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Editorial

Anna Vaninskaya

In July 2009, the Cambridge Victorian Studies Group hosted the joint conference of the North American Victorian Studies Association and the British Association for Victorian Studies, whose theme was 'Past versus Present'. Not surprisingly, papers on William Morris abounded. The conference showcased the wide range of approaches and topics – from art history to anthropology, from print culture to politics – which students of Morris might take up. A special panel on 'Morris Past, Present, and Future', chaired by Peter Stansky, featured Caroline Arscott on 'William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones: The Unity of Matter', and Florence Boos on 'The Defence of Guenevere: Morris's Eternally Recurrent "Pasts"', a revised version of which appears here. Other papers included Elizabeth Carolyn Miller's 'William Morris's Utopian Print and the Politics of the Future', Chris Hokanson's 'Butler, Morris and Wells: Cultural Reproduction and Transference of Memory in the Victorian Age', Caroline Sumpter's 'Barbarian Futures: Imagining Moral and Social Evolution in Late Nineteenth-Century Predictive Writing', and Ruth Kinna's 'Morris: Time and Utopia', the basis of the penultimate article in this issue.

Although it was not possible to reprint all of the conference papers, the two included here, in conjunction with Phillippa Bennett's 'Riot, Romance and Revolution: William Morris and the Art of War', and my own 'William Morris: The Myth of the Fall', address, from various vantages, the interconnected themes of violence, history, and the means of social transformation. Whether one focuses on Morris's early poetry or his late activism, or asks of his work literary, political, or philosophical questions, one cannot avoid the issue of conflict in history. Armed conflict – under the Roman Empire, in medieval France, in the streets of contemporary London, or the revolutionary future – is ubiquitous, and its role as driver of historical change is as vital to Morris's political theory as it is to his verse and prose romances. Morris was a man of paradoxes, and it is difficult to reconcile his 'pacifism' and professed abhorrence of acts of violence with his narrative love of a good fight in the right cause, or his strategic thinking in matters of urban warfare. Florence Boos, who has written about these themes before ('Dystopian Violence: William Morris and the Nineteenth-Century Peace Movement', *J our-*

nal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies, Spring 2005), reads the *Defence* poems in light of this paradox, stressing Morris's gift for 'identification' and its evolution into the historical 'understanding' of his later years. Despite the endemic violence and the 'Hobbesian war of all against all' portrayed in the *Defence*, the volume may be seen as a first attempt at the recreation of 'living cultural memory' which preoccupied Morris for the rest of his life.

Warfare and conflict remained central tropes in the romances (past and future) of the 1880s and 90s, though by this time, as Phillippa Bennett demonstrates, they were indissolubly linked with Morris's conception of social revolution. His response to Black Monday and Bloody Sunday, and the battle metaphors of his political lectures, fit perfectly with the violent imagery of much socialist and anarchist rhetoric. Although Morris came to realise that contemporary socialist struggles would not be played out on the battlefield, he continued to long for a complete overthrow of capitalism. The values and ideals of the Communist barbarians were still worth fighting for: contemporary socialists could learn much from past conflicts, and the romances helped him to envision the 'process of social transformation' via battlefield moments of individual self-sacrifice. Mythical warfare enacted the concerns of nineteenth-century politics: violence was a catalyst for social change and the growth of 'revolutionary consciousness'.

The lessons of historical struggles for justice feature just as prominently in Ruth Kinna's exploration of Morris's and his collaborator E. B. Bax's philosophies of history. The cause of fourteenth-century peasant rebels dramatised in *A Dream of John Ball* resembled that of Victorian workers, but though the latter stood at the right historical juncture, a moment ripe for social transformation, they lacked the 'moral courage' of their predecessors – the will to change and the circumstances of historical development were mismatched in both cases. But 'Morris identified socialist ethics with a past hope in a way which suggested continuity in history': unlike Bax, he was neither hostile to utopianism nor sceptical about the knowability of the past. Instead, an understanding of history was essential to securing the coming revolution: past battles provided the model for future action.

Did Morris carry this belief to his grave, or did he eventually moderate his views, accepting 'gas and water socialism', as Phillippa Bennett reminds us, as a 'necessary first stage' on the road to the Great Change? The final article reconsiders the controversial question of Morris's supposed falling away from purist principles during the 1890s. If revolutionary violence was no longer a short-term possibility, what course was social transformation to take? On what other fronts could battles be fought? Having begun with the soldiers of the Hundred Years' War, the issue concludes with the industrial and parliamentary conflicts of the final decade of the nineteenth century. During almost forty years between the youthful Morris's first poetic endeavour and his mature attempts to form a united socialist party much had changed, but his preoccupation with the historical

Obituary: Barbara Morris (1918–2009)

Linda Parry

Few of those interested in the study of nineteenth century British decorative arts will not know the work of Barbara Morris, one of the most important figures in the revival of interest in Victorian design which has taken place over the past sixty years. Born Barbara Trotman in Willesden, London, she was educated at Brondesbury and Kilburn High School, and the North London Collegiate. Although academically gifted, Barbara showed an early interest in, and talent for drawing, and from 1937 she studied at the Slade School at University College, London. The outbreak of war meant that her studies were put on hold and she took up various teaching jobs, returning to the Slade and graduating as the war ended. For the next two years she worked at various jobs including copywriting for the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency but also undertook part-time research work at the Victoria and Albert Museum. In 1947 she joined the staff on a full-time basis, becoming an active and enthusiastic member of the Circulation Department, which created exhibitions on a range of artistic subjects and toured these throughout Britain.

Circulation (later to be called the Department of Regional Services) was then the most outward looking and adventurous department in the Museum. Alongside Peter Flood, the dynamic and forward thinking Keeper of the department, Barbara became one of a group of left-wing, scholarly curators who were part of the post-war political and socially aware modernising drive experienced throughout Britain, which had witnessed Clement Atlee's Labour party land-slide victory in the general election of 1945. The same year as she joined the Museum, Barbara married Max Morris, a leading communist, teacher and trade union leader, later to become the president of the National Union of Teachers (NUT). The marriage was dissolved in 1960 although the two remained friends throughout their lives until Max died in 2008. During the early 1960s Barbara set up home with Dave Bowman, another committed socialist and a leading figure in the National Union of Railwaymen. They married in 1991.

The 1950s proved the most radical period in the V&A's history, heralded in

1952 with the ground-breaking exhibition 'Victorian and Edwardian Decorative Arts' which celebrated the centenary of the Museum's foundation with a study of the decorative arts in nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain. The Museum had collected very few Victorian artefacts, which until this time were dismissed as being inferior in both design and technique. The exhibition led to the revival of interest in the period and a craze for collecting and interior design based on what became known then as 'Victoriana'. The organising group of curators included Barbara and her colleagues Shirley Bury and Elizabeth Aslin (referred to by some as 'Flood's women' or 'the three graces').

Barbara's first chosen area of study was textiles. Throughout the 1950s she worked alongside Peter Flood, researching the origins of the printed textile industry in Britain for an exhibition held in Manchester in 1955 and later planned for the V&A. Flood died suddenly in January 1960, and it was only through Barbara's efficient organisation, resilience and hard work that the exhibition opened in May of that year. He had also agreed to curate a centenary exhibition on 'Morris & Company' at the Arts Council in 1961. Yet again Barbara stepped in and took over the task. Considering the limited time available to work on catalogue entries, these are informative and scholarly and the catalogue remains an important work of reference. The final paragraph of her introduction declared that the exhibition should be seen not 'as a pious commemoration of a dead movement but as the celebration of a live and continuing tradition of English design'. This was a typically pragmatic view from one of William Morris's most knowledgeable and enthusiastic followers, and remains true to this day.

All of Barbara's published studies on nineteenth century design were meticulously researched, and because they are well organised and well written, are interesting and informative. *Victorian Embroidery* (1962) and *Inspiration for Design: the influence of the Victoria and Albert Museum* (1986) are exemplary in their comprehensiveness and detail. Barbara also held a keen interest in contemporary design, and was responsible for building up the V&A's important collections of twentieth century textiles. With the gradual closure of most sections of the British textile industry throughout the 1960s and 1970s, she was frequently summoned by phone with little warning in order to collect whatever she could from closing factories and shops, and it is thanks to her energy and good taste that the collection is as comprehensive and important as it is today.

The Circulation Department closed in 1976, and Barbara transferred to the Museum's department of Ceramics and Glass, both of which subjects had interested her for many years. Characteristically she took on these new responsibilities with enthusiasm, becoming as well known and respected in these fields as she had in textiles. On retirement in 1978 she was headhunted for the newly opened education department of Sotheby's, and spent a number of years teaching and then head of their short arts courses from 1984–8. Her great talents at commu-

nication were also recognised by the BBC and she became a regular expert on the 'Antiques Road Show'. She was always generous with her time, lecturing and meeting students and scholars and offering advice wherever and whenever asked. She was also a keen committee member and supporter of many specialist groups, including our own, and the Decorative Arts Society, the Glass Circle and the Art Worker's Guild.

Barbara was a superb hostess and loved to give dinner parties, initially at her home in London and later in Brighton where she and Dave spent weekends, eventually living there full time when she retired from Sotheby's. She was an attractive, vivacious woman, always well turned out with an insatiable love of life and interest in people. She lived a full and busy social life and possessed a wide circle of friends by whom she will be greatly missed. For those who did not have the opportunity to meet her, her influence will endure through the vigour and clarity of her published work.

I first met Barbara as a young curator joining the V&A's Textile Department staff during the early 1970s and, gingerly stepping in to study an area she had made all her own, I was dazzled by her eminence and presence. She proved a courteous and generous colleague, instructively critical at times, but also appreciative and generous with her praise. It was a great privilege to have known and worked with her.

The Defence of Guenevere: A Morrisean Critique of Medieval Violence

Florence Boos

How can one reconcile William Morris's firmly expressed determination during his last years: 'to say once for all, what I have often wanted to say of late, to wit that the idea of taking any human life for any reason whatsoever is horrible and abhorrent to me',¹ with the eroticised violence of his youthful *The Defence of Guenevere*, whose medieval warriors cut down antagonists without hesitation, and rushed into battle in service to their liege lords?² How, likewise, could one reconcile the violent, anarchic world of Morris's *Defence* poems with his implausible assertion in 'The Origins of Ornamental Art' (1886), that

... throughout the middle ages[,] although there was a sharp distinction between the feudal lord and his inferior[,] that distinction was rather arbitrary than real; ... there was no class which was by virtue of its position refined, and none which was mentally degraded by the same virtue ...?³

On the one hand, Morris adhered for many years to Ruskin's idealisation of a 'Gothic' society in which

... the separation between the noble and the poor was merely a wall built by law; now it is a veritable difference in level of standing, a precipice between the upper and lower grounds in the field of humanity...⁴

On the other, the principal figures of Morris's *Defence* were trapped in 'wall[s] built by law[s]' whose misogyny and ruthless violence he described in realistic as well as surrealistic detail.

Morris also tempered his love of the medieval past with a strong conviction that attempts to imitate or recreate it were delusive. In an 1895 lecture on 'The

Early Illustration of Printed Books', for example,

He warned those ... who were engaged in art work in any way to guard against the folly of imitating this early [medieval] art ... that time had clean passed away, and however real the continuity of history, they must recognise the enormous gulf between that period and the present ... let them do their own work for themselves, and realize for themselves ... what kind of listening to beauty it was they wanted to express ...⁵

Psychological analyses of Morris's dialectical tensions thus leave open a number of interesting critical and literary historical questions. What should we make of the displacement onto history and stylised conflicts of his best-known early poems in the *Defence of Guenevere*? Should inchoate political or existential convictions be read into them? And if they can, did his later activism break with these convictions, or vary and evolve from them?

I. 'UNDERSTANDING' AND CULTURAL MEMORY

Wilhelm Dilthey, the late nineteenth-century philosopher of 'human studies' (*Geisteswissenschaften*), argued that we possess a sense of the 'value' of things in the present, and confront the future with 'purpose', but can only 'interpret' our actions in reconstructions of the past. Actions may determine our fate, but

spontaneous expression[s] of experience ... contain ... more of mental life than can be comprehended by introspection ... [and] lift ... mental life out of depths that consciousness cannot illuminate.⁶

Put somewhat differently, *Einfühlungsvermögen* – projective identification with the mental and emotional life of others – creates higher levels of self-awareness than unaided self-examination, and such projections are not 'true' or 'false', but rather 'sincere' or 'insincere' – language which suggests the hierarchy of interpretations of a good dramatic monologue.

Another passage in Dilthey's writings might have appealed to Morris:

The course of life exercises a determining influence on every man, by which the possibilities which lie within him are narrowed down. ... he finds that the prospects of a new outlook on life, or further inner development of his personal character, are limited. But understanding [*verstehen*] opens to him a whole new realm of possibilities that are not present in his everyday life. ... Man, who is bound and determined by the realities of life, is not only liberated by art—this has often been said—but also by the understanding of history.⁷

In his youth, Morris used an empathetic gift for thought-experimental 'iden-

tification' in order to try to 'understand' the ironies of success and failure, the dissolution of love and trust *in extremis*, and the arduous nature of artistic efforts to convey communal ideals. In middle age, these insights evolved into an 'understanding' of a 'real history which is . . . the living bond of the hopes of the past, the present, and the future',⁸ and drove his critique of 'commercial war' and other crass realities of life under Victorian capitalism. In both cases, he believed, only resistance and resolution offered a measure of faith (and it is a faith, or 'belief in things unseen') that solidarity across time exists, in some sense, as a limiting ideal.

Previous commentators have found fault-lines in Morris's ardent historicism. E.P. Thompson, for example, queried Morris's tendency to enter the present backwards, as it were. Alternately, critics such as Jeffrey Skoblow and Margaret Lourie have sought to identify modernist aspects of his work.⁹ Along different lines, in his *Critique of Everyday Life*, the mid-twentieth-century Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre reflected on the paradoxical attraction of artistic traditions 'created in conditions which were very different from our own by groups . . . which established themselves using unbridled and limitless violence':

How could we not grasp the works of the past? They interest us, they fascinate us, and we call upon them desperately to give us a sense and a style. In the name of the vast emptiness which is everyday life, our everyday life, we look towards every-thing which could point to or perpetuate a plenitude. . . . We perceive them as art objects, whereas in fact this art was not something external to the everyday or, as is supposed, high above it and trying in vain to enter it, but a *style of life*. What we perceive as theories and philosophies were in fact ways of everyday living.¹⁰

Morris, I believe, anticipated Lefebvre's view of the 'vast emptiness' in the present, as well as his belief that the art of the past arose from everyday patterns – the 'Lesser Arts' – which survived in the margins and sanctuaries of a violent feudal and early modern society. Like Lefebvre, Morris also believed that 'the link between the tragic and the everyday is profound; the tragic takes shape within the everyday, comes into being in the everyday, and always returns to the everyday.'¹¹ Most of the soldiers and petty landowners of *The Defence*, and their wives, were ordinary people goaded to passion or violence by the disruption of their everyday lives.¹²

Another of Lefebvre's notions – of 'moments', or passionate mental states which create clarity, motivate risk, and thus specific forms for human aspiration – may possess interpretative relevance for *The Defence of Guenevere*. The choices made in such 'moments' (or their 'constellations') resolve ambiguities, but they also

cannot endure (at least, not for very long). ... [T]his inner contradiction gives [them their] intensity, which reaches crisis point when the inevitability of its own demise becomes fully apparent.¹³

One could formulate a fairly good description of *The Defence's* battles, imprisonments and ambiguously imagined love-scenes in these terms. Like poetry and feudal society, Lefebvre's 'moment' possesses a certain 'form', for it

weaves itself into the fabric of the everyday, and transforms it partially and 'momentarily', like art, like the figure in a carpet ... The moment is passion and the inexorable destruction and self-destruction of that passion. The moment is an impossible possibility, aimed at, desired and chosen as such and its 'impossibility' is 'the tragedy of heartbreak, of alienation, of failure at the heart of fulfillment, of the return to the everyday to start the process all over again'.¹⁴

Anticipations of such Lefebvrian 'moments' dominate the experiences of the protagonists of *The Defence of Guenevere*, who are forced to make fateful choices *in medias res*, with little knowledge of the 'alienation ... [and] ... failure at the heart of fulfillment' which they might entail. Some of these consequences become clear at the poem's end, but others, in postmodern fashion, remain deferred or enigmatically indeterminate. Many of Morris's protagonists in *The Defence* struggled against death, defeat or violation of cherished ideals, painfully aware that all their psychic victories might be illusory, their failures might destroy those they love, and love itself might be eroded by distance or degraded by time. As they fell prey to desperation, they also became disorientated, lost their bearings in time and space, and/or succumbed to madness or paranoia. No specific agent could be blamed for the injuries and deaths of these characters in poems such as 'The Wind' or 'The Tune of Seven Towers', and the moral identity of embattled speakers in 'The Judgment of God' and 'The Eve of Crécy' remains open to question.

Despite his respect for the spirit of an elusively idealised past, Morris was also rather accurate in his use of the historical records. His indebtedness to Malory for the first four *Defence* poems, and to Froissart for 'Sir Peter Harpdon's End' and 'Concerning Geffray Teste Noire' is well-known, but in her excellent edition of *The Defence*, Margaret Lourie has also identified a surprising number of precise references in the work's twenty-four other poems.¹⁵

'Old Love', for example, a poem about a middle-aged knight's wistful love of his lord's wife, is set shortly before the fall of Constantinople in 1453, and details in the poem suggest the life of the Duke and Duchess of Burgundy as narrated in the *Chronicles* of Enguerrard de Monstrelet. 'Riding Together', narrated by a prisoner who witnessed the death of his comrade, was apparently based on an incident which appeared in Jean de Joinville's *Life of St.*

Louis, and which took place during the Seventh Crusade (CE 1248–1254). Lourie has also found comparable antecedents of motifs and refrains in ‘The Eve of Crécy’, ‘The Sailing of the Sword’, ‘Welland River’, and ‘The Gilliflower of Gold’, and others in carols, folk-ballads, and French *chansons de toile*.

More grimly, many of Morris distraught protagonists become temporarily or permanently deranged or sink into states which recall Ruskin’s notion of the ‘grotesque’.¹⁶ Some of these altered states call forth the volume’s most striking lyrics.¹⁷ Several of the horse-soldiers in Morris’s ‘ignorant armies’ also languished in prisons – in the aptly named ‘Prison’, for example, as well as ‘Spell-Bound’, ‘A Good Man in Prison’, ‘Sir Peter Harpdon’s End’, and ‘Riding Together’. The hero of ‘Shameful Death’ mourned and revenged the grisly death of his liege lord, and the French protagonist in ‘The Eve of Crécy’ unwittingly anticipated the slaughter of his army on the morrow. Other protagonists have been betrayed or deserted, as in ‘Spell-bound’, ‘The Tune of Seven Towers’ and ‘King Arthur’s Tomb’, and the grim fates of their lovers and consorts is addressed in ‘Golden Wings’, ‘The Blue Closet’, ‘Sir Peter Harpdon’s End’, ‘The Judgment of God’, ‘The Haystack in the Floods’ and ‘The Gilliflower of Gold’.

Apart from the Malorian poems, moreover, most of the male protagonists of *The Defence*, unlike the knights of Tennyson’s Camelot, were *soldiers*. We tend to forget that a ‘*Knecht*’ was a ‘boy,’ a henchman or a farm-labourer, and that the ethos of Schiller’s ‘*Raubritter*’ – ‘robber-riders’ – differed little from that of the Younger brothers and their ally Jesse James. As such, they were constrained to defend their livelihoods, and their precarious independence, by killing other *Knechte* who might have grown up a few straits or estuaries away. In Morris’s reconstructions of the Hundred Years War, many of these ‘riders’ were also *estranged* – literally ‘*alienated*’ – from wives and lovers, who dwindled to half-remembered hopes-deferred – ‘dear as remembered kisses after death, / or sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned / on lips that are for others.’¹⁸

II. THREE REPRESENTATIVE POEMS

These bleakly poignant patterns, mediated by traces of popular art and song, are particularly striking in ‘The Wind’, ‘Concerning Geffray Teste Noire’, and ‘Sir Peter Harpdon’s End’.¹⁹ Consider first the ‘The Wind’ – pronounced in archaic-poetic fashion to rhyme with ‘the blind’ – an eerily indeterminate, highly symbolic and disconcertingly dreamlike poem. Stricken by fear and unable to move, its unnamed protagonist ‘sit[s] and think[s] of love that is over and past, / O! so long ago ...’, but he can barely distinguish the recent and distant past, and dreads the dawn which once might have cheered him:

If I move my chair, it will scream, and the orange [on a tapestry] will roll out far,
 And the faint yellow juice ooze out like blood from a wizard's jar;
 And the dogs will howl for those who went last month to the war. ...
 I shriek'd and leapt from my chair, and the orange roll'd out far,
 The faint yellow juice oozed out like blood from a wizard's jar;
 And then in march'd the ghosts of those that had gone to the war. (ll. 16–18,
 79–81)

Suspended in a kind of timeless hell, he suffers inexplicably from 'worn old brains', though the events in his narrative occurred when soldiers 'left last month for the war'. His class and occupation, except for a brief mention of the 'arms I was used to paint', are unclear, and the refrain of the poem's lament is deeply and lyrically tormented:

Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.

A leveller and destroyer, 'the wind' grieves the destruction it creates, and courses restlessly over the earth in search of a dormant lily-seed.²⁰

Modelled on medieval carols,²¹ and on lost chords of Shelleyan sublimity, the source and import of the refrain remains unclear. Is it the voice of a chorus? Of an external narrator? The speaker's tortured consciousness? When Morris republished *The Defence of Guenevere* at the Kelmscott Press during the last years of his life, he took care to reprint all of the *Defence's* refrains in a deep, rutilant 'bleeding' red (Figure 1), so that the poem's refrain seems insistent, overpowering the narrative elements of the text.

The traumatic Lefebvorean 'moment' of the anonymous protagonist's life has been the strange and macabre death of his love Margaret:

I held to her long bare arms, but she shudder'd away from me
 While the flush went out of her face as her head fell back on a tree,
 And a spasm caught her mouth, fearful for me to see. ... (ll. 40–42)

Who or what killed her remains an enigma, but '[w]eeping she totter'd forward, so glad that I should prevail', and 'kiss'd me on the brow'.²² As she lay dying he had 'spread her arms out wide' and walked away, but returned to cover her body with daffodils, and recoiled from the

Blood [which] lay in the many folds of the loose ungirded vest ...
 My dry hands shook and shook as the green gown show'd again,
 Clear'd from the yellow flowers, and I grew hollow with pain ... (ll. 77, 70–71)

In his altered state, the harmless representation of an orange on the nearby tap-

etry also seems to him to darken and bleed, and he is visited by ghosts, not of Margaret but ‘of those that had gone to the war’.²³

Who or what murdered Margaret? Was she a victim of the speaker’s troubled passions or an innocent casualty in one of the skirmishes of this war, fomented by ‘Olaf, king and saint’, the device emblazoned on his comrades’ coats of mail? Was it a mark of the speaker’s disorientation that he did not or could not rejoin his fellows in war? Does he belatedly abhor the war’s destruction, and his complicity in it? Is he haunted because he too is guilty, or simply distraught by the loss of everyone he had loved? The only answer given to these questions is that the wind ‘still wanderest the lily-seed to find’.

Needless to say, this poem – like a ‘rhizomic’ web of linguistic illogic of the kind celebrated more recently by Gilles Deleuze or Felix Guattari – broke several unwritten rules of nineteenth-century narrative poetry. Its indeterminacy and disorientation, for example, distance its readers in ways which differ markedly from the calibrated ‘balance of sympathy and judgment’ elicited by Browning’s monologuists.²⁴ And the dissolution of the speaker’s agitated calm – or its Ruskinian ‘rigidity’, perhaps – leaves the reader with little more than the poem’s dreamlike distortions and the preternaturally vivid, almost hallucinatory intensity of its incantatory refrain.²⁵

Similarly, the nameless and somewhat distracted elderly speaker of ‘Concerning Geffray Teste Noire’ remembers his youthful discovery of the remains of a man and woman, apparently killed in flight, as well as his spectral image of the woman

... kissing once, like a curved sword
That bites with all its edge, did your lips lie. (ll. 173–174)

He had commissioned a statue in their memory, and had tried in vain to bring the story of this stark effigy to the attention of Jean Froissart, and hence commemorate the lovers’ fate through a work of art and history. But the sculptor himself is ‘dead now—I am old’, and Froissart’s *Chronicles* are silent.

The title figure of ‘Sir Peter Harpdon’s End’ is a Gascon knight killed defending the British cause at the end of the Hundred Year’s War. After hearing of his death, his lady broods that the street-singers who glorify Launcelot will ignore her lover’s stoic courage.

Figure 1: ‘The Wind’, from The Defence of Guenevere, Hammersmith: Kelmscott Press, 1892. Image courtesy of the University of Iowa Libraries, Morris Online Edition, <http://morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu/defenceguenevere.html>.

The Wind

THE WIND.



H! no, no, it is nothing
surely nothing at all,
Only the wild-going
wind
round by the garden-
wall,
For the dawn just now
is breaking,
the wind beginning
to fall.

**Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.**

So I will sit, and think
and think of the days gone by,
Never moving my chair
for fear the dogs should cry,
Making no noise at all
while the flambeau burns away.

For my chair is heavy and carved,
and with sweeping green behind
It is hung, and the dragons thereon
grin out in the gusts of the wind;
On its folds an orange lies,
with a deep gash cut in the rind.

**Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.**

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The Wind

If I move my chair it will scream,
and the orange will roll out far,
And the faint yellow juice cooze out
like blood from a wizard's jar;
And the dogs will howl for those
who went last month to the war.

**Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.**

So I will sit and think
of love that is over and past,
O, so long ago!

Yes, I will be quiet at last:
Whether I like it or not,

a grim half-slumber is cast
Over my worn old brains,

that touches the roots of my heart,
And above my half-shut eyes,

the blue roof'gins to part,
And show the blue spring sky,
till I am ready to start

From out of the green-hung chair;
but something keeps me still.

And I fall in a dream that I walk'd
with her on the side of a hill,

Dotted, for was it not spring?
with tufts of the daffodil.

**Wind, wind! thou art sad, art thou kind?
Wind, wind, unhappy! thou art blind,
Yet still thou wanderest the lily-seed to find.**

127

Omnes homines benedicite!
This last fite may ye see,
 All men pray for me,
 Who made this history
 Cunning and fairly. (ll. 736–39, 744–48)

Morris's homages to 'Peter Harpdon' and 'Geffray Teste Noire' are pleas for empathy and remembrance of all 'who made this history' – Sir Peter, his bereaved lady, and their youthful nineteenth-century champion.

III. 'STRIVING WELL TO HOLD UP THINGS THAT FALL'

Are there any political under- or overtones of the kind suggested earlier to be found in the haunted images and altered states of *The Defence*? Isobel Armstrong, for her part, has identified refractions of industrial chaos and anomie in the work's 'grotesque' qualities. But the twenty-two year old Morris had told his friend Cormell Price, in an oft-quoted letter of 1856, that

I can't enter into politico-social subjects with any interest, for on the whole I see that things are in a muddle, and I have no power or vocation to set them right in ever so little a degree.²⁶

Notice however that the last phrase anticipated the wry modesty of the Prelude of the *Earthly Paradise*'s 'idle singer'.

To his mother, the twenty-one-year-old Morris had expressed the desire to be an architect, but one who would

... by no means give up things I have thought of for the bettering of the World in so far as lies in me – Stanley and Rendal, and Arthur, and Edgar shall keep up the family honour in the World, and perhaps even I myself shall not utterly disgrace it, so may Christ help the family of the Morriss.²⁷

Already present in these early responses was a strong measure of detachment from 'the family honour in the World', and a temperamental identification with contemporary counterparts of the medieval underdogs of the *Defence* – anonymous craftsmen, beleaguered warriors, and solitary defenders of lost outposts of the kind recorded in his Froissartian sources.

Obviously pressed by family demands that he undertake a career, Morris also responded with a mixture of cheerful ambition and self-deprecation that

Perhaps you think that people will laugh at me, and call me purposeless and changeable ... but I in my turn will try to shame them, God being my helper, by steadiness and hard work.²⁸

Much later in life, Morris averred in somewhat similar language that, like his Froissartian heroes, he had failed in most of his endeavors. To his comrade Andreas Scheu, for example, he wrote in 1889 that

We must get used to such trifles as defeats, and refuse to be discouraged by them. Indeed I am an old hand at that game, my life having been passed in being defeated; as surely every man's must be who finds himself forced into a position a little ahead of the average in his aspirations.²⁹

Few, however, would accuse him of a lack of 'steadiness and hard work'.

When Morris left the church, he did not aspire to a place in the Oxbridgean academy – then arguably one of its outliers – much less the more lucrative, but even more compromised world of the law, but instead threw his considerable inherited fortune into the life of a speculative artisan. In *William Morris: Design and Enterprise in Victorian England*,³⁰ Charles Harvey and Jon Press have assessed the capital risks assumed by 'the Firm', and concluded that it was more poorly capitalised than other enterprises with roughly equal sales. Morris evidently did *not* seek to maximise the Firm's profits, but quickly reinvested its proceeds in new designs and ventures, which – in an ironic turn for the history of British socialism – happened to succeed.

Details of the Firm's finances are perhaps unlikely to interest students of literature, but Morris's experiences of constant risk informed his mature view of monopoly capitalism and its 'commercial war' for the rights to despoil the 'beauty of the earth'. They also offered him certain freedoms from some of the more stultifying constraints of high-bourgeois life. He could wear a blue artist's smock, not a gentleman's suit, as he worked, and saw himself as a mercantile counterpart of his beloved craftsmen of 'the Lesser Arts'.

Several of Morris's more restless protagonists in the *Defence* – Sir Peter Harpdon, for example, who refused to switch sides to save his life because he '... like[d] the straining game/Of striving well to hold up things that fall/So one becomes great. .../Why then, but just to fight as I do now, /A halter round my neck, would be great bliss' (ll. 118–120) – were also driven by an idiosyncratic work-ethic of the kind Morris recalled in 'The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization':

... I tried to think what would happen to me if I were forbidden my ordinary daily work; and I knew that I should die of despair and weariness, unless I could straightway take to something else which I could make my daily work: and it was clear to me that I worked not in the least in the world for the sake of earning

leisure by it, but partly driven by the fear of starvation or disgrace, and partly, and even a very great deal, because I love the work itself ...³¹

IV. A POLITICAL CONCLUSION

Alone amongst the major Victorian poets, I believe, the twenty-four-year-old William Morris went out of his way to document the violence and degradation which flowed from feudal abuses of power, and to celebrate the stoic courage of those who struggled to preserve cultural memories against the Lefebvrian tragedy at the heart of the 'everyday'. The *Defence of Guenevere*, for example, portrayed a Hobbesian war of all against all, tempered by a few ethical imperatives and 'moments' of preternatural clarity. Violence was endemic in this 'lifeworld,' and memory and tradition were elusive and ambiguous. Sir Peter's legend, for example, is effaced and distorted; the narrator of 'Concerning Geffray Teste Noire' has nothing to show for his life but an effigy; and the speaker of 'The Wind' struggles in vain to recover and understand a traumatic past which now lies beyond his comprehension. Bleak motifs of this kind also pervade *The Defence's* haunting refrains, its insistent focus on symbolic visual detail, and (since the past is another country) its translations and reconstructions of medieval English, French and German lore into nineteenth-century verse.

But they are not all bleak. In later life, Morris resolutely set about to recreate certain fragments of this 'living cultural memory' – in his poems, of course, but indirectly in his work for 'the Firm', and more directly in his essays, his preservationist work, his ardent defences of the 'Lesser Arts', and his adamant opposition to the forms of social and economic violence which bewilder and corrupt us. And *this*, in the end – his tributes to our tenuous 'cultural memory' – gave Morris his common thread. At both twenty-four, thirty-seven and sixty-one, he understood that we must 'shut the book [of history,] and write it again in [our] own way'.³²

He also understood that 'spontaneous cultural expression' is a palimpsest. Many of the motifs of *The Defence*, for example, reappeared in the narratives of his Greek 'elders' and Norwegian 'wanderers' in *The Earthly Paradise*. The latter have taken shelter from the Black Death, far from home, on an island in the Mediterranean. There they and their hosts meditate on their lives, make mutual offerings of their cultures' tales, and prepare to die unremembered, as strangers in a strange land.

The singers have sung and the builders have builded,
The painters have fashioned their tales of delight;
For what and for whom hath the world's book been gilded,
When all is for these but the blackness of night? (st. 11)³³

Morris's personal answer to the 'March Wind' lay in this palimpsest of the 'Less-

er Arts' – song, history, carving, narrative – which endure for a time, before they too are scattered by 'The Wind'. For they and their many sister-'arts' were 'buildd', 'fashioned' and 'gilded' by our *ancestors* – for themselves, of course, but also for *us*. They are the 'lily-seeds' of history.

NOTES

1. Florence Boos, 'From the archive: "Communism, i.e., Property" a partly unpublished Morris essay'. *William Morris Society in the United States Newsletter*, Summer 2009, p. 20. <http://www.morrissociety.org/newsletters/newsletter-july09.pdf>. (last accessed 1 March 2010)
2. Compare Carole Silver's remark, in *The Romance of William Morris*, that 'life, as Morris sees it ... is made up of treachery and violence, of ambush and surprise, of blood and death'. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1982, p. 33.
3. Norman Kelvin, *William Morris: Essays on Art and Socialism*, New York: Dover, 1999, p. 169. (Afterwards Kelvin, *Essays*).
4. John Ruskin, 'The Nature of Gothic', in John Rosenberg, ed, *The Genius of John Ruskin*, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963, p. 179.
5. 'The Early Illustration of Printed Books', a lecture delivered in 1895; William S. Peterson, ed, *The Ideal Book: Essays and Lectures on the Art of the Book*, Berkeley: University of California, 1982, pp. 22–23.
6. Wilhelm Dilthey, 'The Understanding of Other Persons and Their Life Expressions', in Patrick Gardiner, ed, *Theories of History*, New York: The Free Press, 1959, p. 214.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Kelvin, *Essays*, p. 167.
9. E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, Second edition, New York: Pantheon Books, 1976, pp. 1–2, 133, 765, 769, 807–9 and *passim*; Jeffrey Skoblow, 'Beyond Reading', in Richard Maxwell, ed, *The Victorian Illustrated Book*, Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2002, pp. 209–38; Margaret Lourie, *The Defence of Guenevere and other poems*, New York: Garland Publishing, 1981, 262 pp. Now available in The William Morris Online Edition, <http://morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu/defenceguenevere.html> (Afterwards Lourie). Specific reference here is to 'Critical Introduction', <http://morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu/defenceintro.html#criticalintroduction> (last accessed 28 January 2010).
10. Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 2, trans. John Moore, London: Verso, 2008, pp. 321–22. (Afterwards Lefebvre)
11. Lefebvre, p. 347.
12. Compare Elizabeth Barrett Browning's sarcastic critique of romantic medievalism (*Aurora Leigh*, 1864, Sixth Book, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *The*

Poems of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1900, p. 327.)

To flinch from modern varnish, coat or flounce,
 Cry out for togas and the picturesque,
 Is fatal—foolish too. King Arthur's self
 Was commonplace to Lady Guinevere;
 And Camelot to minstrels seemed as flat
 As Fleet Street to our poets ...

13. Lefebvre, pp. 344–45.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 346–347.
15. Lourie, 'Editorial Notes and Annotations', <http://morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu/defencenotes.html> (last accessed 28 January 2010).
16. Isobel Armstrong, 'A New Radical Aesthetic: The Grotesque as Cultural Critique', in *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics*, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 244.
17. Compare also Elizabeth Helsinger's remark that the sharp visual contrasts of *The Defence* possess 'the power . . . to produc[e] an abrupt and unannounced switch in time or place or level of consciousness', and induce an '(appalled) sympathetic identification and reflection . . . [which] comes in part from our positing a profound otherness in the speaker'. *Poetry and the Pre-Raphaelite Arts: Dante Gabriel Rossetti and William Morris*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, p. 68. (Afterwards Helsinger).
18. Alfred Lord Tennyson, 'Tears, Idle Tears', 1847, in Christopher Ricks, ed., *The Poems of Tennyson*, London: Longmans, 1969, pp. 784–86.
19. *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems*, London: Bell and Daldy, 1858, 'The Wind', pp. 187–93; 'Concerning Geffray Teste Noire', pp. 137–47; 'Sir Peter Harpdon's End', pp. 67–109.
20. Observe that the wind does not hope to find a bloom, only the tenuous promise of its 'seed'.
21. Lourie (see Note 15).
22. '[S]o glad that I should prevail' echoes Robert Browning's 'Porphyria's Lover' and its deluded and deranged speaker. (Robert Browning, 1836, 'Porphyria's Lover', in James F. Loucks, ed., *Robert Browning's Poetry*, New York: Norton, 1979, p. 75).
23. In Helsinger's words, 'color . . . "screams", says the unsayable, becoming . . . a potent expressive vehicle for the poem's psychological burdens'; Helsinger, p. 72.
24. Robert Langbaum, *The Poetry of Experience: The Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1957, 246 pp.
25. Similarly, Lourie notes that '[i]t is, moreover, almost entirely a visual world,

- improbably hued and weirdly flat. Not surprisingly, it is a world which corresponds remarkably well to the one Freud describes in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. . . . The psychic energy normally directed outward toward the phenomenal world has been in the Morris poems entirely redirected inward by emotional frustration. . . . Moreover, it is for the sake merely of realizing this hallucinated dreamscape and the emotion that attaches to it that Morris multiplies the details of his descriptions in these poems.' (Lourie, see Note 15).
26. Norman Kelvin, ed, *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 4 volumes in 5, Volume 1, 1984, p. 28. Afterwards Kelvin, *Letters*.
 27. 11 November, 1855: Kelvin, *Letters*, Vol. 1, p. 25. On 5 September 1883, Morris also wrote to Andreas Scheu of his period at Oxford, 'the books of John Ruskin . . . were at the time a sort of revelation to me; I was also a good deal influenced by the works of Charles Kingsley, and got into my head therefrom some socio-political ideas which would have developed probably but for the attractions of art and poetry' (Kelvin, *Letters*, Vol. 3, p. 228).
 28. *Ibid.*
 29. Morris to Scheu, 15 August 1889, on the occasion of the capture of the Socialist League by its radical anarchist faction. As quoted in May Morris, ed, *The Collected Works of William Morris*, London: Longmans Green & Co., 1910–15, vol. 20, p. xlvii. Afterwards *CW*.
 30. Charles Harvey & Jon Press, *William Morris: Design and Enterprise in Victorian Britain*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991, 300 pp.
 31. Kelvin, *Essays*, p. 72. In 1855, Morris had also written to his mother 'You said then, you remember, and said very truly, that it was an evil thing to be an idle, objectless man; I am fully determined not to incur this reproach . . .'; Kelvin, *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 25.
 32. *CW*, Vol. 3, p. xxii.
 33. 'The Message of the March Wind', *Poems by the Way*, London: Reeves and Turner, 1891, pp. 33–36.

Riot, Romance and Revolution: William Morris and the Art of War

Phillippa Bennett

I. THE SPECTRE OF THE BARRICADES

In his preface to the 1906 re-print of *Fabian Essays in Socialism*, George Bernard Shaw reflected on how, during the last decades of the nineteenth century, the Fabian Society, ‘amid the jeers of the catastrophists’, had ‘turned its back on the barricades and made up its mind to turn heroic defeat into prosaic success’. The Fabians had set themselves ‘two definite tasks’, Shaw wrote: ‘to provide a parliamentary programme for a Prime Minister converted to Socialism’, and ‘to make it as easy and matter-of-course for the ordinary respectable Englishman to be a Socialist as to be Liberal or a Conservative’. With some self-satisfaction, Shaw concluded: ‘These tasks we have accomplished, to the great disgust of our more romantic comrades. Nobody now conceives Socialism as a destructive insurrection ending, if successful, in millennial absurdities.’¹

Shaw celebrated early twentieth-century Socialism as simultaneously progressive and stable. It was a political movement which had matured to adulthood, and could now look back with a certain parental affection at its own rebellious and wayward youth. But what a dynamic and ambitious youth that had been – a youth infused with the fervour and optimism evoked by its guiding intellects, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, in the final paragraph of their *Communist Manifesto* of 1848: ‘The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims’, proclaimed Marx and Engels:

They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic

revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win.²

The contrast between the aspirations of Socialism's youth and the realities of its adulthood could scarcely be rendered more striking than by a comparison of Shaw's preface and Marx and Engels's conclusion. There is little concern for facilitating the smooth transition of the 'ordinary respectable Englishman' from Liberalism to Socialism in the Manifesto's call for 'the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions'. And the young activist with 'a world to win' would surely have contemplated with some dismay a grown-up future dedicated to constructing parliamentary programmes. Shaw's lauded State Socialism might have turned its back on the barricades, but in doing so it had also divested itself of much of the excitement and expanded sense of possibility which had motivated and sustained Socialism through its formative years in Britain.

This essay considers ways in which the heroic ideal of the barricade, and what might be termed 'romantic' conceptions of social revolution, maintained their potency in nineteenth-century Socialism – despite Shaw's dismissal of their significance – by focusing particularly on the work of William Morris, undoubtedly one of the key individuals Shaw had in mind when referring to his 'more romantic comrades'. Morris was a leading Socialist activist, and a prolific political lecturer and essayist during the 1880s and 1890s, but he was also a renowned writer who produced during the last years of his life an extraordinary series of pseudo-medieval prose romances. The essay explores the connection between Morris the political revolutionary and Morris the romance writer, particularly in terms of the concepts of warfare and violence. I will suggest that whilst Morris lost hope of seeing the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism on the streets of English towns and cities during his own lifetime, he successfully translated these aspirations to the pages of his final narratives, and in doing so found a means of resolving his ambivalent response to physical violence in nineteenth-century revolutionary politics through the strikingly unambiguous violence played out on his imaginary battlefields of the past.

II. THE POLITICS OF PROTEST

In order to place William Morris's political and literary motivations in context, it is important first briefly to consider the role of conflict and violence in the broader development of the nineteenth-century Socialist movement. Street-corner preaching and organised demonstrations, the circulation of revolutionary reading material, and regular letters to the press were central activities for Socialist activists, whose agenda was captured in the motto on the Social Democratic Fed-

eration's membership cards: 'Educate, Agitate, Organise'. But whilst the three elements of this rallying cry were regarded as interrelated and self-supporting, as the Socialist movement grew in experience and confidence the idea of 'Agitation' lent itself more readily to the construction of a high-profile public agenda, two particularly prominent outcomes of which were the Hyde Park 'riots' of February 1886 and the events of 13 November 1887 which came to be known as 'Bloody Sunday'.

On 8 February 1886, what E.P. Thompson describes as 'a curious gang of "Tory Fair Traders" ' had arranged a meeting in Trafalgar Square, which prompted 'a counter-demonstration of the unemployed called by the SDF'. After addressing the alternative crowd they had generated, Socialist leaders 'led the crowds up Pall Mall for a further meeting in Hyde Park'. They were jeered from windows and doorways by members of the gentlemen's clubs which lined the way, in response to which some of the demonstrators began throwing stones and smashing windows, incidents which were followed by looting and further acts of property damage.³ Over the next few days, London and provincial newspapers reported the events of 8 February in moods which ranged from sombre soul-searching to national moral hysteria. *The Times* reflected on what it termed 'the most alarming and destructive riot that has taken place in London for many years' and castigated the Social Democratic Federation for expounding its revolutionary doctrines to members of 'the dangerous classes'.⁴ The *Pall Mall Gazette* in turn characterised the day as a conflict between civilisation and 'the primordial forces of society', describing a 'terror-stricken' group of tradesmen standing powerless in the face of a 'huge and overwhelming crowd', in streets where 'plate glass smashed to atoms was strewn over the pavements on each side'.⁵

Socialist journals found it equally useful, however, to utilise the violence of the events of February 1886 in order to promote their own political agenda. 'The 8th February will be a day to be long remembered by the working classes in London', proclaimed *Justice*, the journal of the Social Democratic Federation; nor should the public be surprised if the destitute responded violently to the taunts of the idle rich, for the brave victims of capitalism knew 'they had better die fighting than die starving'.⁶ The newspaper of the Socialist League, *Commonweal*, edited by William Morris, adopted a more philosophical approach, asking 'what was the meaning' of the events of the 8 February, and concluding: 'at bottom misery, illuminated by a faint glimmer of hope, raised by the magic word *Socialism*, the only hope of these days of confusion. That was what the crowd represented'.⁷

Various heroic and revolutionary sentiments thus attached themselves readily to the events of one memorable London afternoon in 1886, which became known as 'Black Monday', their purpose to elicit either fear or hope depending on the political persuasion of those who employed them. But whilst February 1886 could thus be interpreted as something of an early warm-up act for social

revolution, 13 November 1887 adopted the rather more sombre reality of a dress rehearsal – and one which exposed the unpreparedness of the Socialists for the final performance. On the day immortalised as ‘Bloody Sunday’, Socialists, Free-Speech campaigners and the unemployed attempted to hold a protest rally in Trafalgar Square. Public meetings had been prohibited in the Square by the Government in the light of recent unrest, provoking mass demonstration marches on Sunday 13 November through key London thoroughfares leading into it.

The demonstrators were confronted by a combination of police and military forces which dispersed the crowds with a brutality which was as shocking as it was unexpected. The *Daily News*, with the assistance of Biblical metaphors of deluge, described the following day how: ‘The disorders that have been ebbing and flowing in the metropolis during the last few weeks rose to high tide yesterday; and that sacred day of rest, at least in and around Trafalgar Square, was a Pandemonium Sunday, disgraceful to any Christian land’.⁸ In similarly apocalyptic imagery, a journalist from the *Pall Mall Gazette* dramatically recreated his experience of events, describing how ‘the police ride very roughly upon the people, there is a sound of the whacking of staves and sticks, there are scuffles and scampers and falls, and there is the clatter of the horses upon the flagged pavement as they gallop across the various refuges, striking sparks of fire with their shoes as they go’.⁹

Writing in *Commonweal*, William Morris, who had experienced the violence at first hand, recalled the ‘wild shrieks of hatred’ at the police and military ‘from the women who came from the slums’, and described ‘one brave man wrapping his banner torn from the pole round his arm and facing the police until he was hammered down with repeated blows’. Nonetheless, Morris attempted to draw something positive from what was at best a disheartening experience for the Socialist cause, declaring:

Sir Charles Warren [the Commissioner of Police] has thus given us a lesson in street fighting, the first point of which is that mere numbers without organization or drill are useless; the second, which ought also to be noted, is the proper way to defend a position in a large town by a due system of scouts, outposts, and supports.¹⁰

There is a hint of Morris relishing this lesson – of taking more than a passing interest in the tactics that would render future violent confrontations more successful for the Socialist side. And the violence of Bloody Sunday had given the Socialist cause something else highly useful for their future political propaganda – a fallen hero. Alfred Linnell, one of the protestors, died of the injuries he received in the conflict and his funeral served as a public demonstration of political solidarity against the brutal tyranny of the state. Morris wrote ‘A Death Song’ for Linnell, which was sung at his graveside to the music of Malcolm Lowson,

the final stanza of which particularly articulates the revolutionary heroics of the Socialist cause:

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.*¹¹

Here, the work becomes the fight, and the inevitability of violence in securing a Socialist future is clearly implied; Morris's 'A Death Song' is thus essentially a call to arms at the tomb of a martyr to the Cause.

III. TO LIVE OR DIE IN THE QUARREL

'Black Monday' and 'Bloody Sunday' thus became significant dates in the Socialist calendar, prefiguring, in the minds of revolutionary Socialists, the final encounter which would issue in a Communistic future. But alongside these actual events in which violence visibly played its part, the concepts of war and violence also underpinned the terminology and imagery of many Socialist writings of the period. As Socialist writers often presented their cause in the form of a quest for a future of fellowship, happiness and rest, so too they frequently conceived and articulated the active nature of that quest through traditional metaphors of struggle and conflict. George Sorel recognised this ingrained propensity in the Socialist movement at the beginning of the twentieth century, noting how 'men who are participating in great social movements always picture their coming action in the form of images of battle in which their cause is certain to triumph'. Utilising such imagery himself, in his 1908 publication *Reflections on Violence*, Sorel claimed that the propagation of, and belief in, such myths as a catastrophic revolution or a General Strike, played an essential role in stimulating people 'to prepare themselves for a combat which will destroy the existing state of things'.¹² It was, after all, with a sense of preparation for combat that Marx and Engels chose to conclude the *Communist Manifesto*, 'WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES UNITE!' serving as a rallying cry in the face of an inevitable forthcoming conflict.¹³

Reflecting during the 1880s on the early decades of the nineteenth century, H.M. Hyndman, the leader of the Social Democratic Federation, acknowledged the effectiveness of such threats in securing legislative reform: 'It was force', he concluded, 'and the fear of force which really enabled the workers to get any measures whatever passed for their benefit'.¹⁴ Whilst Hyndman was clear

to assert that he sought a revolution for England devoid of the 'anarchy and bloodshed' espoused by continental revolutionaries, the language he employed in order to depict the transformation of society is nonetheless steeped in metaphors and analogies associated with the traditional heroic quest. Achieving the Socialist ideal would not be swift or easy, Hyndman admitted: 'But if only we are true to one another, and stand together in the fight, the brightness of the future is ours – the day before us and the night behind.'¹⁵ The Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin similarly adopted traditional images of conflict and heroism in his 1880 essay 'The Spirit of Revolt', in which he lauded those 'men of courage' who would lead the way to revolution, those 'men of integrity for whom the act is one with the idea'. These, Kropotkin claimed, were 'the lonely sentinels who enter the battle long before the masses are sufficiently roused to raise openly the banner of insurrection and to march, arms in hand, to the conquest of their rights'. The bravery and audacity of these revolutionaries would, Kropotkin asserted, ensure the 'coming of the cataclysm' which would issue in a new era for humanity – a cataclysm that would be at once wonderful for the oppressed and terrible for the oppressors. Thus, he assured the youth of the working classes:

All of us together, we who suffer and are insulted daily, we are a multitude whom no man can number, we are the ocean that can embrace and swallow up all else. When we have but the will to do it, that very moment will justice be done: that very instant the tyrants of the earth shall bite the dust.¹⁶

Kropotkin's emphatic declaratory style and the catastrophic overtones of his imagery are potent and alluring, and shrewdly designed to appeal to the undeterred confidence of youth.

Such deliberate suggestions of impending violence cannot simply be dismissed as the excesses of anarchism, for Morris's colleague in the Socialist League, Ernest Belfort Bax, a Firm opponent of the anarchist element which came to dominate the League, defined the Socialist mission in terms similarly replete with metaphors of upheaval and force. In his 1887 essay 'The Modern Revolution', Bax emphasised that before society could be reconstructed, 'we have the last agonized throes of Revolution to pass through', and there would not be long to wait, he assured his readers, for 'we are nearing the catastrophe' and 'the end is approaching'. Adopting the fantastic metaphors of the German legend of Wilhelm and Leonora, Bax warned that:

Already the discerning may see the open tomb in the distance, already hear the chant of the goblins of destiny indicating the termination of the mad chase and the dissolution, it may be by a quiet euthanasia, it may be in blood and fire, of the ghastly mockery of human aspiration we call 'the civilization of the century'.¹⁷

Whilst Bax's focus here is on the apocalyptic overtones of Old German nar-

ratives, Friedrich Engels found a less drastic but equally inspiring relevance for modern Socialism in the myths of his native land, and particularly in that of Siegfried, the ancient tale which held such resonance for Morris in its Old Norse version and which inspired his own re-telling in *Sigurd the Volsung*. 'What is it about the legend of Siegfried that affects us so powerfully?', Engels asked, concluding that its appeal was most strong for those 'who still carry in our breast a heart unfettered by the restraints of life', those who showed 'the same defiance of convention', who desired 'to get out into the free world' and 'to overrun the barriers of prudence and fight for the crown of life, action'. 'Perhaps', mused Engels – the man who labelled Morris 'a settled sentimental Socialist' – 'a friendly Morgan le Fay will make Siegfried's castle rise again for me or show my mind's eye what heroic deeds are reserved for his sons of the nineteenth century.'¹⁸

William Morris employed his own quest metaphors, ancient battle analogies and mythic constructs to define the work of the Socialist movement during the 1880s and 1890s, one of the most potent and recurring of which was the overthrow of an enervated Roman Empire by the vigorous tribes of the Goths. In his lecture 'Art and Socialism', Morris claimed a contemporary relevance for the Roman defeat at the hands of what he termed 'the Fury of the North': 'To those that have hearts to understand,' Morris warned, 'this tale of the past is a parable of the days to come; of the change in store for us hidden in the breast of the Barbarism of civilization – the Proletariat'.¹⁹ It is an analogy he employs again in his lecture 'The Development of Modern Society', in which he concludes by encouraging his audience: 'So shall we be our own Goths, and at whatever cost break up again the new tyrannous Empire of Capitalism'.²⁰ As Paul Meier observes, 'the myth of the new barbarian' was thus 'a constructive and optimistic myth' for Morris, and in his loosely historical romances of the late 1880s, *The House of the Wolfings* and *The Roots of the Mountains*, he gave fictional expression to that 'constructive and optimistic myth'.²¹

In both these narratives Morris utilised his proficient knowledge of early warfare in order to depict the tribes of 'primitive Communism' defeating the forces of tyranny and oppression, and such imaginary battles undoubtedly enabled him to project their overthrow in more optimistic and decisive terms than the skirmishes of late nineteenth-century Socialism had so far evidenced. This is exemplified in the Goths' battle with the Roman invaders of their homeland in *The House of the Wolfings*, in which Morris describes how Arinbiorn:

smote at all before him as though none smote at him in return; yea, as though he were smiting down tree boles for a match against some other mighty man; and all the while amidst the hurry, strokes of swords and spears rained on him, some falling flatwise and some glancing sideways, but some true and square, so that his

helm was smitten off and his hauberk rent adown, and point and edge reached his living flesh [...] so that at last he fell rent and shattered.²²

Here, conviction of the justice of his cause inspires the Gothic warrior to fight to his death in order to preserve the communal values threatened by the tyranny of the Roman Empire. And the details are compelling – heroic and uncompromisingly brutal at the same time – revealing not only Morris’s knowledge of the technicalities of warfare but something also of his thrill at the glory of the battle.

In attempting to envision how such decisive action leading ultimately to social transformation might be secured in his own age, Morris conveyed his speculations through Old Hammond in his utopian narrative *News from Nowhere* published in 1890. An inhabitant of post-revolutionary Nowhere, Old Hammond describes how the demonstrations and sporadic riots with which Morris and his Socialist colleagues were familiar had helped gradually to erode the last bastions of capitalist oppression: ‘a sort of irregular war was carried on with varied success all over the country’, Old Hammond remembers, forcing the Government into a short period of outright war before the revolutionaries triumphed. And whilst this predicted final conflict of the capitalist era could not be presented in terms quite so dramatic and glorious as those of the Wolfings’ and Burgdalers’ revolts, Morris was still keen to imbue it with its own heroic spirit and conviction. Thus Old Hammond relates how success was contingent on that fact that ‘the sloth, the hopelessness, and if I may say so, the cowardice of the last century, had given way to the eager, restless heroism of a declared revolutionary period’.²³

The slothful, hopeless, cowardly century Old Hammond recalls is, of course, Morris’s own age, indicating just how depressing Morris found the absence of this eager heroic spirit in the political machinations of late nineteenth-century society. Indeed, the recurrence of historical and legendary conflicts in his political and fictional writing and his emphasis on the value of the heroic spirit suggest something of a dichotomy at the heart of Morris’s revolutionary Socialism. In a letter to Thomas Coglean Horsfall in 1883 he expressed ‘a religious hatred towards all war and violence’, and a hope that the next great social revolution ‘would work itself out without violence’.²⁴ It is a position which Morris continued to articulate throughout his Socialist career, with an increasing emphasis on the pointlessness, not just the undesirability, of a deliberate recourse to violent methods in order to secure revolution.

Immediately prior to leaving the Socialist League, because it had fallen under anarchist control, Morris asserted in his 1890 farewell *Commonweal* article, ‘Where Are We Now?’, that ‘the method of partial, necessarily futile, inconsequent revolt, or riot rather, against the authorities, who are our absolute masters, and can easily put it down’ was a waste of time and effort.²⁵ Nonetheless, in a letter to Georgiana Burne-Jones following the events of Black Monday in 1886,

Morris had confessed: 'If you had only suffered as I have from the apathy of the English lower classes (woe's me how low!) you would rejoice at their awakening, however ugly the forms it took'.²⁶ And if Morris was thus prevented by his own temperament and values from asserting a claim for violence as a necessary stage on the path to greater social good, he always believed that it would to some extent be inevitable when the revolution arrived at its final stage.

IV. ROMANCE AND REVOLUTION

Despite this, the system of 'scouts, outposts and supports' which Morris argued should be developed for besieged towns and cities in the light of the events of Bloody Sunday in 1887 was never called into action during his own lifetime. The Socialist struggle, as it developed through the 1880s and 1890s, was a struggle which, as Morris knew all too well, expressed itself far more often in the duller daily grind of recruiting new members or agitating for parliamentary reform than in the heroics of the battlefield. Nor did Morris possess any real desire to see the cataclysmic conflicts of the barbarian era played out in literal terms in the streets of nineteenth-century British cities. But the employment of such metaphors did allow him to articulate the ways in which the values which linked the early Communist tribes with the modern Socialist movement were always worth fighting for, even if the terrain had shifted from the battlefield to the street corner and preaching had replaced killing.

By the 1890s, Morris had in fact recognised that what became known as 'Gas and Water Socialism' – the kind of Socialism which aimed at incremental social improvements rather than social revolution – might need to be accepted as a necessary first stage on the road to that revolution. But he never lost his desire to see a far more emphatic and unambiguous overthrow of capitalism, and in the prose romances written during the last six years of his life he found an effective and satisfying means of envisioning, over and again, dramatic and conclusive processes of social transformation through the construct and activities of the battlefield.

Battles are of course a traditional feature of the romance genre and, as Andrew Lang claimed, in his 1887 essay 'Realism and Romance', they appeal at a fundamental level to that love of 'a good fight' that 'lingers in the minds of men and women'.²⁷ Robert Louis Stevenson proffered a similar argument in his 1882 article 'A Gossip on Romance', in which he argued that the most compelling element of the story books of childhood was their inclusion of 'some quality of the brute incident'.²⁸ But Morris's use of battles in his last romances goes beyond a simple appeal to a latent savagery in human nature, for he recognised, as John Goode argues, that 'battles are moments in which the processes of change are

accelerated'. Furthermore, Goode's claim that 'the battle scene is very much a realization of a moment of creative and undivided labour, the community working together in its own defence and each individual occupying a complete role' is of key significance in regard to Morris's Socialism.²⁹

In these terms, Morris recognised the battle as a crucial event in securing social change; the battles of the last romances always move beyond the merely sensational to become critical and decisive moments for both the individual and society, moments in which individuals accept the possibility of their own personal annihilation in the quest for the greater possibilities of the community – in which they experience a shift from a position of self-interest to one of communal interest.

It is in the battles of his final narratives that Morris presents his most optimistic vision of what such fellowship and individual selflessness can achieve. Thus, in Morris's very last romance, *The Sundering Flood*, published posthumously in 1897, the protagonist Osborne is motivated to assist Sir Godrick in his quest to liberate the City of the Sundering Flood after his direct questioning of his new master's character and motives has procured a desirable vision of the city's future. Determined to test the integrity of Sir Godrick's support for the oppressed Lesser Crafts in their impending rebellion against 'their King and the tyrants of the Porte', Osborne asks him: 'wouldst thou give them so much help as not to be against them, but let them fight it out and the mightiest to prevail? Or how much more wouldst thou give?' Sir Godrick fervently responds:

I will have them home with me and arm them and clothe them and feed them and house them, and my lands shall be their lands, and bite and drop shall we share together, so long as it holds out: and a noble host shall we gather, and harry the King and his dastards till we prevail at last, and we will have a new rule of the City and a new Porte, and I will be the captain thereof if they will have it so: or else to die in the pain.³⁰

It is a vision of equality and fellowship which Osborne judges worthy of his commitment and which places his personal quest to find his lost beloved within the wider context of the quest for a new social order. And it is a quest which is ultimately successful, as are all the quests of Morris's last romances – primarily because they are quests which are informed by ideals of justice and social harmony.

Hence, in his 1895 romance *Child Christopher and Goldilind the Fair*, at the moment when Christopher, 'steady and strong' in his purpose, leads the forces of Oakenrealm into battle, we read how:

a great shout rose behind him, and none shrank or lagged, but spears and bills, and axes and swords, all came on like a wall of steel, so that to the foemen the

earth seemed alive with death, and they made no show of abiding the onset, but all turned and ran.³¹

It is a scene echoed in Morris's 1896 romance *The Well at the World's End*, in which Ralph confronts the enemy at the head of his forces at Upmeads and there 'befell a marvel' on the battlefield as the enemy 'cast down their weapons and fled wildly down the hill, overturning whatever stood in their way, till the whole mass of them was broken to pieces'.³² In each of these scenes the remarkable personal qualities of the leader and the ethical conviction of their cause generate a notable loyalty and commitment in their followers and a reflective sense of hopelessness and inadequacy in their enemies, rendering the final assault on tyranny one of relative ease.

Morris's last romances thus enabled him to explore the values, concerns and aspirations of his own late nineteenth-century Socialism in the broader context of historical, mythical and legendary warfare. And indeed this is a device utilised by Arthur in *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* (1897); eager to assault the Red Hold, the location of a brutal tyrant, and to dispel the 'evil things' it harbours, Arthur urges his companions to 'gather force and go thither in arms to live or die in the quarrel, and so sweeten the earth, as did the men of ancient days when they slew the dragons and the giants, and the children of hell, and the Sons of Cain'.³³ In these analogies Arthur confirms the persistent human tendency to conceive contemporary conflicts in terms of ancient and traditional narratives which repeatedly enact the conflict between the forces of good and evil—a tendency revealed in Bax's use of the apocalyptic stories of German legend, and Kropotkin's envisioning of the day when the tyrants of the earth would bite the dust.

The battlefield thus offers itself in these romances as a necessarily violent but also transformative space, in which personal, social and ethical concerns interact, and out of which new social orders are born. And it is through the dynamic and symbolic nature of the battle that Morris is able to demonstrate how the revolutionary consciousness of the individual can in turn foster a revolutionary people. This process is exemplified in the interaction between Ralph and the men of the small rural thorp through which he rides on his way to wage war against the enemies of Upmeads in *The Well at the World's End*: 'now thou hast come,' the spokesman for the thorp tells Ralph, 'we have little will to abide behind, but were fain to follow thee, and do thee what good we can'.³⁴ Once awakened, the revolutionary spirit of the people thus performs a direct role in securing social change, a point emphasised in Morris's Socialist drama *The Tables Turned* in which, on the last and decisive day of revolution, the soldiers of the establishment 'remember that they too belong to the "lower classes"' and join the Socialist ranks.³⁵ Notably, these events recur in *News from Nowhere* in Old Hammond's description of the final days of the revolution: when 'that revolu-

tionary instinct' which the Socialist movement aroused 'acted on the ordinary soldier in the ranks', Old Hammond tells Guest, 'the greater part, certainly the best part, of the soldiers joined the side of the people'.³⁶ Thus, although Goode suggests that the romance 'celebrates the hero and his revolutionary consciousness', whilst only utopias portray 'the revolutionary consciousness of the people', the conflicts of Morris's last romances confirm the essential connection between the two.³⁷ Morris's protagonists invariably release the greater possibilities of the worlds through which they move, their quests and conflicts fostering not only the growth of their own revolutionary consciousness, but that of the communities with which they interact.

V. CONCLUSION

Shaw was correct to conclude that, by the end of the nineteenth century, Socialism had not issued into mainstream British political life through destructive insurrections or millennial absurdities. Instead, it slowly and laboriously built its public support through the more mundane channels of contesting School Board seats and fighting Local Government elections – neither of which proffered an obvious platform for the kind of dramatic performances enacted previously in Hyde Park or Trafalgar Square. But Shaw failed to emphasise that this somewhat duller 'daily grind' of converting the respectable English gentleman to Socialism was, for many potentially disillusioned activists, made bearable because of their resilient confidence in a far more glorious future. As William Morris admitted, 'steadiness of purpose is surely impossible without some high ideal to aim at, nor will a wise man consent to take pains and trouble, to sacrifice his leisure or his pleasure unless he can see and feel that he has set before him something worthy of all that sacrifice'.³⁸

One way in which Morris himself promoted such ideals and encouraged the various sacrifices consequent on a commitment to the Socialist cause, was through the writing of his last romances – and nowhere better were high ideals and noble self-sacrifice demonstrated than in the battles which punctuate these narratives. The values Morris and his Socialist comrades espoused are here articulated in dramatic and inspiring form, and with an immediacy and conclusiveness that nineteenth-century political propaganda could never achieve. But that does not render these narratives escapist, any more than it suggests that Morris had abandoned his hopes for a Communist future by the time he wrote them. Rather, it suggests that, for Morris, literary romance and Socialist activism could and should be allies in the progress towards revolution and social transformation.

NOTES

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Time and Utopia: the gap between Morris and Bax

Ruth Kinna

William Morris's personal friendship and close working relationship with Ernest Belfort Bax is problematic for many Morris scholars. As Roger Aldous has persuasively argued, Bax's reputation as a misogynist and his well-known dispute with Eleanor Marx Aveling on the question of women's emancipation have badly sullied his standing in socialist circles, notwithstanding the originality and richness of his thought; the risk that Morris might be tainted by association helps explain Bax's neglect in Morris studies and, indeed, the desire on the part of leading Morris scholars to emphasise the incongruence of their collaboration.¹ Yet Aldous's conclusion that that the differences between Morris and Bax 'are more than outweighed by similarities' seems too strong.² In contesting this claim, I examine Morris and Bax's concept of time. I argue that there was an important difference in their understanding of historical change, and that the gap between them pointed to an important contrast in the approach they adopted toward the future.

Their joint statement in the second edition of the *Manifesto of the Socialist League* (1885) is a useful starting point for discussion. Here, Morris and Bax describe history as a dialectical, spiralling movement:

... we look forward to the time when any definite exchange will have entirely ceased to exist; just as it never existed in that primitive Communism which preceded Civilisation.

The enemy will say, 'This is retrogression not progress'; to which we answer, All progress, every distinctive stage of progress, involves a backward as well as a forward movement; the new development returns to a point which represents the older principle elevated to a higher plane; the old principle reappears transformed, purified, made stronger, and ready to advance on the fuller life it has gained through its seeming death. As an illustration (imperfect as all illustrations

must be) take the case of advance on a straight line and on a spiral, – the progress of all life must be not on the straight line, but on the spiral.³

The body of this paper considers the ways in which this common idea played itself out in Morris and Bax's single-authored work. My contention is that whilst they were able to generalise their positions in important jointly-authored work, their ideas differed in significant ways. Since Morris and Bax drew attention to the convergence of their views, pointedly describing *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome* (1896) as 'a *collaboration*' in 'the true sense of the word', 'each sentence having been carefully considered by both the authors in common', the claim is perhaps foolhardy.⁴ Nevertheless, my suggestion is that Morris and Bax read different ideas into the framework of the theory of change, and that they not only held divergent views about the dynamics of history, but that this divergence suggested an important difference in their respective assessments of history's epistemic value, which were also therefore incompatible. The depth of this disagreement was made plain by the attitudes they took towards the role of utopianism in socialist thought – an issue I consider at the end of the paper.

I. SOCIALISM AND ETHICS

One of the key tenets of Morris and Bax's socialist thought was the idea that, as well as the transformation of the socio-economic system, the transition from capitalism to socialism involved an ethical change. During the early 1880s, this conviction was expressed in their commitment to 'the religion of socialism', a concept which, as Anna Vaninskaya has shown, was open to a wide variety of competing interpretations.⁵ For Morris and Bax, it underpinned a shared belief that the primary purpose of socialist activism was not a push for immediate 'practical' reform, but to 'make socialists'. Socialism, they argued, was not just a system of production, distribution and exchange, but described a set of social relations and a particular moral consciousness. Finding insufficient support for this view in the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.), and quarrelling with H.M. Hyndman on the question of socialist strategy, in 1884 Morris and Bax left the S.D.F. to found the Socialist League.⁶ Free there to determine their own priorities, they included this statement in the Manifesto:

A new system of industrial production must necessarily bear with it its own morality. Morality, which in a due state of Society ... mean[s] nothing more than the responsibility of the individual man to the social whole of which he forms a part ...

The economical change which we advocate, therefore, would not be stable

unless accompanied by a corresponding revolution in ethics, which, however, is certain to accompany it, since the two things are inseparable elements of one whole, to wit social evolution.⁷

Bax and Morris linked the ethic of socialism with justice and both grounded it in sentiment. For Bax, justice was underpinned by solidarity or brotherhood. By invoking this term, Bax did not mean to suggest that communism implied ‘an equally close personal affection for, or intimacy with, everybody’ – a notion he thought absurd – but ‘the practical recognition of mutual sympathy in the affairs of life and in the recognition of the same ideal aims’.⁸ Morris similarly rooted socialist ethics in feeling, and described its expression in a number of ways. In *News From Nowhere* the ethical principle is characterised as one of kindness to strangers.⁹ In his correspondence with the Rev. Bainton, Morris echoed the terms of the Manifesto to describe it as a ‘religious sense of the responsibility of each man to each and all of his fellows’ or ‘the habitual love of humanity’.¹⁰ In his story of the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381, *The Dream of John Ball*, he identified socialist ethics with fellowship, using the Judeo-Christian term to describe a sense of belonging to an earthly community:

Forsooth, ye have heard it said that ye shall do well in this world that in the world to come ye may live happily for ever; do you well then, and have your reward both on earth and in heaven; for I say to you that earth and heaven are not two but one ... Forsooth, brethren, will ye murder the Church any one of you, and go forth a wandering man and lonely ... what an evil doom is this, to be an outcast ... to have none to love you and to speak with you, to be without fellowship! Forsooth brothers, fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell: fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death: and the deeds that ye do upon the earth, it is for fellowship’s sake that ye do them, and the life that is in it, that shall live on and on for ever, and each one of you part of it, while many a man’s life upon the earth from the earth shall wane.¹¹

II. ETHICS AND THE DYNAMIC OF HISTORY

So-describing the principles of socialist ethics, Bax and Morris agreed that ethical change was part of a wider process of historical development. Both, moreover, understood it as a dialectical process. Of the two, Bax’s view was by far the more elaborate. His sociological analysis mapped three different models of social relations – or what he called expressions of consciousness – on to complementary systems of moral and religious thought. Using the terminology which had found its way into the *Manifesto*, he dubbed these models ‘primitive’ or ‘natural’ com-

munism, individualism, and future communism. The corresponding systems of religious thought were pagan-classical, early Christian and Protestant, and the religion of socialism. Bax's view was that Victorian capitalism was poised at a point of transition from this middle stage – the individualism of Protestantism – and that future communism and the religion of socialism would emerge in the next phase of development. As the transcendence of primitive communism and individualism, such a religion would bear the primary characteristics of primitive communism – duty and solidarity – but in a manner mediated by the history of individualism. In contrast to primitive communism, which was bounded by ties of blood or kinship, the religion of socialism would support a global, generalised duty based on the recognition of the equality of peoples.¹² Unlike individualism, which defined duty in relation to law – all too frequently giving rise to conflicts between individual moral responsibility and respect for rules – equality would resolve the tension between conscience and obedience.

In Morris's writings it is difficult to find either a formal analysis of historical change or a full-blown account of moral development. Nevertheless, as A.L. Morton notes, Morris's reflection on 'the change beyond the change' in *A Dream of John Ball* is rightly regarded as a description of 'the dialectic of history'.¹³ In a long dialogue with John Ball, in the closing chapters of the book, Morris elaborated his view. Like Bax, he identified three movements in the dialectic, the first one negative. Morris tells John Ball that the King's petitioners will 'fight and lose the battle' and the Revolt will be put down.¹⁴ The second is a partial reverse: 'the thing they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant'. As Morris explains, the suppression of the revolt results in the abolition of the category of 'villein', and equality is granted to all. However, as the new freedom consists only of the formal right to sell 'the power of ... labour' for a subsistence wage, changes in the terms of labour cement the status of the newly freed villeins as 'thrall'.¹⁵ Morris tells Ball, 'all power shall be in the hands of ... foul swine' and 'times of plenty shall ... be the times of famine'.¹⁶ The final movement is positive: the new tyranny is overcome as 'other men ... fight for what they meant under another name'.¹⁷ From his nineteenth century vantage, Morris identified this movement with the struggle for socialism. '[M]ake no mistake' he wrote in *Justice*, 'about the cause for which Wat Tyler and his worthier associate John Ball fell; they were fighting against the fleecing of the people by that particular form of fleecing then in fashion, viz.: serfdom or villeinage ...'.¹⁸ The oppressed of the fourteenth-century could not think of themselves as socialists, but their cause was the same, and it was the duty of nineteenth-century revolutionaries to deliver the transformation they had been denied.

III. PHILOSOPHIES OF HISTORY

Given that the terms of Bax's historical sociology found their way into the *Manifesto*, it seems reasonable to assume that Morris believed his own sketchier treatment of the dialectic was compatible with it. Yet Bax's sociology was underpinned by a metaphysical philosophy absent from Morris's historical account. Both men identified two main factors in historical change or what Bax, in a nod to Auguste Comte, called 'social dynamics': the ethical and the material. But whereas Bax's philosophy suggested the impossibility of finding a model of socialist ethics in the past, Morris's history pointed in precisely the opposite direction: the past held the key to the future. The explanation lies in their respective philosophical outlooks.

Bax called the 'two main factors' of historical development 'outward material circumstance (mainly economic in its character)' and ideas, expressed in the 'the *spontaneity* of human intelligence'.¹⁹ These factors did not stand in causal relation to one another: Bax rejected the idea that historical change could be conceptualised as a parallel movement in which idealism somehow triggered or was triggered by material change. Instead he claimed that 'history consists in the unity of these two lines in their action and reaction' and that both had evolved autonomously, neither being ultimately reducible to the other.²⁰ Bax also rejected the proposition that the evolution of ideas followed a logical path – a position he attributed to Hegel – making the possibility of their 'mechanical determination' conceivable. Human beings, he conceded, grasped history only by their reason, and therefore understood it as a rational process.

But it did not follow that history was in fact a process of Reason unfolding – in whatever relation it might be said to stand to the material forces with which it reacted. To believe this was to confuse the terms of history's understanding with the process of its development and to assume wrongly, Bax argued, that individuals were first and foremost creatures of thought. This was not the case: they were primarily creatures of experience, will and feeling. Returning to the Cartesian roots of modern philosophy, he argued that the significance of the thinking being as a category for reflection did not rest in 'the "intelligible" principle' – thought – but in 'the "I" which thinks' – the passionate will. Following Schopenhauer (whose essays he translated), Bax referred to as this as the alogical element of knowledge, and identified it as the real driver of historical change.²¹

Bax's identification of the alogical or the will as the primary force, which realised itself through the complex interplay of ideal and material forces, shaped his image of history as a spiral, an idea which appeared not only in the *Manifesto* but in a number of his single-authored works. Though Bax would not have approved, his image resonated with classical science. Writing more than a hundred years earlier, Voltaire observed that Newton had demonstrated that an 'infinitely lit-

tle' change in the direction of a 'finite line' resulted in an 'infinite curve'. With this wonderful new knowledge it was possible to contemplate 'squares of infinity, cubes of infinity and infinite infinities'.²² Bax imagined something similar: 'wheels' of infinity powering changes in consciousness and material existence. His idea was that infinitely small expressions of will made it possible to comprehend the apparently linear path of history as an infinite progression, each complex movement representing a further stage in ethical development.²³

Morris's treatment of the forces of historical development bore none of the hallmarks of Bax's metaphysical philosophy, though he too argued that it was possible to identify material and ideal factors as dynamics of change. He also agreed that it was impossible to prioritise one over the other, as if in a causal relation. In *A Dream of John Ball*, he traced the broad outlines of historical development from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century. On the one hand, he examined the process of economic development, telling the resolute but incredulous John Ball about the rise of industry, mechanisation and the expansion of production, the de-skilling of labour and the emergence of a novel and terrible tyranny of work; the private appropriation of the common lands, the rise of a new idle class of owners and the skewing of the market towards the consumption of useless things. On the other, he explored concomitant changes in ideas and behaviours, comparing the heady aspirations of John Ball's toilers to the cowed resignation of nineteenth-century workers. In John Ball's eyes, the willingness of the latter to accept the fleecing of capitalism seemingly without complaint indicated a complicity in their own oppression.²⁴ Morris agreed, but tempered this critique. Nineteenth century workers were not really the 'sluggards, dolts, and cowards' which John Ball condemned. They lacked the burning sense of injustice which had motivated their forebears because they had been seduced by capitalism's competitive logic. Mistakenly regarding themselves as free men and equal to their masters, they had been pacified by the slim probability that they might emerge as beneficiaries of market exchange. Morris explained: they had been 'blinded to the robbing of themselves by others, because they shall hope in their souls that they may each live to rob others'.²⁵

According to this analysis, one of the key differences between fourteenth and nineteenth-century workers was historical luck. The development of material forces suggested that the latter stood at a point of potential transformation: capitalism was ripe for revolution. However there was another important difference between the two generations: moral courage. For nineteenth century workers, the windows of historical change were ajar, but, in contrast to John Ball's men, they lacked the wherewithal to throw them open and force through the material and ethical changes which revolutionary socialism demanded. For fourteenth century peasants, the situation was the precisely the reverse. They possessed the will to fight injustice but, in material terms, they stood at the cusp of capitalism's

initial development. So, although Morris believed that their cause was frustrated by their deference to, and misplaced trust in, their masters, the odds of achieving revolutionary change were always stacked against them.

By linking the struggles of fourteenth and nineteenth century peoples, Morris identified socialist ethics with past hope in a way which suggested continuity in history. On his understanding, the religion of socialism could not be conceptualised, as Bax imagined, as a the result of a process of transcendence, linked to historical changes in consciousness, rooted in the endless, unpredictable expression of will. For Morris, the religion of socialism was the part of the transformation to socialism but it was also a principal factor motivating that transformation. Moreover, whilst will – or passion – played an important role in securing change, central to Morris's view was a constant willingness to suffer defeat. To this extent, his understanding of history possessed more in common with traditional notions of eternity than with the fantastic possibilities of modern calculus.

In 1649, 'free-born' John Lilburne declared that the Levellers' 'cause and principles do through their own natural truth and lustre get ground in men's understandings so that though we fail, our truths prosper. And posterity we doubt not shall reap the benefit of our endeavours'.²⁶ For Morris too, because the memory of past actions was a driver for future hope, history played a key role in animating the will. Like Lilburne, Morris thus linked the capacity for action and the power of fellowship to an appreciation of the cyclical rhythms of nature: birth, death and re-birth. Men live, says Morris 'because the world liveth'.²⁷ Developing the theme, John Ball tells him that 'this is but an old tale that men must die; and I will tell thee another, to wit, that they live; and I live now and shall live'.²⁸ Morris agrees:

that though I die and end, yet mankind yet liveth, therefore I end not, since I am a man ... or at the least even so thou doest, since now thou art ready to die in grief and torment rather than be unfaithful to the Fellowship, yea rather than fail to work thine utmost for it ... And as thou doest, so now doth many a poor man unnamed and unknown, and shall do while the world lasteth: and they that do less than this, fail because of fear, and are ashamed of their cowardice, and make many tales to themselves to deceive themselves, lest they should grow too much ashamed to live.²⁹

It is possible to see how Morris could picture such movements of will in the terms which Bax preferred. The image of the spiral, which did not appear in Morris's work, might as easily be seen to represent cycles in the struggle for fellowship over time as expressions of the allogical. But if the imagery worked for both men, this coincidence of view could not conceal their strong disagreement about the status of history as a source of knowledge for the future.

IV. HISTORY AND UTOPIA

In a series of articles in *Commonweal*, later published as *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome*, Morris and Bax re-examined the concept of historical change and future socialism. Apart from embellishing the argument about ethical development, they reasoned that because the past, on which any future projection is based, is also uncertain, the future is necessarily unknowable. However vivid and accurate history may appear, it can only be 'our picture of the past'; not so much a 'picture of what really took place' as an image infused with 'the present which we experience'.³⁰ Knowing that history would progress, and being able to describe a process of historical change, could not, therefore, provide any insight into how the ethic of socialism might be realised and how tomorrow might appear. At best, it was possible to make informed guesses about which features of the present were likely to disappear, but it was pointless to speculate on the ways in which 'the void' might be filled.³¹

Neither Bax nor Morris allowed claims about historical knowledge to inhibit their speculations. The chapters 'Socialism Triumphant' in *Socialism From the Root Up* give a fairly full sketch of their principal ideas. The picture presented in *Socialism Its Growth and Outcome* is even more elaborate, delving even into 'petty' issues of costume.³² In their single-authored work, too, they both left clear pictures of the ways in which they thought history might progress. Bax veered from dry planning to fantastic speculative philosophy. His essay 'The Morrow of the Revolution' (a title taken up by Morris in the opening of *News From Nowhere*) acknowledged the importance of discussing what socialists would do with power, were they ever to achieve it. In order to meet concerns about the need for practical policy, it outlined a number of likely initiatives.³³ With closer attention to the spiral, Bax also set out his ideas about the likely future development of material and ideal forces. There was a strong possibility, he suggested, that the 'direct influence' of material factors on 'spontaneous psychological movement' might be reduced 'to the minimum'. For the first time in human evolution, social change might be 'consciously shaped by the will of man'.³⁴ The idea of the free will was a marvellous prospect.

Whilst Bax was prepared to think about the possibilities that the future might hold, his philosophy of history ruled against utopianism. Writing in 1891, the same year in which *News From Nowhere* was published, he wrote:

The current popularity of Utopian romances, hailed with such joy by some, is not, perhaps, a very edifying sign. It indicates a demand for miracles ... For it would be nothing less than a miracle for any human being to describe in prophetic vision the society of the future. What is effected in Utopian socialist writings is merely a travesty of the society of the present, or of the past. We can *define*,

that is, lay down, in the abstract, the general principles on which the society of the future will be based, but we cannot *describe*, that is, picture, in the concrete, any state of society of which the world has had no experience. For into the *reality* of a society, even in its broader details, there enters a large element of contingency, of *allogicality*, of unreason, with which no general principles will furnish us. In consequence of this, the detail, the reality, has to be supplied by the Utopian romancer, from states of society already realised in the past or the present. The new principles are then superimposed upon a basis already formed of old principles, and a hybrid pseudo-reality is produced, which is neither past, present, nor future.³⁵

Bax's hostility to utopianism can be explained by his metaphysics. Believing that historical change was predicated on the behaviours of wilful beings acting in particular contexts, and that reason could only capture the outward appearance of the changes that they brought into being, he also believed that social evolution could only be known as a process: its inner content or what, following Schopenhauer, Bax called its 'presentment', was by definition unknowable. In *Problems of Mind and Morals* he explained:

To obtain a true *presentment* of any period of history we should, of course, have to identify the content of our consciousness with the content of a consciousness of a past age. This is what the historical imagination endeavours to attain. But such reconstruction as the historical imagination by means of research and archaeological lore can effect, must obviously remain, in its total result, an artificial product, since its correspondence with fact cannot be controlled by a reference to the living reality. And, again, the living reality itself is different, according to the facet from which it is regarded. Each individual lives in his own world, albeit that world at once conditions and is conditioned by the conception which enters into it of the general world of the time ... The reproduction of the past in this latter sense ... is a matter of feeling and, to a large extent, immediate intuition.³⁶

One implication of Bax's view was that the ambition of conventional truth-seeking historians would forever be frustrated. His scepticism was not just that 'historical narrative and historical romance' could be placed in one category, but that whatever form it assumed, historical study could only ever serve as a 'medium of picture-writing'. The purpose of the historian was to evoke an atmosphere or an impression of a past consciousness, the feelings and sentiments which Bax associated with the *allogical*. At best, history was properly a subject for art. In this spirit, Bax identified Wagner as one of the nineteenth-century's pre-eminent historians; in *Die Meistersinger*, Wagner reproduced 'the atmosphere of a past age in the art of the present'. 'We feel', Bax generalised, 'that the music brings us in contact with the *consciousness* of the late mediaeval German city. We feel that

it touches in us some nerve in our consciousness that reawakens an echo of the consciousness of that remote time'.³⁷

Morris certainly did not share Bax's assessment of Wagner, though he permitted similar reference to the genius of *Die Meistersinger* in their joint-authored work, and his idea of history, though easily categorised as romance and perhaps a form of art, was also at odds with Bax's view.³⁸ His public agreement with Bax that the knowledge of history was always restricted by the boundaries of present, did not suggest to him an impossibility of attaining historical knowledge. In *News From Nowhere*, he gives his fictional characters knowledge of nineteenth-century history: of woodland management in Epping Forest, and the events of 1887 in Trafalgar Square.³⁹ The extended conversation between Guest and Old Hammond is similarly predicated on the future generation's accurate grasp of nineteenth-century policies, behaviours and practices. In an exchange concerning the value of nineteenth century scholarship, Morris observes that 'history' – by which he means future understandings of his nineteenth-century present – has 'reversed contemporary judgments', but he does not impugn the validity of Old Hammond's account of education.⁴⁰

As if to highlight the value of history which his presence in the novel affirms, Morris also uses his position to force the future generation to reflect on their loss of historical memory, and to question the adequacy of their narrow concern with the present. Old Hammond tells him that his own 'tales of the past' bore the young. 'The last harvest, the last baby, the last knot of carving in the market-place, is history enough for them'. Born at yet another remove from the dystopia of the mid-twentieth century, the young possess the assurance 'of peace and continuous plenty' and entertain no wish to be reminded of the past.⁴¹ Dick confirms Old Hammond's view: 'it is mostly in periods of turmoil and strife and confusion that people care much about history and ... we are not like that now'.⁴² Morris's fear – which he shares with Ellen – is that by insulating themselves from the past, the future generation leave themselves badly exposed to the possible reverses of history and the loss of utopia gained. Understanding Morris's concerns and realising the lessons of oppression his stories of the past contain, she remarks 'that is not stated clearly enough in our history books, and it is worth knowing'.⁴³

Morris might have agreed with Bax that his idea of the past was as romantic as his image of the future – the facts might always be questioned and it was impossible to build a complete picture of either. He might also have agreed that judgments about social practices change over time. Nevertheless, and contrary to Bax, Morris gave history content, and believed that it was possible to use it in order to reflect both on the condition of the present and the possibilities for the future. To this extent, history was a source of knowledge: the knowledge of what tomorrow should be.

NOTES

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2. Aldous, p. 39.
3. 'Notes on the Manifesto', paragraph C. *The Manifesto of the Socialist League*, new edition annotated by William Morris & Ernest Belfort Bax, London, 1885; available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1885/manifest2.htm> [last accessed 8 October 2009]. Subsequently, *Manifesto*.
4. William Morris & Ernest Belfort Bax, Preface to *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome*, Third edition, London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1908, p. vi. Afterwards *Growth and Outcome*.
5. Anna Vaninskaya, 'Literature and Propaganda: The Socialist Utopia of Robert Blatchford', in Fátima Vieira & Marinela Freitas, eds, *Utopia Matters: Theory, Politics, Literature and the Arts*, Porto: Universidade do Porto, 2005, pp. 172–175.
6. Ernest Belfort Bax, *Reminiscences and Reflexions of a Mid and Late Victorian*, New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1967, p. 78.
7. *Manifesto*, ('Notes on the Manifesto', paragraph E).
8. Ernest Belfort Bax, *The Problems of Mind and Morals*, Chapter I, Note 3; available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/bax/1912/probs/index.htm> [last accessed 8 October 2009]. Subsequently Bax, *Problems*.
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11. Morton, p. 51.
12. Ernest Belfort Bax, *The Religion of Socialism*, London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowrey & Co., n.d., p. 36.
13. Morton, p. 23.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
18. Nicholas Salmon, ed, *Political Writings, Contributions to Justice and Commonwealth 1883–1890*, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1994, pp. 69–70. Subsequently Salmon, *Political Writings*.

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20. *Ibid.*, p. 18
21. Ernest Belfort Bax, *Selected Essays of Arthur Schopenhauer*, London: George Bell and Sons, 1891, p. xliii. Subsequently Bax, *Schopenhauer*.
22. Voltaire, *Letters on England*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2005, p. 86.
23. For a discussion of qualitative improvement and the spiral, see Bax, *Schopenhauer*, pp. li–liiii.
24. Morton, p. 108.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
26. Geoffrey Robertson & Philip Baker, eds, *The Levellers: The Putney Debates*, London: Verso, 2007, p. vii.
27. Morton, p. 87.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 93.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
30. Salmon, *Political Writings*, p. 611.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 612.
32. *Growth and Outcome*, p. 311.
33. Ernest Belfort Bax, *The Ethics of Socialism*, London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., n.d., pp. 84–90.
34. Bax, *Essays in Socialism*, p. 18.
35. Ernest Belfort Bax, *Outlooks From the New Standpoint*; Preface, para. 3; available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/bax/1891/outlooks/oo-preface.htm> [last accessed 16 October 2009].
36. Bax, *Problems*, Chapter II, para 11.
37. *Ibid.*, Chapter II, Note 1.
38. Salmon, *Political Writings*, p. 611.
39. Morton, pp. 196, 223.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 235.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 210.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 385.

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William Morris:

The Myth of the Fall

Anna Vaninskaya

Within a week of William Morris's death in 1896, in a *Daily Chronicle* obituary 'William Morris as a Socialist' reprinted in the special Morris issue of the *Clarion*, George Bernard Shaw announced that after the Trafalgar Square fiasco of 1887, the disillusioned Morris had retreated from socialist activity. By the end of his life, claimed Shaw, Morris had 'practically adopted the views of the Fabian Society as to how the change would come about.'¹ So did the story of the falling off take root, and Morris was probably spinning in his freshly dug grave. Shaw, however, was not completely wrong. There had indeed been a perceptible alteration in Morris's outlook during his last years: enough at least to corroborate guesses of a 'state-ward' shift, and to provide ammunition to those who wished to claim him for a fellow renegade. What exactly happened to Morris during the 1890s is aptly symbolised by James Leatham's account of his 1894 visit to Manchester, a story which exists in two incarnations: in a book which had the honour of being the first critical study of Morris, *Master of Many Crafts*, and in Leatham's serialised memoir in the *Gateway*.

The first account dispels any suspicions about Morris's waning commitment to socialist propaganda. Although he was in failing health,

He was speaking from a lorry pitched on piece of waste land close to the Ship Canal, his whole environment probably as distasteful to him as possible. It was a wild March morning, and he would not have been asked to speak out of doors, but he expressed a desire to do so; and so there he was, talking quietly but strenuously, drawing a laugh every now and then by some piece of waggish wisdom from the undulating crowd, of working men mostly, who stood in the hollow and the slopes before him. There would be quite two thousand of them. ... In spite of the bitter cold of the morning, scarcely a man moved from the crowd...²

The scene is typical of a year of peak lecturing activity such as 1887, even though by 1894 Morris's primary concern, according to received wisdom, was the Kelm-scott Press. But listener reactions betrayed no sign of a weakening in his power to inspire, nor to engage with the unconverted. One member of the audience wrote in the *Clarion*:

Like an archangel in the morning sun
 He stood with a high message, and men heard
 The rousing syllables, and scarcely stirred,
 Rough though they were, until the tale was done.
 Then there arose full many a doubting one
 Who craved interpretation of a word
 So big with meaning, but so long deferred:
 And the great Poet scorned to answer none.³

Leatham's second account largely repeats the narrative of the first, but also brings to the forefront a new element in Morris's political outlook:

The meeting was under the auspices of the Social-Democratic Federation, from which he and many of his friends had seceded ten years before. The Branch had invited him to come and speak on my suggestion; but not satisfied with two free addresses – he spoke again in the Free Trade Hall in the afternoon – they pressed him to become the Socialist candidate for South Salford! At the Sunday-morning meeting he handsomely admitted that Hyndman had been right in standing by a policy and program of specific political proposals, and 'we are now hand-in-glove,' he said.⁴

Did this mean that Morris was now reconciled to the parliamentary path, even to the extent of being considered as a potential candidate? Did he no longer believe that propaganda and electioneering were antithetical, as he had in the mid-1880s? Hyndman, in his autobiography, insisted that Morris 'stuck steadily to revolutionary Socialism from 1882 to the end of his life,' despite the attempts of 'his relations and intimate friends ... to obliterate this portion of his career.'⁵ But Leatham's memory was not playing tricks on him. In 1894, roughly two months before he spoke in Manchester, Morris told an SDF reporter that it would be 'madness to attempt anything like an insurrection.' 'The people will not revolt until every other means have been tried.' 'What we have to do ... is get control of [Parliament] and then we have that executive power at our back'; 'we have to create a party ... with delegates in the House of Commons ... Present circumstances ... go to prove the wisdom of the S.D.F. in drawing up that list of palliative measures ... Mean and paltry as it seemed to me – and does still, as compared with the whole thing, something of the kind is absolutely essential.'⁶ 'The tendency of the English to neglect organisation till it is forced upon them by immediate

necessity ... is obvious in the movement,' Morris complained the same year, 'The materials for a great Socialist party are all around us, but no such party exists. We have only the scattered limbs of it.'⁷ And during the mid-nineties he made many more pronouncements along the same lines.⁸ But while this may seem, on the face of it, a complete turn-around from the uncompromising rejection of palliatives and parliamentary politics expressed at every opportunity throughout the 1880s,⁹ it is difficult to find a single, straightforward repudiation of or dirge for anti-statist socialism in Morris's later speeches and articles. If anything, they demonstrate the complexities of an altered political situation, and Morris's tone when acquiescing in the necessity of Parliament is frequently wistful.

The ambiguity is palpable in the 1895 lecture 'What We Have to Look For,' concerned, significantly, not with the 'ideal of Socialism' but with day-to-day tactics, 'the degrading game of politics' with all its failures, disappointments, and 'causeless quarrels.'¹⁰ Morris admits that during the 1890s the movement had 'undergone a great change.' In the early days it was mostly devoted to 'preaching' socialism, partially because it believed in the inevitability of an insurrection (Morris is here ascribing the views of the Socialist League to everyone else), a belief that was corroborated by government violence on occasions such as Bloody Sunday. At this time socialism gained adherents, but failed to touch the mass of the working class (except its intellectuals), who did not think in terms of class, but in terms of trade-union or even narrower workplace interests. The propagandists, he continues, were too optimistic to admit their failure, or the fact that the spirit of socialism lacked a 'body' that 'would make it a powerful force.'

But by the mid-nineties all of this had changed: virtually no one believed any longer in the change coming by catastrophe, looking rather to the conversion of public opinion to fill Parliament with socialist delegates who would enact the appropriate legislation. Morris is referring, without mentioning names, to the rise of the ILP and *Clarion* socialism: still interested in 'making socialists,' but for a different purpose than the revolutionary Socialist League. He alludes also to the new labour militancy: the working classes, he claims, have finally warmed to socialism, and have begun to take action through strikes 'to be recognised as citizens.' The ruling powers respond by making concessions, which only improve the condition of some workers at the expense of others, and allay the general discontent without fixing its causes. There is no sign here that Morris approves of the concessions: they are what he had always warned against, they prevent further action by the people and perpetuate the status quo. However, now that the decision has been taken to get into Parliament, socialists can no longer remain a sect, but must form a socialist party which will include all the existing groups. Without such a party no political goal would be accomplished; propaganda, he insists, should be used to convert people who would then demand a unified party over the heads of the squabbling 'leaders.'

Morris's words are clearly a reflection of the (ultimately unsuccessful) *Clarion* campaign for socialist unity – the merger of the ILP and the SDF which was obstructed by leadership rivalry. He does not appear too sanguine about its prospects – the 'attempt to act as a party when we have no party' is 'futile' – and even at this late date insists that 'we had better confine ourselves to the old teaching and preaching of Socialism pure and simple.' Before a 'body,' a community of socialists has been created, all talk of legislative transformation is as premature as those early hopes of insurrection. Although Morris appears to endorse Shaw's disillusionment narrative in part – naïve minority revolutionism giving way to mainstream uninspired parliamentarism – the emphasis on conversion remains dominant throughout. The wider labour movement may have begun to awaken to the ideas of socialism, but the propagandists still have their work cut out for them. As May Morris rightly remarked, 'in his latest lectures as in the earliest, the main point he dwelt on was the necessity of "making Socialists"'.¹¹

This even applied to lectures – such as 'Communism' (1893) – which were destined to be reprinted as Fabian Tracts (No. 113 in 1903, with a preface by Shaw). This was the year of Morris's failed attempt to form a united socialist party with the Fabians and the SDF, and he concluded the lecture with an appeal to all socialists 'not to make a quarrel of it with those whose aim is one with theirs, because there is a difference of opinion between them about the usefulness of the details of the means.'¹² This plea was certainly welcome evidence of a rapprochement, but the reality was much more complex. Morris may have been calling for an end to organisational factionalism, in line with the federal aspirations of large parts of the movement, but he had no intention of abandoning his old goals.

He began by agreeing that the Fabian '*machinery* of Socialism,' such as the London County Council or municipal administration of industry, was a gain, but immediately qualified the admission by asserting that it could not be useful unless it educated the people in real socialism. Morris was merely repeating what he and E. B. Bax had just written in *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome*: 'The Bill... for the formation of District and Parish Councils, though their powers will be but small, is nevertheless an important step, if only as providing a democratic machinery, which can be hereafter used for socialistic purposes.'¹³ Decentralising tendencies were to be encouraged: if in his revolutionary purist phase Morris had looked upon 'local self-government' as 'something considerably short of free communes,' and did not approve of the county councils created by the Local Government Act of 1888,¹⁴ during the 1890s he came to see some hope for the 'transitional condition' being brought about in his own time by 'the further development of democracy' in tandem with the 'conscious attempts of the Socialists themselves.' Democracy could not revolutionise the basis of society, but it could to a certain extent 'improve the position of the working classes,' and also raise their discontent, thereby assisting to bring 'us to the fullness of the fel-

lowship.¹⁵ ‘Work by municipalities and trade organisations for the decentralisation of administration, and the acquirement of control over the industries of the country’ could supplement ‘the gradual shifting of the opinions and aspirations of the masses.’¹⁶ But both were essential.

The progressiveness of reforms depended on the ‘spirit’ in which they were obtained, on their success in ‘converting the workers to an understanding of, and ardent desire for ... true and complete Socialism.’ One could better conditions without coming any closer to the attainment of the true Society of Equality: the people must ‘consciously and not blindly strive for [the new society’s] realisation. That in fact is what we mean by the education into Socialism of the working classes.’ The Fabians were probably glad to hear that though Morris ‘once believed in the inevitableness of a sudden and speedy change’ – which ‘was no wonder with the new enlightenment of Socialism gilding the dullness of civilisation’ – he now called on socialists to ‘take soberer views of our hopes,’ for there was to be no sudden revolution. But this did not mean that he was forsaking the religion of socialism altogether, or ‘giv[ing] up all hope of educating [the people] into Socialism.’ On the contrary, ‘all means possible’ had to be used for that purpose, and that is where the machinery would come in handy: ‘to give form to vague aspirations ... to raise their aims above the mere businesslike work of the old trades unions,’ and to ‘train them into organisation and administration’ the lack of which was such ‘a huge disadvantage’ for the working class.

Such measures must be supplemented by ‘instilling into the minds of the people a knowledge of the aims of Socialism, and a longing to bring about the complete change which will supplant civilisation by communism.’ At all costs, the social democratic machinery must be prevented from becoming an end-in-itself: ‘I look to this spirit [of the expectation of equality] to vivify the striving for the mere machinery of Socialism’; ‘in order to make any due use of Socialist machinery one should have some sort of idea as to the life which is to be the result of it.’ Morris goes on to define complete communism, and warns again against confusing ‘the co-operative machinery towards which modern life is tending with the essence of Socialism itself.’¹⁷ If this lecture was an endorsement of Fabianism, it was a very half-hearted one. Morris’s real attitude was expressed succinctly in 1895 when he told Sidney Webb: ‘The world is going your way at present, Webb, but it is not the right way in the end.’¹⁸

He had, it seems, finally accepted the tools of the state, but only for the purpose of educating workers towards the state-less communal ideal. On their own they were worthless. *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome* had made two things clear: that legislation for the bettering of the workers’ condition was being pressed by the workers themselves (and not by someone on their behalf), and that by thus taking up the political line ‘themselves’ they were progressing towards revolution. Strivings for a better standard of livelihood would lead to the birth of a new soci-

ety: the ideal of the theoretical thinkers and the short-term action for immediate gains of the popular movement were finally in accordance. Morris had recognised at last that 'it is through the instinctive working-class movement towards the bettering of life, by whatever political-economical methods,' that his 'ideal of a new society must be sought.'

He would not have been so generous about choice of methods several years previously, certainly not those which potentially accepted the usefulness of state-sponsored palliatives. The theoreticians, he wrote, should 'take part in all action that tends towards Socialism, lest their wholesome and truthful theories should be left adrift on the barren shore of Utopianism,' but the ideal should also be kept in front of the working class lest they lose the way.¹⁹ Limited gains were acceptable only as long as they were fought for with a revolutionary aim in view: 'the essential thing is not an improved administrative machinery . . . not mere amelioration of the condition of certain groups of labour, necessarily at the expense of others . . . Rise of wages, shortening of hours of labour, better education, etc., all these things are good, even in themselves,' but they must be 'used as steps towards equality of condition.'²⁰

As all the foregoing should make us suspect, Morris did not suddenly awaken to this realisation in 1893. The SDF had espoused palliatives as a means of educating the working class towards revolution from the very beginning; their involvement in local government, industrial struggles, and various reformist campaigns side by side with other labour activists was always conditioned by a very Morrisian focus on the development of communal organisational talent.²¹ Morris's seemingly new perception possessed deep roots in his previous political associations: even when he disapproved of their electioneering, he had always identified with the SDF branches on the ground in his propaganda work. Given the small size of the Socialist League, the SDF frequently served as his home away from home during the lecture tours of the 1880s. In 1887 he had already admitted that

it may be necessary to use parliament mechanically: what I object to is *depending* on parliamentary agitation. There *must* be a great party, a great organisation outside parliament actively engaged in reconstructing society and learning administration whatever goes on in the parliament itself. This is in direct opposition to the view of the regular parliamentary section as represented by Shaw, who look upon parliament as *the* means; and it seems to me we will fall into the error of moving earth & sea to fill the ballot boxes with Socialist votes which will not represent Socialist *men*.²²

In its essentials, this was a view which Morris would never give up. He maintained the need to create a mass socialist movement of the people outside Parliament even when he had grudgingly accepted the parliamentary path. Improving working-class conditions and focusing on the passing hour would not change

the basis of society. When he wrote in 1896 that socialism ‘has indeed ceased to be merely a sect or a “church” as it was some fifteen years ago, but has never gained any organisation; its strength, as well as its weakness, lies in its being an *opinion* rather than a party,’ he did not have just the parliamentary party in mind.²³ A mass communal movement had not been created either, and it was this to which all effort had to be bent. Though ‘it is too much to hope that the *whole* working class can be educated in the aims of socialism in due time ... we *must* hope that a strong party can be so educated in economics, in organisation, and in administration,’ and they will in turn educate the rest.²⁴ A ‘party’ in this sense was an instrument of anti-statist socialism, with the emphasis placed squarely on working-class agency and self-management.

Throughout the 1890s, Morris had come to appreciate the educative function of the ‘labour war,’ he no longer dismissed industrial strike action out of hand, if it was ‘founded on principle, and ... not a mere temporary business squabble.’²⁵ Industrial struggle was finally ‘changing its character’ and turning into a class war, workmen were expressing their desire ‘to manage their own affairs.’²⁶ Writing in a *Commonweal* article ‘Anti-Parliamentary’ in 1890, and referring to the New Unionism, Morris claimed that the events of the last year had produced ‘a different spirit in the mass of the workers, and they are now beginning to learn how to combine in earnest.’ Although he did not mention it, the shift in his thinking could also have reflected the changes in union organisation and activity associated with the rise of syndicalism. In 1890 he was still saying that workers should ignore Parliament, because their real weapon ‘is not the ballot box but the *Boycott*’ or ‘*the general strike*.’ But though that was to change, the injunction to ‘strengthen your own organisations to deal directly with your masters in the present, and to learn how to manage your own affairs both now and for the future’ would remain remarkably stable throughout.²⁷ Reforms won by struggle were preferable to those granted by the state because they could promote working-class agency and organisation and thus indirectly serve the cause of socialism. And once the ‘effective majority of the working-people’ was animated by socialist principles and powerfully organised, the new Society would arrive.²⁸

Even at the end of his life Morris continued to subscribe to the sentiments of the 1885 *Manifesto of the Socialist League*: ‘no number of merely administrative changes, until the workers are in possession of all political power, would make any real approach to Socialism.’ Political power was not franchise in a representative system but ‘direct control by the people of the whole administration of the community.’²⁹ In the revolutionary scenario offered by *News from Nowhere*, the workers did indeed learn ‘administration’ in the process of obtaining political control, achieving the communal utopia precisely by developing the organisational skills that according to Morris they so sorely lacked. As Old Hammond explained it to his Victorian guest: the original leaders of the movement

had little administrative capacity ... But now that the times called for immediate action, came forward the men capable of setting it on foot; and a new network of workmen's associations grew up very speedily, whose avowed single object was the tiding over of the ship of the community into a simple condition of Communism; and as they practically undertook also the management of the ordinary labour-war, they soon became the mouthpiece and intermediary of the whole of the working classes; and the manufacturing profit-grinders now found themselves powerless before this combination...³⁰

One might as well be reading a *Commonweal* analysis of the present struggle. The very vocabulary of the passage – ‘administrative capacity,’ ‘labour-war,’ ‘network of workmen’s associations’ – reminds us that the original serialisation of *News from Nowhere* appeared amidst the day to day reports of socialist agitation. The reader’s eye would pass from accounts of real strikes and branch meetings, and Morris’s appraisals of the situation, to the imagined account of revolutionary change, without registering any difference in tone or phraseology. If the vocabulary of the chapters depicting the utopian end-state was akin to that of the medieval romances, ‘how the change came’ could only be described in the matter-of-fact political idiom of the speeches and articles. The one grew naturally out of the other, the future was firmly grounded in the activities and preoccupations of the present, a present which was much more complex than the Shavian narrative allowed.

NOTES

1. George Bernard Shaw, ‘William Morris as a Socialist’, *Clarion*, 10 October 1896, p. 325.
2. James Leatham, *William Morris: Master of Many Crafts*, 3rd edn, Peterhead: Clerkhill Press, 1908, pp. 125–126.
3. *Clarion*, 31 March 1894, as quoted in Edmund & Ruth Frow, *William Morris in Manchester and Salford*. Salford: Working Class Movement Library, 1996, p. 23.
4. James Leatham, ‘Sixty Years of World-Mending. Recollections and the More or Less Pertinent Reflections. XI. – William Morris’, *Gateway*, May 1941. As quoted in Michael Bloor, ‘James Leatham’s Eye-Witness Account of William Morris’s 1888 Visit to Aberdeen’, *Journal of William Morris Studies* 18.1, Winter 2008, pp. 22–33.
5. Henry Mayers Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life*, London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd, 1911, p. 365.
6. ‘A Socialist Poet on Bombs and Anarchism’, *Justice*, 27 January 1894. As

- quoted in Tony Pinkney, ed, *We Met Morris: Interviews with William Morris, 1885–96*. Reading: Spire Books Ltd, 2005, pp. 82, 84–5.
7. E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1977, p. 745. Afterwards Thompson.
 8. See Thompson, p. 600, and William Morris, 'The Present Outlook of Socialism in England', in Norman Kelvin, ed, *William Morris on Art and Socialism*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications Inc., 1999, p. 191, where he called for the creation of a socialist party which would 'include the whole of the genuine labour movement ... [and] all that is definitely Socialist amongst the middle class', for although 'It is true that a wide-spread opinion cannot be defeated, and need not fear the temporary decision of the ballot-box ... to such a decision it must come at last'. Subsequently Kelvin, *Art & Socialism*.
 9. See, for example, 'The Policy of the Socialist League' (1888), in Nicholas Salmon, ed, *William Morris, Political Writings: Contributions to Justice and Commonweal 1883–1890*. Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1994, pp. 360–3. Afterwards *Political Writings*. The apparent deradicalisation of Morris's views squares with Gareth Stedman Jones's chronology in 'Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870–1900: Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class', *Journal of Social History* 7.4, Summer 1974, pp. 467–8, which identifies the years 1883–1888 – the high point of Morris's revolutionary enthusiasm – as a period of social and political unrest, which quickly subsided after 1889, as the depression lifted. George J. Barnsby in *Socialism in Birmingham and the Black Country 1850–1930*. Wolverhampton: Integrated Publishing Services, 1998, p. 53 gives 1884–1887 as the peak years both of the depression and of general socialist activity and influence. For a nuanced examination of Morris's purism and his trajectory in the 1890s which confirms my own analysis, see Introduction to Florence Boos, ed, *William Morris's Socialist Diary*. London: Journeyman Press and the London History Workshop Centre, 1985, pp. 1–18.
 10. 'What We Have to Look For', in May Morris, ed, *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1936, Volume II, pp. 358–61. Afterwards *AWS*.
 11. *AWS*, p. 361.
 12. *AWS*, pp. 352–3; May Morris, ed, *The Collected Works of William Morris*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1910–15, Volume XXIII, p. 276. Subsequently *CW*.
 13. William Morris & Ernest Belfort Bax, *Socialism: Its Growth and Outcome*. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1893, p. 281. Afterwards Morris & Bax.
 14. Nicholas Salmon, ed, *William Morris, Journalism: Contributions to Commonweal 1885–1890*. Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996, p. 142; see also *ibid.* pp. xvi–xvii, 516–18. Subsequently *Journalism*.

15. 'Four Letters', in Asa Briggs, ed, *News from Nowhere and Selected Writings and Designs*. London: Penguin Books, 1986, pp. 152–3.
16. Morris & Bax, pp. 280, 285.
17. *CW*, XXIII, pp. 264–6, 268–71, 275.
18. R. Page Arnot, *William Morris: The Man and the Myth*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1964, p. 108.
19. Morris & Bax, pp. 276–9. Cf. Harry Quelch in 1900: the SDF had to 'be in and of [the working-class] movement. Otherwise, the movement would pass it by as a mere sectarian body of doctrinaires and dogmatists,'; Graham Johnson, *Social Democratic Politics in Britain, 1881–1911*. Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002, pp. 162–3.
20. Thompson, pp. 599–600.
21. James Leatham, for instance, called for 'more local government [and the] extension of Municipal operations'; Leatham, *The Class War*. Aberdeen: James Leatham, 1892, p. 15. See also *The Only Thing That Will Do, By One of the Unemployed*. Aberdeen: James Leatham, 1890, pp. 19–21, 26. In this pamphlet, which appeared at the same time as the serialisation of *News from Nowhere*, Leatham proposed going beyond Municipal Socialism, but 'in harmony with the unavoidable decentralising tendencies of the age,' to create Craft Guilds 'which would manage the affairs of the particular calling,' and 'send representatives to the Commune or Council of Delegates' of the county. The devolution of administration and the 'communisation of the land' would solve the 'muddle of Individualism' and realise the 'Collectivist ideal' in line with the necessity of 'social evolution'.
22. Norman Kelvin, ed, *The Collected Letters of William Morris*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984–1996, 4 vols in 5, Volume II, p. 693.
23. Kelvin, *Art & Socialism*, p. 190.
24. *Political Writings*, p. 125.
25. Kelvin, *Art & Socialism*, p. 191.
26. Morris & Bax, p. 271.
27. *Political Writings*, p. 483.
28. *CW*, Volume XXIII, p. 266.
29. Thompson, pp. 736, 740.
30. *CW*, Volume XVI, p. 120.

Reviews

Edited by Peter Faulkner

Phillippa Bennett, *The Last Romances and the Kelmscott Press*, London: The William Morris Society, 2009, 40 pp. ISBN 978-0-903283-26-7, £4.00

Anyone who takes interest in William Morris knows that his is a house of many mansions, which perfectly justifies repeated visits. Some have arrived there through his poetry, others his political activity, yet others through the 'fine' or the 'minor' arts – and of course the list is not limitative. In her 2006 Kelmscott Lecture, now offered to the reading public in the familiar attractive format of the Annual Kelmscott Lecture Series, Phillippa Bennett proposed to re-visit two of these mansions, combining a literary fresh look at William Morris's Last Romances with a re-evaluation of the Kelmscott Press. To investigate these 'interlacings', to borrow the vocabulary from a recent book (Caroline Arcscott. *William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones: Interlacings*, Yale University Press, 2008, reviewed in this *Journal*, Vol. XVII, 2, Summer 2009, pp. 65–69), is not an easy task, even for a person like Morris, who never departed from his contention that a fine text needed a fine physical translation. Nowhere is this idea that matter (the abstract text) and manner (its concrete presentation) are inseparable better expressed than in the celebrated interviews printed in contemporary periodicals – now reproduced for our greatest pleasure in William S. Peterson's admirable *The Ideal Book* (University of California Press, 1982) from which of course Phillippa Bennett does not fail to quote. Curiously, she does not cite May Morris: 'He loved his books as a craftsman, as a poet, as a romancist: with a threefold affection and a threefold pleasure' (Joseph R. Dunlap, ed, *The Introductions to the Collected Works of William Morris*. New York: Oriole Editions, 1973, vol. 1, p. 39). With this allusion to the 'romancist', May Morris provided the perfect justification for Phillippa Bennett's undertaking.

The first connection the author sees between the Last Romances and the Kelmscott Press, is the 'happy coincidence' (her words) of 1891, when *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, 'the first of the narratives we now refer to as the Last Romances', 'was also the very first title to be issued from the Press'. One would expect a justification for seeing a 'happy coincidence' in this – was it not rather a deliberate choice, and a revealing choice at that? A *choice* would have far more weight than a mere *coincidence* in the argument – it would bring far more grist

to her mill – and we feel frustrated that this possible track is left unexplored. Evidently, it is impossible to reconstruct what really went on in William Morris's mind in 1891 (or any other date, for that matter): but it would have opened plenty of potentially interesting perspectives if the possibility that it was a deliberate choice had been considered.

Much has of course been written before on the Last Romances, and Philippa Bennett offers a fresh angle of approach: they should be viewed from the standpoint of their wondrous content, both in the literal and in the figurative meanings. They are literally tales of wonder – and there, the quest for the ideal book (physically *and* textually) is not far from the ideal world evoked in them – and wonderful (marvellous) stories to read. This is a fascinating angle: who would not be seduced by a conception of 'mankind and the world as inherently wondrous'? The important word here is of course *inherently*, since it provides a link with William Morris's Socialism – a form of Socialism arguably derived from Rousseau, though Philippa Bennett prefers to insist on the influence of Charles Dickens 'one of Morris's favourite authors' and the characters in *Hard Times* (1854). Likewise, she prefers to lean on relatively obscure figures such as Cornelis Verhoeven (*Inleiding tot de verwondering*, 1967 [English translation *The Philosophy of Wonder*, 1972]) rather than the flamboyant and fashionable French practitioners of *nouvelle critique* such as Derrida, Lacan *et al.* And why not? At least one understands what Verhoeven writes – and what Philippa Bennett is driving at: 'This recognition [by Morris] of mankind and the world as inherently wondrous' is, she suggests, 'the primary impetus for Morris's vast and varied output'.

Thus the author has her guiding thread, the unifying factor behind the many strands in Morris's indefatigable activity. Drawing on Verhoeven's idea that the 'zest for living' 'characterises the attitude of wonder', she very convincingly demonstrates that the 'zest for living' found in the Last Romances – the beauty of the world, the beauty of animal and vegetable life, the beauty of other human bodies perceived by the ever-thankful protagonists – is only a literary translation of Morris's basic philosophical sense of wonder. We can also be persuaded by her tempting argument that these beautiful human bodies are in a way a wonderful compensation for the harsh realities of Morris's times, when his contemporaries' bodies were so adversely affected 'by the demands of industrial capitalism'.

One well-known problem today is that many modern readers fail to perceive this sense of all-pervasive beauty, and therefore this wonderful dimension in the Last Romances. The publication contains seven plates of illustrations, of which two really stand out, in that, thanks to them, readers will be able to follow the well-documented discussion of the two versions of 'Friends in need meet in the wild wood' (from *The Well at the World's End*), prepared respectively by Arthur Gaskin and by Edward Burne-Jones, for the Kelmscott Press. Eventually – and predictably – William Morris chose the Burne-Jones version, and one may feel that if these Last Romances are ever 'read' today outside the circle of Morris

scholars, it is first and foremost for their ‘wonderful’ drawings.

Naturally, Phillippa Bennett does not eschew the difficulty: she is fully aware of the common accusation of ‘unreadability’. The texts have been felt to be ‘almost unreadable’ (the phrase is Paul Thompson’s) or ‘literally unreadable’ (Amanda Hodgson’s expression), first because of what we could call the linguistic barrier: ‘the archaic vocabulary and willfully unusual sentence-construction’ denounced by Hodgson. Here, the connection with the Kelmscott Press books is negative – the ‘perceived linguistic difficulties’ and ‘visual difficulties’ constituting ‘mutually exacerbating’ hurdles. If we follow critics such as Hodgson, Morris’s conception of the Book Beautiful as concretely translated in the Kelmscott Press productions makes matters even worse, with ‘the glaring black-on-white print, the Gothic font, the decorative capital letters in which the letter itself is indistinguishable from the border, the way the text is laid out in narrow columns so that the reader has difficulty recognizing where sentences end’.

But then, this off-putting combination does not only apply to the Last Romances. It is obvious that Chaucer’s narrative in the Kelmscott *Chaucer* is no easier to understand than Morris’s stories. But Phillippa Bennett’s self-imposed remit only bears on the Last Romances – and she undertakes to counter the arguments of Morris’s critics respecting them. There is in fact what we could call a halfway house in Morrisian criticism, since she notes that some people (such as Lorraine Janzen Kooistra) blame the ‘unreadability’ of the Last Romances on the Kelmscott Press designs. Once the texts are printed in ordinary book form, they apparently regain readability. Needless to say, this does not satisfy Phillippa Bennett, either. She accuses these critics of exaggerating their case, selecting the more obscure passages and the most elaborately blackened pages: in fact, she argues with unimpeachable common sense that the majority of Morris’s production – whether it be text (even the Last Romances, with their negative reputation) or page design – is perfectly accessible to the modern reader. But she goes further.

Without mentioning him, she adopts in fact a Chomskyan approach: what counts is not the visible surface, but the deep structure. Here, she treads on far more controversial ground, as she argues that there is a fundamental unity and complementariness behind the apparent ‘unreadability’ of the Last Romances in the Kelmscott Press edition – a positive (*not* negative) combination resting on the uniquely wondrous nature of both text and book. This is controversial ground, concerned with personal aesthetic judgement, with which, predictably, many will not agree. But Phillippa Bennett’s arguments to justify this bold claim cannot be summarily dismissed. Even those who, unlike her, do not immediately perceive the peculiar attractiveness of the Last Romances in the Kelmscott Press edition, will examine her reasoning with the serious attention it undoubtedly deserves. It is in fact an impassioned plea in favour of forgetting one’s preconceptions – and the best compliment which this reviewer can address to the author is to confess that the miscreant is on the way to conversion. There is a major

obstacle, however. How many readers of this fine Kelmscott Lecture will have access to, say, *The Story of the Glittering Plain* or *The Well at the World's End* in an original Kelmscott Press edition – not of course as a museum piece in a showcase, but as a real book to handle and peruse?

Antoine Capet

Helen Elletson, *A History of Kelmscott House*, London: The William Morris Society, 2009, 64 pp., thirty three illustrations, eighteen in colour. ISBN 978-0-903283-27-4, pbk, £5.

‘The house is just about big enough for us, and the rooms are mostly pretty’: so wrote Morris to Jane, then wintering in Oneglia, about what was to become their home from 1878 until his death in 1896. Looking to move from Turnham Green, he had been alerted to the house in Upper Mall by Rossetti. As Helen Elletson, the Society’s Curator at Kelmscott House tells us, it was built during the late 1780s. Its third occupant, Francis Ronalds, is notable as having in 1816 constructed, in the garden, the first electric telegraph, an achievement recorded on a tablet affixed to the coach house.

George MacDonald, the poet and novelist, also lived there with this wife and eleven children for ten years from 1867. They entertained extensively, with celebrities such as Tennyson and Ruskin visiting, plays performed in the garden, and the coach house got up as a theatre. Morris acquired the house from MacDonald at an annual rent of £85. Repairs and re-decoration were to cost £1,000. Morris then changed the name of the house from The Retreat to Kelmscott House, in allusion to the Oxfordshire Manor. Thus began the period for which the house is remembered and commemorated today. It is now a grade II* listed building within the Mall Conservation Area, yet in 1878 it adjoined a slum known as Little Wapping, whence urchins would sometimes disturb Morris with their shouting.

The longest period of occupation, though, is that of Mrs. Stephenson. She and her husband moved there in 1926, and she remained until her death in 1972. During that time, one half of the 600-foot (ca 180 m)-long garden was lost to the construction of the A4, the Great West Road. A friend of May Morris and a member of the William Morris Society, Mrs Stephenson bequeathed the house to the Society, together with a number of original Morris & Co. items. The Society ran the house as the William Morris Centre from 1975 to 1980, but for lack of any endowment was obliged in 1983 to let it as a private residence, while retaining the basement and coach house for its own use. These constitute the present museum.

Writers have always been attracted to the house. After MacDonald and Morris came H.C. Marillier, W.H. Draper and, more recently Christopher Hampton,

whilst Athene Seyler, the distinguished and long-lived actress, who occupied the flat over the coach house, published a book on comic acting. The elegant proportions of the house and its position overlooking the Thames continue to enchant. Hidden away, it still has something of a retreat about it such as MacDonald recognised. All this and much more is related in Helen Elletson's history, which flows smoothly across two hundred and twenty five years. It is fully illustrated, as well being enriched with quotations from May Morris's memories of the house as she lived in it as a young woman. Five views reveal how the rooms were arranged in Morris's day, whilst there are eleven colour plates of his wallpapers and designs and, as frontispiece, his portrait photograph by Frederick Hollyer (*ca* 1876). Other reproductions show the appearance of the house at different epochs. Footnotes on each page, and a bibliography, further complement the text.

Everything the casual or more concerned visitor could wish to know about Kelmscott House lies within these covers which, imaginatively, show the house emerging from elements of Morrisian design – truly, a beautiful book for a beautiful house.

Colin Clark

Brenda King, *Dye, Print, Stitch. Textiles by Thomas and Elizabeth Wardle*, Macclesfield: Macclesfield Museum Trust, 2009, 84 pp., 60 illustrations, mostly colour. ISBN 9781870926003. £22.50 (incl. £2.50 for p&p) from the author: bm.king@btinternet.co.uk.

Brenda King is Chair of the Textile Society. During 2009 she co-curated four exhibitions which marked the centenary of Thomas Wardle's death: *Wardle: the Man*, in Leek, Staffordshire; *Dye, Print, Stitch: Textiles by Thomas and Elizabeth Wardle* in Macclesfield, Cheshire; *The Manchester Indian* at the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, and *Experiments in Colour; Thomas Wardle, William Morris and the Textiles of India* at the William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow. This is an achievement in itself. Her book seeks to honour Wardle's accomplishments, together with those of his wife, Elizabeth.

Thomas Wardle (1831–1909) was born in Macclesfield, Cheshire, into a family of silk dyers. His father Joshua Wardle (1802–1879) was a gifted dyer who produced 'Raven Black, the bluest black in the world'. (p. 1) In the year of Thomas's birth, Joshua moved his family and his workplace from Macclesfield to Leek in Staffordshire in order to take advantage of the waters of the River Churnet, which were particularly suited to the dyeing process. Dr King makes it clear that Thomas was a man of broad talent and experience. He could steer through the cross-currents which lay between Art and Science, East and West, Ancient and Modern and Craft and Industry ... The owner of a silk dyeing and printing com-

pany, he became an international authority on dyeing and printing textiles. He was also a designer, entrepreneur, businessman, educator, musician, composer, geologist and sportsman. (p. 1)

His wife Elizabeth (1835–1902), a gifted needlewoman and colourist, became Superintendent of the Leek Embroidery Society, training and organising a team of skilled women. The other stars of the book are silk dyeing and printing, particularly tussur silk, which had not been successfully dyed before, and Leek itself, which, it appears, became the focus of a great deal of architectural and Arts and Crafts activity as leading architects such as Richard Norman Shaw, Giles Gilbert Scott and William Sugden were commissioned to extend and re-order local churches and domestic buildings. In turn, the architects commissioned the Leek needlewomen to stitch their designs on altar frontals, vestments, and other embroideries. Some of these are still in use. The Leek Institute operated as an extension college for Cambridge and Oxford universities.

Dr King makes it clear that the Wardles formed part of a global textile network which took advantage of the efficient communications offered by the British Empire and the growth in nineteenth century consumerism. Thomas became the chief supplier of dyed and printed silks to Liberty's, amongst other retailers. He and Elizabeth also opened their own shop on Bond Street in order to sell silks and the products of the Leek Embroidery Society. He was a member of learned societies and a founder member of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. He countered the threat posed to the market by a flood of silk goods and materials from the Far East by developing important contacts with the silk industries of India, Lyon, Piedmont and Krefeld. These contacts enabled him to keep abreast of scientific and technological developments which were essential to remaining competitive. He founded a research department at his Hencroft dye works in Leek, in order to solve technical problems with raw materials such as tussur silk, and to resuscitate lost skills in the use of natural dyes.

The book really takes off with the practical details of the story of tussur silk and the exquisite textures and colours produced through the skill of the Leek dyers and embroiderers. It is well known that William Morris visited Leek at least five times between July 1875 and the spring of 1878, in order to learn the finer points of natural dyeing at the Hencroft works. He stayed in the Wardle family home, 62, St Edward Street, Leek, sometimes for a fortnight at a time, and the two men enjoyed a lively relationship while Morris struggled to perfect a method of indigo dyeing which had almost disappeared from Europe.

Morris persuaded Wardle to print some of his designs, which necessitated adding block-cutting and printing areas to the Leek factory and directing the company in an entirely new way. Between 1875 and 1877 Wardle printed Morris's *Tulip*, *Honeysuckle*, *Acanthus*, *African Marigold*, *Bluebell* and *Snakeshead*. Then came *Indian Diaper*, *Iris*, *Little Chintz*, *Marigold*, *Carnation* and *Pomegranate*. These textiles were commercially successful and were often exhibited. '20 years

later they were still acknowledged as the best of their type'. (p. 33) They continued to be produced by Wardles long after Morris and Company printed their own textiles. There is a lovely photograph on page 34 of a piece of Morris's *Bluebell* design, printed by Wardle and Co. on to silk and then embroidered with Indian tussur silk by the Leek Embroidery Society. Wardle was extremely generous in allowing Morris to use his dye recipes at Morris and Company, especially as at times 'their alliance was explosive'. (p. 32) Wardle and Co. were also to print textiles for other contemporary designers, including Walter Crane, Lewis Foreman Day and John Dando Sedding, one of whose exquisite designs, embroidered by the Leek needlewomen, is illustrated on page 45.

Dye, Print, Stitch is beautifully illustrated with the original plans of Joshua and Thomas Wardle's dye works; maps, photographs of letters and book bindings; pictures of Elizabeth and Thomas and ten of their fourteen children, and photographs of fabric designs, silk yarn and embroidery, including detailed shots which enable the reader to examine specific stitches closely. There is a delightful picture of Wardle's employees (p. 15), seventeen of them, sleeves rolled up, all wearing pale shirts and collars and ties for work in and around the dye vats. There are three chapters covering the Wardle companies, Wardle and the Arts and Crafts movement and the Leek Embroidery Society. The chapters are packed with interesting information. However, there is no index, and a fairly limited selection of notes after each chapter.

No book is perfect, but Dr King has been rather ill-served by her editor and proof reader, who might have advised a tighter focus and concision, with less repetition. Individual chapters are better edited than the Preface and the Introduction, but they possess no headings, so that one must return to the Contents page in order to discover where they begin and end. The punctuation is rather erratic, the use of apostrophes can seem odd, and there are numerous other grammatical and syntactical errors. Lichfield is spelled Litchfield, and Burne-Jones is spelled 'Burn-Jones'. All this detracts from the value of the content.

A Wardle family tree would have been useful when younger members of the family pop in and out of the story unannounced, as would a glossary of the stitches used by the Leek embroiderers and technical terms such as 'passementerie', 'orphreys' or 'glacined'. The text mentions that the names of more than fifty of the Leek needlewomen are known; a list would surely therefore offer interest, not least for their descendants.

Diana Andrews

John Simons, *Rossetti's Wombat: Pre-Raphaelites and Australian Animals in Victorian London*, Middlesex University Press, 2008. 152 pp., ISBN 978-1 904750 60-4, £12.

Talented creatures, wombats, for as John Simons informs us in this delightful book, they 'have evolved the capacity to produce more or less cubic faeces'. One cannot help but be impressed, though given that Simon also tells us that 'their faecal pellets are just about the driest of any animals' (*sic*), it sounds as though this may have been a somewhat painful talent to develop (its advantage is that cubic pellets are easier to stack to mark out territory). Wombat sperm is 'marked by its sickle-shaped heads', a feature shared with their relatives koala bears, apparently. Despite his unbridled enthusiasm for all things wombatian, Simons also tells us nothing about wombat testicles, which one might expect to be no less interesting than their faeces or sperm. But he does have a lively interest in the testicles of his fellow wombat-enthusiast Dante Gabriel Rossetti, whose hydrocele, or gross swelling of the testicle, makes it unlikely, in Simons's view, that he could have consummated his love for Jane Morris. Indeed, the plump cushions which the artist carries in the Burne-Jones cartoon of him pursuing Jane may well constitute – as Simons warms thoroughly to his testicular theme – 'a sly dig at the state of Rossetti's genitalia'.

'Now, why is all this of any interest?' as John Simons disarmingly asks of his own prose at one point (and might have asked many times more). In this self-declaredly 'whimsical book', he creates as many ingenious contexts as he can for making some sense of the brief life of Rossetti's wombat, Top (purchased for eight pounds from Jamrach's shop in September 1869, died 6 November 1869 and subsequently stuffed). Simons pursues every conceivable context with great gusto, and one cannot but admire the strange reaches of scholarship into which he has ventured on our behalf in compiling this enjoyable book. He approvingly cites Rossetti's 'apparently unquenchable desire to own what he called "beasts"', and this drive is entirely matched by the author's own unquenchable desire to know about Victorians and beasts, especially Australian ones.

Australian animals, as they begin to arrive back in the home country from the end of the eighteenth century, create problems for the categories which the European scientific imagination has invented in order to catalogue, and thus master, the natural world; and are thus both fascinating spectacles at the popular level and challenging intellectual conundrums for the scientific elite. A dead wombat is sent to Newcastle in 1799, and is still to be seen in the Hancock Museum apparently; and from then on wombat mania threatens to shape world history, for 'Napoleon's imperial ambition towards Australia might have been stimulated by the desire to have more wombats', and sweeps through the fashionable world (by the 1880s you could encounter wombat hearth rugs or wombat fur carriage rugs). Kangaroos do well too, with some early (and execrable) poems devoted to them by Robert Southey and Charles Dibden, attempts to farm them in Lincolnshire

(which persist into the 1960s), and a number of them kept in Windsor Great Park by George III. One wonders whether, in the improved environmental conditions of Morris's utopia, as William Guest, Dick Hammond and Clara make their brief visit to Windsor Castle on their way up the Thames, the kangaroos have returned.

But the whole mad world of the Victorians and their animals – not just Australian ones – is evoked for us here. William Buckland is eating his way busily through the animal kingdom ('He wondered whether bluebottles or moles tasted worse'); the Duke of Edinburgh keeps an elephant on his ship for seventeen months ('What on earth do you do with an elephant on a smallish war-ship?'); Jamrach wrestles down a tiger which has escaped from his East End animal and curios shop with a boy in its jaws, or struggles to accommodate a twenty-three-foot-long Australian crocodile he has got in stock; and Rossetti acquires an extraordinary menagerie of animals of nearly all kinds in his Cheyne Walk back garden in Chelsea. I say nearly, because his plan to keep an elephant in residence to help with the window-cleaning never came to fruition, nor did his desire to possess a lion, since it would have cost too much to run hot water pipes out into the garden in order to keep it warm in winter. His racoon 'ate a considerable number of Rossetti's poems in manuscript', so we may regard this as the animal kingdom's fitting revenge on its neglectful Cheyne Walk master.

He also, among so many other unusual creatures, possessed a wombat (or two, actually, but it is only Top who concerns us here). Wombat mania had already run rife amongst the 'jovial campaigners' in the Oxford Union in 1857 where, as Val Prinsep reported: 'Caricatures of this creature in every imaginable position in all the windows'. Wombats may have been a gift to visual artists, but they were rather more intractable material to poets; after all, what can you rhyme with 'wombat'? Rossetti himself tried 'combat' (easy), 'bomb at' (inventive, in a faintly Hopkinsian manner) and 'sweet and fat' (lazy). His sister Christina recast the beast in Italian form as 'Uommibatto' rather than 'wombat', which perhaps opens up more rhyming possibilities in that language. His more prosaic brother William did not rhyme the new little fellow, but simply referred to him unkindly as 'the most lumpish and incapable of wombats'.

But how do you name your new creature once you have acquired him from Jamrach's? 'Of course, I shall call him "Top"', Rossetti wrote to Miss Losh; and John Simons, who is so sensitive to nuances of language throughout his entertaining book, curiously does not pick up on that casual 'of course'. But at a time when Rossetti was exhuming Lizzie Siddal but pursuing Jane Morris, and Morris was (in Simons's view) pursuing Georgiana Burne-Jones, and Burne-Jones himself was pursuing, and in John Donnean phrase 'getting', Maria Zambaco, the new furry arrival at Cheyne Walk becomes a lighting-conductor for many of these tensions, 'another link in the covert chain of signals he [Rossetti] was sending out to Janey Morris'. To call the wombat 'Top' in a social circle in which

Morris himself was ‘Topsy’ is thus a way to diminish or master Jane’s legal and sexual possessor, of restoring Morris to the subaltern role he had played during the late 1850s as Rossetti’s devoted admirer and student; and the most powerful visual image of all is Rossetti’s malicious cartoon of Jane Morris walking with a diminutive wombat/Morris figure on a lead behind her.

‘Can we stretch back into a Victorian world and smell it with the keen sense of a wombat?’ John Simon asks at the end of this stimulating book, having done a very effective job of giving us a wombat’s-eye view of the sexual tangles of Rossetti, Morris, Jane and the others. ‘Top is finally out of reach’, though, he concludes lugubriously; but I wonder. Given how intelligent wombats are (‘proportionally very large brains, that are fitted into their heads by dint of deep and complex folds’), and given that, as Simons himself informs us, as late as ‘1902 Helen Rossetti was having regular visitations from Gabriel during her spiritualist experiments with a planchette’, might there not still be ways of calling up the spirit of Top to have his firsthand say on the complex sexual matters he witnessed unfolding before him in Cheyne Walk late in 1869?

Tony Pinkney

Michaela Giebelhausen & Tim Barringer, eds, *Writing the Pre-Raphaelites: Text, Context, Subtext*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009, 262 pp., 24 b/w illustrations. ISBN 7980754657170, £55 (£49.50 online).

To include the word Pre-Raphaelite in a scholarly book makes it more saleable, and sometimes the term is invoked too loosely. This collection of papers, evidently from an unidentified academic conference, aims to ‘interrogate the texts through which Pre-Raphaelitism was constructed’ and opens with an epigraph from the late Pierre Bourdieu on the industry which brings past works into the academic ‘game’ which promotes the cultural elite. But the essays are less abstruse and form a useful if uneven contribution to Pre-Raphaelite literature – as they should, being chiefly concerned with the textual aspects of the movement. They stand independently, without over-arching structure, and are contributed by established and emerging experts in the field. However disparate, the papers are all interesting, and well illustrate the editors’ introductory claim for the scholarly rewards of writing and re-writing Pre-Raphaelite historiography.

First stands Deborah Cherry, foremost feminist art historian, who interrogates the 1984 Pre-Raphaelite exhibition at the Tate Gallery – including a wonderful photo of Prime Minister Thatcher on an official visit with Leslie Parris and Peter Palumbo, apparently poking a painting in order to make her point – and surveys the historiography of the movement from 1860. Julie Codell writes on its reputations in Britain and Europe up to 1908 in the context of ideas of masculin-

ity and national identity. David Piers Corbett, contributes a short, original paper on Rossetti's neglected story 'St Agnes of Intercession'.

Julie L'Enfant expounds the crucial and evolving role of William Rossetti as PRB and art critic, whilst Michaela Giebelhausen traces Holman Hunt's self-fashioning as a Pre-Raphaelite in terms of a 'covert romance' interwoven with character traits promoted by Thomas Carlyle, Samuel Smiles and Victorian versions of Christ. Will Vaughan analyses the critical neglect of Ford Madox Brown whose role in the movement was marginalised by his fellows, and which has continued despite the 1991 biography by Teresa Newman and the late Ray Watkinson, of the WMS; one hopes that the forthcoming book (Angela Thirlwell, *Into the Frame: the Four Loves of Ford Madox Brown*, London: Chatto & Windus, 2010, 328 pp.) and exhibition at Manchester Art Gallery (2011) will remedy this. Matthew Plampin chronicles the artists' decisions on when and where to exhibit, seeing a Pre-Raphaelite 'program' and the proto-modern creation of a brand.

Colin Cruise describes and assesses the reception of Simeon Solomon's works at the Dudley Gallery – a signally under-rated exhibition space owing, presumably, to its eclipse by the Grosvenor. Jason Rosenfeld does much the same for contemporary newspaper criticism of the Pre-Raphaelite presentation of nature, beginning with Collins's 'Regents Park', and proceeding to include works by Linnell, Mulready and Maclise, in the sole essay to venture outside the main frame. Finally Malcolm Warner provides a masterly account of the emergence and importance of mass reproduction of Pre-Raphaelite works – here, those by Millais – from fairly simple woodcuts through steel engravings, large and sophisticated mezzotints to chromolithographs and beyond. He notes in conclusion how the great revival of Pre-Raphaelite fortunes came with full-colour reproductions during the 1960s, and how the teaching methods of today, projecting 35 mm slides and digital images on white screens, replicate the luminosity of the originals.

Jan Marsh

Stanley A. Shepherd, *The Stained Glass of A.W.N. Pugin*, Reading: Spire Books Ltd, 2009, 443 pp., colour illustrations throughout. Hbk, ISBN 978-1-904965-20-6, £34.95.

It is a great pleasure to be able to welcome this massive volume, which represents a life's work, even though Shepherd kept his day-job as a chartered accountant. It is based on his Ph.D. thesis of 1997. He also wrote the chapter on Stained Glass for the Victoria and Albert Museum catalogue of the exhibition *Pugin: A Gothic Passion*.

The first half of the book is a series of introductory chapters, which explain

what Pugin was trying to do and illuminate various preoccupations throughout his short life. The second half is a gazetteer, together with other information to assist a person trying to find a particular window. Throughout the book are distributed colour plates of all the important windows; nearly all the photography is by Alastair Carew-Cox. Some of these images have never been made available in earlier publications. It is worth pointing out that stained glass windows are notoriously difficult to photograph, especially those as dark as many of Pugin's early efforts. In many cases there is a full shot of the entire window and its surroundings, supplemented by some exceptional photographs of details. On pp. 62–63, for example, are shown parts of two windows at St Chad's Cathedral in Birmingham, which depict 'glassmakers' at work. These are modelled on John Hardman's actual makers of the stained glass, and remind us of the figures of craftsmen in the windows of Chartres Cathedral. In the chapel of his own house at Ramsgate, Pugin included pictures of members of his own family posed as medieval donors beneath the images of saints (pp. 115–116).

The first chapters explain how, as is well known, stained glass had become entirely pictorial by the eighteenth century. Large squares of glass were painted upon by artists, who were simply transcribing an oil painting. From the beginning of his working life, Pugin discarded this method. He made journeys to see the best examples of medieval glass, both here and on the continent, and then designed windows which were 'archaeologically correct' – to use the terminology of the time – though of course he added his own insight. He then employed established or aspiring manufacturers, such as Warrington, Wailes and Willement; correspondence with these Firms indicates frequent disagreements, as few people could really understand Pugin's vision of the Middle Ages. So, from November 1845, he set up a partnership with the Firm of John Hardman, who had supplied his metalwork. He produced the cartoons from his own workshop, which was built on to the front of his house at Ramsgate; he employed his family e.g. his son Edward, aged 11, and one or two pupils. Hardman finished the windows in a new section of his works in Birmingham. A comparison with Morris's Firm is helpful in understanding Pugin's impatience with what the commercial manufacturers had to offer.

Like many Victorian architects, the extreme rapidity of his working methods continues to astonish us. John Hardman Powell, one of his pupils, said:

The pace at which he worked would be incredible to anyone not seeing it. His few implements were at hand and his design was in his brain distinct even to the detail, so without hesitation he pencilled or penned or brushed in; he never rubbed out or altered, all was as easy as talking, he used any quick method, ruling in straight lines, sketching in arcs with compasses; 'What does it matter how the effect is produced, the result is the thing.' (p. 169)

However, Pugin was never completely satisfied with the results and his interpre-

tation of the medieval ideal changed. In 1848 he visited Chartres for inspiration before working on the lancet windows at Jesus College, Cambridge, trying to understand the jewel-like nature of the best glass, and its 'brilliance'. In fact the resulting windows did not come out as Pugin expected:

I went to Jesus College. The windows like everything else are very disappointing I was quite astonished. They don't look as if there was a powerful colour in them. Our ornament is too faintly painted we are afraid of black. (p. 133)

In 1849 he realised that Hardman was still using coloured sheets of glass from manufacturers, and visited Evreux in order to buy specimens of the old glass. 'I assure you', he wrote to Hardman, 'we have hardly one of the old colours in our glass . . . I have several pieces of the early sort so they can be analysed if necessary'. Then he decided that he must have 'thick rich-looking unequal glass' instead of 'smooth polished' modern glass. One thinks of Morris's similar frustrations; Pugin died before this problem could be solved.

Many people have looked on glass and allowed their eyes to pass through it in order to see visions of heaven, to paraphrase George Herbert. Pugin was more conscious of the opposite purpose of the coloured glass within a religious building; it was part of the architecture, and the light that poured through it changed the interior and was part of the decorative scheme. As he said in a lecture to his Oscott College students in 1838:

The vivid colours of the glass were recalled to the eye by the mosaic enamelled tile pavements, by the gold and colours which relieved the wood and stone carvings, by the painted panels of the screens and altars, by the tapestry hangings, and antependiums of massive embroidery, by the shrines of gold and silver enriched with jewels, and lastly by the gorgeous vestments of the clergy, covered with imagery, pearls and precious stones.

In this way, as at Cheadle, for example, Pugin decorated the whole church, knowing that its richness would be enhanced by these 'vivid colours'. But later, because 'some modern people complain it is too dark', he added more white glass to the windows in order to disperse the 'dim religious light'; and of course, in secular buildings, such as the new Houses of Parliament, Pugin and Barry accepted that plain windows with heraldic symbolism would give better lighting.

The triumph of Pugin and his associates was to be asked to design the Medieval Court at the Great Exhibition. He wore himself out with the sheer amount of work he took on. For a number of years after his death in February 1852 his influence on Gothic Revival glass continued to be important, but notice the advice G. F. Bodley gave to the Dean of Jesus College, Cambridge, only fifteen years later, when he asked about commissioning a new window for the chapel.

Hardman's glass is getting worse and worse – Pugin's influence started them well,

but it is a great risk now what you get – the windows I have seen lately are terribly bad in *colour and drawing* ... I still think you [had] better get a sketch from Morris. (p. 190)

Morris did eventually get the contract for most of the other windows in the chapel. In 1913 an appeal document in the college archives described two of Pugin's chapel windows as an 'eyesore, disfiguring the beauty of the chancel and out of harmony with the series of windows in the nave and transepts' (p. 199); they were removed.

This is the kind of detail which can be explored further in the *Gazetteer*, which includes all the scholarship on which the book is based. There is a full county by county index of all the windows which were constructed and placed in buildings by the Firm of John Hardman, because Hardman's first *Glass Day Book* is available and everything is listed. Even windows which have been destroyed by enemy action are included. Letters from Pugin are supplied: there are no letters to Pugin because 'Every letter he received he answered at once and burnt'. (p. 192) Other sources, such as comments by the patrons, are also made available. Unfortunately the windows made by the other Firms Pugin used – which were listed above – cannot be documented in the same way because records are limited, or have not survived. Whilst every effort has been made to complete the survey it is possible that some earlier windows have been missed. At the end of the book there is a list of the windows in date order, and a fascinating index of the subject matter of Pugin's designs.

Shepherd's book is a landmark in the progressive rehabilitation of Victorian stained glass. In *The Buildings of Cambridgeshire, 1954* (p. 289), Nikolaus Pevsner could hardly bring himself to look at the glass in Ely Cathedral:

... as to Victorian glass Ely is a mine inexhaustible for those few who for the sake of historical completeness or a somewhat morbid aesthetic curiosity wish to study it.

He simply printed a list of the glass, and the Pugin window to be seen there received no special comment. Of course stained glass had other uses at that time. During the 1960s, I remember being directed by art students to stand in the south aisle of the cathedral and watch the kaleidoscopic patterns which the glass threw on the floor. I was to delight in the way these patterns seemed to move; this, they explained to me in my ignorance, was 'a psychedelic experience'. Later, the cathedral incorporated its windows into a stained glass museum with a high reputation.

The final word lies with Rosemary Hill. In *God's Architect: Pugin and the Building of Romantic Britain* (p. 326) she explains the deeper meaning of stained glass, and by implication places Pugin among its greatest designers:

... If the window was symbolic, in romantic portraits, of the divided self, the meeting between interior and exterior realities, then the stained glass window was perhaps the epitome of Victorian romanticism, more serious and more sacred than the Georgian. Set at the meeting point of material and immaterial worlds, as a body is animated by a soul, so the visible glass is animated by invisible and unreflected light.

John Purkis

Cyndy Manton, *Henry Wilson. Practical Idealist*, Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2009, 258 pp, 64 colour plates, 101 b & w illustrations. Hbk ISBN 9780718830977, £50.00; Pbk. 9780718830984, £19.99.

Cyndy Manton has written a lively and enthusiastic account of one of the second-generation Arts & Crafts designers that should go some way to giving Henry Wilson the prominence he clearly deserves. Wilson (1864–1934) has, it seems to me, been a rather shadowy figure among his generation, which included C.R. Ashbee, Eric Gill, Edward Johnston, May Morris and Christopher Whall. Wilson began in the architectural practice of J.D. Sedding, along with Ernest Barnsley, Ernest Gimson and Alfred Powell, and it was he who took on the considerable responsibility of completing the projects begun by Sedding before his sadly early death in 1891. These included work in the interiors of two of the buildings for which he is best known, the superb decoration of St. Bartholomew's, Brighton, and numerous contributions to that of Holy Trinity, Sloane Street, including the Lady Chapel screen and the alabaster-and-marble pulpit. Other works by Wilson which are comparatively well known are at Welbeck Abbey, the Council House in Coventry, and King's College at the University of Aberdeen – the striking Elphinstone Tomb – and in the United States the remarkable bronze doors for the Salada Tea Company in Boston and for the West doors at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. But the extraordinary range of his work and the integrity of his artistic commitment does not seem to me to have been properly recognised.

One has only to examine the colour plates in this book to realise that Wilson was a remarkably fine craftsman in many media, fortunately well enough recognised in his time to have received many fruitful commissions. Indeed, the attractive cover points the way, its nine panels each showing a work in a different medium, all of the highest quality. Manton discusses and praises Wilson's work on a large scale at St. Martin's, Low Marple, near Manchester, the Thatched House (which he built for his family at St. Mary's Platt in Kent), the granite St. Mark's Church, in the remote village of Brithdir, Gwynedd, and the powerful bronze south doors at St. Mary's, Nottingham, prefiguring his work in Boston and New York. On a smaller scale we are shown an abundance of beautiful

and finely made pieces, including the silver communion chalice for Gloucester Cathedral, made with the cooperation of Sidney Wiseman and Harry Murphy; the elaborate Chamberlain Casket for Birmingham; a tiara with the goddess Diana; a rambling rose locket; a gold enamel buckle; a gold necklace; a gold ecclesiastical morse; the gold pendant in green and white enamel with calcedony teardrop given to his wife in 1912; a silver enamel alms dish for St. John's Church, Cirencester; and stained glass in St John the Baptist, West Ashton, Wiltshire, and St Mary's, Weymouth. The jewellery in particular suggests a master craftsman, at least the equal of Ashbee, and it is no surprise therefore to find that Wilson wrote a respected book on the subject, *Silverwork and Jewellery*, in the Artistic Crafts series edited by W.R. Lethaby, in 1903; there was a revised and expanded edition in 1912. D.S. MacColl of the National Gallery is quoted as having called Wilson 'a gifted architect who went off into the minor crafts' (p. 3), but, as Manton argues, such a distinction was one that no-one committed to the ideals of Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement could have accepted. Indeed, the variety of Wilson's achievements reminds us of Morris, though the two men do not seem to have met. One unusual skill to which Manton draws attention was Wilson's ability to arrange exhibitions in a way that created stimulating wholes rather than random collections of objects. Wilson it was who arranged the British Section at the Ghent International Exhibition in 1913, the British Arts and Crafts at the Pavillon de Marsan in Paris in 1914, and the 11th Exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society at Burlington House (which had previously been hospitable only to High Art) in 1916. Of this, *The Studio* wrote: 'Mr. Wilson's plan [is] bolder than anything that has been carried out before'. (p. 163)

Wilson did not restrict himself to his craft activities, or indeed to his family, to which he was deeply committed and with which he enjoyed spending time, but was also active in the public fields of education and publicity. From the useful Chronology appended we can see that he became a member of the Art Workers' Guild in 1892, joined its committee in 1898, and became Master in 1917. He belonged to the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society for a number of years, and was its President from 1915 to 1922. He edited the *Architectural Review* from 1896 to 1901, and was a member of the Council of the International Society of Painters and Gravers from 1899 to 1925. He was Chair of the London County Council's Consultative Committee on teaching Goldsmith's Work and Jewellery in 1908. He was a member of the Council of Governors of the British Institute of Industrial Art in 1920. But his publications were surprisingly few. Manton does not provide a list of these, though she quotes usefully from his book on jewellery and, in her detailed and scholarly Notes, from a number of his unpublished lectures. These include the interesting remark, in an article in *The Studio* in 1896, that 'It is not the graceful and charming designs which flowed so readily from Morris's facile hand which will place [him amongst] the most honoured English artist craftsmen, but more his teaching ...' (Note 56, p. 220). In the same year, Wilson

published three articles on 'The work of Sir Edward Burne-Jones' in the *Architectural Review*, in which, in addition to praising and analysing Burne-Jones's achievement, he developed the idea of architecture as a form of music, with the architect as a 'composer in charge of a thousand living instruments'. (Note 78, p. 224) Manton points out that here, as elsewhere, Wilson's ideas are close to those expressed by Lethaby in *Architecture, Mystery and Myth*; both men believed that works of art could be given unity by symbolism of an eclectic kind. A letter to the town-planner Patrick Geddes in June 1906 shows that Wilson's views on other architects were far from bland and were based on Webb-like assumptions about building and architecture: 'E.S. Prior is a really gifted person and a builder – Bailie Scott is no builder, neither is Voysey, I do not think Macintosh is, but both he and Voysey have grit and tenacity, a belief in themselves and a certain strange originality of which Scott is innocent.' (p. 47)

However, the most impressive quotations come from Wilson's thoughts about education, and the vital importance of creativity, which he thought best developed by craft work. He had the highest hopes for what might be achieved, and expressed these at the New Ideals Conference during the dark days of the first World War: 'When mind and activity are joined the work thus produced is the channel by which the worker receives wisdom. Craft training is indeed the ladder of humanity, with power not only to [improve] education but also in time to transform industry and to regenerate ... society'. (p. 132) He seems here to hover on the brink of a politics that he was never able completely to formulate, so that the hope expressed, however noble, now seems naive. Indeed, the book overall cannot but feel elegiac in relation to the Arts and Crafts in Britain.

Wilson moved to France in 1922, and lived there for the rest of his life, with the most impressive of his late works being created in the United States. He was keen for the crafts to contribute to the recovery of industry after the war, but was always suspicious of the power of industry to impose its own values rather than learning from the crafts. From 1919 Wilson tried, through the Association of Architecture, Building and Handicraft, to develop the 'hand craft movement' through the establishment of a craft village in the Cotswolds. The Association gained the support of many distinguished Arts & Crafts workers, including Sidney Barnsley, Ernest Gimson, Christopher Whall and May Morris, and drew up budgeted plans. Unfortunately, the sudden death of Gimson at the age of fifty-five, and the withdrawal of Barnsley from the scheme, led to its failure. This pattern of early promise and subsequent failure repeated itself with the British Institute of Industrial Art in the early 20s. Manton gives us a thorough and moving account of how Wilson, sceptical of what he saw as the subordination of design to industry in the Design and Industries Association, tried to bring his ideas into the mainstream through the Institute which he helped to launch. The Institute was established by the Board of Trade in conjunction with the Board of Education with the aim of raising the standard of British design and stimulating demand for such work.

Many prominent people from the Arts & Crafts world were involved and the first year saw several exhibitions and an Information Bureau to link craftsmen, designers and industry. However, the Treasury grant lasted only until 1921, and the work of the Institute gradually subsided. By the time of Wilson's death, in 1934, the ideals which he had embodied no longer seemed relevant. But Manton records that he remained positive to the end. She concludes with a remark scribbled hurriedly by Wilson in a notebook, which she sees as expressing the spirit of this remarkable man: 'It is not the thing you think you desire; not what you are, but what you hope to be that matters'. (p. 203)

Manton's book convinces the reader that the quality of the work Wilson produced throughout his active lifetime entitles him to a higher reputation than he currently enjoys, and deserves to stimulate a revival of interest in the man whom Gordon Craig tellingly described as a 'practical idealist' (p. 101) – surely the best kind. This is a thoroughly researched account, clearly written and with a wealth of good illustrations; it contains a welcome Gazetteer, which shows the range of Wilson's work to be seen in different parts of Britain today. *Henry Wilson. Practical Idealist* is a credit to the Lutterworth Press and to its author, and I hope it will be widely read.

Peter Faulkner

Jane Bingham, *The Cotswolds: a cultural history*, Oxford: Signal Books, 2009, xxvi + 244 pp. Pbk, ISBN 978-1-904955-62-7, £12.

The Signal Books Landscapes of the Imagination series announces itself by the claim to present 'the world's great landscapes – real, mythic and imagined – explored through their history, literature and art.' So much for the intention. What of the reality? Bingham's *The Cotswolds* is an attractive book, written in a friendly, open style and dealing with the full range of cultural possibilities of a relatively small area. Thus although she covers (successively) ancient history, religion, agriculture, military history, industry, Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement, the literary and artistic Cotswolds, garden history and sports, the unity of the area she covers is never in doubt. Indeed, she seems at times to limit herself unnecessarily by adopting the Cotswolds as defined by the protected Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. She admits small deviations from this by including Woodstock and Blenheim Palace. But she might have wandered a little further – for example, the curious pre-history of Bath as a Cotswolds town, before its eighteenth-century redevelopment and reinvention as Georgian Bath, or the distinctly Cotswolds villages around Chippenham in Wiltshire, which include Kingston Langley.

Here Robin Tanner (engraver and teacher) and Heather Tanner (writer)

worked in the tradition of Morris and the Arts and Craft movement during the twentieth century, not least its moral rejection of the capitalist system of production for profit. Heather Tanner's observation about oolitic limestone, in *Wiltshire Village*, that 'When it is old and grey it is alive with new growth – emerald moss, orange spots of lichen, stoncrop and rue-leaved saxifrage, pennycress and cob-webbed ivy' will strike an immediate chord with visitors to Kelmscott Manor. Bingham also omits Faringdon, close enough to Kelmscott for Dick Dufty and Peter Locke to 'hold one another up' in the teashop during the traumatic rescue of Kelmscott Manor from years of neglect. Another conspicuous omission for those interested particularly in William Morris is the tithe barn at Great Coxwell near Faringdon.

One central question for anyone writing about an area such as the Cotswolds is whether we are dealing with a culture indigenous to a particular place, or representations of a wider, perhaps national, culture which have been introduced into it. Is it a culture which emerges from, or a culture which enters into, a place? Bingham does not address these theoretical issues directly, and yet her splendidly eclectic collection of material offers plenty of food for thought on such themes. She notes, for example, that often the remnants of folk culture surviving in the Cotswolds were introductions or revivals depending on later incomers such as Ashbee's Guild of Handicraft at Chipping Camden. At the southern end of the Cotswolds, the revival of the Marshfield Paperboys Boxing Day mummers' play was a 'community development' initiative in the 1930s led by an active member of Cecil Sharp's English Folk Dance and Song Society.

A careful reading of Bingham's book also reveals that the space for the twentieth-century 'invasion' of the Cotswolds by Arts and Crafts practitioners, weekend cottagers, commuters and assorted royals and celebrities was, created by the long decline in both English agriculture (from the mid-nineteenth century) and the weaving industries (from even earlier). At Kelmscott, for example, the population declined from 179 inhabitants in 1841, to only 101 in 1881. Against national trends, it then rose to 164 by 1901, before beginning the long twentieth-century decline to only 85 in 1981. Prices and wages fell as English agriculture faced global competition. Much rural housing was sub-standard, diets were poor, and the National Union of Agricultural Workers sought to alleviate poverty by encouraging farm labourers to emigrate to 'the colonies'. Others took themselves off to the factories of Oxford, Swindon and Gloucester. Bingham is especially strong on the long, sad decline of the weaving industry, which left buildings which might be occupied around 1900 by Arts and Crafts craftspeople, and around 2000 by Arts Centres.

Bingham also observes the growing use of the Cotswolds for military purposes. Of course, William Morris cared about foreign policy: indeed his first political involvement was through the Eastern Question Association when it appeared that the British government was determined to go to war with Russia in

support of Ottoman Turkey. In his manifesto ‘To the working men of England’ (1877) he denounced ‘*unjust war*’ [italics in original]. The phrase resonates down through to our own time. Morris, who witnessed police violence at the Bloody Sunday riot in Trafalgar Square in November 1887, would have been appalled at the action of the police in turning back coachloads of demonstrators en route for Fairford in 2003 for a peaceful anti-war rally, an action declared illegal in 2006 by the House of Lords. Nor is Fairford the only military presence in the area. A few miles north of the village is Carterton, a little known ‘new town’ of some 15,000 inhabitants which has grown up round the Brize Norton air-base. With the closure of RAF Lyneham in Wiltshire, even more of the work of Transport Command will be centred close to Kelmscott – more noise, more traffic and more pollution.

Of key interest to members of the William Morris Society are the central chapters in *The Cotswolds*, which deal with Morris and the Arts and Crafts. Bingham does not attempt to introduce new material or novel insights. What she does achieve is a clear and unblinking statement of the role which Kelmscott played in Morris’s life. She follows Fiona MacCarthy in emphasising that Kelmscott was first of all chosen as a place out of public view, where Jane Morris could conduct her affair with Rossetti. Only later did it become for Morris a representation of the contrast between the ruinous state of the English countryside towards the end of the nineteenth century, and the Utopian vision of the way things might be otherwise in *News from Nowhere*. Kelmscott is also the site of the one obvious error in the book, where the author explains the ‘sizing-down’ of Cotswolds stone roofs as larger stones at the top and smaller at the bottom, rather than the other way round. That apart, she has been meticulous in her research.

Bingham does not mention the role of Jane and May Morris as craftswomen in their own right, an omission she more than makes up for in choosing to feature the work of such distinguished Cotswolds craftswomen as Phyllis Barron and Dorothy Larcher. Checking the gender balance is also important for scholars and fans of William Morris. Apart from being a designer and craftswoman in her own right, May Morris spent a great deal of time editing the twenty four volumes of her father’s *Collected Works*, published 1910–15. As important, and in sharp contrast to her parents, she attempted to ‘do something’ for the people of Kelmscott. In 1914 she commissioned a pair of cottages, designed by Ernest Gimson, in memory of her mother; in 1916 she presided at the inaugural meeting of the Kelmscott WI. In 1934, she fund-raised and project-managed for the building of the Village Hall. Yet even so, development at Kelmscott was haphazard compared with nearby Filkins, where Sir Stafford Cripps (later Chancellor of the Exchequer in the 1945 Labour government) promoted major building projects during the 1930s, including new council houses (1929), a Village Centre with doctor’s surgery, public baths, and recreational facilities (1935–1936), and an improved water supply.

Bingham's two chapters on the Arts and Crafts movement and its successors provide an excellent introduction to the subject. She suggests too the oscillation of Arts and Crafts designers between a decorative approach sometimes bordering on art nouveau and a more rationalist tradition which leads in a straightish line from Morris to Gordon Russell. It was Russell who made the link between good design and factory production, essential if it was ever to become competitive with 'bad' design. In the process he also made good design accessible to a better-educated public which was becoming increasingly discriminating in matters of interior design and furniture.

The book is well provided with black-and-white images – photographs, but also copies of engravings such as the frontispiece of *News from Nowhere* depicting Kelmscott Manor as it appeared during Morris's time. There is a very useful reference section, including both books and internet sites, as well as lists of interesting houses and churches to visit. There are good indices too, a detail too often omitted in books of this kind for the general reader who may or may not develop a lifetime interest in Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement.

John Payne

Catherine Gordon, *Cotswolds Arts and Crafts Architecture*, Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 2009, 182 pp., 98 b/w illustrations. Hbk, ISBN 978-1-86077-548-2, £20.00.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed a flowering of vernacular architecture in the Cotswolds, led by the most influential architects of their day. These architects were directly inspired by the writings of John Ruskin and William Morris, and possessed genuine commitment to their ideas of reforming the living and working environment, of living and working with nature, of the beauty of natural forms, and the simplicity and potential vitality of country life. They were most influential in saving the traditional architecture and the environment of villages and small towns in a swathe of central England, but they also formed part of a wider movement to revive and protect rural industries, crafts, folk song and dance damaged by the population movements of Enclosure, the industrial revolution and agricultural depression.

The architectural styles employed by these architects may look traditional, but they took an almost modernist approach towards the efficacy of healthful, natural light and aspect and to the importance of moulding a building to its site, often through the use of changing levels. Whilst they insisted upon the use of local materials where at all possible, they were not shy of modern techniques, used appropriately, as in W.R. Lethaby's concrete vaulting in Brockhampton Church. The development of the north corridor plan and the butterfly plan to

make the best use of natural light, and the cranked plan in order to mould a building to its site, exhibit real innovation. Catherine Gordon writes with elegance and clarity. Her Introduction places William Morris and his architect-disciples firmly in the Cotswolds landscape, at the centre of a 'rekindling of romanticism ... the quest ... for the beautiful rather than the sublime, for a gentle, nurturing vision of nature that offered a soothing sense of reassurance and stability at a time of rapid social and economic change'. (p. 1) 'The buildings that they [the architects] designed in the region reveal an admirable appreciation of the strong vernacular precedent, which served to channel their creativity. Their work encouraged the revival of the local building crafts and the quarrying industry, and instilled a new sense of pride among the local communities in their built and natural assets.' (p. 2)

In her first two chapters, Gordon provides a thorough background to the ideals, character, development and principles of the Arts and Crafts movement which would be valuable to any student wishing to gain an overview of the discipline. The conflict between the desire to make handmade goods, which proved to be too expensive for the majority of the population, and the growth of art in industry, is carefully delineated, as is the foundation of the various associations and societies which were to foster craft traditions in the English Lake District, Haslemere and Ditchling, as well as the Cotswolds. The keen political involvement of the architectural profession in the reform of arts and industries, led by figures such as J.D. Sedding, W.R. Lethaby and Ernest Newton, and its commitment to conservation through the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (S.P.A.B.), the Council for the Preservation of Rural England (C.P.R.E.) and the National Trust, are described.

Philip Webb's influence as 'the architectural mentor of the Arts and Crafts Movement', who 'removed "architecture" from the architect's office to the builder's yard and craftsman's workshop' (p. 9) is emphasised. He enjoyed close friendships with most of the Cotswolds Arts and Crafts architects. They designed churches and village halls, such as the one at Kelmscott for May Morris; community housing, such as that in Broadway for the Russell Workshops Housing Scheme, and war memorials, such as the one at Stanway, but the development of the small, manageable, country house remains their greatest legacy. Despite their fine ideals, it appears that these architects were unable to ameliorate the housing of the agricultural labourer. In artefact and architecture, it was the middle and upper classes who benefited from the Arts and Crafts movement.

Subsequent chapters address the development of Arts and Crafts architecture and architectural conservation in the Cotswolds. Gordon describes individual architects, touching upon their background, their characters and their particular strengths and examines specific building projects in some detail. William Morris's admiration for the Cotswolds landscape, and the art embodied in its architecture, exerted great influence upon his immediate followers. The expanding

railway system made travel from Birmingham and London relatively easy, and a fashion in migration to the Cotswolds countryside began. The artistic gentrification of Broadway was an early manifestation of this enthusiasm. The town formed a focus for American and British artists, musicians and writers, for actors and craftspeople and, most important, for those who would become the patrons of the Arts and Crafts architects, such as Lady Elcho, the American actress Mary Anderson, and the Russell family. Architects were drawn into the artistic ferment as it became desirable to improve and extend old buildings and design new ones. 'By 1920 barely a domestic or agricultural building remained unaltered in Broadway's famous street. However, the damage was mercifully slight, due largely to the influence of families like the Flowers and the Russells, whose attitudes to architectural design and conservation had been influenced by Arts and Crafts ideals, and also to new pressure groups such as S.P.A.B.' (p. 26)

The architects, like most of their client-patrons, all came from somewhere else. One of the first to arrive was Guy Dawber (1861–1938), later to become the first President of the C.P. R.E. Ernest Gimson (1864–1919) and the Barnsley brothers, Ernest (1863–1926) and Sidney (1865–1926), were raised in Leicester and Birmingham respectively. They jointly took Daneway House in Sapperton as a showroom and workshops in 1902, after training with Sedding and Shaw in London. They were all experienced in furniture making, but Gimson was also accomplished in decorative plasterwork. A broad range of talents is common amongst these architects. C.R. Ashbee (1863–1942) moved his Guild of Handicraft to Chipping Campden in 1902, establishing the Campden School of Arts and Crafts in 1904. The Guild did not survive long, but many of its craftsmen stayed on and started their own businesses. The Ashbees attracted talented artists, craftsmen and thinkers from all disciplines, many of whom were to settle in the area. F. L. Griggs (1876–1938), architect, artist and conservationist, was one of these. He was to develop an important creative friendship with Sapperton architect Norman Jewson (1884–1975), from Norwich. The story of the architects and their commissions, their talents and their personalities is fascinating and too involved to enumerate here; Gordon relates it fluently.

Clients could come from the aristocracy, for instance Lady Elcho or Lady Plymouth. They might be artists such as William Rothenstein, retired colonels and majors, new money such as the jam heiress Miss Hartley, other architects, craftsmen such as the Birmingham stained glass artist Henry Payne, or designers such as Gordon Russell. In the new architectural designs, favourite features included battered, local stone walls, cladding with oak boards, cruck frames, stone slate roofs or moulded thatch sweeping from the apex of the roof almost to the ground, with thatched eyelids peeking open over the upstairs windows. Fittings were handmade by the Guild of Handicraft or other, local craftsmen. Interiors were decorated simply with white walls, substantial fireplaces, wall sconces for candlelit evenings, delightful plasterwork in natural forms and shaped elm

planks or stone flags for flooring. There was a penchant for the handmade in preference to machine goods, but a realisation that modern materials, concrete floors and foundations and steel joists, could cut structural costs and be successfully camouflaged. A great deal of time and energy was spent on conservation and conversion work. Most of the architects were committed conservationists, many of them serving on the committee of S.P. A.B. They were prepared to fight for the integrity of old buildings and the use of traditional building materials and techniques, with the occasional aberration.

Catherine Gordon's text is leavened with an excellent selection of quotes and her notation is professional, with interesting digressions, for instance that fake adze marks were made on the steel beams of Baillie Scott's Blackwell. (p. 171, n. 14) Her bibliography is useful. A glossary of architectural terms might help the lay person, together with a list of the architects with their dates and major works and interests. Likewise, a gazetteer of the houses, halls, memorials and churches studied in the text would be most useful for a visitor to the region. This reader was longing for more photographs of fittings, stained glass, furniture, interiors and gardens, Jewson's plasterwork, portraits of the architects, their clients and their workers, and many more plans, to go with the exhaustive descriptions of each house and its construction.

Having said that, most of the photographs provided are contemporary with the period being described. There is a delightful picture on p. 88 of a collection of proud workmen just after the completion of Drakestone House, Stinchcombe. Phillimore, excellent publishers of local histories and historic maps, have published the book. On initial inspection the pages are set with rather narrow outer margins, and sometimes the justification can affect the spacing between words. This gives a slightly dated look, which, perhaps, is intended to be in keeping with the period described in the text. The content is obviously the result of exhaustive research and provides a most valuable overview of Cotswolds Arts and Crafts architecture. The book deserves to become a classic of its kind.

Diana Andrews

Vicki Halper & Diane Douglas, eds, *Choosing Craft: the Artist's Viewpoint*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2009, 328 pp. Hbk, ISBN 9780807831199, £31.50.

Choosing Craft is an anthology of the thoughts of makers who have worked in America since the Second World War. The extracts (one hundred and twenty five of them) vary in length from a few paragraphs to a few pages, and each is prefaced with information about the maker and the context of the extract, which varies considerably. Passages from craft journals, monographs and blogs all feature, but

a surprising number come from what the editors describe as ‘oral histories’. Many of these interviews were collected under the ‘Documentation Project for Craft and Decorative Arts in America’ now housed at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Given the unquestionable value of many of these interviews, I could not help wondering whether any parallel project has been undertaken to document British Craft during the twentieth century – I suspect not.

Choosing Craft is a fascinating read: much more absorbing than it might sound. The informal nature of many of the extracts gives an accessible feel to the book, but this comment does not indicate a lack of substance: often the opinions of the featured makers are deeply felt and at times profound. There are several real gems: the book begins with an inspiring piece by Anni Albers, a Bauhaus student and teacher who emigrated from Germany to America in 1933. The extract from *Design* in 1944 holds extraordinary power and conviction: ‘We learn courage from art work. We have to go where no one was before us. We are alone and we are responsible for our actions. Our solitariness takes on a religious character. This is a matter of my conscience and me.’ (p. 6)

From the ambition of the post-war era the reader is led through an entertaining range of cultural contexts. The counter-culture of the 1960s emerges in Judy Kensley McKie’s account of the ‘New Hamburger Cabinetworks’, where members of the group shared wages and ‘charged whatever we gauged the client could afford’. (p. 120) The revival in blacksmithing is described in L. Brent Kinton’s account of the ‘Artist-Blacksmith Association of North America’ conference of 1976 (the ‘Woodstock of the blacksmith’s association’) after which fifteen ‘dirty-faced, grubby guys’ called upon a surprised arts administrator at the National Endowment for the Arts in Washington D.C. in order to point out that they had just undergone a life-changing experience.

The eclectic nature of more recent craft is represented by Sabrina Gschwandner’s reflections on the resurgence of knitting in the last decade; she is described as someone who works in ‘film, video and textiles’ and ‘started knitting in college as a way to pass time while I was waiting to graduate. I liked to space out while knitting as a break from bouts of dense art theory reading.’ (p. 136) She works by inviting ‘extreme knitters’ to the installations and performances she creates.

Much of this has little to do with Morris directly, but the whole structure and thematic arrangement of the book shows that debates central the Arts and Crafts Movement persisted right through the twentieth century. Pervasive themes include the conscious decision to become a craft practitioner rather than an artist, the relationship of the maker to capitalism (in a whole section called ‘Making a Living’), and the potential of craft practice to act as an effective political strategy. Makers express wide-ranging and contradictory attitudes towards commercialism, fine art, gender and ethnicity, whilst at the same time seeing their creative practice as in some way connected with these issues.

One quite distinctive feature of the anthology is a marked stance against

academia. Whilst some makers argue for the positive aspects of university-educated makers, many see university art departments as a negative influence. Several commentators suggest that an atelier-based apprenticeship is superior to art school, whilst other makers complain that university-based makers are given an unfair commercial advantage, owing to their regular salaries and free workshops.

When Morris is mentioned directly, the allusions are negative. Stanley Lechtzin, a metalworker and jeweller, in a rather polemical piece from 1988, suggests that there is no intrinsic merit in hand-making and that this is a 'romantic notion' still relying on the ideas of 'William Morris and his friends'. (p. 259). Garth Johnson, a ceramicist involved in the 'Pottery Liberation Front', suggests in an extract from a blog in 2000, that the way Morris sold his products is a 'direct corollary to the philosophy of modern advertising, that the objects one owns makes them *different* than the rest of society'. (p. 294) The former comment is an offhand reference to justify computer aided design, whilst the latter shows a fundamental misconception about both the history of consumer culture and the significance of Morris's work.

It is disappointing that when Morris is mentioned it is in the narrow context of his belief in the value of handicraft: his much broader aim to reconnect human labour with dignity and creativity is a central concern of the book but never directly associated with Morris. There are plenty of makers who, without mentioning Morris, show how his ideas have been perpetuated and developed. A thoughtful and perceptive piece extracted from a monograph by Warren Seelig (a weaver) in 1992 argues that materials are essential to craft. Whilst questioning the relationship between material and maker he suggests: 'The answer goes beyond truth-to-materials or the notion that a material is merely a means to an end. Materials contain clues that allow us to discover our own personal sense of reality through a subconscious process, an intuitive, creative process in which material is an active partner'. (p. 55)

As an object the book is very pleasing. The photography is handled really well, it is extensively illustrated, all the reproductions in matt black and white. The most memorable images are of the makers in their workshops: George Nakashima dwarfed by enormous planks of wood (p. 45) is a captivating example. The list price seems reasonable value, although it is worth pointing out that at the time of writing the book is available at under half this price from internet vendors. The editors have done an excellent job. The preface and introductory sections are concise, pertinent and unobtrusive. It is clear that the extracts have been carefully selected and shaped to produce a coherent volume. No doubt those who follow them up will find a messier picture, but the book does its job really well in opening up an enticing window onto this diverse and fascinating field of study.

Jim Cheshire

John Potvin & Alla Myzelev, eds, *Material Cultures, 1740–1920, The Meanings and Pleasures of Collecting*. Farnham, U.K. and Burlington, U.S.A: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2009, 234 pp., 39 b & w illustrations. ISBN 978-0-7546-6144-3, £55.00.

For his part, Morris believed that beauty and function, through the hands of a good craftsman, entered into an eloquent and sensuous sort of dance, in which the viewer, the user and the collector overlap in as much as they easily neglect to differentiate where the desire for beauty ends and where the appreciation for technical skill begins. (p. 6)

This beautifully written sentence belies the bulk of the introduction to *Material Cultures, 1740–1920*, which runs to nearly seventeen pages and is a tough read for anyone not of a philosophical bent. Potvin and Myzelev seem determined to out-Baudrillard Baudrillard, or out-Benjamin Benjamin, Stewart, Pearce or Kant in this section, as if thesis-speak is necessary for peer validation; it probably is. Part of the aim of this book is to extend theoretical boundaries, and so a display of theoretical virtuosity and obfuscatory language is inevitable. Try this typical sentence:

The fourth line of investigation ... is an intervention moving beyond the disciplinary ethos of material culture to argue more firmly for the aesthetic, visual and semiotic potency inseparable from any understanding of material objects integral to the lives of their collecting subjects without falling into a traditional, isolating and aggrandising connoisseurial elitism, which reifies the Kantian object/subject divide in its avocation of aesthetic disinterest. (p. 9)

Had I not been reading for Morris, I would have flung the publication from the Tarpeian rock on reaching page seventeen. This would have been a shame, as the essays which follow the introduction, by eleven different scholars, including Potvin and Myzelev, are informative, amusing, and by and large not over-weighted with philosophical deconstruction. This collection studies collectors and their collections of craft, design and fashion, providing them with historical context and meaning.

In 1785 Karl Philipp Moritz wrote, 'it follows that an object cannot be beautiful purely because it gives us pleasure, for otherwise everything that is useful would also be beautiful. The thing that gives us pleasure without being of any real use to us is what we call beautiful'. (p. 5) Not mentioned in this book, despite his mastery of glorious ornament, which, through modernism's lens would be labelled an 'excess', the book collector William Morris said something slightly different, and rather modernist, on 19 February 1880, in his lecture 'Labour and Pleasure versus Labour and Sorrow' at the Birmingham School of Design:

Believe me, if we want art to begin at home, as it must, we must clear our houses of troublesome superfluities that are for ever in our way, conventional comforts

that are no real comforts, and do but make work for servants and doctors. If you want a golden rule that will fit everybody, this is it: have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful.

Stacey Sloboda's essay 'Porcelain bodies: gender, acquisitiveness, and taste in eighteenth-century England' describes how Adam Smith had tried to unite beauty and utility through the notion of 'fitness' in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). 'He argued that the more perfectly an object is suited to its use, the more beautiful it becomes'. This seems to lead directly to Morris.

A gender divide has traditionally equated women with consumption but men with collection, but Sloboda deconstructs the 'mythomorphic' figure of the female china collector. She describes the acquisition and display of china collections and china's correlation in literature with the fragility of female virtue, intellect, and the delicate feminine body. Clive Edwards's essay describes craft collections made for the home by women between 1750 and 1900. Gendering, partly influenced by determinist philosophies and 'promoted both in schools and in print, meant that by the mid-eighteenth century, any visual awareness which women had developed was particularly directed towards their homes'. (p. 37) During the nineteenth century, homemade collections of shell work, spill work or lace, joined others in the home: books, art, 'cult of death' ephemera, taxidermy, and so on. (p. 38) The interior became the collection 'en masse', an exhibition space, a public expression of the self, central to the 'performance' of family life. (p. 50) The making and collection of objects was literally a labour of love, filling up time and providing comfort and a creative outlet, but they also filled up the interior alarmingly, which has been equated with mania or what philosopher Max Nordau described as 'an irresistible desire among degenerates to accumulate useless trifles'. (p. 44)

In her essay 'Spatializing the private collection: John Fiott Lee and Hartwell House', Anastasia Filippopoliti describes the collections of Lee (1783–1866), his observatory, and his eclectic displays of scientific and antiquarian artefacts at Hartwell House which was open to the public by arrangement. Lee was a patron and member of numerous learned societies. The collection, of 4,650 artefacts on his death, reflected well upon his standing both through its public display and through his largesse in donations to institutions such as the British Museum and the Society of Antiquaries. Lee's taxonomy was influenced by international exhibitions so that groups of objects were exhibited in series, rather than individually, and he used the classification systems of public institutions.

Nadine Rottau discusses the aftermath of the Great Exhibition of 1851 in her essay, 'Everyone to his taste', or "truth to material"?: the role of materials in collections of applied arts'. New materials such as hard rubber and xylonite defied the accepted definition of 'truth to materials' because they were able to imitate the qualities of others such as ivory, bronze or marble. They were thus rejected by

gurus of good taste and condemned as ‘moral delinquencies’. (p. 83) The displays of the ‘Chamber of Horrors’ at the Museum of Ornamental Art in London made connections between materials, bad taste and morality in its collected displays.

Several essays study issues of ‘colonial and capitalist strategy’, or Orientalism, in the process of collecting artefacts from other, exotic, cultures. Artist John Frederick Lewis (1805–76) made a large collection of Middle Eastern women’s costume while living in Egypt. On his return to England, he employed his collection in order ‘to fetishize’ harem women’s clothing, and made a series – a collection – of paintings which used the harem as its subject. (p. 102) He dressed his models with the rich fabrics and clothing from his own collection, with an excess of colour, sumptuous pattern and weave. His clothing collection ‘functioned to reiterate racial and gendered difference, keeping at bay any similarities between the Western viewer and the Easterner’. (p. 105) The harem is itself a collection of course, and Joan DelPlato’s essay provides an interesting critique of Lewis’s pictures and the collectors who purchased them. John James Ruskin owned two. Whilst the paintings reference the Orient and the real harem, they are in fact simulacra. Lewis’s young wife Marion was his most frequent model.

Anne Anderson’s essay ‘“Chinamania”: collecting Old Blue for the House Beautiful, c. 1860–1900’ is a delightful account of the influence of the mania for Old Blue china upon James McNeill Whistler, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetic Movement. Old Blue provided its owner with ‘otherness’ and exoticism. However, Anderson argues that china collection also signalled the feminine and the effeminate and brought accusations of decadence, perversity and sexual ‘inversion’.

The heightened emotionalism of the aesthete connotes an erosion of masculinity, while the transference of affections to objects and an insatiable appetite may be read as a subversion of sexual desire. As a ‘rule-governed passion’ collecting can be likened to a degenerate mental condition with the potential to undermine gender relations and negate sexual differentiation ... was Blue itself a sign of ‘negative characteristics?’ (p. 111)

Old examples of Blue could be purchased from Marks on Oxford Street or Joel Joseph Duveen, as well as junk and bric-à-brac shops. Marks’s business card was said to be a collaboration between Whistler, who supplied the pictured ‘Hawthorn’ jar and peacock feather, Rossetti who designed the Japanese background, and Morris, who designed the typography. (p. 124) Rossetti ‘purchased two “sumptuous” Hawthorn jars with covers from Marks for £120 in 1867’. (p. 117) However, he was forced to sell them back, at a loss, following his breakdown in 1872. They were bought by William Armstrong, and one is included in his portrait hanging in the dining room at Cragside. Rossetti and Whistler often included Old Blue in their paintings and the intense rivalry between them sparked full-blown Chinamania.

When Whistler bragged about his own pots, Rossetti evidently retorted, 'My dear Jimmy, if I take to it, I will beat your collection in a week'. This he did by purchasing for £200 an entire collection of blue and white from the Marquis d'Azeglio, the retiring Sardinian ambassador: 'since I lately bought all in a bunch this gorgeous collection, I pant and gasp for more.' (p. 120)

In 'From specimen to scrap: Japanese textiles in the British Victorian interior, 1875–1900', Elizabeth Kramer discusses collections of decorative Japanese art in Britain following the London International Exhibition of 1862, when Japanese objects were displayed for the first time since the reopening of Japan to the West in 1854. She challenges the accepted chronology of the craze for Japanese design, which placed interest from collectors, artists and critics in the 1860s, the espousal of Japanese art by the Aesthetic Movement in the 1870s and a full-blown mania for all things Japanese in the 1880s. The real situation was more complex, with Japanese textiles and artefacts 'blurring class distinctions, elite and popular culture and masculine and feminine spheres and roles in Victorian Britain between 1875 and 1900'. (p. 130) Kramer describes the dictates of domestic advice literature about the display of exotic collections and the artistic positioning of artefacts and draperies.

In *Beautiful Houses* (1882), Mary Eliza Haweis examined the relationship between collections of exotica and interior display in famous homes. 'Hints of Japan' were 'detected in the furniture, curtains, and portières' in the home of painter George Henry Boughton. His studio was 'swathed in *Oriental* rugs, embroideries, and old tapestries, with Persian and Indian rugs and cushions adorning settee and floor'. In Alma-Tadema's studio, 'an entire wall was covered in shelves with innumerable "draperies" rolled up – protruding enough to be distinguished'. (p. 133) Edward Burne-Jones's studio contained 'heavily carved furniture, stained glass, embroideries and tapestries'. Artists carefully arranged their studio collections to appeal to the sensibilities of prospective customers. In *Hints on Household Taste* (1872), Charles Eastlake dictated how to display collections in a domestic environment, by placing associated groups together so that 'a little museum may be formed and remain a source of lasting pleasure to its possessors, seeing that "a thing of beauty is a joy forever".' (p. 140) Displays in department stores and curio shops of middle range 'oriental' fabrics and objects inspired emulation. Middle-class homemakers were 'encouraged to participate in collectorly behaviours'. (p. 145)

Judith Codell is scathing about Viceroy George Curzon's influence upon the representation of Indian craft during the early twentieth century. Indians had to be seen to be producing purified, completely Indian craft, whilst the British were able to produce both high art and crafts. In 'Indian crafts and imperial policy: hybridity, purification, and imperial subjectivities', Codell details the influence of Curzon's speech at the opening of the Delhi Coronation Durbar in 1903. By

1851, many Indian objects were already European in form, and Indian art was traditionally hybrid. Indians mimicked European dress and furniture, which threatened the authority of colonial discourse and endorsed hybridity. However, George Birdwood's influential publications, written between 1878 and 1880, and inspired by the 1877 Coronation Durbar, nurtured the myth of the spirituality of the Indian village craftsman, who 'polluted no rivers, deformed no pleasing prospects, nor poisoned any air'. (p. 153) Displays from the 1880s on consciously policed Indian goods for signs of Europeanisation, 'differencing and "othering" Indian things as *not* European. ... Curzon's purification was as important to fantasies of a pure Britishness as it was to fantasies of restoring Indian traditions.' (p. 154)

Alla Myzelev describes the formation of the Peasant Arts Society and the Peasant Arts Museum in Haslemere in 'Collecting peasant Europe: peasant utilitarian objects as museum artefacts'. Owing to Enclosure, Britain had lost her own peasantry, and thus her vernacular traditions, and it was intended that this void be filled through the import and display of foreign peasant objects and the revival of peasant handicrafts. This initiative formed part of an international Romantic Nationalism movement which led to the formation of open air museums of peasant art and architecture, such as Skansen (Stockholm), and art and craft revival groups. The myth of an idealised past and a pure Nordic race was implied. Gerald Davies, one of the leaders of the Haslemere group, acquired only 'those objects that were to produce pleasure in the making and in the use, but not to produce direct gain of money'. (p.174) Pottery was thus excluded.

In another nod to Romantic Nationalism, 'Collecting the Sublime and the beautiful; from Romanticism to revolution in Celtic Revival jewellery', Joseph McBrinn makes a study of Irish jewellery designers, who created and collected objects impregnated with nationalistic messages during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, an era of growing revolutionary horror, and collates the revival in Celtic jewellery with Edmund Burke's ideas of 'terror' and 'pleasure'. Between 1839 and 1896, a number of precious Celtic artefacts were discovered across Ireland, the Cross of Cong, the Tara Brooch and the Ardagh Chalice among them. These were collected and would form the nucleus of a new national collection. Copies of them were copied and sold, together with other derivative Celtic designs. 'Jewellery became the epitome and embodiment of the sublime in the sense that as an object it came to reflect the ravages of the era as opposed to an abstract ideal of beauty.' (p. 212) 'These precious objects betrayed not only the political inclinations of their wearers, but also helped to construct an historical continuum between the medieval mastery of the Celtic craftspeople and a modern nationalistic awareness.' (p. 12)

Illustrator Charles Ricketts (1866–1931) and artist Charles Shannon (1863–1937) enjoyed a long and devoted domestic relationship which transgressed the gender codes of late Victorian and Edwardian economic and domestic systems.

In ‘Collecting intimacy one object at a time: material culture, perception, and the spaces of aesthetic companionship’, John Potvin shows how what he calls their ‘queer’ collection of beautiful things made it possible for them to re-imagine their home – The Vale, their house in Chelsea –away from the dominant bourgeois definitions of domesticity and masculinity. It became a popular destination for artists and writers.

Oscar Wilde was a close friend and introduced the artist Sir William Rothenstein who was ‘quickly charmed by both the men and “their simple dwelling”’. He recalled the ‘primrose walls, apple-green skirting and shelves, the rooms hung with Shannon’s lithographs, a fan-shaped water-colour by Whistler, and drawings by Hokusai’. (p. 199) Potvin describes the entire home functioning as a sort of ‘phenomenological cabinet of curiosity’ and quotes a delightful description of the now depersonalised collection, displayed in the Fitzwilliam Gallery in Cambridge in 1939, after the death of Ricketts and Shannon. ‘It is like going to a cemetery, gazing at a mummy in a crystal coffin: the presence that once informed it all, the daily life which flowered among these things, the flow of conversation, of laughter, the sense of being in the intimate company of great art collected by a zealot, himself a genius, all that is gone, gone.’ (p. 201) The objects assumed identities all of their own; Shannon once referred to three Sheffield jugs as ‘Bullfinch,’ ‘Swallow,’ and ‘Fatty’. (*Ibid.*)

As *Material Cultures, 1740–1920* is written by eleven different authors, there is bound to be slight unevenness in its presentation, but by and large it achieves a unity of approach. There is the odd inaccuracy, however: on p. 153, Julie Codell describes how ‘In a *Times* letter of 1 May 1879, the who’s who of the arts and crafts movement (such as William Morris and C.R. Ashbee ...) praised Birdwood’s condemnation of industrialization and of the government for eviscerating Indian arts’. This does not quite ring true, as Ashbee would only have been sixteen at the time, and I can find no record of the letter in the literature. Alla Myzelev repeatedly uses the term ‘natural history museums’ to describe museums specialising in the collections of art and artefacts, which sounds odd to an English ear. It may have been altered in trans-Atlantic translation.

Diana Andrews

Vanessa R. Schwartz & Jeannene M. Przyblyski, eds, *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture Reader*, London: Routledge, 2004, 405pp. Hbk ISBN 0415308658, £75; pbk 0415308666, £22.99.

At first sight, the title of this book might lead readers of this *Journal* to expect some considerations of such prominent Victorian visual topics as Morris and the Arts and Crafts movement. However, that is emphatically not the case: the index offers ‘art’ only under ‘art galleries’ and, oddly, ‘*art pour art*’. Ruskin does make

a brief appearance, but only in context of his contention, in Wolfgang Schivelbusch's illuminating account of 'Panoramic Travel', that 'all travelling becomes dull in exact proportion to its rapidity' (quoted p. 96). The editors point out that the kind of attention to visual culture now to be found 'everywhere in universities' (p. xxi), and of which this book is a product, is an extension of the interest in 'the social history of art' developed during the 1960s and '70s. Just as literary criticism influenced by feminism, Marxism and Said's critique of Orientalism extended its range beyond the traditional literary canon, so art criticism began to take an interest in a range of images not restricted to the accepted masterpieces of Western art. Academic studies in visual culture took this process further, moving away from the aesthetic towards a variety of cultural concerns.

In this book seven artists – none of them British – are discussed in some detail, of whom Cézanne, Delacroix and Manet are accepted masters. But their works are considered here not for their aesthetic qualities, but for their cultural and historical significance, Cézanne in relation to prostitution in Paris during the 1870s, Delacroix to Orientalism, and Manet to the depiction of French society during the 1860s. Four less-known artists are also considered, Jean-Léon Gérôme, Guillaume Guillon-Lethière, J.Q.A. Ward and Adolphe Willette. Gérôme is discussed with great insight by Linda Nochlin, in the context of 'The Imaginary Orient', focussing on his *Snake Charmer*, painted during the late 1860s and used on the cover of Said's great book. The charmer himself has his back to the viewer, exposing what Nochlin describes as 'the manifest attractions of [his] rosy buttocks and muscular thighs'. (p. 290) She goes on to show the painting's avoidance of history and of any allusion to the Western viewer for whose benefit the painting exists, emphasising also its claims to realism and the attitude to the Orient which it embodies. Guillon-Lethière, by contrast, discussed by D.C. Grigsby, was born in French Guadeloupe, the illegitimate son of a French official and a black slave, but came to Paris around 1785 and made a successful career there. The painting principally discussed is the *Oath of the Ancestors*, 1822, which shows the alliance during the revolution which had taken place in Sainte-Domingue (now Haiti) of the mulatto officer Alexandre Pétion and the black slave leader Jean-Jacques Dessalines. The discussion of this painting and of the career of this remarkable artist, previously unknown to me, is both surprising and illuminating.

Also remarkable is the sculpture of *The Freedman* by John Quincy Adams Ward, first exhibited, as Kirk Savage tells us in an article tellingly entitled 'Molding Emancipation', in New York during the spring of 1863. It contrasts strongly, we are shown, with the conventional images celebrating the victory of the Union, in which the slave is a crouching kneeling figure being raised by the hand of a white man, often Lincoln himself. Ward's *Freedman* is very different: he 'does not beg or despair. He has gotten off the ground and broken his own chains, which he still clenches in one fist ... No longer passively awaiting salvation from above, this figure exudes an active force shaping his own destiny'. (p. 267) Sav-

age discusses other aspects of the figure, including its realism and its nudity, and considers why it failed to become the favoured image for Civil War monuments. He regrets that Ward soon gave up working in the mode of *The Freedman*, to provide more traditional and popular monuments, pointing out that 'there was precious little public sculpture in the nineteenth century (or even the twentieth) that did any justice to African Americans'. (p. 274) It is a revealing story and well worth telling.

Finally, Marcus Verhagen discusses some work by Adolphe Willette, described here as 'the Bohemian artist' (p. 327). Verhagen is interested in the culture of Montmartre in the 1880s, in which, he argues, the Bohemians offered a kind of aesthetic critique of 'the materialism of contemporary French society' (p. 327). Willette was prominent in this as an illustrator for magazines and caricaturist, producing in 1885 a stained-glass window of *The Golden Calf* for the Bohemian cabaret Chat Noir, in which the Calf is shown presiding over the dissolution of French civilisation. Unfortunately, as Verhagen shows, the basis of the critique could be crudely anti-Semitic; an unpleasant election poster of 1889 by Willette ('Candidat Antisemite') exhibits this disturbingly. It is not surprising to read that Willette became an anti-Dreyfusard in the 1890s, though it is reassuring to find that there could be other attitudes in Bohemia: Théophile-Alexander Steinlen produced a series of lithographs celebrating the Commune of Paris, and became supporter of Dreyfus. Again, this is material well away from central aesthetic concerns that is well worth encountering.

However, as this *Reader* makes abundantly clear, the range of visual culture extends far beyond painting and sculpture. The basic – and surely unchallengeable – assumption is that the nineteenth century greatly increased the amount of visual material confronting the spectator, especially in the expanding cities of Europe and North America. In this process, crucial parts were played by the development of electricity, by photography, by advertising, and later by cinema, in parallel with the proliferating modes of reproduction of images in the press and on the streets.

This indeed is part of the understanding of 'modernity' promoted by the editors. As historical background, they include some of the classic accounts of this development to be found in the writings of Baudelaire, Marx, Freud (on dreams, and their necessary visibility), Benjamin and Foucault. They then organise their material in six further sections in order to demonstrate the new visual experiences of the era. The first is concerned with official exhibitions, beginning in Hyde Park in 1851, but also with the educational slide collection built up in the Edwardian era by the Colonial Office Visual Instruction Committee to educate the young in knowledge of the British Empire, and with the expanding social activity of shopping, particularly for women; Erika Rappaport's 'A New Era of Shopping' offers a thoroughly entertaining as well as informative account of how Gordon Selfridge succeeded in bringing American business practices to Oxford Street in

1909 (the book does not confine itself strictly to the century indicated in its title) The next section concerns the City, with accounts of the Ringstrasse in Vienna, Haussman in Paris, street signs in New York, Henry James in London in 1888 (that 'dreadfully delightful city'; p. 206), and photography promoting the image of Los Angeles. (Morrisians may note that James's essay roused Morris's ire in a contribution to *Commonweal* in December 1888: James's 'ingenious paper' was written 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 imagination enough to realise the fact that the said machine is composed of millions of men, women and children who are living in misery ...')

The following section is devoted to 'Visualizing the Past' and includes the accounts of Guillon-Lethière's paintings and Ward's sculpture, already discussed, as well as commenting on illustrated history books and on Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West show, which reached some six million spectators in a six-month season during 1893 (p. 285). The section on 'Others' includes Gérôme's Orient, Cézanne's erotic scenes, German ethnographic shows (Carl Hagenbeck held shows of non-Western people in Berlin, with 93,000 visitors attending on one day in 1883 in order to see a Mongolian troupe in the Zoological Gardens; p. 31), and the work of the Bohemians. Finally, the section on the public/private issue concerns itself with Suffragist banners (the third and last chapter with a British orientation), with the Parisian portière, with family photograph albums ('Baby's Picture is always treasured', according to Cyclone Cameras in 1898; p. 359) and the development of new psychological ideas at the end of the century.

Here, Debora Silverman, in her account that Jean-Martin Charcot, known for his interest in hysteria and his influence on Freud, takes us, rather unexpectedly, into the area of domestic design. She argues that 'The tension between reason and fantasy, order and disorder that shaped Charcot's artistic-medical persona was expressed in his personal practice of interior design'. (p. 385) Charcot not only collected decorative objects on his many trips abroad, but, in conjunction with his wife and daughters, created many original works in various media: a faience and painted lamp by Madame Charcot is illustrated, as is the elaborate mantelpiece and fireplace of their mansion home on the boulevard Saint-Germain. (pp. 386, 387) Silverman concludes that the new psychology of the period, which emphasised the irrational and the visual, 'provided the intellectual vehicle for the transformation of the domestic interior from a place to display a historical anchorage to one that expressed personal feeling'. (p. 388) Although this observation is provided with a French psychological basis, it is interesting to consider its possible application elsewhere. Can we see any parallel development in the history of design in Britain, to which Morris contributed? Perhaps one does not need an altogether new psychology to account for the desire of later Victorians – or indeed ourselves – to decorate homes in ways which related to more general attitudes to life rather than simply to indicate family histories.

As will have become obvious, the more recent work included in the *Reader* is largely that of North American scholars. The focus is therefore often on the United States, although it is noticeable that when these scholars come to Europe they nearly always gravitate towards Paris, France, and much less often to Berlin, Vienna or London – the cover photo (of which I could find no discussion, though it is credited to the Musée Grévin, Paris) seems to be of chorus-girls and toffs at a Parisian show. However, the book was simultaneously published in New York and London, and it is obviously also aimed at scholars and students of nineteenth-century culture in this country. Anyone reading it here will find a wealth of interesting material about a historical situation which they will recognise, and may be stimulated to investigate parallel aspects of British culture, as it developed towards our present condition in which the visual plays such a central role, for good or ill.

Peter Faulkner

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

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Colin Clark read Modern Languages and Law at Cambridge; he has contributed biographical notes on William Buchanan and Arthur Kay to *Scottish Art Review*, and on Pierre-Alexandre Wille to *Master Drawings*.

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