede. The fact that Guest’s desire for her drives her to make this proposal to him must, from the viewpoint of Nowhere’s political future, be seen as a fundamental misdirection on Ellen’s part. Guest has shifted from being a benign force who can soak up and expunge her disturbance into a more forceful and malign one who disturbs her himself and knocks her socially off track. The ‘tool’ that has been summoned by séance from the past is on the point of becoming a dangerously self-willed implement, as with the sorcerer’s apprentice’s broom in the Goethe poem. Ellen might now truthfully say of Guest what Dick light-heartedly does just after their swim at Kelmscott: ‘I should have thought it was your doing, Guest; that you had thrown a kind of evil charm over me.’ (p. 207)

How, then, does one exorcise the spirit one has summoned? William Guest, thoroughly settled in the new society and gaining strength by the hour, is not likely to go willingly; he is, indeed, likely to prove the most alarmingly Obstinate Refuser of them all. The means of exorcism in the final chapters of the book turn out to be surprisingly conventional. Critics have often noted the absence
of formal religion in Morris’s utopia, and though this is true enough, we should note that religious architecture, at least, makes an unexpected comeback in the later chapters of *News from Nowhere*. Travelling up the Thames, Guest and his companions pass the long church at Dorchester and the remains of Godstow nunnery, and note the delicate spire of an ancient building as they halt for lunch on the upper reaches of the Thames. The culmination of this vein of imagery is, of course, Kelmscott church itself, where the closing feast of the book is held. This church turns out to be an anti-Hammersmith Guest House, as it were: the latter was a politically sacred site which allowed Guest’s troubled spirit to be called into being; the former is a traditionally sacred locale whose religious associations enable him to be packed firmly off again to the past.

Fortified by this auratic site, the Nowherians decisively reassert themselves against Guest. Dick, whose physical prowess has been partly challenged by Guest’s renewed vigour, ‘was looking round the company with an air of proprietorship in them, I thought’, thereby sloughing off whatever claims Guest thought he had on Ellen. (p. 209) Ellen herself ‘did seem to recognise me for an instant [but] she shook her head with a mournful look’ (p. 209); and one can emphasise, as the book encourages us to, the plaintive regret here, or, alternatively, as I should prefer, stress the decisive act of will – ‘shook her head’ – which issues a veto to Guest powerful enough to propel him two hundred years back into the past. Integrated fully into Nowhere at last, Ellen has understood that this is her future destiny in her society; the objective gap at the Hammersmith gathering which set the whole text into motion in the first place has been closed at last. She may be grateful to Guest for breaking her out of the enclosure of Runnymede, but she has now grasped that the proposed sojourn with him in the north is a baneful idea.

In a text preoccupied with bridges, Guest has been a bridge back to normality for Ellen; and the Great Clearing which has been directed at so much of the capitalist past in Nowhere is now brought forcefully to bear on him. His banishment in Kelmscott church, then, constitutes an anti-séance, as the group around the table implicitly uses the traditional Christian associations of the place in order to exorcise his now troubling presence. The time has at last come, as Guest himself dolefully notes, ‘when they would reject me’ (p. 210); and at this point a séance-orientated reading of the text comes to its natural close, having revealed *News from Nowhere* to be much closer to Tom Moylan’s idea of the self-problematising (but in this case also self-correcting) ‘critical utopia’ of the 1970s than the classical instance of the genre we had formerly taken it to be.
NOTES

10. Parrinder, p. 32.
11. As this formulation would suggest, it is also possible, in another generic thought-experiment, to read *News from Nowhere* as a Japanese Noh play. See my ‘Japanising News from Nowhere’, *Eigo-Sei-Nen*, Tokyo, no 3, March 2009, pp. 682–6 (in Japanese).
13. A minor additional function of Guest’s is to answer from firsthand experience the rightwing ‘grumblers’ of the new society, such as Ellen’s grand-father, who are convinced that economic competition is the basis for a more vigorous social and cultural life.
15. Parrinder, pp. 32–33.
Morris’s ‘A King’s Lesson’: A Hungarian Perspective

Éva Péteri

The quality which first strikes the Hungarian reader of Morris’s prose romance ‘A King’s Lesson’, is the author’s familiarity with his theme: the great Renaissance king of Hungary, Mátyás Hunyadi (Matthias Corvinus), and the legend of how he made his lords work hard at vine-dressing. The direct source of Morris’s short story (published as ‘An Old Story Retold’ in the 18 September 1886 issue of *Commonweal*) is originally thought to have been tracked down by Helen A. Timo, on the basis of a comment in H. Halliday Sparling’s recollections of the Kelmscott Press.¹ ‘… *A King’s Lesson,*’ Sparling writes, ‘spranged and flowered into poignancy and charm from a chance-met “fill-up” at the foot of a column in Dickens’s *Household Words*.’ ² The article in question, ‘The Golden Age of Hungary’, was published in the 1852 Christmas number of the paper,³ at the time when, following the ultimate defeat of the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence in 1849, and the consequent flight of some of its prominent leaders to England, the nation was much in the focus of attention. Although Timo supposes that the article in question was ‘read by Morris … when he was only a very young man’,⁴ the close correspondence between it and Morris’s own writing, suggests that this happened rather at the time of Morris’s work for *Commonweal*, in 1886. Morris’s short story incorporates such particulars from the article as the illegitimate origin of king Matthias’s father, John of Hunyad, and a reference to the king’s renowned legion, the so-called Black Band, details of which play no direct role in the plot or the moral of the romance.

Notwithstanding the clear connection between the two writings, one is also aware that Dickens’s article could not have been Morris’s only source. Whereas the account in *Household Words* summarises the tale of King Matthias’s visit to Gömör in two short paragraphs, Morris tells a story at least twenty times that length. Whilst some of the details he adds are taken from the historical account given in the rest of the article, and many others are undeniably of his own invention, in certain points, as well as in basic attitude, his story strongly recalls the fable as it is known in its more complete form all over Hungary.

The legends which have evolved around the figure of Matthias Corvinus could
be called ‘anecdotes’, but their definite aim is not just to provide entertainment to readers, but also to offer a moral lesson. They are built on frameworks such as: ‘the king rewards the poor while dispossessing the avaricious, he makes the gluttonous and the fastidious live on a meagre diet, puts the bumptious to shame, or reprimands the selfish’. In the case of this particular story, Matthias makes fun of his tyrannous, conceited lords in order to demonstrate their own triviality, and to illustrate the value of the serfs and their work. As he emerges from the stories, King Matthias does not just appreciate the work and wisdom of the peasants, but often lives and works in disguise amongst ordinary people. The image of ‘Matthias, the Just’, friend of the people, also possesses some historical basis: Bonfini, the king’s Italian chronicler recounts how the royal court was open to everyone, how anyone could approach and address the king, and how he heeded the complaints and redressed the wrongs of even his lowest serf.

Morris’s portrait of the king is very similar: he depicts Matthias as a ‘friend’ and a defender of the people, who plays a ‘game’ with his haughty lords in order to give them a lesson. The peasants fear their lords, but, on recognising him, they do not fear their king. The difference between Morris’s idea of the king (as well as the traditional Hungarian concept of him), and that suggested by Household Words is important. In the first case, the king demonstrates regard for the peasants and their work. In Dickens’s article, however, he appears rather artful and selfish, regarding work as painful and degrading. At the end of the game, he says to his lords: ‘treat [the serfs] with kindness and forbearance, lest you destroy the source of your wealth and thus be compelled to perform the labour yourself’.

Given Morris’s deviation from the moral suggested by the article, and his thoroughness in everything he did, it is very likely that he made further inquiries about the legend of King Matthias, and relied on other sources as well as Household Words. The article itself mentions that the time of Matthias (‘Hungary’s golden age’), was ‘often sung of by poets’. Its author might have had in mind, amongst others, János Garay’s poem, ‘Mátyás király Gömőrben’ [King Matthias in Gömör], which was by far the most popular adaptation of the story in mid-nineteenth century, and which also sets the story in the small town of Gömör. Although, in Hungarian folk tradition, the legend is connected to several places very distant from each other, on the success of Garay’s poem, Gömör became closely associated with the story.

Garay’s poem was first published in 1840, but was not translated into English during Morris’s lifetime. Yet, taking a closer look at Morris’s version of the tale, and Garay’s, there still seems to be a connection. Describing the setting, Morris writes that: ‘[the king and his nobles] rode … to the vineyards where men were working on the sunny slopes that went up from the river: my tale does not say whether that were Theiss, or Donau, or what river…’. Neither Household Words, nor Garay, make mention of the town, and Morris would almost certainly
have had no idea where Gömör was, nor that it lies on the banks of the River Sajó. As the exact place possessed no relevance to him or his English readers, he simply did not name it. But Garay, though in a different context, mentions two other rivers, the Danube and the Tisza:

[The King] travelled about his beautiful country, and, like an angel of peace
Enforced the law and did justice wherever he went,
He travelled about the lands of the Danube and the Tisza
And listened to the complaints of the peasants.¹²

Morris might also have thought that one of these rivers provided the background to his story. Giving more attention to his description, we also notice that for no understandable reason, he names the two Hungarian rivers in German: Theiss and Donau. This point leads to the possibility that he may have relied on a German source.

Garay’s poem was available to Morris in German, in two translations. One appeared as ‘Das Bankett in Gömör’ in Ungarische Heimats-, Liebes- und Heldenlieder (1873) translated by G. W. Henning,¹³ the other as ‘König Mátyás in Gömör’ in Kläenge aus dem Osten (1855) translated by Demeter Dudumi.¹⁴ It is also interesting to note that Dudumi, who was born Paul Szakellariosz, and who belonged to a Greek minority in Hungary, settled in London in 1858.¹⁵ Morris, though, probably could not much read German. As he wrote in 1884 to Andreas Scheu: ‘I wish I knew German, as I see I must learn it. Confound you chaps! What do you mean by being foreigners?’¹⁶ However, he was much surrounded during the 1880s by people of German and Austrian extraction. Apart from the Viennese refugee Andreas Scheu, the Socialist League also contained Karl Marx’s younger daughter Eleanor as a prominent member, as well as Frank Kitz, son of a German exile, and Frederick Lessner, another refugee from Germany. With Scheu, as Thompson writes, Morris’s ‘acquaintance had ripened … into warm friendship. He was a frequent visitor to Kelmscott House at Hammersmith, translating to Morris passages from Marx and Engels and Lassalle: or entertaining the family by singing arias from Mozart or Austrian folk-songs and songs of German and Austrian revolutionaries’.¹⁷

In 1886, at the time of writing ‘A King’s Lesson’, Morris was working with Ernest Belfort Bax on ‘Socialism from the Root Up’ for Commonweal. Although Bax was born in England, he too possessed a decisive German orientation, having studied German philosophy in Stuttgart, and when in London, he was a frequent visitor of Engels.¹⁸ According to Roger Aldous, and in the recollection of May Morris, Bax ‘appears almost as a member of the Morris family’,¹⁹ visiting Morris regularly in his Hammersmith home during the 1880s, and taking Morris on his ‘compulsory Baxination’. In addition, Florence Boos suggests that Bax may have summarised Engels’s Der Ursprung to Morris during their collaboration.²⁰ Given
what are probably daily contacts, either Scheu or Bax might easily have conveyed the contents of Garay’s poem to Morris.

A closer comparison of the poem and Morris’s romance seems to support this idea. Although Morris does not adopt the framework of Garay’s piece (according to which Matthias attends a feast in Gömör, and, finding that they neglect to toast the serfs, decides to take the squires hoeing), there are other correspondences than the reference to the rivers already mentioned. Moreover, these parallels strongly relate to Morris’s other concerns at the time: the value of useful work, the role of education in promoting revolution, and his painfully ambiguous position as both socialist and capitalist.

Hungarian folk tradition associates King Matthias with the people in opposition to his magnates. Garay does the same, yet this aspect of the story is neglected in the account in *Household Words*. Like Morris, Garay refers to the ‘game’ (Scherz in both German translations) which the king is about to play with his lords. He leads them to the hillside, where, to the great astonishment of the workers, they are commanded to take turns with the peasants working at vine-dressing. The serfs thus become witnesses to the humiliation of their feared lords, and in this way, they see the king rendering them justice. Moreover, both Garay and Morris depict the king as already accustomed to hard work: outdoing his lords in both strength and bearing. In this respect, as Andor Solt emphasises, in that it propagates the doctrine of István Széchenyi, the great intellect of that age – that work, even hoeing is noble – Garay’s poem is a ‘true mirror of the ideology of the Reform Period’ which preceded the 1848 revolution in Hungary.21 Such a Carlylean view was also shared by Morris, who even expressed his appreciation of Saxon kings and ‘Icelandic heroes and aristocrats’, who not only ruled, but participated in everyday work.22 In this regard, Alice Chandler’s claim that ‘[i]n *A King’s Lesson*, the king learns by doing it [, just] how hard the peasants’ work is’23 needs to be revised. Morris’s Matthias ‘worked on doggedly’ whilst his nobles had already exhausted themselves. In addition, Morris also points out that the king knew right at the beginning of the vine-dressing episode that a ‘new knowledge will come out of it’; thus he deliberately wished to give his lords a lesson.

The title ‘A King’s Lesson’ clearly shows that Morris’s main purpose of telling the story was didactic. As a prominent member of the Socialist League, and the main voice of its paper, *Commonweal*, he intended to promote those things he believed necessary in order to make possible a socialist revolution: education, agitation and organisation – as the League’s motto affirmed. Garay’s poem definitely possesses a similar purpose. In the last two stanzas, the king himself draws the lesson for the lords – as well as for readers:

‘The earth, my lords is hard to cultivate,
And who cultivates it does it in a bloody sweat.

51
Thus, when you drink the next time, do remember
To toast the serf: Long live the people!’
Said the King, and the Lords minded the lesson.24

Morris also wished to provide a lesson, but in preparation for a socialist revolution he needed to say more. Abandoning the framework of the poem, he opened up the story, and added a concluding moral in the form of a sermon. Actually, his first lesson is not so much a sermon as the workers’ desperate reproach concerning their circumstances and the inequality of the classes. Its role in Morris’s short story is clear: to bridge the temporal and spatial gap between sixteenth-century Hungarian serfs and Morris’s nineteenth-century readers, thus making possible identification by the latter with the former. By introducing new characters – such as the captain and the headman – and creating dialogues, Morris allows the headman to articulate the workers’ grievances, thus rendering their plea more powerful. Such identification is vital for Morris’s final sermon, which, as in Garay’s poem, is delivered by the king, and in which Morris calls for agitation and organisation:

‘Carle, … were I thou or such as thou, then I would take in my hand a sword or a spear, … and bid the others do alike, a forth we would go; and since we would be so many, and with nought to lose save a miserable life, we would do battle and prevail, and make an end of the craft of kings and of usurers, and there should be but one craft in the world, to wit, to work merrily for ourselves and to live merrily thereby.’25

The king is definitely Morris’s spokesman, yet Morris’s Matthias decides not to preach his sermon, lest he be taken to a madhouse. Concerning the inaction of the king, Alice Chandler writes that ‘Morris’s moral seems to be that you cannot trust the ruling class to reform itself, that only the worker can change society’.26 Notwithstanding the legitimacy of Chandler’s claim, Morris’s identification with the king places the concluding moral in a broader context. The kinship of Corvinus and Morris is obvious: the Hungarian king’s esteem for work, his sympathies with the oppressed, his promotion of education and literature – all that he could know from the Household Words article – must have appealed to Morris. Had he made further inquiries, he might have also been informed of the king’s love of beautiful books, and his magnificent library.

Furthermore, Morris was much aware that being a capitalist he also prospered by ‘robbing the poor’. When he joined the socialist movement, he was regarded by many as a madman, and his act an embarrassing folly. Tennyson, for example, was at first ‘shocked to hear of … Morris’s Democratic Socialism’, and then said that he ‘has gone crazy’.27 The parallel between Morris and Matthias Corvinus is thus too close to be neglected. And although it is true that in Morris’s version
of the story, the king does not preach the final moral lesson to his people, Morris definitely does so by putting his own message into the mouth of the Renaissance king, and in this way telling it to his nineteenth-century working-class readers. The moral then seems to be that 'now the time has come, and I, although a capitalist, stand by you and tell you what should be done'. Charlotte Oberg called Morris a 'great adapter', a 'synthesiser of genius, for what he brought together gained new integrity and force under his hands'.

This is exactly what happened to the Hungarian legend: Morris turned it into socialist propaganda. As such, this short romance seems to have been regarded by Morris as an important and effective piece, since, in 1888, it was published together with the much longer *A Dream of John Ball* in a book form. It then appeared in 1891 as a separate pamphlet, and again in 1892, once more attached to *A Dream of John Ball*, as one of the first volumes from the Kelmscott Press. G.D.H. Cole considers 'A King's Lesson' an admirable example of Morris's best prose style, free from the over-artificiality of his tapestry romances and yet far more polished than his occasional writing. Its easy accessibility must have contributed to its significant role in Morris's promotion of socialism. At the same time, adapting the story of a distant country, yet showing that its events are so familiar, must have supported Morris's claim for the need of international socialism. As in 'The Manifesto of the Socialist League' he proclaimed: 'We come before you as a body advocating the principles of Revolutionary International Socialism; that is we seek a change in the basis of Society – a change which would destroy the distinctions of classes and nationalities'. In Morris's view, it is no matter whether English or Hungarian: inequality and injustice should be fought against, and should be fought together.

NOTES

4. Timo, p. 18.
6. Zoltán Újváry, *Adomák Gömörből* [Anecdotes from Gömör], Debrecen:
Kossuth Lajos University, 1988, p. 27.
10. ibid.
17. ibid, p. 355.
18. ibid.
23. Alice Chandler, A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth-Century
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24. Garay, Poems, p. 44.

25. Wilmer, p. 22.


The Briar Rose

Peter Faulkner

Readers of Poems by the Way, Morris’s last book of poetry and the second product of the Kelmscott Press, published in 1891, know that it contains a group of what David Latham calls ’Picture poems’. These relate to paintings by Burne-Jones and to a number of tapestries designed by Burne-Jones, of which the best-known are ‘Flora’ and ‘Pomona’ of 1885. Among these Picture poems there are two which are remarkable in that they deal twice with the same subject: ‘For the Briar Rose’ and ‘Another for the Briar Rose’. All these short poems show that Morris, whose middle-period poetry was often slow-moving and expansive, could at times write with succinct assurance.

The story of the Briar Rose, or Sleeping Beauty, is one of the most popular of fairy stories. It was recorded by Charles Perrault in French in the seventeenth century and by the Brothers Grimm in German during the early nineteenth; it formed the basis of ‘The Day-Dream’, a poem in nine sections published by Tennyson in 1842, and illustrated by Millais in the Moxon edition in 1857; the two illustrations show, first, a young page overtaken by stupor as he leans to kiss a ‘maid-of-honor’, and the second the awakening of the court, treated by Millais in a surprisingly comic spirit. The tale is of a Princess who is cursed by an evil godmother that at fifteen she will pierce her hand with a spindle, and die, but whose doom is changed for the better by another godmother, who states that she will not die, but will sleep for a hundred years until awakened by a Prince.

The story was clearly one which appealed to Burne-Jones and Morris, and, as Caroline Arscott has recently reminded us, they produced a number of versions of it over some thirty years. The first, in 1864, was a set of nine tiles for an overmantle in one of the bedrooms of Myles Birket Foster’s home, The Hill at Witley. Later, Burne-Jones went on to make paintings on several of the subjects of the tiles, but there is general critical agreement with the judgement put forward by Julian Hartnoll in 1988 that the exhibition of the four large paintings constituting The Legend of the Briar Rose in 1890 ‘marked the climax of Burne-Jones’s career … expressing his vision more completely than anything he had achieved before’. The paintings were first exhibited at the dealers Thomas Agnew’s in London, where they were accompanied by a short pamphlet. This began with an adver-
tisement for the four photogravure reproductions – £31 10/- for artist’s proofs of all four, six guineas for prints. (Although the reproductions come out well in Hartnoll’s book, they lose immeasurably in the absence of Burne-Jones’s expressive coloration, and are necessarily greatly reduced in size.) The pamphlet then gives a succinct and lively summary of the story, in which the Princess appears at one point as ‘Thorn-rose’. The account ends with the Princess awakening from her trance: ‘and the whole court awoke, and the breath of life was stirred again in all’ – taking us beyond the point at which Burne-Jones ends the story. The pamphlet concludes with the four short poems, ascribed to William Morris; the titles, given in Gothic type, are those of the four paintings. At Agnew’s, the paintings were purchased by the financier Alexander Henderson for his recently acquired Buscot Park. They were installed there in 1891, with the addition of ten smaller paintings without figures, provided by Burne-Jones to bring the pictures and the room in which they are displayed into a harmonious unity. They can still be seen there, thanks to the National Trust, in this attractive form.

The paintings went on to be exhibited in Liverpool, where Agnew’s had a gallery, and then, by arrangement with the philanthropic Canon Barnett, for the benefit of East-Enders, at Toynbee Hall in Whitechapel over Easter 1891. As Hartnoll notes, ‘exhibitions of pictures, organised by Canon Barnett, the enlightened Warden, were a regular feature’ at the settlement. For this occasion, a new version of the pamphlet was produced, with different typography and entitled The Legend of the Briar Rose … A Memento of the Whitechapel Picture Exhibition, Easter, 1891—with the last phrase in Gothic type. This pamphlet does not advertise the prints (likely to be too expensive for the people of Whitechapel), but is illustrated in black-and-white with Burne-Jones’s study for the third painting, ‘The Garden Court’. It gives a fuller (but less engaging) account of the story of the Briar Rose, but stops suddenly with the arrival of the Prince: ‘He broke through the hedge, which parted before him and------’. The next line consists of four asterisks, followed by the comment: ‘We can finish the story each for ourselves’, but then going on: ‘we know how, when the Prince reached the bower of the Briar Rose, “a touch, a kiss, the charm was snapt!”’ This is a quotation from the opening of the fourth section, ‘The Revival’, in Tennyson’s poem ‘The Day-Dream’, although the poet is not named. The poet is then called on to ‘add a fifth picture, and end the story for us’; quotations follow from the final part of Tennyson’s poem, entitled ‘The Departure’, as the Prince and Princess ride away together. The final five pages of the pamphlet are devoted to intelligent accounts of each of the ‘The Four Pictures’. Each begins with the title and the Morris quatrain, although the poet is not named. ‘The Briarwood’ concludes that ‘The picture is beautiful in harmony of colour; it is noble, dignified and tranquil’. ‘The Council Room’ notes that the briars are ‘the only quick and changing thing in the whole sleep-locked scene. The softened light is much brighter that in the
The first picture.’ ‘The Garden Court’ concludes enthusiastically: ‘In this picture the artist is at his perfection. We find here the balance of composition, luminosity, breadth, daring and luxurious colour … and the most graceful figures he has ever drawn.’ ‘The Rosebower’ is described in some detail, but the final emphasis is on the evoked mood: ‘The chamber is fitted with an atmosphere of purity and peace, waiting for the touch of love to rouse it into life.’ Caroline Arscott has remarked that these accounts of the paintings ‘correspond closely to the notice in the Athenaeum of April 1890’. It is evident that the organisers of the exhibition wanted to help the viewers to appreciate the qualities of the art that was on display to them. Morris quatrains were retained without the poet’s name, and they were inscribed on the frames below the paintings, in attractive small Roman capitals, before their installation at Buscot. The couplets appear in Poems by the Way preceded by the title of each painting.

Few critics have commented on these couplets or their relation to the paintings. Penelope Fitzgerald in 1975 felt that the paintings expressed Burne-Jones’s concern over the growth of his daughter Margaret towards adulthood – she married John Mackail in September 1888: ‘only if we are afraid to lose a daughter shall we understand Briar Rose’. This was why the painting did not show the kiss or the awakening. Indeed, Burne-Jones stated that ‘I want to stop with the Princess falling asleep and to tell no more’. Fitzgerald concluded, ‘The picture was finished. The princess in it would never awake.’ However, when it came to the poem, in striking contrast, Fitzgerald thought that in the final line Morris was pointing towards ‘a vaguely socialist future’. Francis Spalding in her Magnificent Dreams: Burne-Jones and the Late Victorians in 1978, wrote mainly about the paintings, finding the series at Buscot ‘intensely moody, theatrical and strangely compelling in its suggestion of sleep’. She argued that the series might be interpreted as ‘an allegory of love: the briar rose represents material desire which grows up and chokes the world, while the sleeping beauty represents the spirit of love which is capable of infusing the material world with spiritual life’. She claimed that this interpretation – which strangely offers no role for the Prince – is supported by Morris’s lines for the final scene (though she quotes the couplets inaccurately, substituting ‘live’ for ‘be’ and ‘fatal’ for ‘fated’). Christopher Wood remarks that the Morris poems are ‘rather weak when compared to those of Tennyson’ (there is in fact only one Tennyson poem, though an elaborate one nine sections). David Latham finds the scenario of the poem ‘threatening rather than promising’ by contrast with the preceding poem in Poems by the Way, ‘Verses for Pictures’. He adds ‘Where no hand stirs the stillness and no voice breaks the silence, all remain asleep as passive lives with no control. Fate may intervene but is not even anticipated.’

In ‘For the Briar Rose’ Morris keeps closely to the narrative of the paintings. The first quatrain introduces the situation; Burne-Jones shows the Prince in his
armour on the left of the painting, with the bodies of five knights lying, asleep or possibly dead, on the ground in front of him. The briar dominates the area above the recumbent bodies, holding everything in stasis. Overall the coloration is grey and brown, sombre. This is Morris’s version:

The Briarwood

The fateful slumber floats and flows
About the tangle of the rose;
But lo! the fated hand and heart
To rend the slumberous curse apart!

Morris begins by conveying the ‘slumberous’ spirit of the painting in the first two lines, but thereafter suggests a stronger sense of approaching and inevitable – ‘fated’ – liberation than does the painting; for Morris the Prince is the ‘hand and heart’ sent by fate to resolve the situation positively. (It is perhaps relevant that in Tennyson’s poem there is a reference to the sleepers waiting a hundred years for ‘the fated fairy Prince’). The Prince of Burne-Jones has his sword in his hand, and is upright above the figures of the knights lying on the ground, but his sword hangs down and his presence lacks energy; the painting has no equivalent for Morris’s exclamation marks.

In the following two poems, responding to Burne-Jones’s portrayal of the sleeping court and the equally dormant maidens in the bower, Morris is closer to the spirit of the paintings:

The Council Room

The threat of war, the hope of peace,
The Kingdom’s peril and increase
Sleep on, and bide the latter day
When Fate shall take her chain away.

The Garden Court

The maiden pleasance of the land
Knoweth no stir of voice or hand,
No cup the sleeping waters fill,
The restless shuttle lieth still.

Fate is referred to again in ‘The Council Room’, but there is less sense that the ‘chain’ of controlling indolence will soon be removed; the ‘latter day’ seems distant, as in the painting. The same spirit of inactivity pervades ‘The Garden Court’: the ‘maiden pleasance’ lacks all activity of voice and hand, the cup
remains unfilled, and the shuttle is denied that 'restlessness' that would mark it as a symbol of creativity for Morris.

In the last painting Burne-Jones shows the Prince approaching the sleeping Princess; in his poem, Morris points towards a future which Burne-Jones closes off from the viewer:

The Rosebower

Here lies the hoarded love, the key
To all the treasure that shall be;
Come fated hand the gift to take,
And smite this sleeping world awake

As in the first stanza, there is a good deal of energy in the final couplet. The idea of the fatedness of what is about to happen is continued from the earlier stanza; it is perhaps odd to see the Sleeping Beauty as a gift awaiting the Prince’s hand; but we may think that the culminating emphasis on the ‘sleeping world’ rather than the young woman bespeaks Morris’s social concerns. Perhaps we can discern a Marxist energy in the unexpected verb ‘smite’ that will link to Fitzgerald’s at first sight surprising reference to a ‘vaguely socialist future’.

In her biography of her husband, Georgiana Burne-Jones gives a clear account of Morris’s provision of poems to accompany his series of paintings, and adds that when these appeared in Poems by the Way, there was ‘another set, on the same subject but of profounder meaning’, where the Briar is ‘the tangle of earth’s wrong and right.’ She then quotes the third stanza, ‘Here sleeps the world that would not love.’ 12 The only other critic to have commented on the poem, as far as I know, is David Latham, who remarks that it is ‘an apostrophe to the rose that seduces us to dream of rest instead of love. He sees in it the beginning of ‘a political shift from love to art’’.13

It is clear that Morris found the Briar Rose scenario sufficiently interesting to tackle it again in a way less directly related to the paintings. In the second poem, there are no titles for the individual stanzas; the outline narrative is retained, but without the two central scenes:

‘Another for the Briar Rose’

O treacherous scent, O thorny sight,
O tangle of world’s wrong and right,
What art thou ‘gainst my armour’s gleam
But dusky cobwebs of a dream?
Beat down, deep sunk from every gleam
Of hope, they lie and dully dream;
Men once, but men no more, that Love
Their waste defeated hearts should move.

Here sleeps the world that would not love!
Let it sleep on, but if He move
Their hearts in humble wise to wait
On his new-wakened fair estate.

O won at last is never late!
Thy silence was the voice of fate;
Thy still hands conquered in the strife;
Thine eyes were light; thy lips were life.

Here Stanza 1, unlike its predecessor, consists of a question. We are taken close
to the Prince’s point of view as he encounters the entangled dangers of the world
as embodied in the briar, which he experiences as both smell and sight. But he
dismisses what he senses as being, by contrast with the vital ‘gleam’ of his armour,
mere ‘dusty cobwebs of a dream’. The imagery supports the sense of their lack-
ing reality, but the overall question form takes away the reader’s certainty at this
point. Stanza 2 scrutinises the knights who lie ‘dully’ dreaming; they are not dead,
but have abandoned hope and sunk into unreality, their manhood forfeited,
lost. They are no longer capable of responding to Love, granted a capital letter,
by implication the power latent in the situation which might transform it. (We
may be reminded of Morris’s 1872 poem Love is Enough). Stanza 3 opens with an
emphatic assertion: the knights represent ‘the world that would not love’; they
have abandoned idealism to enter an empty dream-world. That world might
well ‘sleep on’ unless – I take that to be the meaning here of ‘but’ – the power of
Love should bring their hearts back to life, to humbly serve ‘his new-wakened fair
estate’, the world restored by the power of Love to its full beauty.

Stanza 4 begins, like its predecessor, with an emphatic single-line state-
ment, but this time it is a positive assertion: if victory is achieved, its belatedness
becomes irrelevant. The final three lines all refer to and celebrate an unnamed
positive presence. Since we began with the Prince, it would seem that here we
encounter the Princess, and so complete the story. Four assertions are made in
these three lines, giving a confident sense of finality. The second and third lines
evidently refer to the qualities of the Princess when she was asleep – silence and
stillness – and assert a positive aspect of them; they were part of her fate, which
was eventually to be victorious. The last line offers two brief assertions relating
to more positive aspects of the sleeper, her eyes and lips, so that the poem can
culminate in the claim that ‘her lips were life’; when touched by the Prince they could restore life to the world. The coming together of the Prince and Princess in this unifying kiss suggests that life itself depends on love’s taking the form of shared action, while the past tense shows that the story has come to its inevitable happy end. This gives a note of confidence to the conclusion. Love can and will triumph, but needs to be a shared enterprise. Love may take both personal and social forms, and it is the motivating force for the triumph of life promised at the end of this fine poem, which Georgiana Burne-Jones was right to find ‘of profounder meaning’ than its tidy predecessor.\(^\text{14}\)

An attractive appendix to Burne-Jones’s Briar Rose group, which may be seen as analogous to Morris’s second poem, is to be found in one of the flower paintings which he produced for his own pleasure in his later years, and gave to Georgiana. It is inscribed ‘Wake Dearest’, and has the subtitle ‘The Sleeping Beauty’. In it, the Knight, or Prince, in dark armour like that in the first and last Briar Rose paintings, is bending tenderly over the recumbent body of the sleeping Rose, who is wearing a green dress and wrapped in a rich blue cover. His approach is respectful, but the Rose has yet to open her eyes. Her head is similar to that in the final Briar Rose painting, for which Margaret Burne-Jones was the model, though there she was wearing a white garment, giving her more prominence in the composition but possibly less vitality. In ‘Wake Dearest’ the thorns of the rose are less prominent and threatening than in the earlier paintings. According to the Goldmark Gallery’s 2007 leaflet É. Burne-Jones. Flower Prints, 1905, Burne-Jones began the series in 1882, ‘keeping by him a list of beautiful flower names that he had met with’.\(^\text{15}\) He painted not the flowers themselves, but the ideas and images suggested to him by the flowers’ names. In 1905, after the artist’s death, Lady Burne-Jones gave permission for the series to be reproduced in Paris using the pochoir technique; ‘Wake Dearest’ is No. 32 in the series of 38, and, in my view, like Morris’s second poem, a very attractive work.

NOTES

catalogues referring to this pamphlet attribute this ‘descriptive sketch’ to E.J. Milliken; see Copac Brief Records, items 4 and 6.

5. Hartnoll, p. 44.

6. *The Legend of the Briar Rose … A Memento of the Whitechapel Picture Exhibition, Easter, 1891*, pp. 3–8. Arscott (p. 109) describes this as ‘specially devised to make the pictures accessible to the working-class audience who were admitted free’.


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David and Sheila Latham

This bibliography is the fourteenth instalment of a biennial feature of The Journal. We give each original entry a brief annotation meant to describe its subject rather than evaluate its argument. Although we exclude book reviews, we include reviews of exhibitions as a record of temporal events.

We have arranged the bibliography into six subject categories appended by an author index. Part I includes new scholarly editions and translations of Morris’s own publications, arranged alphabetically by title. Part II includes books, pamphlets, articles, exhibition catalogues, and dissertations about Morris, arranged alphabetically by author within each of the following five categories:

- General 2–45
- Literature 46–85
- Decorative Arts 86–114
- Book Design 115–125
- Politics 126–144

The General category includes biographical surveys and miscellaneous details as well as studies that bridge two or more subjects. The Author Index provides an alphabetical order as an alternative means for searching through the 144 items of the bibliography. Though we still believe that each of Morris’s interests is best understood in the context of his whole life’s work, we hope that the subject categories and author index will save the impatient specialist from having to browse through descriptions of woven tapestries in search of critiques of ‘The Haystack in the Floods.’

With the rising costs of inter-library loan services and personal travel, we would appreciate receiving copies of publications. They can be sent to us at 42 Belmont Street, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5R 1P8, or by e-mail attachment to dlatham@yorku.ca.
PART I: WORKS BY MORRIS

For practical purposes, this section of the biennial bibliography is limited to translations of Morris and to new critical or scholarly editions of his works. The technology of digital scanners and desktop publishing has made it possible for anyone allegedly to ‘publish’ Morris’s works. For the years 2006–07, Books in Print Global lists over 300 editions from various sorts of publishers who will print copies on demand. In addition, the majority of Morris’s texts are freely accessible on the internet through ‘Project Gutenburg,’ and, more important, Florence Boos is organizing a scholarly on-line edition of Morris’s works (see links on the William Morris Society’s websites), which will be cited in our next bibliography.


PART II: PUBLICATIONS ABOUT MORRIS

General

   Scattered references to Morris’s residences beside the Thames, his boat journeys rowed ‘like some medieval wherryman,’ and his fictional swims in News from Nowhere are not always accurate.

   Lamenting cuts to the opening hours of the William Morris Gallery, the author summarizes the significance and influence of Morris and his many achievements.

   From the serpentine images and lines of such poems as ‘King Arthur’s Tomb’ and such wallpapers as Trellis, Daisy, and Fruit to the Christian and erotic connotations of the pomegranate, Morris explores the relationship of sacred and profane love praised by Ruskin in Modern Painters.

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Our impression of Kelmscott Manor is influenced by the many drawings, paintings, embroideries, and photographs by friends who visited Morris and May Morris.


Illustrations and drawings document the alterations before and after Morris’s residency at the Manor, the home that reinforced his linking of craftsmanship with the vernacular.


The reputation of Red House divides into four eras: 1859–62 when it was known as similar to designs by Butterfield and Street; the 1890s as a forerunner of the Arts and Crafts and the Queen Anne styles; 1930–60 when Betjemann, McGrath, Strand, Yorke, Read, and Pevsner saw it as a forerunner of the Modern movement; and since the 1960s when its Modernist reputation was refuted and its importance to the Victorian age celebrated.


An illustrated collection of thirteen essays documents the Morris family’s influence on the village of Kelmscott and discusses its archaeological and social history. For annotations of eight of the chapters, see entries for Cherry #5, Cooper #6, Hassall #16, Howard #19, Moggridge #30, Parkinson #139, Parry #37, and Robinson #39.


A regular speaker in Scotland since the early 1880s, Morris joined Walter Crane, Emery Walker, and T.J. Cobden-Sanderson for an influential lecture series in Edinburgh and Glasgow in 1889. His influence on decorative art, book design, and socialist politics is discussed in association with the work of Rowand Anderson, Walter Blaikie, William Kelly, Jessie King, James
Leatham, James Mavor, James Morris, Francis Newbery, Richard Norman Shaw, and Phoebe Anna Traquair.

   Davis’s poem suggests that the presence of Jane Morris lurks in each corner, but every stone of Kelmscott Manor now stands for William Morris and his achievements, thus making a house he never owned utterly his.

   Morris’s Arts and Crafts work influenced the literature of Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Hermann Bahr, and Peter Altenberg in turn-of-the-century Vienna.

   News from Nowhere is compared with the revolutionary decorative designs of Morris’s Arts-and-Crafts work and with his pioneering commitment to ecology, epitomized in his eight designs for cotton chintzes patterned after the meandering principle of the rivers he loved.

   F.R. and Q.D. Leavis curiously dismissed Morris as a sentimental escapist, praising instead the fiction of George Sturt in their defence of a culture of organic communities against a technological industrialism.

   Morris inspired Fitch by showing him that ‘art, design, craft and culture can combine in an industrial society.’

   With cheerful details about the Firm’s business, Webb’s 18 November 1864 letter to an ill Morris was found under the floorboards at Red House, perhaps hidden because of Webb’s premature optimism about the Burne-Joneses’ month-old baby who died three days later.
Inspired by News from Nowhere and Morris’s love for the countryside, the Society of Antiquaries founded the Kelmscott Landscape Project in 1996 ‘to investigate the archaeological, historical, and ecological context of Kelmscott Manor in the setting of its parish and locality’ and ‘to investigate means of conserving the heritage.’

The Morris Gallery at Walthamstow is threatened with financial cutbacks by the government.

This novel is based on the infamous love triangle involving Rossetti and Jane and William Morris.

Though May Morris wished to preserve the Manor for posterity as a tribute to her father, she added furniture, comforts, and conveniences that changed the practical simplicity her father cherished, as shown by detailed diagrams listing the alterations.

The Japanese scholar, psychoanalyst, and publisher, Ohtsuki (1891–1977), wrote actively on Morris from 1921 to 1935, translated his Hopes and Fears for Art and other lectures on art and society, and organized the Maruzen Bookshop Centenary Exhibition featuring 280 items, including several Kelmscott Press books and the Kelmscott Chaucer.

New directions in Morris scholarship stress the interdisciplinary nature of his work, thus overcoming the warning in his short tale from the *Earthly Paradise* about the disintegration of image and text, of structural design and the written word, and of life and art into the indiscernible and the unreadable.

The collection of sixteen essays showcases the varied canon of Morris. The most revolutionary artist, writer, and socialist of the nineteenth century now stands at the centre of interdisciplinary studies in the twenty-first century, challenging academics and artisans alike to pursue an ideal community of scholarship, craftsmanship, and subversive statesmanship. See individual entries for Beaumont #48, Bentley #4, Boos #53, Campbell #54, Cowan #56, Faldet #11, Friesen #57, Herbert #59, Jones #62, Kinna #64, Kirchhoff #65, LaPorte #67, Latham #69 and #135, Londraville #70, and Thomas #80.

Of the 120 items annotated, seven are by Morris, thirty-two are general publications about Morris, fifteen are about his literature, forty-four are about his decorative arts, ten are about his book designs, and twelve are about his politics.

Selecting some details from Morris's life and work to support his argument, Le Bourgeois explains how Morris's love for his sister [Emma] evolved, how it destroyed his marriage and how it produced the great achievements of his life. For his sister was a guide to heroic behaviour as well as a source of erotic emotion.'

The descriptive bibliography of Morris's original publications in periodicals and as books includes full quasi-facsimile transcriptions and detailed technical, publication, and explanatory notes. The engaging introduction discusses a number of problematic details, each one followed by a comment about Morris's personality or focus on a domestic chore, thereby providing an intimate view of the daily business of the bookman's life.


28. MacEwen, Ann. ‘Ernest Radford and the First Arts and Crafts Exhibition, 1888.’ *The Journal of William Morris Studies*, 17 (Winter 2007): 27–38. Hired on 11 April 1888 to help organize the Exhibition, Radford worked diligently to the point of exhaustion two days prior to the opening on 29 September, but gained in the process new experiences and new friends (including the Walkers, the Cranes, and the Morrises) for himself and Dollie Radford.

29. Marsh, Jan. ‘Peter Marshall’s Tottenham Well – Copy or Prototype?’ *The Journal of William Morris Studies*, 17 (Winter 2007): 57–73. The history and design specifications for the well at Red House (attributed to Philip Webb) in comparison with that of a similar well twenty miles away at Tottenham (attributed to Peter Marshall) raises the possibility that Webb and Marshall may have collaborated on the design professionally, or informally through casual discussion.


William Morris: An Annotated Bibliography


   A brief biography of Morris as a designer and founder of Morris & Co. and the Kelmscott Press is followed by a selected critical bibliography.

   This brief biography provides an overview of Morris’s life and achievements.

   Morris’s influence on the Japanese writer and social activist, Kenji Miyazawa (1896–1933), is the focus of this book, written in Japanese.

   Morris consulted Church (an expert on ink chemistry) on a problem with paper discolouration with the Kelmscott Chaucer; Church called upon Morris to design the ‘Signs of the Zodiac’ window for the chapel of the Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester.

   Jane’s letters about the family’s tour of Italy are compared with her husband’s to reveal her energy and stamina, while subsequent trips record her independence and his loving support.

   A residence of the Morris family from 1871 to 1939, the Manor was first a discreet location for Rossetti’s relation to an unconventional marriage, an inspiration for Morris’s prolific designs from 1872 to 1888, always the ‘home-like’ place for Oxford-bred Janey, and where May practised her art and celebrated her father’s life.
38. Poe, Simon. ‘Venus Rising from the Waves: Morris, Stanhope, Botticelli and “Aphrodite Anadyomene.”’ British Art Journal, 7.3 (2006–07): 54–57. Morris’s painting at Kelmscott Manor of Aphrodite rising from the waves is similar enough to Stanhope’s Venus that the two artists may have painted their own versions of Botticelli’s portrait while sharing with Burne-Jones the studio that Philip Webb had designed for Stanhope in 1869.


41. — —. ‘William Morris and Gabriele D’Annunzio: Kindred Spirits.’ Es. Revista de filologia inglesa, 27 (2006–07): 189–200. Morris’s News from Nowhere and D’Annunzio’s The Child of Pleasure (1889) share a similar Pre-Raphaelite cult of the beautiful, Red House is similar to the little red house in Venice (1915), and the femme fatales in The Earthly Paradise are similar to those in Il Poema Paradisiaco (1893).

42. — —. ‘William Morris e la vision del giardino come dominio estetico.’ In Riscritture dell’Eden: Il Giardino nell’Immaginazione Letteraria dell’Occidente. Ed. Andrea Mariani. Venice: Mazzanti, 2006. 147–68. Morris’s real, medieval, mythic, and utopian gardens are analysed with examples from his textiles (Strawberry Thief and Trellis), fiction (‘The Story of the Unknown Church’), poetry (The Earthly Paradise), and utopian romance (News from Nowhere).

43. Shone, Richard. ‘Editorial: The William Morris Gallery.’ Burlington Magazine, 149 (June 2007): 375. Over 10,000 have petitioned against the threat to limit the opening hours
of what was the Morris family home from 1848 to 1856, which since 1950 has exhibited riches comparable to the Victoria and Albert Museum.

44. Steel, Patrick. ‘Council Cuts Lead to Reduced Opening Hours at William Morris Gallery.’ Museums Journal, 107 (March 2007): 6. Cuts to hours will affect staffing stability and reduce curatorial care in a museum that is important to an area of London that has few museums.


Literature

46. Alexander, Michael. Medievalism: The Middle Ages in Modern England. New Haven: Yale UP, 2007. 172–80. Among Morris’s many contributions were poems such as ‘The Defence of Guenevere’ and The Earthly Paradise (with its parallels in Chaucer), his La Belle Iseult painting, his translations of medieval Icelandic legends and Beowulf, and his prose romances which influenced Tolkien.


In his prose romances Morris explores ‘what it means to build both practi-
cally and beautifully and to recognise architecture as one of the most endur-
ing celebrations of communal values and aspirations’ for a new society.

50. — —. ‘The Last Romances of William Morris and the Reclamation of
Morris’s ‘understanding of the importance of wonder as experience, atti-
tude, and praxis’ is discussed in relation to his prose romances and within
the context of ‘philosophical, aesthetic, and political theories of wonder.’

51. Boenig, Robert. ‘Prince Caspian and Child Christopher and Goldilind the
C.S. Lewis, whose diaries and autobiography reveal his admiration for Mor-
ris, drew upon the story of Child Christopher and Goldilind the Fair (Morris’s
loose adaptation of the thirteenth-century poetical romance Havelok the
Dane) for Prince Caspian, the second volume of ‘The Chronicles of Narnia’
series.

52. Bolus-Reichert, Christine. ‘Aestheticism in the Late Romances of William
Morris’s prose romances of the 1890s share the principles of aestheticism
promoted in R.L. Stevenson’s ‘A Gospel on Romance’ and Oscar Wilde’s
‘The Decay of Lying,’ as Morris’s social transformations involve not pas-
sive but active looking, not external facts but the decorative design of our
visions.

53. Boos, Florence S. ‘Medea and Circe as “Wise” Women in the Poetry of Wil-
liam Morris and Augusta Webster.’ In Writing on the Image: Reading William
Morris’s unconventional treatment of the classical figures of Jason, Medea,
and Circe not only anticipate the egalitarian principles of his later political
lectures but also influenced the poetry of Augusta Webster, whose feminist
heroines contribute to an emerging feminist counter-tradition.

54. Campbell, Wanda. ‘Clothes from Nowhere: Costume as Social Symbol in
the Work of William Morris.’ In Writing on the Image: Reading William Mor-
The characters in News from Nowhere dress in harmony with nature, a prin-
ciple that ‘permeates all of Morris’s art, from poetry to wallpaper,’ as Morris
looks back to ‘the tribal community of the Goths’ as inspiration for the
manners of a socialist society of the future.

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57. Friesen, Janet Wright. ‘William Morris, Shaper of Tales: Creating a Hero’s Story in “Sir Peter Harpdon’s End.”’ In Writing on the Image: Reading William Morris. Ed. David Latham. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007. 31–41. ‘Sir Peter Harpdon’s End’ is a reflexive poem about crafting a tale of masculine heroism, as Lady Alice frames the reputation of her defeated lover by modelling his life after the heroic examples of Hector and Launcelot.


1886 lecture ‘England as it was, is, and may be’ [‘Early England’ in *Unpublished Lectures*, ed. Eugene LeMire] tells his view of the heroic poem as an inspiration for a socialist power to replace the aristocratic order.


Morris’s prose romances are included in the analysis of a mythopoeic perspective that resists scientific materialism and regards nature as a ‘virtuous force of spiritual redemption.’


The compromises Morris made with medieval scribal culture in preparing his text for the Kelmscott Chaucer show him as a transitional figure between Victorian editorial practice and modern textual theory.


Morris, Tennyson, and Mark Twain and T.H. White, Camelot 3000, and Spamalot all used more or less obscure versions of the Arthurian legends to tell tales fit for our times. (Not seen.)


Recognition of the seemingly incredible transformations that have occurred concerning the ideals of health, weather, and ecology since first envisioned in News from Nowhere may inspire a cynical generation to share Morris’s faith in hope and change, and thus strive to establish his ideals for labour and fellowship.


Marya Zaturenska’s unpublished study of Morris reveals the influence he had on the Pulitzer-Prize winning poetry of a young emigrant from Russia and her relations with a woman who shared a lover with May Morris.


Studying the past is discouraged in Nowhere because history is a celebration of national ideals, but students today benefit from Morris’s comparisons of the medieval and Victorian ages and their relevance to our contemporary issues.

73. Miles, Rosie. ‘Teaching Morris Online.’ *The Journal of William Morris Studies,* 17 (Summer 2007): 54–72. The use of Virtual Learning Environment Discussion Boards, with online activities for student debate, discussion, reflection, play, and fellowship, can enhance teaching and learning in courses on *News from Nowhere.*


of Red Hanrahan share a cyclical rather than linear concept of time, using the powerful chronotope of the forest to materialize the time vortex of their lost heroes.


79. — —. William Morris: tra utopia e medievalismo. Rome: Aracne, 2007. 202 pp. Morris constructed a new model for the artist, one concerned with colours, recurring patterns, and topological structures of space and feeling. The central text is News from Nowhere, but the discussions include his early poetry and tales, The Earthly Paradise, prose romances, and lectures on art and politics.


ideal of hospitality promoted by Cobbett, Pugin, and Ruskin. Rejecting insularity and protectionism, Morris devoted his life to reconciling individualism and socialism, from Red House and *The Earthly Paradise* to Iceland, his translations, and his political and prose romances.

83. Williams, Todd O. ‘Teaching Morris’s Early Dream Poems through the Three Registers.’ *The Journal of William Morris Studies*, 17 (Summer 2007): 99–114. By relying on mysterious imagery and emotions rather than linguistic meaning, Morris’s dream poems engage our imaginations for creative dialogues, which a teacher can encourage with such techniques as drawing six visual scenes for a hypothetical film of the poem.


85. Zissos, Andrew. ‘Reception of Valerius Flaccus’ *Argonautica*.’ *International Journal for the Classical Tradition*, 13 (Fall 2006): 165–85. In the *Life and Death of Jason* Morris draws upon the *Argonautica* in ‘his choice of Echion as the herald of the Argonauts ... and the appointment of Erginus as helmsman following Typhys’ death,’ as well as in his portraits of Pelias, Juno, and Jason.

*Decorative Arts*


The first to introduce a Marxist theory of art, Morris also contributed to the reassessment of ornament by anthropologists who were debating the role of body art in cultural evolution, citing Maori tattooing as an example of the universality of the aesthetic impulse.


A chapter on the ‘First Explorations: William Morris and His Circle’ that explains how Morris helped to restore ‘social and moral meaning to the arts’ is followed by a chapter on ‘craft and comradeship’ in the 1880s and 1890s, with illustrations from Morris’s life and work.

The floral motifs in the designs of the contemporary Chinese artist, Kin-Wah Tsang, were inspired by the designs of Morris.

A survey of Nikolaus Pevsner’s criticism from 1936 to 1976 shows a consistent view of Morris as the most influential Victorian forerunner of Modernist design but backward in his hostility to the machine.

The Ardabil carpet (1539), which Morris described as a design of ‘singular perfection,’ is the centrepiece of the Victoria & Albert Museum’s new Jameel Gallery of Islamic Art.

Following the ideals of Morris’s Arts and Crafts model raises many difficult questions in the twenty-first-century Appalachian Mountains, where
untrained craftspeople shop at Walmart, cannot afford to buy their own craft products, and have difficulty choosing colours and creating designs that sell without the guidance of taste-savvy designers and marketers.


The catalogue of the September 2007 London exhibition at the Francesca Galloway Gallery includes a discussion of Morris’s contributions to the Arts and Crafts movement, with illustrations of 22 works by Morris.


102. Mckee, Kate. ‘Mad about Morris.’ *Australian Country Threads*, 7 (March 2007): 56–57. His ‘life filled with revolution, beauty, and scandal,’ Morris paved the way for the global respect for domestic crafts as art, and influenced the machine-appliqué work of Michele Hill, who is interviewed here.


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In an essay on Walter Crane, the author notes that Crane was influenced by Morris’s art and socialism, and worked with him at Merton Abbey on an illustration of *The Goose Girl* that accompanied Morris’s tapestry on the same theme.

The roots of the Arts and Crafts movement are in Red House – ‘Webb’s new approach to the Gothic’ – and lead to Morris connecting a ‘moral dimension to the home’ so that the ‘benefits of home could be extended down the social scale to be enjoyed by everybody.’

Review of ‘The Beauty of Life: William Morris and the Art of Design’ exhibition curated by Dianne Waggoner at the Yale Center for British Art suggests how we continue to be attracted by Morris’s contradictory appeals to a ‘mythologized medieval past,’ handicrafts, and serial production in a machine age.

Morris placed textiles on an equal footing with other arts, envisioning ‘the total work of art’ and the ‘unity of artistic design and craftsmanship.’

Detailed photographs of Red House were found in an album from the 1890s, when the house was owned by Charles Holme, the decorative-arts business-partner of Christopher Dresser and the founder and later editor of *The Studio.*

Wild & Wolf, consultants on product design, has collaborated with the Victoria & Albert on a collection of garden tools (trowels, secateurs, tape measures, scissors, pliers, and hammers) featuring Morris designs.

Included with the illustrated book is a CD-ROM featuring digital versions
of many Morris designs, useful for printing and illustration purposes.


American Arts and Crafts ideology evolved directly from Ruskin and from Morris's writings and designs and can be seen in the works of Mary McLaughlin, Adelaide Rovineau, Maria Storer, Candace Wheeler, as well as in the founding of several Arts and Crafts communities and societies that created a studio environment and instructive organization.

**Book Design**


Mullard was an American bookseller who encouraged wealthy California patrons like Estelle Doheny to collect Morris's calligraphy and Kelmscott Press books.


Meeting Morris in 1892 – ‘the luckiest day of his life’ – and first employed to catalogue Morris's library, Sydney Cockerell would become an authority on medieval manuscripts.


A brief review of the Arts and Crafts style of decoration and the Kelmscott Press concludes that modern graphic designers rejected Morris's small-scale production and historicist styles as ‘inappropriate for a new, modern urban society’.


The impact of the ‘Ruskin-Morris tradition’ can be seen in such Irish private presses as the Dum Emer-Cuala, self-defined as ‘an Arts and Crafts enter—
prise,’ the Dolmen Press, and the Gallery Press.


120. Jubert, Roxanne. ‘Arts and Crafts and the Private Press.’ Typography and Graphic Design: From Antiquity to the Present. Paris: Tlammarian, 2006. 109–12. Morris’s contributions to the Arts and Crafts and to book design are summarized, with attention to his concerns with type design, the relation between text and space, the double-page unit, and the quality of materials.


122. Miller, Elizabeth Carolyn. ‘Collections and Collectivity: William Morris in the Rare Book Room.’ The Journal of William Morris Studies, 17 (Summer 2007): 73–88. Teaching Morris in the rare-book room encourages students to ‘pay attention to medium and form,’ to consider Morris’s ‘ideal of a publicly-owned textual inheritance, publicly accessible art,’ and to explore the ‘complex politics of Morris’s aesthetics and insistence that the practice of production is as important as the product.’

Morris’s Arts and Crafts approach to typography and his recognition that ‘aesthetic decisions have deep political and cultural dimensions’ have influenced postmodern American poets.

Morris’s handmade books for the Kelmscott Press exemplify how such para-textual concerns of design, illustration, title page, and advertisements break out of the ‘generic roles to take an active part in the aestheticization of books and their reading.’

Politics

In terms of Walter Benjamin’s Arcade Project, the utopian mode of production in News from Nowhere does not ‘escape the gravitational force of the dreamscape’s of capitalist mass consumption represented by recreational shopping.

From Thomas Spence and Charles Hall in the late 1700s to William Cobbett, Ernest Jones, Robert Blatchford, and Morris, English socialists follow a tradition that links radicalism not with modernization, but with nostalgia for an idealized culture destroyed ‘by capitalism and industrialism.’

Morris founded the SPAB to replace the practice of renovation with a policy of historic preservation, a conservative practice of repair that respects the integrity of the original building. His two-sided view of the Gothic Revival is reviewed, as he denounced the fashion for adding incompatible Gothic features that did not respect the Gothic tradition.

Like the libertarian Robert Nozick, who advocates the need for a meta-utopian framework, Morris provides in his lectures a framework for *News from Nowhere* that is not rigid but based on a sensual utopian imagination.

Though *News from Nowhere* is the most anarchistic utopia, Morris opposed the violence and individualism of anarchism, and should be considered a libertarian communist like E.P. Thompson, whose study of Morris is discussed.

A Conservative MP charges that the governing Labour Party has forgotten Morris’s teachings and has failed to provide meaningful and attractive training programs.

This exploration of ‘the problem of labor’ contains a chapter entitled ‘John Ruskin and William Morris: An Alternative Tradition: Labor and the Theo-aesthetic in English Romantic Critiques of Capitalism.’ (Not seen.)

Morris’s socialism was not internationalist but ‘consistent with expressions of nationality’ and ‘his communitarianism was grounded on a concept of enjoyable labour, not friendship as is often supposed’.

Morris was a forerunner of the political movement that links ecology and socialism, insisting on ‘the transformation of capitalist production’ in order to restore ‘a harmonious relationship between society and nature.’

Morris’s lectures on the decorative arts in the 1870s, his political lectures in the 1880s, and his prose romances in the 1890s exemplify his consistent progression through aesthetic (1877–82), militant (1883–90) and visionary (1891–96) socialist phases in his campaign to revolutionize the fundamental nature of work so that work and play become synonymous.


tion of each talk is discussed, and the study concludes with Morris’s lasting
influence on Oxford and the influence of Oxford on Morris.

141. Shea, Daniel Patrick. ‘Going into Labor: Production and Reproduction in
Olive Schreiner, Rider Haggard, and Morris (in News from Nowhere and his
lectures) manipulate the relation between economic production and bio-
logical reproduction ‘in order to restore, reshape, or revolutionize Britain’s
political and biological character,’ as Morris flirts ominously with eugenics.

142. Stetz, Margaret D. ‘“Caught in the Trap”: William Morris, Machinery, and
Popular Film from Charlie Chaplin to Nick Park.’ Journal of Pre-Raphaelite
Studies, ns 15 (Spring 2006): 61–73.
Morris and Chaplin were socialists and artistic perfectionists who drama-
tized the escape from the oppressive traps of authority and machinery, a
rebel tradition carried on by John Lennon and by Nick Park and Peter Lord’s
animated film, Chicken Run.

143. Waithe, Marcus. ‘The Laws of Hospitality: Liberty, Generosity, and the
Limits of Dissent in William Morris’s The Tables Turned and News from
Morris’s depictions of Justice Nupkins, Old Hammond, and self-parodies
of grumbling dissenters demonstrate a socialist society marked by openness
and equality, though hospitality can assume the sinister effect of a regulatory
code of conduct, with individuals practising conformity to avoid embarrass-
ment.

144. Wills, Sara. The Greening of William Morris: A Reasonable Share in the
Wills ‘follows the presence of nature in the work of this inspirational design-
er and focuses on his many lectures and writings to prove that his context
was nineteenth-century materialism and culture rather than modern-day
conservation or eco-spiritualism.’ [Not seen.]
WILLIAM MORRIS: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Reviews

Edited by Peter Faulkner


Whereas mention of Morris’s socialism was once almost taboo, discussion of his commitment to revolutionary socialism is now relatively commonplace in treatments of his political thought. Nevertheless, short, accessible studies of Morris’s politics are still difficult to find. Accounts which take Morris’s socialism as their main focus are still rarer. Hassan Mahamdallie’s short introduction does not underplay the significance of Morris’s literature or his designing but, forcefully asserting the link between these aspects of Morris’s work and his socialism, usefully fills a gap in the existing literature.

Mahamdallie’s book is structured around three essays, each fully referenced. The first traces Morris’s journey across the ‘river of fire’ and shows how his early disenchantment with the effects of industrial production and commerce shaped his decision to declare for socialism. The second follows Morris’s progress through the Social Democratic Federation to the Socialist League, and ends with a description of Bloody Sunday. The last section focuses on Morris’s socialist writings. *A Dream of John Ball* and *News From Nowhere* form the backbone for the discussion but Mahamdallie also examines some of Morris’s important essays, notably ‘Useful Work Versus Useless Toil’.

The first section is prefaced by a series of selections from Morris’s writings, each headed to highlight some of Mahamdallie’s central themes – war and imperialism, capitalism and the environment, sweatshop labour and the profit system. The collection closes with Morris’s ‘Chants for Socialists’. The book is illustrated with well-produced cartoons and photographs; it includes a list of links to Morris organisations and a short bibliography for further reading. The design is not only attractive but the organisation and selection of the material gives real weight to Morris’s words, captures the breadth of his talent and successfully makes even familiar ideas appear new and fresh.

Mahamdallie’s analysis draws on familiar sources: A. L. Morton, E. P. Thompson and Fiona MacCarthy, and it does not pretend to add to published scholarship. However, his evaluation of Morris’s socialism is both interesting and persuasive. His general claim is that Morris’s thought remains important in the modern...
world. Morris’s achievements, he argues, ‘deserve to be rediscovered by a new generation of artists, activists and socialists’, because if you could sum up Morris’s message to the Victorian working class it would surely be ‘Another world is possible’ (p. 5). Morris was a utopian – in a creative and dynamic sense; Morris was a dreamer – who laboured actively to inspire; and Morris was a poet of ‘exquisite despair’ – who challenged existing configurations of power and dedicated his life to the revolutionary transformation of social, political and economic life.

Within this broad claim, Mahamdallie spotlights three areas of Morris’s work for special consideration: his anti-imperialism, his critique of work in capitalism and his concern for the environment. The first theme, which runs through Mahamdallie’s analysis and is clearly central to his assessment of Morris, paints Morris both as critic of colonialism and jingoism and a genuinely colour-blind campaigner for workers’ solidarity. Morris, Mahamdallie reminds us, championed the cause of migrant workers, acutely sensitive to the exploitation and discrimination they suffered. The second theme, Morris’s treatment of work, is discussed in the last chapter of the book, largely through a reading of ‘Useful Work’. Mahamdallie does not explore fully the links between Morris’s concept of labour in socialism and his understanding of art, but rightly argues that the idea of voluntary, creative labour was fundamental to his socialist vision. In his discussion of the third area, Morris’s political ecology, Mahamdallie does link Morris’s interest back to his art and suggests that his profound sense of the destructive power of industrial capitalism turned Morris into a pioneer: quoting John Bellamy Foster, one of the ‘formative Green thinkers in the English context’ (p. 88).

Mahamdallie is not so much interested in asserting Morris’s relevance to modern socialist struggles, but the continuing resonance of his work. The claims are that there are parallels between nineteenth-century socialist struggles and the campaign for global justice and that problems which Morris’s identified in Victorian Britain persist today, not that the approach Morris adopted towards their solution was always right. On the contrary, Mahamdallie identifies a number of strategic weaknesses in the positions Morris adopted: notably, the priority he attached to education over organisation, his anti-parliamentarianism and his suspicion of trade unions (pp. 94–6). These judgements are informed by a class analysis of nineteenth-century British politics which runs through all three chapters. One of the strengths of this analysis is that it encourages Mahamdallie to contextualise his treatment of Morris: the book successfully explains the development of the British trade union movement and the rise of the new unionism; discusses the economic crises which helped fuel them and examines important changes in industrial production, in colonisation and political reform. In addition, Morris’s views are explored in relation to those of other leading activists: H.M. Hyndman and Eleanor Marx are the two most prominent. The disadvantage is that it encourages Mahamdallie to deliver some unneces-
sarily judgmental pronouncements about Morris’s politics. Some of these are hardly contestable. That Morris would have been a critic of New Labour, for example, is unlikely to excite much comment. That Morris would have given unqualified support to the Russian Revolution is perhaps more questionable and that he ‘was certain that the road to socialism would involve the “dictatorship of the proletariat” ’ (p. 50) is highly contentious. Mahamdallie’s desire to assess Morris’s politics with reference to the class analysis he prefers also encourages him to make claims about the orthodoxy of Morris’s Marxism which seem at times to be overly reductive and at other times distracting. For example, Mahamdallie’s treatment of medievalism in A Dream of John Ball is limited by the assumptions he reads into Morris’s understanding of historical materialism; and the discussion of Morris’s ecologism is nearly swamped by a largely irrelevant defence of Marx’s green credentials: the principal claim Mahamdallie wants to make about the pioneering vision of News From Nowhere is significantly undermined by the suggestion that Morris merely echoed Marx. (p. 88)

It would be misleading to suggest that Mahamdallie’s book is narrowly sectarian. Mahamdallie certainly follows Morton and Thompson in wanting to re-assert Morris’s commitment to revolutionary socialism and, chastising Morris for this toleration of the anarchists in the League, is quite open about the socialist legacy he wants to defend (the book builds on an article first published in International Socialism). But he resists the temptation to narrowly pigeonhole Morris by explicitly signing him up to a party political cause. Moreover, his ability to link the struggles of Victorian socialism to twenty-first century politics adds depth and richness to his account. His obvious enthusiasm for Morris and his knowledge of the period, its literature and politics also make the book highly readable. Although the language of class struggle demands a familiarity with socialist thought which newcomers to Morris studies might lack (and/or find unattractive), the picture of Morris’s socialism which Mahamdallie paints is highly appealing. And the attractiveness of the book should help him find a wide readership.

Ruth Kinna


The conflicting dictates of personal and collective fulfilment in class society produce many and complex effects. So much has been clear not only to Socialists over the last two centuries but in all major tendencies of Enlightenment thought. And few lives, surely, can be seen better to exemplify their problematical nature than
that of Robert Cunninghame Graham. Born to inherit the position of laird of an extensive though declining and perpetually struggling Scottish estate (owing to the intricacies of the Scottish class system a significantly ambiguous one, floating – in English terms – somewhere between aristocracy and gentry) he came to inhabit, for the most part of a long and exceptionally active life, that pantheon of traitors to their class which has contributed so much to the history of socialism, and which includes such diverse figures as Fidel Castro, Lenin, Mao Zedong and Clement Attlee.

Two factors – one experiential, the other intellectual – would seem mainly to have informed Graham’s path to revolutionary socialism: the life, struggles and solidarity of the Latin American gauchos whom he came to know initially during their years of decline when, as a youthful adventurer of eighteen, he sought to retrieve the family fortunes abroad; and later the thought and writing of William Morris. Together, they brought him to decades of ceaseless class-war activity – not only as the first declared Socialist in the UK House of Commons (though nominally a Liberal, selected \textit{via} what now seems a bizarre combination of growing working-class consciousness and inherited deference) during the critical years 1884–9, but also as a militant supporter of Irish independence, of the match-girls and their famous strike, and of countless instances of working-class struggle in the London and Liverpool docks and elsewhere.

Anne Taylor attributes this exceptional activity – which when considered suggests him as combining elements of Byron, T.E. Lawrence (whom he knew), André Malraux and Tam Dalyell (to name but a few) – to an overriding sense of \textit{noblesse oblige}. But this seems to me much too simple. True, Graham, in moments of exasperation, could vent his spleen upon the ‘cowardly’ working class; but these are at worst occasional irritations, shared with his friend George Bernard Shaw, who originated in the precarious world of the Dublin Protestant petty-bourgeoisie. Undoubtedly, aesthetics played a greater part in Graham’s world-view than in that of many socialists; he detested Texas for instance, but adored Mexico. When he had the opportunity to decorate a residence apart from his native and terminally crumbling Gartmore, as a friend of Whistler and Millais, and, as it seems of, everyone else, he did so in the light and airy style of the 1890’s \textit{avant-garde}. Morris would have approved (and probably did).

Rather Graham’s political choices would seem to have been the consequence of a rational awareness of the extent of suffering world wide, and its causes. His condemnations of the latter were rarely couched in terms of moral denunciation (a welcome rarity in an age when progressive thinking in Britain was largely dominated by adaptations of Ruskin and Carlyle), but rather turned on contempt for the incompetence and stupidity of the ruling class. (In this connection the author gives us an intriguing and moving account of Graham’s boyhood relationship with his step-grandfather Admiral Katon, whose tales of life aboard ship,
reviews

and of the necessary interdependence of all ranks, also affected him profoundly).

The 1880s may in retrospect be seen as the most significant decade of Graham’s remarkably active life. Though not actually a Marxist (like Morris, he eventually read *Capital* in French translation, and met Engels, to their mutual admiration, after Marx’s death), he was informed by Morris (the men of whose Icelandic Sagas he felt had much in common with his *gauchos*) and by the writings of Hyndman and the Social Democratic Federation. On entry into Parliament, it never occurred to him to moderate his views; one wonders at the tolerance of his fellow Liberal MPs (many of them still traditional Whigs) of his ‘class war’ parliamentary declaration – a tolerance, alas, less generally to be observed some one hundred and twenty years later.

The crucial moment of Graham’s career – as indeed of British class politics and society during the later nineteenth century – was to be ‘Bloody Sunday’ of November 1887; the repression of a mass working class demonstration against the imprisonment and alleged torture of an Irish MP, O’Brien, but also against unemployment and government inactivity in an acutely fractious decade. It is tempting to see the event as emblematic of British left-wing activities in both their positive and negative aspects. Certainly it focused the awareness of masses of workers in preparation for the struggles of decades ahead. Severely beaten by the police (to which circumstance, his later supposed eccentricity was often to be attributed), he was rewarded, together with John Burns, with six weeks in Pentonville; a sentence oddly termed ‘lenient’ by Ms Taylor (He subsequently had his tailor make up a convict’s uniform, complete with arrows, and wore it on his return to Parliament).

His friends on the Left come out of the confrontation with, perhaps, less credit; Shaw later recounted, with characteristically exuberant self-denigration, that he had not so much fled the police as ‘skedaddled’, and had not stopped running until he reached the perennial sanctuary of progressives, Hampstead Heath; Morris, for once not present, confined himself, in one of his less glorious moments, to the gloomy prognostication to Graham awaiting trial, that ‘an English prison is torture, and is meant to be so.’ (Though characteristically, Morris was shortly afterwards to express his deep regret at his relative inactivity in the whole affair).

Graham would seem – after not being re-elected in 1889, and at least until 1914 – to have maintained generally cordial and often productive relations with leading political figures to the left of Toryism, from Ben Tillett to Sir Edward Grey. But it is perhaps in his parliamentary period that his most significant interventions were made. His general position was in many ways similar to that later taken by Jean Jaurès and Rosa Luxemburg, a refusal to counterpose reform to revolution, and an assertion of the necessity of the one as a stimulus to the other.
Thus – as the first advocate in Parliament of nationalisation of the mines – he could articulate a penetrating critique of the generation among the workers of an ideology hostile to their interests which precedes Gramsci; his fervent opposition to Bradlaugh’s radical individualism and his advocacy of the Eight Hours Bill, tended to confront, on behalf of the workers, a situation where working-class self-activity was as yet insufficiently developed. And yet – in radical opposition to Morris as to the viability of Parliament as an institution – he was as committed to the notion of the cultural transformation of art, for and by the people – as the mentor with whom he so often disagreed.

Graham was a consequential internationalist; in 1889 he presided over the congress in Paris from which developed the Second International. His last major activity as a Socialist was in opposing war in 1914, and in calling – together with Jaurès, Luxemburg and Keir Hardie – for international general strikes. Yet only a few months later – the dislocation of the code by which he had lived here becomes only too evident – he was, with the rank of colonel, in Uruguay buying horses for the British army. The enterprise reads like a grisly parody of his youthful adventures on the pampas; as the last point of a parabola in which the agent has moved from definition as an individual to recognition of the need for collective subjectivity, and subsequently to acquiescence in the forces of oppression.

Graham’s later politics constitute a depressing litany of the Right – loathing of conscientious objectors and the Russian revolution, complicity in a Scottish nationalist politics considerably infused with reactionary and even Fascist tendencies. Only his penultimate publication of 1933, a lengthy denunciation of Paraguayan dictator Francisco Lopez and his regime, might seem to weigh heavily in the balance against accommodated reaction. And yet, whilst it would plainly be over-simple to separate the politician Graham of pre-1914 from the significant writer of the inter-war years, Ms Taylor’s account suggests, as far as the later period is concerned, a body of narration whose logic, largely concerned with Latin American experience and memory, remains inherently progressive. It certainly seems more substantial than the mere picturesqueness of Graham’s Arabian ‘Greenmantle phase’ as she terms it, with its origins in his involvement, even before 1914, in the murky operation of imperialist rivalry.

It is perhaps to be regretted that Ms Taylor does not consider Graham’s writings – fictional, historical, (semi)-autobiographical – more fully. In this domain, indeed, she shows herself less critically acute than Cedric Watts & Laurence Davies in their Cunningham Graham: a Critical Biography (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1979), yet she is also capable of critical insights of great pertinence. Her evocation of the men of the S.D.F. counter-demonstration to the Lord Mayor’s Show in ‘flat caps and shabby bowlers … no one would have dreamed of going bare-headed’, is informed with a generous sympathy appropriate to the best instincts of her subject. Otherwise, whilst noting Graham’s fluency in Scots, she penetrates
the heart of his complications in stressing his difficulties in writing ‘the authentic voice of working men ... [his] uneasy representation of their speech.’ And her account of the loss of discursive power between his elegy for Morris of 1898 and that for Keir Hardie of 1915 is powerful and irrefutable.

On the subject of Graham’s relationships with women – quite as intriguing and extraordinary as his travel and political experiences – her accounts are less focused. His marriage – over decades a semi-detached relationship – was evidently one of true, if unorthodox companionship founded on a mutual propensity for melodrama and Graham’s attraction to women not to be trifled with. Gabrielle de la Balmondière (née Caroline Horsfall in Masham, Yorks), it is suggested, married Graham under a false name, after a hidden pregnancy and a brief career in prostitution (though the latter allegation is unjustifiably and somewhat implausibly based only on a story written by Graham himself twenty years after her death). His serial philandering during their period of separation is more believably and briefly referred to; of Gabrielle’s extra-marital relationships, we only hear that the radical journalist W.T. Stead ‘came on’ to her strongly whilst Graham was in jail, but with an outcome which remains unknown.

The couple’s periods spent together in the great house of Gartmore on the Lake of Menteith (inland from Stirling), were like nothing so much, it appears, as a Molière comedy, with financial doom perpetually threatening, and Gabrielle – as convinced a revolutionary as her husband – throwing tantrums in the uncertain foreign accent she adopted for most of her life, and beating her Spanish servant and occasional travelling companion, the aptly named Peregrina. But her burial on the Isle of Inchmahome in the Lake gives quite an alternative inflection; with Graham and the old gravedigger rowing the coffin over the lake and together rolling the stone from the grave in the ruined chapel, the scene – the most striking in the whole book – could be straight out of Scott or Stendhal; the culmination of a shared lifestyle, Romantic in much more than the commonplace usage.

Despite some of the criticisms which I have noted, this is a work of fascinating erudition. Ms Taylor has, in addition to the more foreseeable sources, trawled not only through the press of various provincial localities but also through mountains of Scottish legal documents – and contrived to bring their significance alive. Even her occasional digressions – on the Countess Harley Teleki’s trip to Egypt, on H.G. Macdonell’s report on the Plate Republics, or on Mrs Beeton’s opinions on the treatment of typhus – are generally intriguing. Above all, this biography leaves us with an unforgettable realisation of a man who believed that life should be fun – and that such a condition should be available to all.

John E. Coombes

Paul Delany has written a detailed and sympathetic account of the largely unhappy life of the novelist George Gissing (1857–1903). It is a remarkable story. Born in Wakefield, the eldest son of a successful pharmacist who became a leading figure in local Liberal politics, Gissing was an academically gifted boy and young man, who won a scholarship to Owens College in Manchester. A promising career was cut short as the result of his falling in love with Nell Harrison, a seventeen-year-old prostitute from nearby Shropshire with what would now be seen as a serious drink problem. In order to keep Nell in funds, Gissing resorted to stealing from his fellow-students, was caught, and sentenced to one month in prison with hard labour. After this start, life was likely to be difficult. Soon after leaving prison, he went to America, but found the people he met too loud and ‘hopelessly vulgar’, and soon returned to England. He settled in London, trying to make a living by writing and private teaching as described in his novel New Grub Street, and brought Nell to London so that they could marry and live together. Nell proved incapable of overcoming her alcoholism to become the companion Gissing hoped to make of her; the relationship became increasingly painful to them both. Much of their married life was spent apart, and Nell died in grim poverty in Lower Marsh early in 1888.

Despite the difficulties of his life, Gissing succeeded in publishing Workers in the Dawn (1880), The Unclassed (1884), Demos (1885), Thyrza (1887) and The Nether World (1889), all conveying a sense of the grimness of lower-class life in contemporary London. They were received with some critical respect, but the financial returns were poor. Fortunately, Gissing was supported by the Positivist thinker Frederic Harrison, whose sons he taught privately. The circumstances of his life remained difficult. With a kind of sad inevitability, on the death of Nell, Gissing turned to another unstable working-class woman, Edith Underwood, marriage to whom was to prove equally unfortunate and unhappy; two sons were born to the couple, the elder of whom was brought up by Gissing’s two unmarried sisters, the younger on a farm in Cornwall, after his mother had been diagnosed as insane and sent to a private asylum. Gissing was not close to either of them, but managed to ensure a public-school education for them at Gresham’s. Somehow he managed to keep his literary career going, and established positive relations with a number of his fellow writers, including Meredith, Hardy, James, Conrad and, most intimately, H.G. Wells; he also had a number of supportive middle-class women friends.

Gissing’s third significant relationship was with a Frenchwoman of this class,
Gabrielle Fleury, who admired and translated some of his work. Although this was a happier relationship in many ways, the fact that they could not marry forced Gissing to live in France, which he did not really enjoy, especially as he found his wife’s invalid mother unsympathetic and dictatorial. His later novels included *New Grub Street* (1891), *The Odd Women* (1893), dealing sympathetically with the problems of women’s lives in and reissued by Virago in 1980, and *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1903), in which a middle-aged writer withdraws from London to live happily and alone in the Devon countryside, away from the miseries of the city. He also wrote book on Dickens in 1898 and a travel book, *By the Ionian Sea*, in 1901. He died of pneumonia near St. Jean Pied-de-Port at the early age of 46, having embarked on *Veranilda*, an ambitious historical novel about the late Roman Empire (he had long been an admirer of Gibbon).

In his thoughtful book on Dickens, Gissing remarks that Dickens was a middle-class Radical whose undoubted sympathy for the sufferings of the poor did not make him think that they were capable of creating a better future for themselves; in this sense, Gissing emphatically denied that Dickens was a democrat. For Dickens, no believer in political solutions to social problems, the only hope lay in a renewed Christian philanthropy, shown in the novels through such figures as the Cheeryble brothers and John Jarndyce. Since Gissing did not believe in Christianity, and was highly critical of his sisters’ conventional piety, his political view was even bleaker than Dickens’s. He was sharply aware from his own experience of the sufferings of the poor, but came to believe that they were an inevitable part of the modern human condition; perhaps too the poor were able to find pleasure in activities like public-house drinking that would have been objectionable to the more sensitive and fastidious. But he had no time at all for conventional society. Thus he denounced the Queen’s Golden Jubilee as ‘the most gigantic organized exhibition of fatuity, vulgarity and blatant blackguardism on record’ (quoted p.128) – a description Morris would surely have enjoyed.

Gissing regretted Morris’s decision to become active in politics, which he saw – rather as Burne-Jones did – as an error likely to bring Morris down into the lower depths of confusion and unhappiness. Delany tells us that he admired ‘both Morris’s poetry and the values of the Arts and Crafts movement’ (p. 91), though he gives no evidence for the latter evaluation. In a letter he stated with apparent sympathy that ‘Younger men (like W. Morris) are turning from artistic work to social agitation, just because they fear that art will be crushed out of the world as things are’. (quoted p. 91) But a little later he told his brother, ‘I grieve to see Morris in the companionship of the Secular Review, and of men like Ingersoll and the rest. It is deplorable. I confess I get more and more aristocratic in my leanings, and cannot excuse faults of manner in consideration of the end.’ (quoted p. 92) So in September 1885, he expressed his indignation over Morris’s having allowed himself to get into the position of being charged in court with...
assaulting a policeman: ‘alas, what the devil is such a man doing in that galley? It is painful to me beyond expression. Why cannot he write poetry in the shade? He will inevitably coarsen himself in the company of ruffians.’ (quoted p. 93)

Gissing’s disagreement with Morris found expression in the novel Demos, A Story of English Socialism in 1885. Indeed, Delany claims interestingly that ‘Gissing’s explicitly political phase, beginning with Demos, can be framed as a debate with William Morris’. (p. 91) In Delany’s view, Morris, ‘possessed by a dream of fellowship with the workers’, saw them ‘as types rather than individuals’, while Gissing, being well aware of ‘the mixture of characters to be found in the slums’ and concerned to distinguish between the worthy and the unworthy poor, had an ‘eye for difference that enlivens his brilliant account of the socialist meeting in chapter 6 of Demos.’ (p. 92) ‘The account of the meeting is grimly satirical, and perhaps does not do justice to the seriousness of these occasions. While writing the book, Gissing attended a meeting of the Socialist League in what he called the ‘shed’ next to Kelmscott House in November 1885. He does not seem to have recorded the speaker or the subject, but was evidently greatly taken by May, then aged twenty-three, whom he described vividly: ‘There was Miss Morris – the secretary of the Branch – talking familiarly with working men. She is astonishingly handsome, pure Greek profile, with hair short on her neck; wore a long fur-trimmed cloak, and Tam O’Shanter cap of velvet. Unmistakably like her mother, – the origin of Rossetti’s best type.’ (p. 94) (It would appear that Gissing was not personally acquainted with any of the Morris family).

He later introduced an idealised May as a character in the novel, in the person of Stella Westlake. She is the wife rather than daughter of the wealthy socialist who is often seen as a Morris figure – though it seems to me that Mr. Westlake, a gentle idealist and writer, is much more like Harrison than Morris. The beautiful and dreamy Mrs. Westlake is presented as a kind of distant Muse of the socialists, not at all the light in which Gissing had seen May at the Socialist League meeting. Delany quotes a remarkable passage about Mrs. Westlake: ‘The white swan’s down at her throat – she was perfectly attired – made the skin above resemble rich-hued marble, and indeed to gaze at her long was to be impressed as by the sad loveliness of a supreme work of art’. (quoted p. 94) Politically, as Delany says, ‘Gissing mistrusted alliances between aspiring workers and conscience-stricken middle-class intellectuals’ (p. 95) and he conveys his mistrust in Demos. But this can hardly be said to be the novel’s main concern. Mr. Westlake ends the novel as serenely as he enters it, while the reader’s attention is directed for the most part to the story of Richard Mutimer.

Mutimer is a young working-class London socialist of considerable potential, who unexpectedly inherits a large sum of money. He decides to use the money to further the socialist cause by developing an industrial colony in a beautiful valley in the Midlands, following the example of Robert Owen. However, he gradu-
ally moves away from his early ideals; he marries an upper-middle-class young woman, Adela Waltham (who wrongly believes that she has been betrayed by Hubert Eldon, an admirer of her own class); becomes impatient with the failure of his industrial colony; and asserts himself in the socialist movement in increasingly arrogant ways. By this time, somewhat melodramatically, a new will has been discovered, restoring the property to Eldon, for whom it was originally intended. This leads to an interesting argument between the Adela and Hubert about what should happen when the industrial colony is abandoned. Adela asks Hubert whether he could not arrange for it to continue, providing necessary work for those who have moved there. He refuses: ‘I will replant the orchards and mark out the fields as before’. (Ch. XXVI) To Adela’s question, ‘Then you think grass and trees of more importance than human lives?’ Hubert replies, ‘I had rather say that I see no value in human lives in a world from which grass and trees have vanished … The ruling motive of my life is the love of beautiful things ...’ At this stage in the novel the argument is left unresolved, but Hubert soon exerts his power. The workers are offered a month’s wages, and told that they may ‘inhabit their present abodes for a fortnight. After that they no longer had right of tenancy’. (Ch. XIX) The valley is restored to its former beauty; if Gissing may be seen as something of an environmentalist in his concern here, he is at the aesthetic end of environmentalism. Adela returns to Hubert, and the last words of the novel assure us that with him ‘she had achieved her womanhood’.

Mutimer’s story moves to a disastrous conclusion. His defiance of some of the most aggressive of his fellow-socialists at an acrimonious meeting culminates in a powerfully described riot, in which Mutimer is killed by a rock thrown from the violent mob. Mutimer is not treated without sympathy as he tries to cope with life in circumstances for which he is totally unprepared, but it is implied that his working-class background makes him an unsuitable husband for a lady. Moreover, the country vicar, Mr. Wyvern, who appears as the voice of mature reflection – he had once been a kind of socialist, but is now older and wiser – expresses the view that the poor are no unhappier than the rich: ‘Go along the poorest street in the East End of London, and you will hear as much laughter, witness as much gaiety, as in any thoroughfare of the West ... A being of superior intelligence regarding humanity with an eye of perfect understanding would discover that life was enjoyed every bit as much in the slum as in the palace’. (Ch. XXIX) Delany comments reasonably that this argument ‘doesn’t take into account that the poor could be better fed and housed and still have their old enjoyments’. (p. 96) Since this book is a biography, Delany sees it as his responsibility to try to convey an accurate idea of Gissing’s views rather than to support or contest them. His final comment on Demos is that ‘Gissing was not writing a treatise, but a novel; he wanted to show how different people lived out their political beliefs, and to understand his own position in the political arena. He still felt pity for those
crushed by the world... But his own solution had to be some kind of escape, begin-
ning with psychic detachment from the worldly struggle.’ (p. 98) He particularly
and justifiably praises the description of Manor Park cemetery, where one of the
working-class characters is buried, as ‘one of Gissing’s great set-pieces’. (p. 98)
This biography (which contains a splendidly detailed index) enables
us to see quite how necessary it was for the in-many-ways-unfortunate Giss-
ing to seek detachment rather than commitment, though we can only won-
der about the price that his fiction may have paid for this. In his Introduction,
Delany quotes the remark of George Orwell in 1946 that Gissing was ‘perhaps
the best novelist England has produced’. (quoted p. ix) This is hardly a claim
generally likely to gain much support today, and Delany himself does not try to make
it. Instead he gives a full and sympathetic account of a man whose ‘obses-
siveness and emotional rigidity limited the use he could make of his remark-
able intelligence.’ (p. xi) Gissing’s story can be seen as an example of just how
wasteful late-nineteenth-century society could be of its human potential.

Peter Faulkner

1–59213–922–1, $25.95.

This volume is misleadingly titled since it collects seven articles on different top-
ics, first published between 1978 and 1995, but they do include a two-part ‘Issues
in the Historiography of Communism’. Michael E. Brown is a sociologist, not
an historian, and no fewer than four items first appeared in a journal, *Socialism
and Democracy*, of which he was co-founder ‘more than twenty years ago’ (p. vii).
He is still living the Cold War – ‘the American hegemonistic project called “the
Cold War”’ (p. 97) – by which he is obsessed, and the only Communist Party he
is concerned with is, disappointingly, the CPUSA. More particularly it is Theo-
dore Draper and his pioneering *The Roots of American Communism* (1957) which
monopolise his attention. Brown ‘theorizes’ or ‘conceptualizes’ anything and
everything – and does he love placing words within inverted commas! His favour-
te, other than ‘theory’, is ‘immanent’, his publisher remarking that he ‘develops
the idea of history as an immanent feature of human activities….’

Brown reprints a short piece on *Society against the State* (1977), the impor-
tant survey of the statelessness of the Amerindians by the French anarchist
anthropologist, Pierre Clastres. He is unpredictably generous in his assess-
ment, presumably originally a review, apparently attracted like some other con-
temporary Marxists to anarchist utopianism (for me an alarming tendency).
Morris is never mentioned by Brown and the chapter most likely to interest readers of this journal is ‘History and History’s Problem’, devoted to E.P. Thompson’s ‘The Crime of Anonymity’. Although Thompson wrote nothing finer, this essay is not widely known since it was included in the collective volume, *Albion’s Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (1975) and has never been reprinted other than (and then regrettably without the lengthy appendix, ‘A Sampler of Letters’) in *The Essential E.P. Thompson* (New York: The New Press, 2001), edited by Dorothy Thompson. (This revealing selection extracts from *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* ‘The “Anti-Scrape”’, ‘The River of Fire’ and naturally the great 1976 Postscript.) Yet Brown’s analysis of ‘The Crime of Anonymity’ cannot be recommended. He fusses for pages over Thompson’s third paragraph and finally turns at similar length to the concluding paragraph. He has little feel for the history of the period, 1750–1830, and mistakes the *London Gazette*, from which Thompson draws the texts of most of his anonymous, threatening letters, for a newspaper. He admires Thompson as a great historian, but is uneasy with the exuberance of his writing. He not unreasonably claims Thompson as a founder of ‘cultural studies’ and even more reasonably dwells on the congruence between sociology and Thompson’s kind of social history, but is seemingly unaware of Thompsonian contempt for cultural studies and rejection of the discipline of sociology. He does, though, note unhappily Thompson’s assault in ‘The Poverty of Theory’ on Louis Althusser and the Althusserians. If Thompson himself had been the reviewer of this book he would surely have thundered against French theory as ‘conceptualized’ by Brown.

Brown cites the final sentences of ‘The Crime of Anonymity’:

> It would now seem, Richard Cobb tells us, that half the valets of pre-Revolutionary Paris, who followed the nobility servilely through the suave salons, were nourishing in their reveries anticipations of the guillotine falling upon the white and powdered necks about them. But, if the guillotine had never been set up, the reveries of these valets would remain unknown. And historians would be able to write of the deference, or even consensus, of the ancien régime. The deference of eighteenth-century England may have been something like that, and these letters its reveries.

‘This’, according to Brown, ‘seems more precise and focused, less moralizing, and somehow more epistemological than Thompson’s earlier self-evaluation’ – in the hugely admired passage from the preface to *The Making of the English Working Class*:

> I am seeking to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the ‘obsolete’ hand-loom weaver, the ‘utopian’ artisan, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of
posterity. Their crafts and traditions may have been (dying. Their hos-
tility to the new industrialism may have been backward-looking. Their
communitarian ideals may have been) fantasies. Their insurrectionary
conspiracies may have been foolhardy. But they lived through these
times of acute social disturbance, and we did not. Their aspirations were
valid in terms of their own experience; and, if they were casualties of his-
tory, they remain, condemned in their own lives, as casualties.

Brown comments further:

Thompson sought to inculcate in his reader the sense that these stock-
ingers, croppers, and weavers were human and lived society as we are and
do. But his own passion overwhelmed the effort … (pp. 61–2)

What indeed would Thompson have made of all this, complete with Brown’s
bungling butchery of his resplendent prose?

David Goodway


This is an impressively wide-ranging, well-documented and intellectually
demanding book, whose ‘cast list’ reads as a *tour de force* of Western thought, from
the late eighteenth century to the present day. Here are Isaiah Berlin, Edmund
Burke, Thomas Carlyle, Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, William Hazlitt,
David Hume, Immanuel Kant, John Maynard Keynes (et *père* John Neville),
Thomas Kuhn, Thomas Malthus (although here, curiously, indicated only by
his second name, Robert), Alfred Marshall, Friedrich Nietzsche, David Ricardo,
Lionel Robbins, Joseph Schumpeter, Adam Smith (of course), C.P. Snow, and
Ludwig Wittgenstein, with walk-on parts for everyone from Aristotle to Mary
Wollstonecraft. The main characters are, however, Jeremy Bentham, Samuel
Taylor Coleridge, John Stuart Mill, and William Wordsworth (in his early, radic-
al *Lyrical Ballads* incarnation), and the main thesis is to use to the Romantics’
(mainly Coleridge’s) critique of utilitarianism in order to develop a new kind of
economics, as sometime embarked upon, but apparently never fully realised, by
Mill, ‘the principle *(sic)* protagonist’ (p. 31). As the subtitle suggests, the main
way such change might be effected is by introduction into economics of the
romantic sensibility, and in particular imagination, in order to counter the bale-
ful influence of utilitarianism, and its over-preoccupation with quantification,
commodification, and above all mechanism.

The world is presently divided into two types of economic animal: *Homo economicus*, the archetypal, Gradgrind, ‘economic man’ who deals only in facts, prices, costs and static equilibrium, and who is motivated only by self-interest, and *Homo sociologicus*, the creature of societal rules, roles and norms, who is strongly committed to the collective and the communal above the individual, but who is therefore the stiffer of creativity. Consequently, the main response to the current economic crisis is to call for *H. sociologicus* to rein in the wilder excesses of *H. economicus* by greater regulation. But what the author proposes is recognition of a third species (or in fact a third variety of the human psyche), *Homo romanticus*, the Romantic Economist of the title, who acknowledges both necessity and desire, who seeks to reconcile creativity with efficiency, and who employs imagination in order to transcend the restrictions of the utilitarian calculus (recognise anyone?). Finally, what is then proposed, is a merging of these three subspecies in order to develop a new kind of economics – another ‘Third Way’ – in which capitalism is reformed in order more fully to incorporate all three aspects of ‘human nature’. In this way, it is claimed, it will be rendered more humane, sustainable and caring, but also more creative and innovative, and will identify even more ways of creating new and undreamed of sources of wealth, but in ways which recognise the true nature of human beings, and of the modern, dynamic economy.

The details of romantic economics, as Bronk describes them, will appeal to greens, but not to Marxists, or to any other kind of Enlightenment thinker, in that the local, the regional, and the national are valued over and above the international. Because of the importance of history, language and culture, one of the key lessons of romantic economics is that there is no ‘universal pattern’ (p. 86), ‘no universally applicable answers to the practical or ethical problems of life’. (p. 94). Such ideas found their way into Romanticism mainly via Coleridge in England, and Goethe in Central Europe, both of whom were strongly influenced by the now neglected Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), a writer whose work is described by Clarence Glacken, in that wonderful book *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, as ‘a glorious sunset’ (p. 543) on the ancient view of nature now largely replaced by modernity. And this perhaps may indicate a flaw in the author’s own arguments, in that the main cast-list of the book (as indicated above) consists mainly of conservative writers such as Burke, Carlyle, Hume, Malthus, Schumpeter and Smith, and that for his key romantic ideas, he has consulted mainly the ‘Lake’ school of English Romanticism (Coleridge, Southey, Wordsworth), whereas had he given more emphasis to the ‘Cockneys’ (Blake, Hazlitt, Keats, Shelley) he might have obtained a different answer.

However, there is another, newer source of romantic economics, one which would probably have appealed to Coleridge, namely the ‘New Biology’ of Complexity Theory, which sees nature (and now, it seems, the economy) not as a system
which works by achieving the inherently manageable static equilibrium on which even the most sophisticated modern economic models – including the ‘post Neo-Classical Endogenous Growth Theory’ (transl. ‘something for nothing’) beloved of our current Prime Minister – are based, but as a dynamic, creative system operating ‘at the edge of chaos’, and possessing ‘emergent’ properties which cannot be predicted from those of their components. Such systems are more like living organisms, are inherently unpredictable, and therefore, despite all attempts so far, unmanageable, as many economists are currently learning, mainly at our expense. But herein perhaps lies a second flaw in the argument, for whereas there is some discussion of the applicability of Complexity Theory to economics (but Fritjof Capra does it much better in *The Hidden Connections*), there is precious little about the applicability or otherwise to the Earth of an economic system (however caring, imaginative and sensitive) which would still operate on the basis of limitless growth in a complex and inherently unpredictable finite nature. Also, although there is some discussion of those ‘incommensurable values’ which utilitarianism fails to comprehend, there is a general failure to distinguish between *value*, which is something an item possesses, and *values*, which are abstract ideas developed by humans. Thus, we all may hold inherently incommensurable values, but these may or may not concern the value or otherwise of commodities, services, or (another thing about which the book says nothing) of nature itself.

Therefore, although the book does consider the implications of Complexity Theory for economics, the implications of even a reformed capitalism for complex nature are ignored. In this respect, it remains true to its aims – to reform capitalism so that it takes account of new economic and ecological ideas; but as someone once remarked, the idea is not just to interpret the world, but to change it. Also, a more creative capitalism is surely potentially even more of a threat to humanity and to nature than the old kind, were that possible. Therefore, although much is made of Schumpeter’s ‘creative destruction’ as a model for romantic economics, what capitalism, creative or otherwise, actually destroys, are people’s lives, the self-reliant communities they once lived in, the stable, traditional societies they came from, and vast swathes of the surrounding nature, all in pursuit of flexibility, creativity and innovation. Count me out.

Last, a couple of editorial gripes. Although the book is impressively documented – of nearly four hundred pages, nigh on eighty are devoted to endnotes and references (an editor’s dream!) – and large sections of it, including a whole chapter, are devoted to John Stuart Mill, nowhere is there any mention of Harriet Taylor, even though it is she who is most often associated with the least utilitarian aspects of Mill’s writings. Second, as a scientist, I would, in future, be grateful if people from an arts/humanities background are going to use Linnaeus’s binomial taxonomic system – to which I have no objection – they use it properly. Thus, the correct taxonomic name for our species is not
homo sapiens (or even Homo Sapiens as the BBC loves to put it), but Homo sapiens, and the terms Homo economicus, Homo sociologicus and Homo romanticus should have appeared in that form throughout the book, and they do not. If it was good enough for the Baron von Linné, it’s good enough for the rest of us.

There is, as you may now have guessed, no mention of ‘our dear Morris’ in this book, although that may be fair enough, as it deals mainly with the early Romantic response to utilitarianism and the rest of the Enlightenment. There is only passing reference to Marx, who was apparently ‘mistaken’ about the tendency of capital to eliminate local and national differences. As indicated, some of Morris’s early mentors – the Carlyle of Past and Present – do receive a mention, as does Ruskin and his ‘chemical’ (organic?) critique of utilitarianism in Unto this Last, but, by and large, this book deals with that epoch of romanticism all trace of which Morris left behind when he crossed the river of Wear. And this, as ever, comes to the nub of what I would say to the author of such a book, which is, that if you really want to understand what to do about modern capitalism and its inherent unpredictability, and what it does to human lives, human cultures, and to nature, then ‘Have a read of News from Nowhere!’

Patrick O’Sullivan


A book of little over two hundred pages called Contemporary Craft immediately sets itself a difficult task: the diversity and complexity of contemporary craft practice is a broad topic. Racz is interested in craft ‘that is the outcome of particular ideologies and lifestyles’ (p.1) and bases her analysis on two areas of craft practice – ‘traditional utilitarian craft’ and ‘cutting-edge craft’.

The book is structured around a series of contrasts and parallels between urban and rural craft and the craft traditions of England and America. English craft is seen as having its roots in the ideas and work of William Morris and the development of these ideas through figures such as William Lethaby and Philip Webb. Racz’s brief account of craft inspired by English rural life jumps from Eric Gill to the revival of interest in craft during the 1970s, which supports her earlier statement that ‘it was not until the 1970s that crafts began to gain an important voice in England.’ (p.8) She follows this sketch with brief discussions of makers whom she sees as working within the Morris tradition such as potters at Winchcombe pottery in Somerset and Hart Gold and Silversmiths who make objects in The Old Silk mill at Chipping Camden, inspired by the work of C. R. Ashbee. Her discussion of Winchcombe includes a brief
analysis of a jug made by Mike Finch: she then builds on this with an account of certain potters working within this tradition who see repetitive throwing as a meditative activity, which she links to ideas connected to phenomenology and tacit knowledge. This may sound a bit overwhelming but is in fact done very skilfully and her analysis throughout the book is pertinent and well informed.

Racz finds an interesting parallel to English rural craft in the ‘artisan tradition’ in Western Massachusetts, where she sees the three most important influences as the Shakers, the early settlers, and the English Arts and Crafts movement. The countryside was still a crucial influence but the ways in which it was perceived were, according to the author, more diverse than the pervasive myths of the ‘cosy English countryside’. Instead ‘rugged individualism in the face of adversity’ (p. 37) became a defining idea of what it meant to be American and importantly ‘whereas the myths in England were developed by an educated elite, those in America have grown from the socially more egalitarian basis of the family farm and an economy sustained through those units’. (p. 37) The idea that craft arose in this way is apparently echoed in contemporary attitudes: ‘all Americans realize the central role that useful craft had in transforming the wilderness into the civilization that they recognize’. (pp. 37–8)

Urban craft in England is represented by the generation of makers which followed Bernard Leach. Racz discusses the influence of European modernism on makers such as the silversmith Michael Rowe, and examines the contradictions in the production of hand-made objects which seem to embody a machine aesthetic. This strand of recent English craft is portrayed as linked to architecture and the urban environment, a decisive shift from the earlier tradition and its preoccupation with the countryside. The other theme she detects in contemporary English craft is the idea of the flâneur, and the development of this stream of thought in Walter Benjamin, the Cubists and Dada. These influences are seen as important in the work of both Lucy Casson and Grayson Perry, both of whom use imagery plucked from urban settings in their work. Her use of Perry is symptomatic of a work which is not concerned with definitions of craft: although his work is often craft-based, the sphere within which he operates is definitely fine art – after all, he won the Turner prize not the Jerwood.

The author’s knowledge of contemporary and recent makers is impressive and readers are likely to come across objects which are both fascinating and unfamiliar. A spectacular example is Jan Yager’s Rainbow’s End Collar made from crack cocaine caps and insulin syringes found on the street, which draws ironically upon Native American traditions for its design. Equally captivating and much more beautiful (in a conventional sense) is Jennifer Trask’s Wunderkammer Necklace which combines traditional jewellery materials with shed snakeskin and dragonfly wings which the maker found in the Hudson River valley where she lives.

The emphasis in the book is firmly on crafts since the 1960s, but careful
attention is paid to the roots of the tradition from the late nineteenth century to the First World War. Whilst this is useful it does leave something of a gap during the mid twentieth century: in effect the author jumps from Arts and Crafts to Postmodernism without discussing the makers of the modernist tradition in any detail. Admittedly this is not the subject of the book, but does make the narrative a little unbalanced. Another way the book is perhaps a little too simplistic is in its opposition between the ‘vernacular’ craft and urban craft. One of the interesting complexities of mid twentieth-century craft is its importance within British modernism – for example some studio pottery of the 1930s and 1940s can be comfortably considered both vernacular and modern. A similar tendency can be seen in the Arts and Crafts movement: both Morris & Co. and the Guild of Handicraft produced some objects which were sophisticated and urbane and others which were earthy and vernacular.

The concise nature of this book could be considered both a strength and a weakness. The author’s ability to condense a series of very complex situations into succinct chapters is impressive but this does make for a rather dense read and at times and there are passages where the reader might feel the need to have read most of the books in the intimidating bibliography in order to obtain a good grasp of what she is really getting at. In similar vein, thirty-six pages of notes and bibliography is arguably excessive in a short book. Both of these issues point to the fact that this is less of a survey of contemporary craft than an attempt to pick out key themes illustrated by specific case studies. Within these parameters the book is very successful and will provide many interested in contemporary craft with a framework through which to approach this complex subject.

The book is light and pleasing in its production values but the absence of colour illustrations is frustrating, though perhaps no surprise in a relatively inexpensive volume. The author discusses many objects which are not illustrated at all. I achieved some consolation by reading the book in conjunction with Google image search: many of the absent relevant images can be viewed on the Internet. The writing is lively and erudite. An enthusiasm for the subject and a conviction that contemporary craft is both significant and beneficial pervades the book allowing Racz to claim that craft is ‘arguably now more important than at any time since the industrial revolution.’

Jim Cheshire

This dense but scholarly tome provides a refreshingly new approach to a subject variably covered by a wide range of publications. The author is honorary professor at the School of World Art Studies & Museology at the University of East Anglia, Norwich. He is a respected and well-published historian of nineteenth-century architecture whose research has always balanced traditional studies of the arts with an overview of contemporary life, nowadays defined rather grandly as ‘design and material culture’. This book departs from many previous studies on the history of domestic decoration by concentrating on the development of interior design in its widest sense, not through specific styles, periods or types of furnishing, but judged through the work and words of the main exponents – the architects, designers and makers who led the way, and how these were interpreted and presented by the retailer and consumer.

Concentrating on western décor from the 1800s to the mid 1890s, revivalism is the recurring theme throughout the many pages of the book. However, there is an initial warning that images can often deceive, especially when studying an age in which technology provided for the first time a mass of illustrations – photographs, colour prints, advertisements and printed matter of all types – most of which were distorted or ‘interpreted’ not by the designers but those with a vested interest – producers, retailers and consumers. The author believes that a more reliable indication comes from a rounded study of contemporary written accounts and it is from this that a ‘new, more abstract terminology of form and colour, light and dark’ for the period was identified. This approach is not new. Literature and sociological aspects of society have been an important part of the study of design for decades, but the range of sources used in this book and the author’s elucidation make this an important publication. For the purposes of the Journal, William Morris plays a contributory role in the book as one of the most devoted revivalists of his day (the concept of Red House is described here as ‘relaxed medievalism’). However it was as ‘a new type of designer-guru’ as promulgated through his lectures, that Muthesius believes his greatest influence as a decorator was felt.

Muthesius freely admits that he is not the first to attempt a history of interior design in the west, yet his approach is different. The most comprehensive accounts to date are Mario Praz’s An Illustrated History of Interior Design; Pompeii to Art Nouveau (1964) and Peter Thornton’s Authentic Décor, The Domestic Interior 1620–1920 (1984). Both evolved a standard of comparative scholarship using a wide international range of images. In Praz’s case his overriding interests were literary, whereas Thornton, as a curator and furniture historian, based his conclusions on the visual, dismissing as gross exaggeration the theory that images distort history. Both books covered a much longer period of time than the nineteenth century but were wide-ranging in their view of the west, surveying large tranches of Europe and North America.

Muthesius is more selective in his choice of countries and it is this aspect of
the book which is most valuable but also problematic. The book is rich in new material concerning German and Austrian interiors in particular, and goes a considerable way to make amends for a general ignorance of historical design in these countries by other parts of Europe, the inevitable yet regrettable result of twentieth-century political conflict and warfare. The overwhelming influence of German and Austrian design on the Modern Movement is now internationally acknowledged, but still little is known in non-German speaking countries about what happened there before the opening of the Wiener Werkstatte and the setting up of the Bauhaus in Weimar, for instance. Recent museum exhibitions and publications on nineteenth-century styles (including historicism, Art Nouveau and the Arts and Crafts Movement) have included the work of German-speaking countries, yet a rounded and comprehensive look at how a large and powerful section of Europe lived during the major part of the nineteenth century has been largely ignored until now.

A definition of the qualities which made up the perfect nineteenth-century home and the terminology used to describe these, plays a significant part in the author’s discourses. ‘The Poetic Home’ of the title was a popular nineteenth-century catchphrase which tantalisingly suggested the importance of both character and atmosphere, but comfort was the most enduring quality. A comparison of the English word with *gemütlich*, the nearest equivalent in German, show how much more complex yet expressive the latter is, encompassing cosiness and amiability at the same time. Furthermore, other German terms for the domestic such as *gesamtkunstwerk*, which describes a totally designed interior, have nowadays slipped into the international vocabulary of the design historian in preference to a much longer explanation.

Whereas an extensive survey of nineteenth-century German interior design is fascinating and much needed and the range of illustrations superb, the book falls short of its aim to cover the West as a whole and this proves its weakest point. The claim that much common ground is shared in the decoration of western homes is certainly true, as is the supposition that from the 1890s a more widely accepted global style was developing, but it was frequently the less common, more novel features of international design that had the greatest impact overall. Whilst French design clearly dominated fashionable Europe until the last quarter of the century, it is Britain and particularly Germany which dominate his book. There is little or no consideration of Russia, Scandinavian or the Mediterranean countries, for instance, and very little on developments in North America. A rough count of illustrations in the first quarter of the book is revealing as thirty-four are devoted to Germany, twenty-six to Britain, twenty-four to France, five to the US and one is Austrian.

Minor quibbles concern the frequent use of inverted commas around many well-used words such as ‘art’, ‘design’ and ‘poetic’ in the early chapters of the
book. Although correctly signifying a definition, or use of the word in a different context, these are so numerous that they distract from what would be a good read. This also applies to manufactured expressions such as ‘a hierarchy of decorum’ and ‘the materiality of textiles’. Their meaning usually becomes clear on a second reading but they lack finesse in a book in which definition is paramount and have neither the clarity nor effectiveness which was intended. Despite these minor criticisms, the book provides not only an important new contribution to scholarship on nineteenth-century interior design but is thought provoking and challenging in its methodology. It will be a significant addition to the shelves of anyone interested in nineteenth-century design, not just interiors.

Linda Parry


Addressing a challengingly wide remit, this attractive publication investigates a range of international schemes surrounding the common theme of the power of decoration within a constructed space. Craft can be read as utopian, decorative and feminine, but it can also be controlling, in that it can define the space which it locates. In roughly chronological order, well-known arts-and-crafts historians, including Annette Carruthers, Elizabeth Cumming, Jim Cheshire and Tanya Harrod consider the role played by decoration within the constructed interior. The theories of Owen Jones are convincingly used in order to demonstrate ways in which nineteenth-century design reformers and architects considered the importance of connecting craft, interior design and architectural space: ‘Decorative Arts arise from, and should properly be attendant upon, Architecture.’ (p. 1)

By the mid century, the case was being made that craft should be involved with architecture from the outset. A particular scheme selected for comment was the effect of technology on crafts exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Gottfried Semper and Le Corbusier held similar views, believing that craft and interior design were analogous to ornament.

John Potvin’s chapter explores the introduction of the Turkish bath into Britain during the 1850s, arguing that interior design is seen alongside the way in which male culture interacts within this space. Functional yet luxurious, the Jermyn Street Turkish bath is taken as a case study for representing the epitome of truly Oriental-styled design. Designed and executed by the architect G. Somers Clarke, it offered an ‘authentic’ experience of exoticism,
prompted by the recent Great Exhibition which had highlighted oriental ornamentation in design. The bath’s functionalism was nevertheless dictated by an aesthetic principle, that it should be a ‘thing of beauty’. Surface decoration included tiles, mosaics and marbles, while Persian and Turkish carpets and starry stained-glass windows added to the overall effect of the exotic.

Jim Cheshire articulates the transformation of space through craft, particularly in relation to church furnishings and how the expanding range of products such as stained glass, encaustic tiles and embroidery transformed the nineteenth-century ecclesiastical interior. Between 1835 and 1875 alone, 3,765 Anglican churches were consecrated, having been either newly or substantially rebuilt, demonstrating the demand caused by economic growth and the rising popularity of the Oxford Movement. It was this movement which had a profound impact on the establishment of the Gothic Revival and corresponding interest in the medieval, pre-Reformation church. A.W.N. Pugin was at the forefront of the highly decorated interior, made possible by the wealth of Victorian England. Two specific Revival buildings examined in detail are St. Ethelreda’s Church, West Quantoxhead, Somerset, and All Saints, Nocton, Lincolnshire. Both examples illustrate ways in which survival of craft processes, either from specialist local makers, or from large manufacturers who could furnish an entire church, profoundly affected the decorative schemes of church interiors. A specific example of an ecclesiastical space is addressed by Joseph McBrinn when he examines the decoration of Belfast Anglican Cathedral. McBrinn argues that there is a gendered authorship at work in this space, although the significant contribution made by women has been obscured over time.

Melsetter House in Orkney, built during 1898–1901, is a relatively little-known Arts and Crafts house, yet it provides an excellent case study of ideas, architecture and decoration from a period when British design was the inspiration for the worldwide Arts and Crafts revival. Designed by William Richard Lethaby for Thomas and Theodosia Middlemore, Melsetter is a secular space which contains a wealth of symbolism. Annette Carruthers analyses both the functionality and the decoration of the building which Lethaby considered to be his best house. Based on Gothic principles, the layout and hierarchy of rooms is similar to that of Philip Webb’s Standen. The furniture was designed by Lethaby, or by Morris and Company, and many of the furnishings are products of the Morris business. May Morris visited Melsetter, assisting Theodosia Middlemore with dyeing and weaving the blue woollen curtains during the 1920s. Theodosia Middlemore was also a skilled embroiderer, and had ordered several items from Morris and Company, including a dress panel, an alms bag and a door curtain. This curtain was in the Fruit Garden pattern, designed by May Morris, and is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Also in the house was the
Acanthus textile, designed by William Morris and embroidered by Jane Morris. On May’s visit in 1902 she commented on its ‘looking delightfully delicate and suitable’. (p. 67) Tapestries inspired by the Arthurian Legend also decorated this Scottish home, including Morris and Company’s The Ship. Carruthers compares its journey in the quest for the Holy Grail to the journey experienced by visitors to Melsetter over the often rough sea. Also displayed was the Verdure with Deer, adapted from the original design at Stanmore Hall, which Lethaby had worked on for Morris and Company. May wrote that Melsetter was ‘a very lovable place. And surely it is test of an architect’s genius; he built it for home life as well as for dignity’. (p. 70)

Carruthers also places Melsetter in context with other arts and crafts houses built around the same period, such as Baillie Scott’s Blackwell, and Voysey’s Broadleys and Moorcrag. Melsetter’s isolated location has resulted in limiting its influence, although Carruthers successfully demonstrates how Melsetter is worthy of study as an archetypal example of Arts and Crafts architecture and decoration, and the ways in which it epitomises Morris’s ideas on the value of the ‘beautiful house’ as the art work most to be longed for.

The decorative space of the Glaswegian tearoom is examined by Janice Hel-land. Commissioned by businesswoman Kate Cranston, the Ingram Street Tea Rooms (1900) and the Willow Tea Rooms (1903) were designed by Charles Ren-nie Mackintosh in a collaborative scheme with Margaret Macdonald, who was responsible for the textured gesso panels. This was a time when gesso was not widely used, except by a few specialist artists, Kate Faulkner and Walter Crane among them. It was Margaret Macdonald who took the medium of gesso and supported its use through her beautiful line and intricately worked surface texture. These sum up the discreet luxury of the tearooms, resulting in a crafted space which evoked pleasure and defined taste within an intimate and ‘artistic’ environment.

Elizabeth Cumming continues a discussion of Scottish decorative schemes when she contemplates the relationship between the Arts-and-Crafts movement and Modernism within 1930s architecture. Her analysis posits Scottish architect Basil Spence as sensitively working with space and tradition as a ‘modernist/craft architect.’

Bridget Elliot’s chapter explores the connections between a Finnish folkloric past and an industrial American present which generated a form of decorative modernism. Elliot examines Saarinen House, designed by Eliel Saarinen in 1930, which incorporated objects designed and crafted by his whole family, thus conflating the domestic and the commercial. This collaboration is compared with Morris’s beliefs, and their shared anxiety that the separation of the arts and crafts would result in the trivialisation of the crafts. Saarinen House has been compared to the London studio houses built by Sir Frederic Leighton and Lawrence Alma-Tadema. It was Loja Saarinen who designed the traditionally Finnish textiles for the house,
going on to exhibit her rugs and carpets widely and producing them for architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright. Elliot examines the fabric decoration in particular, arguing that the prominence of textiles in Saarinen House speak of the links rather than the fissures between the Arts-and-Crafts movement and Modernism.

Tanya Harrod explores these same links in her discussion of twentieth-century studio ceramics, and wheel-thrown vessels in particular, when discussing the crafted space of the material object, and arguing that Pugin and Morris influenced the modernist potter. Le Corbusier, Paul Gauguin, and Henri Matisse were all involved with ceramics, but it was the English studio potters such as William Staite Murray, Bernard Leach, Katherine Pleydell-Bouverie and Michael Cardew, who pioneered ‘pure’ pottery often influenced by non-Western cultures. Tag Gronberg establishes a similar argument when examining interactions between Simon Starling’s contemporary installation Blue, Red, Green, Yellow, Djungel (2002) and the 1928 block printed textile ‘Aralia’ designed by the Viennese architect Josef Frank upon which Starling based his Djungel (Swedish for jungle). The ‘Aralia’ motif was based on a houseplant and became a popular expression of textile art, being used for furnishing and upholstery, and demonstrating the importance of textiles within modernism. Gronberg goes on to contrast Frank’s textile designs with those of other artists, including Klimt and Burne-Jones.

The crafting of interior space is examined by Penny Sparke when she discusses interior designs by the pioneer American interior decorator Elise de Wolfe as handmade artefacts. Cynthia Hammond considers the architectural plans of American urban planner and social activist Catherine Bauer, who believed in the reduction of ‘unnecessary’ ornament from interior surfaces as part of her socialist and utopian ideology. Her theories on modern public housing were indebted to the ideas of Robert Owen, Octavia Hill, John Ruskin and Ebenezer Howard, who all addressed the problem of how to house large numbers of people humanely. Both Bauer and de Wolfe designed with women users in mind, although catering for different classes; de Wolfe for upper-class clients, whilst Bauer considered spaces suited to ‘ordinary’ women, particularly in relation to functionality. De Wolfe’s crafted interiors embraced the ideals of Pugin, Ruskin and Morris, and the popularity of home-furnishing books which encouraged their readers to embrace sincerity and modernity when creating their own individual domestic space. Sandra Alfody also discusses the relationship between craft and architecture by focussing on the cooperation between artists and craftspeople. Finally, Amy Bogarty uses the artist-designed rooms at Toronto’s Gladstone Hotel in order to highlight the contribution of contemporary craft in public design. She argues that craft possesses the potential to change the atmosphere within an interior and, together with interior design, continues to change the way we perceive space, thereby playing a primary role in our lives.

Unfortunately, the high price of this publication is likely to deter students
and those with limited means. The lack of any colour illustrations is also typical of Ashgate publications and, although this book has obviously been produced to the highest standards, reliance on black-and-white images sometimes lets the authors down. However, the various responses to craft’s contribution to constructed space represented in this publication provide a valuable insight into historical and contemporary interactions between decoration and space. This collection of essays successfully articulates the ways in which craft can manipulate its relationship with the interior in order to form a unified whole.

Helen Elletson


Alton Towers means only one thing to most people – it is a theme park with accompanying ‘rides’ and childish distractions. But Alton Towers is really the name of the palatial country house which overshadows the gardens. Though it is one of the largest Gothic Revival buildings in existence, it now appears to be a sad ruin. In 1951 the house was stripped of saleable assets and left to decay. Michael Fisher has devoted a considerable amount of time to studying what remains, and describes the progress which has been made in recreating the appearance of the original building. He has found a large number of sketches and old photographs to illustrate his book.

Alton Lodge, Alton Abbey, Alton Towers – the changes of name illustrate the stages of growth. The original eighteenth-century house had been added to again and again. The word ‘abbey’, as in *Northanger Abbey*, simply means a gentleman’s residence, without being based on a former monastic ruin. Fonthill Abbey is mentioned by Fisher for comparison; though that possessed a famous tower, the fifteenth and sixteenth Earls of Shrewsbury outdid William Beckford in the ground plan and eventual size of their Abbey.

Fisher charts the progress of this enormous structure, and lists the architects who worked on the building before Pugin; he comments that they used ‘the Romantic “abbey style”, with a pronounced asymmetrical plan and skyline’. In their decorative schemes for the interior the Gothic features were often made of plaster, and did not have any structural function. ‘It was all “wedding-cake Gothic”’, says Fisher, ‘i.e. decorative rather than structural, and as such it had more in common with eighteenth-century antecedents such as Strawberry Hill … than with the more archaeologically correct Gothic of
Pugin’. Now that the building is reduced to a bare state, recent photographs confirm this and show the plain stone walls without the plaster features.

Pugin arrived during the 1830s, and over a long period of time up to his death in 1852 he re-modelled portions of the existing structure in accordance with his vision of the medieval past and the Catholic future. The chapel was the most splendid of these creations. Fisher has been able to assemble a number of watercolours and early photographs which give some impression of the work. He also notes that Pugin’s work at Alton probably led to his commission to design the interior of the new Houses of Parliament.

In his last chapter Fisher reviews the slow degeneration of the Towers, and the virtual destruction of the interior. In 1857, following the death of the 17th Earl, who was the last of the Catholic dynasty, there was a sale of furniture, pictures, books, and other movable features. With the change of ownership in 1858 – the new owner was an Anglican – portions of the chapel’s furnishings were moved to other ecclesiastical buildings in the area. Though the house continued to be occupied, the gardens were already in use for ‘Monsters Fetes’, equestrian events, illuminations and firework displays as early as the 1890s, and a succession of subsequent owners developed this idea.

During the Second World War and the remainder of the 1940s, the house was requisitioned by the Army. When I was doing my Army service in the 1950s I would occasionally meet officers who had been trained at Alton Towers, for which they had a baffled admiration. Some people blame the Army cadets for the state of the house in the early fifties, but it was actually W.S. Bagshaw & Sons, the firm which purchased the Towers in 1951, who were responsible for stripping out the entire building. They removed everything they could sell, including copper pipes, the lead from the roof and all the woodwork including the wall-panelling and the floorboards. Anything left was disposed of by the Potteries Demolition Company. Most of the structure then became a ruin. In 1958 the chapel was used to display a model railway, a tent being used to conceal the remains of Pugin’s decorative scheme.

The theme park continues to flourish. There have been many recent changes of ownership, and there is now an Alton Towers Heritage Committee, of which Fisher is a member. Though new rides have been constructed, planning permission has been given on condition that efforts should be made to restore some parts of the building. The work which has taken place is described in Fisher’s final chapter, which reviews developments since the previous edition of the book in 1999. Obviously the restorations are in no way comparable to what Pugin intended, but fragments of his designs have been discovered, and original features have been partially reconstructed.

Disciples of Morris will be interested to note that he visited Alton Towers during 1876, while he was working at Leek: he described it as ‘a gimcrack palace
of Pugin’. There has always been a distinct opposition to Pugin, led by Ruskin, and his followers could be accused of neglecting Pugin’s work. I remember being told that Pugin was all stage-settings from beginning to end, and there was often religious animosity to take into account. Of course Pugin was already dead when Morris began to work, but the influence of the man and his ideals lived on; for example, you can see this in the buildings of G.E. Street, who trained Morris in his office. The 1994 exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the recent biography by Rosemary Hill have led to a more generous appreciation of Pugin’s life and designs. However much I admire Fisher’s devotion to his cause, and the amount of work he has done, it is not clear to me how far all this is going. I wonder how many of us would wish to see the restoration of Alton Towers in all its glory.

John Purkis


This is an important reference work which I have long wished for, albeit without any real expectation that it would ever be produced. For I have for many years used and cherished *Brasses* by J.S.M. Ward (Cambridge University Press, 1912) as my essential convenient source for reference relating to memorial brasses. *Brasses* remains a classic text, which in its day set new standards of clarity, and ease of reference, including both scholarly accounts of the brasses of successive historic periods, and also a gazetteer listing brasses of different types and descriptions with their respective locations. Most regrettably *Brasses* ends its consideration of the subject in 1773 with ‘The Last Brasses’ (sic) and is therefore of no assistance in considering the diversity of ‘modern’ brasses, a few of which are important art works, and many being of some historic and/or design interest.

The need for a guide to modern brasses has become all the more necessary owing to the wholly inadequate attention taken of these furnishings in the *Buildings of England* series (commonly referred to as the ‘Pevsner’ guides). The original editions for each county invariably eschew any reference to nineteenth or twentieth-century brasses in their accounts of church interiors. Even in the more recent bumper-size new editions this practice continues, with only a few exceptions for very special works. The publication of this ground-breaking guide not only at long last provides a much needed reference work; it also does so in an exemplary manner.

The history of English monumental brasses did not, of course, end with the rare Georgian examples, as was contended by Ward. (Indeed, he surely would have appreciated this, although no doubt he considered late nineteenth-century examples not worthy of serious study, such was the state of general contempt that
Victorian art and design reached in the years immediately before the First World War.) This new book traces the modern history of brasses in a highly informative and perceptive way, and includes two broad categories of works which are each of particular interest. The first relates to the brasses of the High Victorian period, from 1880 onwards, which can be considered as late expressions of the Gothic Revival. Here the book provides helpful accounts of the trade firms involved, as well as important information relating to the designers and engravers concerned. The second area of special interest includes the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century works directly influenced by Arts and Crafts designers and guilds, leading on to the revival in lettering design in the 1920’s. The book provides an excellent account of this work, with the section on ‘Craftsmen and Designers’ being especially illuminating, as well as including much original scholarship. The section on ‘The Tradition of Lettering’, which covers amongst others the leading work of Eric Gill and Edward Johnston, is a model of succinct communication.

The book also relates how as the twentieth century progressed, there was a decline both of the number of monuments and their quality. The Modern Movement had little perceptible influence on the design of monumental brasses, which from the 1930s onwards are generally lacking in innovation. Post Second World War brasses tend to be regressive in design, with a few notable exceptions. In this study, the flourishing of modern brass design and its subsequent decline are contextualised with reference to social and ecclesiological developments, tendencies in twentieth-century church architecture, and the changes in fashion for the use of memorials. Most important and helpful for the church visitor, the book includes a county-by-county checklist which, although not exhaustive, includes the most significant modern brasses and a large number of interesting examples.

There are two features of this book which I would particularly applaud. The first is the quality and choice of the very fine and abundant illustrations. Included are not only pertinently selected illustrations of brasses, but also other relevant images, including designs, and photographs of designers and craftsmen. The second is the compact size of this book, which is such as to fit easily into a haversack, or glove compartment.

I also have two points of criticism. One relates to the work of William Morris. On page 78 there is the claim that ‘William Morris almost certainly designed brasses’. So far as I have been able to ascertain there is no single example of a memorial brass with a definite attribution to Morris or for that matter to his Firm. (Nor have I been able to trace any reference to commissions for or involvement in memorial-brass design in the Morris correspondence, or any of his published writings.) However I would hasten to add that this unsubstantiated assertion regarding Morris’s involvement with brasses is totally untypical of this book,
where other statements of opinion are consistently evidence-based. I should also make it clear that a good account is given of the design philosophy and the influence of Morris.

My second criticism is that in the listings of notable brasses the locations of the memorials within greater churches are not always given. I discovered when field-testing the listings that it is sometimes difficult to find a modern brass memorial, particularly when it has been obscured by carpeting or furnishings. On another occasion, on a recent visit to Westminster Abbey, I found the superb Victorian brasses in the nave commemorating Sir Charles Barry (made by Hardman’s) and Sir George Gilbert Scott (designed by G.E. Street) hidden beneath a row of chairs. (I trust this was a temporary arrangement, as these brasses are located on what is usually the main processional route.) It is to be hoped that this book will reawaken interest in important brasses and thus help towards the prevention of such aberrations in future.

All in all, this is an excellent book which I would unreservedly recommend as important and highly informative reference work for everyone with a serious interest in ecclesiastical architecture and design in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Shuan Tyas are to be congratulated for undertaking such a worthwhile publishing project and the author on his achievement.

Joseph Mirwitch
Guidelines for Contributors

Contributions to the Journal are welcomed on all subjects relating to the life and works of William Morris. The Editor would be grateful if contributors could adhere to the following guidelines when submitting articles and reviews:

1. Contributions should be word-processed or typed using 1.5 spacing, and printed on one side of A4 or 8.5 x 11 paper. They should be ca 5000 words in length, although shorter and longer pieces will also be considered.

2. Articles should ideally be produced in electronic form (e.g. as a Word.doc, or .rtf format). Please send your article as an email attachment to editor@morrissociety.org, or on a floppy disk or CD, and marked for the attention of the Editor, JWMS, to

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3. Contributions in hard copy only are also accepted, and may be sent to the same address.

4. In formatting your article, please follow JWMS house style by consulting a recent issue of the Journal. Back issues are available from the William Morris Society at the above address, or online at http://www.morrissociety.org/jwms.samples.html.

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7. At the end of your article please include a short biographical note of not more than fifty words.

Please note that the views of individual contributors are not to be taken as those of the William Morris Society.
Notes on Contributors

Jim Cheshire is Senior Lecturer at the University of Lincoln. He has recently curated an exhibition about Tennyson and visual culture, and edited the associated catalogue – *Tennyson Transformed: Alfred Lord Tennyson and Visual Culture*, Lund Humphries, 2009. Other recent publications include ‘Space and the Victorian Ecclesiastical Interior’ in *Craft, Space and Interior Design 1855–2005*, Ashgate, 2008. (Reviewed, p. 111.)

John E. Coombes is retired from teaching European literature at the University of Essex. He now divides his time between Colchester, Luxembourg and Abijan, and his literary interests between the counter-realist novel (Rabelais, Cervantes, Sterne) and the literary discourses of fascism.

Martin Crick is author of *The History of the Social Democratic Federation*, and numerous articles on labour and socialist history. He contributed a short biography of Peter Shore to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, and is currently writing a history of the William Morris Society.

Helen Elletson is Curator of the William Morris Society’s collection at Kelmscott House. She is currently undertaking research into the Society’s May Morris archive, and is the author of the forthcoming book, *A History of Kelmscott House*.

Peter Faulkner taught English at the University of Exeter until his retirement in 1998; he is a former editor of this Journal and Honorary Secretary of the Society.

David Goodway is an historian whose doctoral thesis, published as *London Chartism, 1838–1848* (1982), was supervised by E.J. Hobsbawm. He has also written on E.P. Thompson, principally in *Anarchist Seeds beneath the Snow: Left-Libertarian Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward* (2006).

Ruth Kinna teaches political theory at Loughborough University. Her book,
William Morris: The Art of Socialism appeared in 2000, and she has since written widely on Morris. A co-edited volume (Anarchism and Utopianism, with Laurence Davis) is about to be published by Manchester University Press.

David Latham is a Professor of English at York University, Toronto, and Sheila Latham is a Librarian at George Brown College. David is editor of The Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies and his latest book is Writing on the Image: Reading William Morris, 2007. Sheila is editor of The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada.

Joseph Mirwitch is a trustee of the Twentieth Century Society, and a member of its casework committee.

Patrick O’Sullivan is Editor of the Journal, and writes and speaks about the ‘green’ Morris.

Linda Parry has studied British nineteenth-century decorative arts for many years. She recently retired from the Victoria and Albert Museum where she specialised in William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement and has published widely on these subjects. She is a past President of the William Morris Society.


John Purkis joined the William Morris Society in 1960, and is a former Honorary Secretary. He was with the Open University from 1970. He is currently writing a memoir of his time in Finland during the 1950s.
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Rosemary Taylor has spent many years researching the history of the East End of London, leading to publication of several books on various aspects of its rich and diverse history. As a long-standing member of the East London History Society, she gave illustrated talks and led guided walks around the area whilst living in the East End. Now resident in Spain, she still produces the Society’s twice yearly newsletter.