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Editor: Patrick O'Sullivan (editor@williammorrisociety.org.uk)

Reviews Editor: Peter Faulkner (reviews@williammorrisociety.org.uk)

Designed by David Gorman (dagorman2000@yahoo.co.uk)

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Editorial – Looking Forward

Patrick O’Sullivan

Most followers of Morris surely know by now the story of how and why he came to write *News from Nowhere* – that during May and June 1889, he was reading another utopia (Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*), and was incensed by what he soon came to describe as a ‘cockney paradise’.¹ For me, *Looking Backward* describes a regimented, centralised, coercive society, in which the modernist project of replacing human labour by the machine is rapidly coming to pass. But what surely distressed Morris most about Bellamy’s depiction of a ‘progressive’ society is that it was meant to serve as a *positive* example of what the future might hold, whereas for Morris it was surely much more of a nightmare than a dream.

Most scientists, I suppose, still subscribe to the modernist project, but it was still disappointing recently to be reminded just how powerful that particular vision of utopia (i.e. the Morrisian’s nightmare) – in the form of the Royal Society of London’s report on *The Future of the Global Food System*² – remains. The report begins ‘For the last few decades, food has been cheaper in real terms, and more readily available, than probably at any time in history’;³ rather an ironic statement, in that almost simultaneously, other media items began to appear regarding ‘food riots’ in Egypt, India, Pakistan, Serbia and notably Mozambique, and the possible onset of another ‘food spike’ echoing that of 2008, when widespread rioting took place.⁴ Factors said to be responsible include climate change, the unusual weather of 2010, poor harvests in Australia, Canada, Russia and Ukraine, a consequent ban on Russian wheat exports, the ‘nutrition transition’ currently experienced by several fast-growing Asian countries (most notably China), increased diversion of land from food production to biofuels, volatility in food prices, and (perhaps related) speculation in food price futures in world commodity markets, principally by hedge funds and investment banks such as Goldman Sachs.⁵

Unusual weather patterns for 2010 included a prolonged summer heat wave over Northern and Eastern Europe and adjacent Central Asia, but also floods in Australia, Canada, West Africa and (most tragically) Pakistan. Most of these anomalies occurred because 2010 was an El Niño year, during which, typically, glo-

bal weather patterns are reversed; dry regions (California, Peru) experience unusual wet conditions, and humid areas (Indonesia, northern Australia), drought. Seasonal weather anomalies do not amount to long-term climatic trends, but evidence of a change in El Niño has recently been reported which might be associated with global warming.⁶ So there may be more of this kind of weather to come.

Poor harvests in Canada, Eastern Europe, Central Asia and West Africa were therefore at least in part a result of El Niño. But other factors also contributed to the rising price of food, not least the decision by Russia, the third largest exporter of this cereal, to impose a twelve month ban on exports of wheat.⁷ Meanwhile, the 'nutrition transition', and the diversion of cropland into production of biofuels, are part of globalisation, and still seem to many to be a bad idea – maybe not for the people involved, but for the Earth. For, as mentioned in previous editorials, to support nine billion people at the same level of prosperity as the citizens of the world's eight richest countries will require not one Earth, but at least four, probably five.⁸

Beyond all this, as if it were not disturbing enough, is the news that at least part of the reason for the current 'food spike' may be speculation on world commodity markets by investment banks and hedge funds. Apparently these agencies are buying up foodstuffs on commodity markets, in the hope that as values rise further, they will be able to sell at a higher price. Of course the banks in question deny any culpability – but as someone once did not quite say, 'Well, they would, wouldn't they?' – and food is not the only commodity whose price has risen, but there is enough evidence of a 'food bubble' taking place for the United Nations to lay the blame firmly at the door of institutional investors.⁹

Does it not occur to such people that in speculating in the price of other people's food, they have plumbed new depths, even for capitalism? The world, apparently, is not so badly off as it was in 2008 – food stocks are more extensive, fuel prices lower; Congress has passed a law which attempts to discourage such speculation – but food price inflation to the consumer is set to rise globally next year by 5–10%. And even if the banks are not the *cause* of the increases in food prices, they seem perfectly prepared to *profit* from them.

Just when you think the Hydra has drawn its last breath, another set of heads springs up. William Godwin, that most optimistic of Enlightenment 'philosophes', believed that the means of subsistence are part of the common stock, and therefore should not be privatised, but he clearly underestimated his adversary.¹⁰ Morris shared no such illusions

Is money to be gathered? Cut down the pleasant trees among the houses, pull down ancient and venerable buildings for the money that a few square yards of London dirt will fetch; blacken rivers, hide the sun and

poison the air with smoke and worse, and it's nobody's business to see to it or mend it: that is all that modern commerce ... will do for us herein.¹¹

Media reactions to the Royal Society report, even among sober outlets, focused almost exclusively on its advocacy (but only by one article out of twenty) of feeding the world by 2050 on 'artificial' (or more correctly, 'cultured') meat.¹² Apologists for this idea are quick to point out its perceived advantages,¹³ but generally ignore the point that it would replace a range of 'natural' systems by a single one which completely bypasses nature (and the human communities in which food is produced), to say nothing of transferring strategic responsibility for production of a major component of the world's food supply to a few trans-national corporations. And does not advocacy of artificial meat production on an industrial scale imply a manipulative attitude to nature which might surprise even Francis Bacon?¹⁴

One step beyond is the recommendation, by no less a person than James Lovelock, that in order to release vital land 'back to Gaia', the majority of the world's population (but not, I note, the 'custodians') be consigned to live in tower blocks, where they will be required to subsist on a diet synthesised completely from inorganic matter (a *truly* artificial food).¹⁵ Couple these suggestions to those of Dickson Despommier – that the inhabitants of cities should forsake soil-based agriculture, and grow their food in 'vertical farms' – tower blocks dotted around the city landscape – and we begin to arrive not only at *Looking Backward*, but even (with its vats of pre-programmed embryos) *Brave New World*.¹⁶

Faced with seemingly insuperable problems,¹⁷ even some parts of the Green movement are beginning to panic, and to advocate solutions which, rather than working with nature, seek to separate us from it, and to replace it with a totally artificial environment. As usual, Morris knows better.

... looking upon everything, ... animate and inanimate – 'nature', as people used to call it – as one thing, and (humankind) as another ... it was natural to people thinking ... this way, that they should try to make 'nature' their slave, since they thought 'nature' was something outside them.

Instead, in the London of Nowhere, between Piccadilly and Trafalgar Square,

Each house stood in a garden carefully cultivated and running over with flowers. ... the garden-trees, ... except for a bay here and there, and occasional groups of limes, seemed to be all fruit-trees: there were a great many cherry-trees, now all laden with fruit ...

and in the countryside, on the Upper Thames

One change I noticed amidst the quiet beauty of the fields ... (was) that they were planted with trees here and there, often fruit-trees, ... To be short, the fields were everywhere treated as a garden made for the pleasure as well as the livelihood of all.¹⁸

In other words, along with that other great nineteenth century precursor of 'ecosocialism', Peter Kropotkin,¹⁹ Morris invented 'permaculture' about a century before it became fashionable amongst greens. Now they need to take on board his other ideas.

In this issue we are very pleased to publish Florence Boos's edition of two previously unpublished lectures by Morris – 'Socialism' (1885), and 'What we have to look for' (1895). In the first, Morris spends some time discussing inequality, an issue which, it is hoped, now that the kind of remuneration which can be 'earned' by financial speculation has been widely recorded, may be gaining prominence. In the second, he describes precisely why, two years after the collapse of Lehman Brothers, politicians seem to have done very little about the root causes of the current financial crisis. We also include Alex Wong's analysis of Morris's early *Defence of Guenevere* poems (a subject also considered in recent issues by Richard Frith, and Florence Boos), and Peter Faulkner's comparison of print settings of Chaucer by Morris, and Eric Gill – a very different artist from Morris, and even more different character. These are followed by reviews of books on Morris himself, on Ruskin, and on Richard Norman Shaw, as well as a further volume of Rossetti's letters. Morris's impact on nineteenth century design, including the Aesthetic Movement, and on twentieth and twenty-first century architectural conservation, and production of stained glass, are explored in further reviews.

Laurence Davis & Ruth Kinna's new collection of anarchist and utopian writings, in which Morris's role in the development of such thought is discussed – even though Morris himself was not an anarchist – is also reviewed by David Goodway, who reiterates the key point that a crucial property of utopia is to provide a model of 'How we might live'; something we 'soixante-huitards', however incoherent, always possessed, but which, it seems to me, our young people – since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the 'death of socialism', and 'victory of the free market' (so popular even amongst 'left-wing' commentators) – sadly lack. As Morris would no doubt agree, there is still much work to be done.

NOTES

1. Nicholas Salmon with Derek Baker, *The William Morris Chronology*, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996, pp.216–217; E.P. Thompson, *William Morris. Romantic to Revolutionary*, London: Pantheon, 1976, p. 693.

2. Theme issue 'Food security: feeding the world in 2050', compiled and edited by Charles Godfray *et al.* *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society Series B* vol. 365 (no. 1554), September 27 2010, pp. 2769–3097; <http://rstb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/365/1554/2769.full> (Afterwards *Royal Society*)
3. *Royal Society*, p. 2769 (although it does then immediately point out that today one in seven people are still short of food).
4. 'Commodity prices soar as spectre of food inflation is back', <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/aug/06/commodity-prices-food-inflation> (Accessed 23 September 2010).
5. 'Hedge funds accused of gambling with lives of the poorest as food prices soar', <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/jul/19/speculators-commodities-food-price-rises/print> (Accessed 23 September 2010).
6. Sang-Wook Yeh *et al.*, 'El Niño in a changing climate', *Nature* 461, 2009, pp. 511–514. doi:10.1038/nature08316; <http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/461/n7263/abs/nature08316.html> (Accessed 15 October 2010).
7. 'Fears grow over global food supply'; http://www.ft.com/cms/s/5f6f944c-b6bc-11df-b3dd-00144feabdco.Authorised=false.html?_i_location=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ft.com%2Fcms%2Fs%2Fo%2F5f6f944c-b6bc-11df-b3dd-00144feabdco.html&_i_referer= (Accessed 28 September 2010).
8. Patrick O'Sullivan, 'Editorial', *Journal of William Morris Studies* XVII, 3, Winter 2007, pp. 3–9; <http://www.morrissociety.org/JWMS/17.3.OSullivanEditorial.pdf> (Afterwards 'Editorial', Winter 2007); 'Editorial – Fears and Hopes', *Journal of William Morris Studies* XVIII, 1, Winter 2008, pp. 3–7.
9. 'UN warned of major new food crisis at emergency meeting in Rome'; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/sep/24/food-crisis-un-emergency-meeting-rome/print> (Accessed 1 October 2010)
10. William Godwin, *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*, Book VIII, 'Of Property'. As in Peter Marshall, *William Godwin*, London: Yale University Press, pp. 110–111, 162–163.
11. 'The Lesser Arts', in A.L. Morton, ed, *The Political Writings of William Morris*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1973, pp. 31–56 (p. 53).
12. 'Artificial meat "made in a giant vat" could solve global food shortage', <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/earthnews/7947613/Artificial-meat-made-in-a-giant-vat-could-solve-global-food-shortage.html> (Accessed 23 September 2010).
13. 'Radical changes needed to feed the world'; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2010/aug/21/radical-changes-needed-to-feed-world> (Accessed 28 September 2010).
14. We have also parks, and enclosures of ... beasts and birds; which we use ...

- for dissections and trials, ... Wherein we find many strange effects: as continuing life in them, though divers parts, which you account vital, be perished and taken forth; resuscitating of some that seem dead in appearance, and the like. ... We make a number of kinds of serpents, worms, flies, fishes of putrefaction, whereof some are advanced ... to be perfect creatures, ... and .. do propagate. Neither do we this by chance, but ... know beforehand of what ... kind of those creatures will arise. (*The Advancement of Learning and New Atlantis*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 290–291).
15. James Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia. Why the Earth is fighting back – and how we can still save humanity*. Allen Lane, 2006, pp. 13, 133.
16. Dickson Despommier, *The Vertical Farm*, Essays 1 & 2; <http://www.vertical-farm.com/essays.html>. See also George Monbiot's critique of Despommier's ideas ('Greens living in ivory towers now want to farm them too'; <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/aug/16/green-ivory-towers-farm-skyscrapers>, (both accessed 29 September 2010)
17. Mainly because they assume 'scarcity'; see 'Editorial', Winter 2007, pp. 6–7.
18. James Redmond, ed, William Morris: *News from Nowhere*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970, Chapter XXVII, p. 154; VII, p. 34, XXIX, p. 164.
19. Peter Kropotkin, *Fields, Factories, Workshops: or Industry Combined with Agriculture and Brain Work with Manual Work*, 1899. Revised edition, London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1912, 484 pp.

‘Socialism’ and ‘What we have to look for’: Two unpublished lectures by William Morris

Florence S. Boos

P R E F A C E

‘Socialism’ and ‘What We Have to Look For’, along with *Our Country Right or Wrong*, and ‘*Communism, i.e. Property*’,¹ are taken from two large notebooks (now held as Add. MSS. 45,333 & 45,334) which May Morris’s executor Robert Steele donated to the British Library after her death. These volumes contain twenty-three of Morris’s essays on socialism, in his characteristically firm, legible hand (Figure 1).

Some of these had appeared in *Hopes and Fears for Art* (1882) and *Signs of Change* (1888), and May Morris had included others in *William Morris: Artist Writer Socialist*, but she found it necessary to truncate some, and to fuse others into her longer narratives. Three decades later, Eugene LeMire printed several additional essays in *The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*, and smoothed the path for potential successors with his meticulous appendix to that volume, ‘A Bibliographical Checklist of Morris’s Speeches and Lectures’.²

Scholarly editions of the essays of other Victorian writers such as Matthew Arnold and Thomas Carlyle have long been in print, as have the works of Marx, Engels and other nineteenth-century socialists. A comparably comprehensive edition of Morris’s socialist writings would draw on the work of May Morris and LeMire, as well as Nicholas Salmon’s reprinting of Morris’s journalism, and editions of individual essays by Paul Meier, Alan Bacon and others.³

Passages also printed by May Morris are reproduced in Gill Sans.

7
13

Socialism.

I think I may without offence assume that a large part of my audience know no more of Socialism than the name, and that it will be convenient to look upon our wide way Stephen's subject from an elementary point of view; and this all the more as I shall be liable to the same criticism so treating it as I should be if I attempted something more elaborate: for this is a subject where the admission of the principle is the one important matter, nor ought it be so difficult for me to lay these principles before you; while at the same time if I can do so with any amount of clearness, there is nothing so abstract in them nothing so technical but that any intelligent person could at once understand them. Indeed it were strange if it were not so since Socialism has to do with all that is practical in our daily life.

But again even those of you who know that they know nothing of the principles of Socialism may think that they understand pretty well those on which our present Society is based, and that they have nothing to learn here: but this assumption beg leave to deny: it is only by learning something of the ~~principle~~ Socialism that we can understand what the present Society is, what it aims at doing, & what are the means whereby it carries out its aims. Most of you I fancy never put to yourself the question why are am I in the position which I am? Why is the workman the beggar, the pauper, the criminal in his position; and why is the great capitalist the land owner, in a word the rich man in his position? Few of you have ever doubted the necessity of the classes into which Society is divided, or supposed that

NOTES

1. Florence S. Boos, *Our Country Right or Wrong*, London: William Morris Society, 2008, 95 pp.; ‘From the archive: “Communism, i.e., Property”, a partly unpublished Morris essay’. *William Morris Society in the United States Newsletter*, Summer 2009, pp. 15–20; <http://www.morrisociety.org/newsletters/newsletter-july09.pdf>. (Accessed 27 September 2010)
2. *Hopes and Fears for Art*, London: Ellis & White, 217 pp; *Signs of Change*, London: Reeves & Turner, 1888, 202 pp; May Morris, *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1936, 2 vols, 673 + 641 pp; Eugene LeMire, *The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1969, 331 pp.
3. Nicholas Salmon, ed, *William Morris. Journalism: contributions to Commonweal, 1885–1890*, Bristol, Thoemmes Press, 1996, 674 pp; Paul Meier, ‘An Unpublished Lecture of William Morris: “How Shall We Live Then?”’, *International Review of Social History* 16, 1971, pp. 217–40; *The relations of art to labour*. Reprinted from the Co-operative Wholesale Societies Ltd. England & Scotland Annual for 1890. Edited with an introduction by Alan Bacon and an appendix by Lionel C. Young, London: William Morris Society, 2004, 83 pp.

Figure 1 – First page of manuscript of ‘Socialism’; B. L. Add. Ms. 45,333, f. 13. (All images reproduced courtesy of the British Library Board.

I. 'SOCIALISM': INTRODUCTION

William Morris designed 'Socialism' (1885) as a kind of radical-egalitarian stump-speech for working-class audiences. He delivered it many times between June 1885 and November 1887, but, except for a four-page excerpt in *William Morris: Artist Writer Socialist*, it has remained unpublished.¹ Morris had begun to study Marx's writings in 1883 and used the word 'socialism' in public for the first time in 'Art and Socialism' on 23 January 1884. Though respectful of Marx—he wrote in 1887 that Marx seemed to be 'the only completely scientific Economist on our side'²—he also held throughout his years as a political activist to the conviction that socialism is an ethic, not a deterministic science, and in his attempts to convey this ethic in jargon-free language to radical, reformist and working-class audiences, avoided talk of 'trade cycles,' 'surplus labour' or 'value added'.

Morris began 'Socialism' with a stark description of the chasm between a small propertied class and a kind of corporate-feudal underclass of workers who could not 'be said to have more than a subsistence wage,' and were protected from penury only until 'their time, of industrial death so to say, comes on them' [f. 18]. Members of this underclass were 'free', of course, to sleep under one of Anatole France's notorious bridges. But their 'masters'—a medieval expression Morris often employed—were also free to exploit them without let or hindrance; to force displacements of populations which undermined familial solidarity; and to let hunger and exhaustion demoralise them and 'keep them in their place' (as it always had).

Another pattern remained from Roman slavery and medieval villeinage: 'the class which lacks wealth is the class which produces it' [f. 19], and production would cease, therefore, if all the worlds' oppressed workers could manage to 'withhold their labour'³ (the great dream of a 'general strike'). But if all the worlds' managers, shareholders and board members withheld *their* labour, 'production of wealth would go on pretty much as before, though we might reasonably hope that its method of distribution would be altered' [f. 19].

Some members of the propertied class, Morris readily acknowledged, made useful contributions to society, 'chiefly [in] physic, education, and the fine arts'. Others—'lawyers and clergymen' among them—would be harmless enough if they did not draft repressive laws and bless the cannons of the real ruling class: those who 'engaged in gambling or fighting for their individual shares of the tribute [which they have] compelled the working class to yield ...' [f. 20].

One consequence of this interminable conflict, Morris argued, was that ordinary workers have been defrauded of 'about two thirds of all they produce' [f.20], for '... besides the profit or unpaid labour that he yields to his immediate master, [the worker] has to give back to the employing class ... a great part of the wages which he receives from his immediate master' [f. 21]. Capitalists' 'direct' profits

might appear to be ten percent or less. But workers’ indirect losses—like the widow’s mite—were ‘all they had.’ For they had no choice but to pay exorbitant prices for rent, basic needs, a workhouse system, dues for self-protection to trades unions, and the ‘services’ of other minor exploiters who ‘form[ed] a system of wheels within wheels’ [f. 20] which left them with little or nothing.

The landlord class, moreover, profited from the labour which created and ‘improved’ their properties, even though such improvements might take grotesquely destructive forms—for example, when

a piece of barren ground or bog becomes a source of huge fortune to [the landowner] from the growth and development of a town or district, and he pockets the results of the labours of thousands of men and calls it *his* property [f. 22].

No matter: the tip might be exhausted and the land poisoned for generations, but the masters could ‘begin the game over again, and carry it on forever, [they] and [their] heirs...’ [f. 22].

Morris spoke from all-too-direct personal experience. Most of his family’s original wealth was derived from extraction of copper and, later, arsenic from a 142 acre (57 ha) patch of land near Tavistock in Devon (South West England), which a consortium including his father had leased from the Duke of Bedford. One of Morris’s uncles was the mine’s ‘resident director,’ and he himself had acceded to his family’s expectation that he serve for a time on the board of ‘the family mine’⁴ When, therefore, he described someone who

seem[s] to be doing something and receives his pompous title of an organizer of labour, [but] what he does ... is nothing but organizing the battles with his enemies[,] the other capitalists who happen to be in the same way of business as himself ... [f. 22],

Morris knew whereof he spoke.

At this point, Morris asked whether there was no way we might hope to eliminate the gross inequities (in his words) ‘written into the constitution of our present society’? Must we resign ourselves to a bitter variant of the final lines of *Middlemarch*: that ‘the good nature and kindness of individuals may more or less palliate the evils the source of which can never be dried up’ [f.23]? If so, it might seem natural to cry out from the depths for a

new religion ... [which] will take such a hold of the hearts of men[,] [so that] that those who have the opportunity will forgo the excitement of gambling with other people[’]s property ...’ [f. 23].

Though Morris was an agnostic, a good argument can be made that this is exactly what he did. His doomed hero of *A Dream of John Ball* subscribed to such a faith,

as had the Diggers of the seventeenth-century, and many Quakers.⁵ In common with Morris, some of these ardent souls subscribed to a common tenet: that 'equality of fellowship is necessary for developing the instincts of good and restraining the instincts of evil which exist in every one' [f. 24]. It is realisation of this egalitarian ideal which remains a 'thing unseen'.⁶

In the language of a young Marxist in *Another Country*,⁷ the elusive object of Morris's faith (or 'religion of socialism') might be called 'earth on earth': a regulative ideal of fellowship or solidarity which would

[avert] the waste of the few and the want of the many [f. 25];

[offer] a chance of happiness to every one [so that] ... an injury to one will be an injury to all [f. 24];

[and free us from the] abiding fear ... and all the self[-]inflicted misery of our civilization [which] form a terrible burden, the sense of which is deeply impressed on the art[,] the literatures[, and] the religion of mankind [f. 25].

The latter, by the way, is one of very few passages in Morris's socialist essays in which he evoked an ideal of literature as a witness to human sorrow and part of the 'conscience of mankind.'

Indeed, recent history has, rather alarmingly, seen an increase in inequality: there is really more difference [now] in the manner of life and the refinements attainable between the two classes than between the employer and the employed of earlier times ... [f.27].

In response to the standard argument that such states of egalitarian grace are beyond human reach, Morris countered that 'to suppose that when the former systems [of routine slavery, for example] have passed away this latter one must necessarily outlast the world is manifestly absurd' [f. 26], for 'whenever [egalitarian ideals have] appeared, [they have] always done so with renewed force and wide scope' [f.28].

'[T]he ashes of the old struggle,' moreover, 'are not quite burned out' [f.28]. Workers more 'conscious of the antagonism between the classes' [f.28]⁸ were also more aware that 'the real question ... is whether the masters have any claim to profit at all; that is[,] in other words[,] whether the masters are necessary ...' [f. 29], and trades union leaders who ignored this growing awareness did not, therefore, 'represent the whole class of workers as working men[,] but rather are 'charged with the office of keeping the human part of the capitalist machinery [free] from any grit of discontent' [f. 29].⁹ Morris found other signs of this activism and awareness in the fact that the 'Radicals' had become hard-pressed to

define issues which distinguished them from the Conservatives, and ‘the boundaries between the old [political] parties are now thrown down’ [f.29]. The ‘great class of workers,’ by contrast, were a force which he hoped was ‘slowly but surely developing into a new society, and only needing complete organization of their scattered elements to become that society’ [f.30].

Anticipating *News from Nowhere*’s ‘Great Change,’ he repeated that pre-revolutionary Britain could ‘see nothing but the relation of masters and servants,’ and when people finally understood this, they would ‘find themselves face to face with revolution, that is to say the New Birth of Society’ [f.30]. He earnestly hoped that this birth would not be an agony, and that

... the waste and misery of civil war may be avoided: but remember that it can only be avoided by the combination and organization of all that is most energetic, most orderly, most kindly, most aspiring among the working classes’ [f.31].

At this point, Morris reminded his audience of the need to act in solidarity with their fellows in other countries (a maxim which has almost always been honoured in the breach), and appealed to what might be called the ‘hortatory fallacy’ (the passionate assertion that what ‘*should*’ be ‘*must*’ and ‘*will*’ be) to assure them that ‘nothing but mere brute force of armed men or abject poverty now prevents that outbreak of the last stage of struggle’ [f. 31], and that

the change in the basis of society must come, and [we must] cho[o]se whether there shall be ... violence[,] confusion and chaos, or whether we shall glide into the future peaceably ... [f.31].

Returning to what ‘*should*’ be (or what we ‘*should*’ desire), Morris added that ‘[w]e want to make people leave off saying this is mine and that is thine, to say this is ours’ [f.32]—an echo of ‘Mine and Thine,’ a poem he published in *Commonweal* on 2 March 1889¹⁰—and explained that ‘collective ownership’ would (or should) not mean that ‘the state’ would hold all property, but that it should ensure that ‘there is none left out, or it has no right to call itself a community, a Commonwealth’ [f.33]. All must work, for wealth comes from labour, but work cannot be judged hierarchically: ‘[workers]’ needs will not be estimated conventionally by the supposed value or dignity of the work which they do’ [f. 33].

Anticipating the objection that nursing a child (say) is not as ‘hard’ as designing a steam engine, he appealed to the justice of the formula ‘from each what he can do; to each what he needs’ [f.34] to argue that ‘the man who can do the higher work does it as easily as he who does the lower’ [f. 33], and to familial ideals of care for the sick and the old to ask, ‘why it is that in the bigger family called society[,] the rule should be for each to do his best to snatch the meal out of his fellow[']s mouth as glaring wolves are used to do?’ [f.34].

Acknowledging that workers ‘hoodwicked’ by propaganda may believe the ‘masters’ are, after all, masterful, he asked why most capitalists are (against the counsel of earlier moderates such as Richard Cobden and John Bright) addicted to chronic overproduction, and in one of the essay’s most eloquent passages, linked this pattern with war:

You cannot give away the overplus; nay you cannot even carry it out into the fields and burn it there and go back again merrily to make some more of what you don’t want; but you must actually pick a sham quarrel with other people and slay 100,000 to get rid of wares which rid of you are still intent on producing with as much ardour as heretofore: O lame and impotent conclusion of that Manchester school which has filled the world with the praises of its inventiveness and its energy[,] its love of peace! [f. 37]

But if, as he hopes, individual ownership will be abolished, the producers will have all the means of labour at their disposal:

when this takes place, the land, capital, the machinery, the plant and stock in short, will naturally fall into the possession of the producers, since it would be useless to anyone else[, and] our class society would cease to exist [ff. 36–37].

Admittedly, ‘much would have to be done first, troublous times, partial failures even would have to be met before we could quite shake off that old fear of starvation’ [f.28]. But if workers came together to demand their ‘final freedom; freedom to work and live and enjoy’ (f. 38), then ‘the mask [would] fall ... from the face of this huge tyranny of the modern world ... [and] the risks of destruction [would] seem light compared with the degradation of championing an injustice [f.38]. If, finally,

the intelligent of the working classes and the honourable and generous of the employing class could learn to see the system under which we live as it really is, all the dangers of change would seem nothing to them[,] and our capitalistic society would not be worth 6 months purchases. [f.38]

But ‘*if*’ cannot be identified with ‘*when*’, and ‘*should*’ cannot be identified with ‘*must*’. Therein lie the ‘troublous times’ and the (not so) ‘partial failures’ to which he alludes [f. 23].

As suggested earlier, ‘Socialism’ was a stump speech in which Morris strove to convince his audiences, as well as to ‘look at things bigly and kindly.’¹¹ Like Immanuel Kant’s ‘realm of ends,’ then, Morris’s socialism has remained ‘*nur ein Ideal*’, but an essential ideal. For without it, we are like the ‘proud dispiteous rich man’ in *A Dream of John Ball*, who, ‘though he knoweth it not, is in hell already,

for he has no fellow ...’¹²

In order to see what Morris may have meant by this, consider again the secular implications of John Ball’s avowal that

... fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell: fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death: and the deeds that ye do on this earth, it is for fellowship’s sake that ye do them, and the life that is in it, that shall live on and on forever, and each one of you a part of it, while many a man’s life upon the earth from the earth shall wane ...

Solidarity may well remain forever a state of unstable equilibrium, and Morris’s ‘religion of socialism’ may be infeasible. But his secular faith in ‘things unseen’ has drawn readers for more than six generations to the great peroration of *John Ball’s* ‘sermon at the crossroads’:

[O]nce again I saw as of old, the great treading down the little, and the strong beating down the weak, and cruel men caring not and kind men daring not; and the saints in heaven forbearing and yet bidding me not to forbear ... [But] he who doeth well in fellowship and because of fellowship, shall not fail though he seem to fail today, but in days hereafter shall he and his work yet be alive, and men be holpen by them to strive again and yet again; and yet even that was little, since, forsooth, to strive was my pleasure and my life.

NOTES

1. May Morris, *William Morris: Artist Writer Socialist*, Vol. II, Oxford: Blackwell, 1936, pp. 193–97. According to the ‘Bibliographical Checklist of Morris’s Speeches and Lectures’ in Eugene Le Mire’s *Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*, Detroit: Wayne State U P, 1964, p. 303, Morris delivered ‘Socialism’ twelve times between 9 June 1885 and 8 November 1887: to the Oxford branch of the Socialist League; the Northampton branch of the National Secular Society; the Working Men’s College in Bloomsbury; the Hammersmith branch of the Socialist League (in his absence by May Morris); the Peckham and Dulwich Radical Club in Peckham; the Hackney and Shoreditch Branches of the Socialist Democratic Federation; the Patriotic Club in London; the Dublin, Bradford and Glasgow branches of the Socialist League; and a meeting of Huddersfield socialists.
2. Norman Kelvin, ed, *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987, Vol. II, pp. 393–94. (Afterward *Letters*) He would also have been acquainted with the outlines of Marx’s ideas through H. M. Hyndman, whose *England for All* (1881) borrowed heavily from

Das Kapital. On 23 April 1883 Cornell Price recorded in his unpublished diary that ‘Top ... was full of Karl Marx, whom he had begun to read in tr.’ (Nicholas Salmon & Derek Baker, *A William Morris Chronology*, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996, p. 126). On 26 November 1884 Morris described Marx’s theory of surplus value to William Allingham (*Letters*, Vol. II, p. 340), and on 28 February 1885 advised an unknown recipient, ‘On the whole tough as the job is you ought to read Marx if you can; up to date he is the only completely scientific Economist on our side.’ Book I of *Das Kapital* became available in translation in 1887, the year in which Morris produced a series of articles for *Commonweal* with Ernest Belfort Bax, ‘Socialism from the Root Up.’ Of a meeting on 15 February 1887 with Bax, Morris noted that he had been ‘glad of the opportunity for hammering some Marx into myself.’ But he essentially saw Marx’s system as one of many arguable rationales for socialism, and remarked on 30 December 1887 to a correspondent whom Kelvin has identified possibly as E. J. Collings that ‘Socialism does not rest on the Marxian theory’ (*Letters*, II, p. 729).

3. Robert Owen’s Grand National Consolidated Trades Union had advocated a ‘General Strike,’ an idea later taken up by anarchists.
4. Cf. Charles Harvey & Jon Press, ‘The City and Mining Enterprise: the making of the Morris family fortune’, *Journal of the William Morris Society* IX, 1 (1990), p. 12. See also Florence Boos & Patrick O’Sullivan, forthcoming, ‘Morris and Devon Great Consols’.
5. The Diggers were a group of agrarian communists (fl. 1649–50) led by Gerard Winstanley and William Everard, who sought to reclaim the ‘Commons’ for the people. See Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution*, London: Temple Smith, 1972, 432 pp.
6. In Chapter 8 of *News from Nowhere*, Old Hammond describes the faith of the new society: ‘But now, where is the difficulty in accepting the religion of humanity, when the men and women who go to make up humanity are free, happy, and energetic at least, and most commonly beautiful of body also, and surrounded by beautiful things of their own fashioning, and a nature bettered and not worsened by contact with mankind? This is what this age of the world has reserved for us.’ Similarly, in *Socialism from the Root Up*, Morris and Bax take up the issue of religion in the new society, and conclude that ‘As regards the future form of the moral consciousness, we may safely predict that it will be in a sense a return on a higher level to the ethics of the older society, ... and the identification of individual with social interests will be so complete that any divorce between the two will be inconceivable to the average man.’ (Reprinted from the ‘Commonweal’, 1886, Chapter 23, part 2 (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1888/sru/ch23-2.htm>);

- Paragraph 8; as accessed 27 September 2010).
7. Julian Mitchell, *Another Country: A Drama*, New York: French, 1982, 104 pp.
 8. Before the Trades Union Act of 1871 gave legal status to trades unions, their leaders could do little more than request higher wages during periods of expansion.
 9. For an account of failed protests at the ‘Morris family mine’, see John Goodridge, ‘Devon Great Consols: A Study in Victorian Mining Enterprise,’ *Reports and Transactions of the Devon Association for the Advancement of Science, Literature and Art*, 96 (1964), pp. 247–52, 256, 263. Also Gerry Woodcock, ‘Strike!’, in *Tavistock’s Yesterdays: Episodes from Her History*, Callington, Cornwall: Woodcock, 1993, pp 57–65, and Frank Booker, *The Industrial Archaeology of the Tamar Valley*, Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1971, revised edition, Chapter 13 ‘Devon Great Consols Mine’, pp 143–177.
 10. Florence Boos, ‘Poems Published After 1875,’ no. 21 (<http://morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu/listpoemslatertext.html#21>), as accessed 27 September 2010). May Morris told her readers that Morris had composed this poem—which included translations of two strophes of ‘Wapene Martijn,’ by the Flemish poet Jacob van Maerlant (fl. ca 1230–after 1291)—after the discussion which followed a talk about ‘The Fourteenth Century’ he had given at Kelmscott House (May Morris, ed, *The Collected Works of William Morris*, London: Longmans, 1910–15, vol. IX, p. xxvii).
 11. To Aglaia Coronio, 25 November 1872, *Letters*, Vol. I, p. 173.
 12. *A Dream of John Ball and a King’s Lesson*: (reprinted from the ‘Commonweal’), London: Reeves & Turner, 1888, 143 pp. This and the following passages are from Chapter 4 (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1886/johnball/chapters/chapter4.htm>), as accessed 27 September 2010). s

‘SOCIALISM’

British Library Add. MS 54,333, ff. 13–38

[f. 13]

I think I may without offence assume that a large part of my audience know no more of Socialism than the name, and that it will be convenient to look upon our wide[,] nay stupendous[,] subject from an elementary point of view; and this all the more as I shall be liable to the same criticism so treating it, as I should be if I attempted something more elaborate: for this is a subject where the admission of

the principle is the one important matter, nor ought it [to] be so difficult for me to lay these principles before you; while at the same time if I can do so with any amount of clearness, there is nothing so abstruse in them[,] nothing so technical[,] but that any intelligent person could at once understand them.

Indeed it were strange if it were not so since Socialism has to do with all that is practical in our daily life[.]

But again even those of you who know that they know nothing of the principles of Socialism may think that they understand pretty well those on which our present society is based, and that they have nothing to learn here: but this assumption I beg leave to deny: it is only by learning something of Socialism that we can understand what the present society is, what it aims at doing, & what are the means whereby it carries out its aims.

Most of you I fancy never put to yourselves the question[,] why am I in the position in which I am? Why is the workman[,] the beggar, the pauper, the criminal in his position; and why is the great capitalist[,] the landowner, in a word[,] the rich man[,] in his position: few of you have ever doubted the necessity for the existence of classes into which society is divided, or suspected that [f. 14] the arrangement might not go on for ever. Even when you have felt most discontented with your own lot or that of your fellow men, you have supposed that it is[,] has been & will be necessary for the existence of society that there should be a rich class and a poor one; therefore you have never troubled your heads as to what makes some men belong to the poor, some to the rich class, but have supposed that it was a piece of accident, or say a provision of nature so deeply rooted and abstruse in its origin that it is no use enquiring into it.

We Socialists on the contrary believe that we know why these classes exist and how they have grown into what they are, a growth inevitable indeed, but so far from being eternal that it will itself destroy itself and give place to something else, a society in which there will be no rich and no poor.

Therefore before we look specially into the matter of what Socialism is[,] let us consider how our present society is composed; since by the light of that contrast we shall see things that might otherwise be obscure.

The society of the present day[,] like all others[,] is founded on the necessity of the human race for constant labour, for a ceaseless contest with nature who without labour gives us nothing: when you hear people talking about the possibility of things being free; education, libraries & what not, you must understand that some person or persons have to pay for them, we don't & can't mean to say that they are given to us; we have made them & won them before we can use them.

[f. 15] There is no question then as to whether man must labour in order to live, but there has always been a question as to how that labour shall be apportioned amongst the members of society, and also how its results shall be shared amongst them. I have no time to go into the history of the answer to these questions; I will

only remind you that for ages both the work and the wealth won by it from nature have been unequally divided: there has always since the dawn of history in communities called civilized been a class which has had much work and little wealth living beside another class which has had much wealth and little work. Also during all this time those civilized communities have professed various religions which have inculcated justice and fair dealing, and have even sometimes bidden men to bear each other[']s burdens, the strong to work for the weak, the wise for the foolish, the provident for the thriftless; and yet these precepts of morality have always been thrust aside and evaded by class by-laws so-to-say, and today it is still a rule of our society amidst all our refinement[,] all our shrinking from violence and rudeness[,] that those who work most shall fare the hardest, and that the reward of idleness shall be abundant wealth. Clearly then[,] either those precepts of morality are mere foolish dreams and bid us to do what we recognize now to be impossible; or else those class by-laws which bid us evade them with a clear conscience are ruinously misleading, the foundation of continuous unhappiness and of future degradation and the downfall of civilization.

That to my mind is the alternative.¹ Yet I admit that at the present day people do try [to] [f. 16] evade the horns of the dilemma; the inequality and undeserved misery of our class society they say are inevitable, nor can we apply the precepts of justice and love to them except that within those classes we can palliate the poverty on one side[,] the luxury on the other[,] by our individual efforts toward kindness & manliness: hapless and futile compromise! to fight feebly against the results of the very machine that we have made & uphold, conscious all the time of certain defeat: thus do we the well[-]to[-]do & prosperous dull the sting of conscience, and yield ourselves to the stream of class violence, our best hope being that joy may oppose itself to grief, health to disease, right to wrong[,] life to death—for a little while, but that the sum of all is and must be irresistible evil.

With this modern pessimism which has taken the place of the stern hope of medieval pietism wherein the wretched slaves of this world were to be joyous masters of the next; with the pessimism of the well[-]to[-]do of a luxurious age we socialists have nothing to do: we say those precepts of morality were not and are not mere ‘Counsels of perfection[,]’ the birth of dreamy fanaticism, but rather the principles of reasonable action, rules of mutual defence against the tyranny of nature, and that the society which acts on them will be far wealthier and infinitely happier than our present one; that the sum of its wealth will be so great, that even the rich men of the present day would find in it ample compensation for the loss of the riches which they cannot use now for their own happiness but which, whether they will it or not, must be used for the unhappiness of their fellows.

[f. 17] For what is the composition of society at present, the society founded on so called freedom of contract, on labour and capital, cash payments, and the supply and demand markets?

It is simple; far simpler than that of past ages and especially of the last age, the feudal period, which was based on a hierarchy wherein each from the highest to the lowest had (in theory at least) his rights and his duties to those above and below him: all these elaborate groups have since the full development of the commercial period been resolved into two great classes, those who possess all the means of the production of wealth save one, and those who possess nothing except that one, the power of labour. The first class[,] the rich[,] therefore can compel the latter, or the poor, to sell that power of labour to them on terms which ensure the continuance of the rich class, and therefore properly speaking own the poor class and indeed are called their masters: only as the latter are very numerous & the former but few, the masters dare not drive them into a corner for fear they should rebel against them: indeed in one way or another they have rebelled even in our own times, and are organized, for rebellion (though but badly and loosely) into trades unions, at least in England.² If it were not for this fear of revolt, this constant struggle on the part of the workmen to get more out of the employers[,] all workmen would only get as much as would supply them with bare necessities, that is[,] would enable them to live[,] work and breed; but as it is[,] a proportion of the workmen do get more than this bare subsistence wage: these are the skilled workmen, especially [f. 18] in those crafts where women and children cannot be employed to reduce the wages of adult males, & those protected by trades unions; of the rest[,] few of them can be said to have more than a bare subsistence wage, and when they grow sick and old would die if it were not for the refuge afforded them by the workhouse, which is purposely made as prison-like and wretched as possible for fear that the lower paid workers should in their despair take refuge there before their time, of industrial death so to say, comes on them.

This then is the first distinction between the two classes, that the one possesses nothing but the power of labour inherent in their own bodies, and the other possesses everything necessary to make that labour fruitful; so that the labourers cannot work until they have obtained leave from their masters to do so, which the latter will only grant on the condition that the workers will yield up to them all they produce over and above their livelihood, which as I have said above[,] is mostly only just enough to live on and seldom or ever rises much above that. Unless they rebel the workers must accept these terms, since they must live from day to day: moreover owing to the ever increasing productivity of labour[,] helped by the wonderful machines of our epoch, and organized for production with so much skill, and owing also to the long hours of labour, and the employment in most trades of women and children to whom it is not even pretended that a subsistence wage is given, there are, taking one year with another, more workers than there is work for them to do, so that they compete with each other for employment, or in other words[,] sell their labour-power in the market at Dutch Auction to their masters: so that the latter are able now-a-days to dispense [f. 19] with the exercise

of visible force in compelling them to work which in earlier days of the world masters used towards their slaves.

Besides this distinction between the classes of one possessing wealth, and the other lacking it, there is another to which I will now draw your attention: the class which lacks wealth is the class which produces it, the wealth owners only consume it. If by any chance the whole of the wage-earners or ‘lower classes’ were to perish or leave the community, production of wealth would come to a standstill unless the masters were to descend to the level of their former slaves and learn to work for their livelihood: if on the contrary the masters were to disappear[,] production of wealth would go on pretty much as before, though we might reasonably hope that its method of distribution would be altered.

I will here meet an objection which will probably occur to most of you: you will say[,] do not the masters[,] or what you call the possessing class[,] work? Undoubtedly a large part of them do work, but for the most part their work is unfruitful or sometimes directly harmful. There are some useful occupations[,] chiefly physic, education, and the fine arts[,] which are exercised by members of the privileged classes: of whom one can say nothing worse than that they are paid too high in proportion to their workmen; so that they partly earn their livelihood and partly fleece it from the workers: but these are but a small part of the possessing classes, as to number, and as to the wealth they hold it is insignificant compared with that held by those who do nothing useful. As to these last, some of them do not pretend to do anything but amuse themselves, and these probably [f. 20] do the least harm; of the rest[,] some are engaged in work which only our complicated system of compulsion and inequality, of injustices in short, makes necessary, they, as lawyers & clergymen[,] for instance[,] are the parasites of the system: but the rest are engaged in gambling or fighting for their individual shares of the tribute which their class has compelled the working class to yield to it; they are never producing wealth[,] hard as they may work.

Again to answer another possible objection: the tribute taken from the workers is no trifle, but amounts in all to about two thirds of all they produce: but you may say such profits as that are seldom made by the employer[,] who has to be content with 10 percent perhaps, or perhaps even less in bad times. Well I have just said that it was the rich class that took this tribute[,] not the individual employer only; besides his tribute, which in all cases is as much as he can get amidst the competition or war with other employers, the worker has to pay taxes for payment[,] amidst other things[,] of the interest of the national debt which the privileged classes take to themselves: and remember that all taxes are in the long run paid by labour, since labour only can produce wealth: rent also he has to pay, and much heavier rent in proportion to his income than rich people[, as well as] the commission of middle-men, who distribute the goods he has made, and who instead of doing this distribution simply and for a moderate payment,

form a system of wheels within wheels, and make monstrous profits from their busy idleness: lastly if he is fairly well to do he has to pay to a benefit society or a trade union a tax for the precariousness of his employment brought about by the gambling of his masters, he has to help them to pay their poor rates and [f. 21] thus actually enables the master to shut his factory gates on him when there is an open trades dispute between employers & employed; since otherwise the master would be taxed for his subsistence in the workhouse. In short[,] besides the profit or unpaid labour that he yields to his immediate master, he has to give back to the employing class to which his master belongs a great part of the wages which he receives from his immediate master.

Now it is clear from this that there is a class struggle always going on between the employers and employed, though neither party may be conscious of it: the interests of the two classes are opposed to each other: it is the object of the employing class to get as much as it can out of its privilege, the possession of the means of production, and all it makes can only be made at the expense of the workers, any increase in the fertility of the possessions of the rich must come from the labour of the poor: on the other hand if the workers succeeded in raising their standard of life they can only do at the expense of the rich; what one gains the other loses; there is therefore constant war between them, and yet it is a war in which the capitalist must always win until the workers resolve to be an inferior class no longer.

Meantime observe that the privilege of the possessing class consists in their power of living on the unpaid labour of others: if the capital of the rich man consists of land, he forces his tenant to improve his land for him[,] exacts tribute from him in the form of rent[,] and still has his land improved generally when the transaction has come to an end, so that he can begin the game over again, and carry it on for ever, he and his heirs: [f. 22] If he has homes on his land, he has rent for them also[,] often receiving the value of the buildings many times over, and at the end house and land once more: not seldom a piece of barren ground or bog becomes a source of huge fortune to him from the growth and development of a town or district, and he pockets the results of the labours of thousands of men and calls it his property. Or the earth beneath the surface is found out to be rich in minerals, and he is paid enormous sums for leave and license to labour them into marketable wares. And all the while in each case he has been sitting still doing nothing, or it may be worse than nothing; devising means perhaps in parliament for strengthening & continuing his pernicious domination. Or again if his capital consist[s] in cash, he goes into the labour-market, and directly or indirectly buys the labour-power of men[,] women and children and uses it for the production of wares which shall bring him a profit, keeping down their livelihood to as low a point as they will bear in order that the profit may be greater, which indeed the competition or war with his fellow capitalists compels him to do. Nor does he do anything to earn this profit, nothing useful in any case, and he need do

absolutely nothing; since he can buy the brain power of managers and foremen on terms a little higher than he buys the hand-power of the ordinary workmen; mostly he does seem to be doing something and receives the pompous title of an ‘organiser of labour,’ but what he does even then is nothing but organizing the battles with his enemies[,] the other capitalists who happen to be in the same way of business as himself, and so both his idleness and his industry do but serve to make [f. 23] life hard and anxious for all of us.

Thus then[,] I have told you briefly what the composition of our society is in this age of Commerce. Let me recapitulate before I go further: There are two classes, a useful and a useless class: the useless class is called the upper, the useful the lower class: the one class having the monopoly of all the means of production except the power of labour can and does compel the other to work for its advantage so that no man of the workers receives more than a portion, the lesser portion too[,] of the wealth he creates; nor will the upper class allow the lower to work on any other terms: I must add that as a necessary consequence the rich class[,] having great superfluity of riches[,] withdraws many of the workmen from the production of wealth and forces them to minister to its idleness[,] luxury or folly, and so by waste makes the lot of the labourer harder yet.

This I say [is] the constitution of our present society; and surely you will not deny that if I have stated the matter truly, it is but a sorry result of all the struggles of man toward civilization. You may admit that, yet think the misery of it inevitable and eternal, and that nothing can be done but to hope that the good nature and kindness of individuals may more or less palliate the evils the source of which can never be dried up. Or you may perhaps hope that some new religion will arise which will take such hold of the hearts of men that those who have the opportunity will forgo the excitement of gambling with other people[']s property and the pleasure of living luxuriously at other people[']s expense, and will live justly and [f. 24] austerely[,] considering themselves as nothing more than trustees of the wealth which the people have made and entrusted to their care. I will not say that this will not happen[,] but I am sure that when it does these leaders of humanity will at once manifest their newly gained moral sense by begging their fellow man to relieve them from their position of dignity and authority which will for ever tempt them[,] or rather compel them[,] to live in that very way which they have found out to be degrading to themselves and oppressive to their fellows. In sober earnest I say that no man is good enough to be master over others; whatever the result to them, it at least ruins him: equality of fellowship is necessary for developing the innate good & restraining the innate evil which exists in every one.

But indeed I do hope for the rise of a new religion, nay with all earnestness I preach to you now, for it is called Socialism. It proclaims the necessity of association among men if the progress of the race is to be anything more than a name; Society it says must be the condition of man[']s existence as man: and the aim

of that society is something higher than the greatest happiness of the greatest number: it is to offer a chance of happiness to every one; that is to say[,] an opportunity for the full development of each human life: it denies the title of society to any system which degrade[s] one class to exalt another; nay more[,] it asserts that if we injure any one member for the benefit of all the rest,³ we have poisoned and corrupted our society: an injury to one will be an injury to all, & will so be felt in the long run.

Instead of that system [f. 25] now existing which exacts a tribute from one class in order that another may be freed from the necessity of labour, it asserts that each should pay his tribute of labour to nature, and each in turn receive his share of the wealth which each has done his best to create: so only[,] it says[,] shall we avoid the waste of the few and the want of the many: so only can we rise above that perpetual condition of war in which indeed the beasts live not unhappily, since their memory is so limited that they are not conscious of abiding fear, of anxiety, or of aspiration; whereas with us anxiety and hope deferred and all the self[-]inflicted miseries of our civilization form a terrible burden[,] the sense of which is deeply impressed on the art[,] the literature[, and] the religion of mankind.

Combination for livelihood[,] therefore[,] and the assurance of equal chance⁴ for every one are what we socialists want to bring about, and probably most of those here present will agree in thinking such an aim is good: but I suppose some will say the thing is impossible; a little knot of people preaching certain utopian doctrines cannot bring about such a stupendous revolution as this. Well, no set of people know that better than socialists: at no time can a part of a society existing change the basis of the society unhelped by those of past ages: but we socialists claim that the progress of mankind has really been steadily in this direction, and that all we have to do is to help [in] developing the obvious & conscious outcome of this progress. I have not time now to go into the historical side of the question: I prefer to lay before [you] the [f. 26] aims of socialism in as much detail as possible: but I am obliged to remind you that there have been since the beginning of definite history three conditions under which industrial production has gone on: mere slavery under the classical peoples; serfdom in the Middle Ages, and wage labour and capital today: to suppose that when the former systems have passed away this latter one must necessarily outlast the world is manifestly absurd, and there are abundant signs of the approaching change for those who can read them. There has always been a double thread running through the history of mankind; contention for individual gain has been visible always[,] but so also has the tendency towards combination for common gain, the two have been always visibly contending with one another, and whenever the latter has appeared, it has always done so with renewed force and wider scope: and in these later times combination for the production of wealth has progressed immensely with the result that the productive powers of labour have so increased, as to become at last an absolute

evil under the present system; of that more promptly. It was discovered ages ago that one man working with tools could produce more than was necessary for his own subsistence, and on this discovery class society was built; tribes when they went to war took prisoners and made them slaves instead of killing them, because the slave could live on less than he produced: but to jump over a long interval of various transition[s,] the change from mere tools to machines as auxiliaries of man[']s own powers has quite enormously increased the margin between the necessary livelihood of a man and his capacity of production, especially since an elaborate system of cooperative organization has gone along with the invention [f. 27] of the machines: the increased wealth so produced has notoriously not gone to the labourer but has enriched the classes who live upon his labour, and especially has almost made a rich middle class whose life is not distinguishably less easy or luxurious than that of the territorial nobility: so that though there was theoretically more difference between the slave of ancient Greece and Rome and his master[,] the gentleman citizen, or between the serf and the baron of the feudal period than there is now between the workman and the capitalist, there is really more difference in the manner of life and the refinements attainable between these two classes than between the employer & employed of earlier times: in fact there is so much real difference that there is now no necessity for making those arbitrary and legal distinctions which once drew [a] line of demarcation between rich and poor: the upper classes can now with a cheap generosity afford to declare all classes equal before the law; since they well know that they cannot avail themselves of that sham equality; a sham equality I say, so long as men have not economical equality, so long as they are not on equal terms in disposing of their labour-power: for we have seen that the whole of the working class is compelled to give an hour[']s work for less than an hour[']s just pay[,] that is[,] for less than the amount of wealth produced by that work.

Now the upshot of all this [is] that the contest of classes which has always gone on is now limited to a narrow issue and simplified by being cleared of all by-issues. It was necessary for the supremacy of the [f. 28] commercial classes, the capitalists, that political and legal freedom should be established, since they on the one hand needed the working class as allies against the aristocracy of hereditary privilege, and on the other needed the workman free from all bondage and all support which would hinder his labour power from being a mere commodity saleable in the market like other wares. Therefore two classes[,] the employers and employed, that is[,] the sweaters and the sweated[,] are now face to face; and though it is true that the ashes of the old struggle are not quite burned out, and in England the working classes are not fully conscious of the antagonism between the classes, yet the consciousness of that struggle which has so long been going on cannot be much longer delayed. On the defeat of Chartism[,] itself a political movement on the surface, though at bottom it meant revolution, the Trade

Unions became the visible token of the class struggle in this country: they gained during a period of great commercial prosperity all the success they were capable of gaining, to wit an improved position for the better off of the workmen engaged in the more consolidated industries: but they can no longer be considered as fighting bodies, partly perhaps because they have been lulled asleep by their very success, but chiefly I believe because the issue has been changed since the time when they were most vigorously at strife with the masters: the Trades Unions claimed a mere rise of wages when the selling price of the article they made rose, admitting the necessity of their accepting lower wages when it fell: only in their palmy days the general tendency of the market was [f. 29] to rise as it now is to fall, so that they appeared to sustain the class conflict much more than they did, as their strikes were then often successful[,] and of course were so at the immediate expense of the capitalists: in any case a rate of wages roughly proportioned to the rate of profit made by the masters was what they strove for: all classes are now feeling that that point is won so far as it goes, though there may be a little bickering on individual cases, and that the real question now is whether the masters have any claim to profits at all; that is[,] in other words[,] whether the masters are necessary, and accordingly the Trades Unionists and their leaders who were once the butt of the most virulent abuse from the whole of the Upper and Middle Classes are now praised and petted by them because they do tacitly or openly acknowledge the necessity for the masters['] existence; it is felt that they are no longer the enemy; the class struggle in England is entering into a new phase, which may even make the once dreaded Trades Unions allies of capital, since they in their turn form a kind of privileged group among the workmen: in fact they now no longer represent the whole class of workers as working men but rather are charged with the office of keeping the human part of the capitalists' machinery in good working order and freeing it from any grit of discontent.

Again look at the change which has come over the world of politics: the boundaries between the old parties are thrown down; the difference between the programme of the Tories and the Liberals is so small that no one but a mere party man can take any interest in the conflict between them; nay the very radicals whose name was once used for frightening babies with, are at this moment finding it difficult to get out a programme [f. 30] which shall distinguish them from the Tories, and have to rely on the hope that the chapter of accidents may force their opponents into a position reactionary enough for them to attack safely; without the fear of their lending themselves to the progress of Revolution.

For you see the explanation of this is that the real movement of today is quite outside the conception of political parties: it is true that those parties are conscious of the existence of the great class of workers, but they look upon them merely as an instrument to be played on for the 'good of society,' instead of what they really are[,] a great force slowly but surely developing into a new society, and only needing completer organization of their scattered elements to become that

society. Such a contingency as that our Parliamentary system does not recognize and cannot recognize: it can see nothing but the relation of master & servant repeated in various forms throughout all society: it is driven indeed into trying to make those relations bearable to a large portion of the servants, for it has to admit that on its success in doing so depends the very existence of our present society: further than this it cannot go: when it is discovered as it is beginning to be[,] that the relations of master and servant is unbearable and produces misery & suffering that cannot even be largely palliated[,] its function will be gone and it will find itself face to face with revolution, that is to say[,] the New Birth of Society. When that day comes all that is progressive [in] it will melt into the Revolution, while its reactionary part will openly oppose the happiness of mankind: most vainly certainly, and one [f. 31] may hope so feebly, that it will have to yield to the mere threat of force, and that the waste and misery of civil war may be avoided: but remember that it can only be avoided by the combination and organization of all that is most energetic, most orderly, most kindly, most aspiring among the working classes: a moment's thought will show you that the Upper and Middle classes who are divorced from useful production could not resist the union of the useful, the Lower classes for a week. Take note then, working men, that the Revolution[,] the change in the basis of society[,] must come, and choose whether there shall be a transition period of violence[,] confusion and chaos, or whether we shall glide into the great [change] peaceably because obviously irresistibly.

It may be news[,] perhaps, as a further sign of the times, to some of you that though in England the consciousness of the necessity for revolution is only dawning, the populations of the continent are fully awake to it: nothing but mere brute force of armed men or abject poverty now prevents the outbreak of the last stage of struggle: or perhaps we may rather say that they are only waiting for one thing[,] the awakening of England, the great country of Commercialism, and consequently in spite of all appearances to the contrary, the country where the opposition of classes is most abundant.

Now as to the claims of that socialism which is advancing upon us certainly, though possibly slowly, I have in a way stated them in putting before you a sketch of the tyranny & folly of our present conditions; but I [f. 32] will now try to state them positively instead of negatively, which I feel to be all the more necessary since[,] though the word of socialism is now in everybody[']s mouth[,] I believe that the ideas of most people as to what it is or aims at are very vague.

The aim of socialism is to make the best by man's effort of the chances of happiness which the life of man upon the earth offers us, using the word happiness in its widest and deepest sense, and to assure to everyone⁵ born into the world his full share of that chance: and this can only be assured to him by men combining together for this benefit: if we fight with each other for it[,] it is certain that some will gain it at the expense of others and in the struggle will waste as much

as they gain.

We want to make people leave off saying[,] this is mine and that is thine, and to say[,] this is ours.

In other words we look forward to a society in which all wealth would be the property of the community, would be held collectively.

But [so] as to not misunderstand this assertion as you easily may by not being clear about the use of the word property: property at present means the power of preventing other people from using wealth; as for instance a man may and often does refuse to cultivate a tract of land himself or to allow others to do so: but as we understand property[,] it means the possession of wealth which we can use ourselves: it is necessary to explain this because with the present ideas of property[,] when one talks of the community possessing all property you may have the idea of a government or state having the property and only granting the use of it to people on certain arbitrary conditions, that is[,] to certain privileged persons. [f. 33] But a socialist community would hold wealth only to use it, and it could only use it as a community by satisfying with it the needs of all its members, since a community consists of each and all the individuals composing it: there is none left out, or it has no right to call itself a community, a commonwealth.

Everyone's reasonable needs must be satisfied therefore[,] first for food & shelter, and next for pleasure bodily & mental; which would include the full development of every individual according to his capacity, an aim which is rendered possible by the great variety of capacity existing in the individuals of the race, & which socialism would foster as sedulously as the present system depresses it.

I have said that no arbitrary conditions would be imposed on the members of a true commonwealth for the satisfaction of their reasonable needs: but there is one condition which is not arbitrary and which all must accept: they must all work for the commonwealth or there will be in the long run no wealth: but their needs will not be estimated conventionally by the supposed value or dignity of the work which they do; because that could at once give rise to a fresh system of classes, that is[,] of privileged people tormenting the unprivileged: and why should labour be divided into privileged [and unprivileged]? [A]ll kinds are necessary to the common weal; nor is the difficulty & labour of exercising a specially excellent capacity at all proportioned to its excellence. The man who can do the higher work does it as easily as he who does the lower: neither again is the expensiveness of the workman[']s needs necessarily proportioned to the excellence of his work; nay the man who does the rougher work may need the more expensive livelihood, & if he does he ought to have it: In short[,] the maxim which true Socialism would carry out is[,] 'From each what he can do; to each what he needs.' [f. 34]

And if that seems to you an impossible maxim to carry out; pray consider what goes on in a well conducted family which is above the pressure of mere poverty: the sick[,] the weak, the old, the infants are not stinted of food or shelter or such

pleasures as they can enjoy because they add little or nothing to⁶ the wealth that the family subsists on: they do what they can and have what they need: and if it be the rule in a decent family to bear one another’s burdens, tell me[,] I beg of you[,] why it is that in the bigger family called society[,] the rule should be for each to do his best to snatch the meal out of his fellow[']s mouth as glaring wolves are used to do?

You may still say[,] but is it possible on this larger scale? I have alluded before to the fact that every man working with due combination of his fellows in a civilized society can produce more than is absolutely necessary to his own subsistence: this [is] the basis of all industrial society; but in these latter days man[']s productivity has increased enormously because of the invention of machines and general improvement of organization, while his necessities remain what they always were. Now of the difference between what the workman needs to live on and the value of the wealth he produces[,] a very small portion goes to him, the main part being claimed by his masters as profit, rent, and interest; and the increase in that surplus value has in our days grown so enormous that nobody ever dreamed of the workman receiving a proportionate share of it: it seems to me that that increase has gone to create a rich middle-class whose occupation is to fight with each other for their shares of the surplus value of labour. This occupation cannot be necessary to the production of wealth, but unfortunately a [f. 35] large part of the working classes (whose occupation obviously is necessary to the production of wealth) is still under the influence of the superstition that the ‘employers of labour’[,] so called[,] are necessary to their employment: there is no wonder in that, they are ignorant, hard driven by need, & without leisure for thought, and moreover have been habitually hoodwinked by the writings of the intellectual part of the employing class, themselves probably unconscious or but half conscious of the fraud which class instinct compels them to commit.

But now at last their eyes are slowly opening to the real state of the case: the course of events is compelling them to feel[,] if not to see[,] that they must no longer depend on people to employ them who will very naturally make them pay for the fulfillment of that function: it is actually now being proved that the middle-class occupation of fighting for the share of the surplus-value wrung from the workers is useless & wasteful: trade is said to be suffering depression caused by over-production: over-production of what? Of wealth? That should mean that every person in the country has more than he needs to eat, more than he needs to wear, more and better house-room than he wants; well that would be a curse which we might soon modify into a blessing: but indeed it seems it does not mean that, and whatever it means it strikes people as a real evil to be abated at any cost: at Manchester lately I was told that it was the general opinion sustained by one of the economical lights⁷ there that the one thing needed to amend the Depression of Trade was a great European war so that some of the surplus wealth might be destroyed. One’s brain

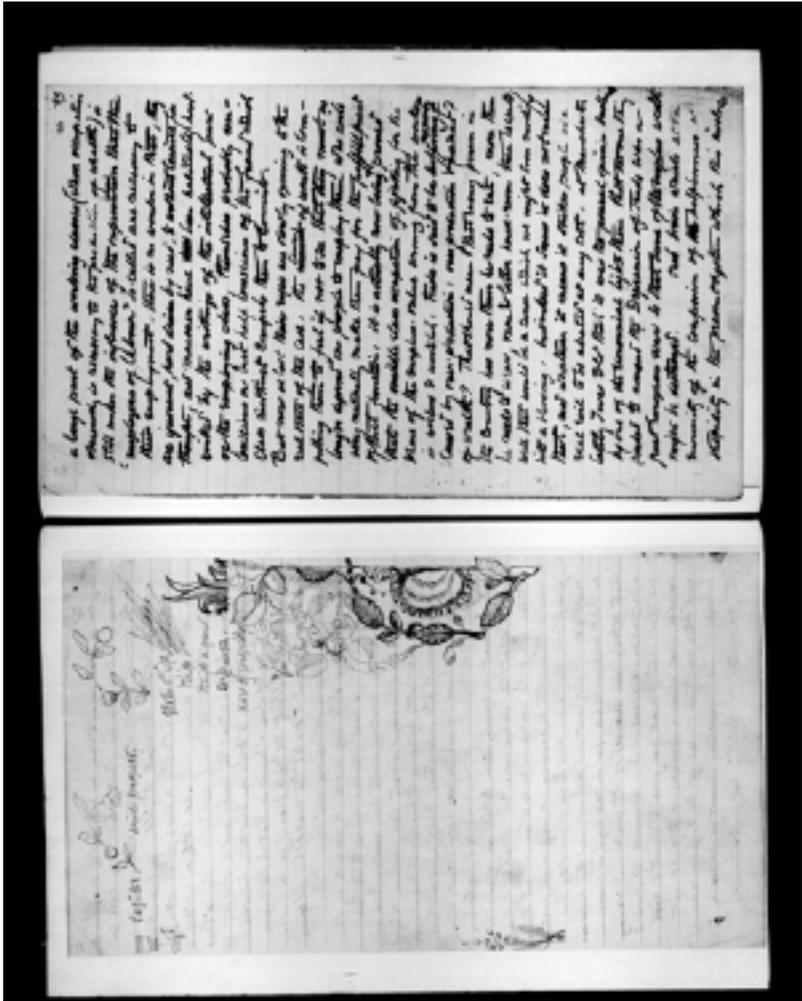


Figure 2—Floriated design, 'Socialism'; B. L. Add. Ms. 45.333. f. 34v.

whirls at the enormity of the confession of helplessness or stupidity in the present system which this involves[,] [f. 36] What! You have created too much wealth? You cannot give away the overplus; nay you cannot even carry it out into the fields and burn it there and go back again merrily to make some more of what you don't want; but you must actually pick a sham quarrel with other people & slay 100,000 men to get rid of wares which when [got rid?] of you are still intent on producing with as much ardour as heretofore: O lame & impotent conclusion of that Manchester school which has filled the world with the praises of its inventiveness[,] its energy[,] its love of peace! Strange that the new Atilla, the new Ghengis Khan, the modern scourge of God, should be determined to stalk through the world wrapped in the gentlemanly broadcloth of a [Q]uaker manufacturer!

In short[,] my friends[,] what this depression of trade really means, this over-production, is that for the time at least the middle-class who live on our labour & fight among themselves for their share of what it produces are finding that their warfare does not even pay them: and if they the plunderers must teach us this[,] surely we the plundered should not be slow to learn the lesson, which is simply that they are not needed. The remedy lies in the hands of the workers; their masters as a class cannot see it, will not tell us how to get rid of them.

The way how to get rid of the useless classes is to abolish the profit of the individual, to let the producer have in one way or other all that he produces: when this takes place, the land, capital, the machinery, the plant and stock in short, will naturally fall into the possession of the producers, since it would be useless to anyone else: nay[,] there would soon be nobody else to possess it, for there would be no surplus value available to keep [f. 37] an idle class[,] a non-producing class[,] upon: our class society would cease to exist.

I do not say that this would at once bring us to that condition of collective or communal holding of property which I have already put before you: much would have to [be] done first, troublous times, partial failures even would have to be met before we could quite shake off that old fear of starvation which our present competitive or plundering system has imposed upon us: before we got to see quite plainly that the loss to one involved loss to all: before we got instinctively to consider it a disgrace unendurable to an honest man to shoulder off our burden, now grown so light, on to another man[']s back; before the ease of livelihood[,] leisure and simple refinement of life allowed us to look upon work, the useful exercise of our special energies[,] as a daily recurring pleasure and not a daily recurring curse.

Yet all these good things we should[,] I am sure[,] gain in time when we had once taken that first [step]⁸ of insisting that all shall produce as all consume, which means the abolition of classes.

And lastly if this revolution seems to you a prodigious one, as surely it is, I say once more it lies in the hands of the workers, of the useful classes[,] to bring it

about: whatever they demand must be yielded if reason backs them. When the complaint of the poor which has ever been heard dimly or less dim amidst the excitement of life rouses people at last to definite organization[,] they gain what they claim; yes[,] even when that organization is partial & imperfect. The Chartists [f. 38] claimed political freedom: it is now yielded: the Trades Unions claimed some share in the increase of the profit of the capitalists; that also had to be yielded, how ungraciously accompanied with what unmanly complaints, what base slander of the workers at the hands of their masters[,] some of you may forget but I remember: and now this last claim for final freedom; freedom to work & live and enjoy[,] as it is infinitely greater and more important than the others[,] so surely will be claimed more widely with greater intelligence & if possible greater determination. With what amount of resistance it may meet none can tell, but this is certain[,] that it [will] meet with no forcible resistance unless the upper classes can delude some part of the workers [to] take their part in defence of their unjust and pernicious position: nor less certain, I believe, that when the mask falls from the face of this huge tyranny of the modern world, & it is shown as an injustice conscious of its own wrong to the honest and just of the upper classes themselves[,] the risks of destruction will seem light compared with the degradation of championing an injustice.

Yes[,] I believe that if the intelligent of the working-classes and the honourable and generous of the employing class could learn to see the system under which we live as it really is, all the dangers of change would seem nothing to them and our capitalistic society would not be worth 6 months purchase.

It is in this belief that I am here tonight preaching to you that new good tidings of Socialism.

[notes 37v, probably taken during discussion]

how to carry out—

Malthusianism

details—

force

who is [to] initiate

head work

competition & emulation

people have all power when they know [it]—class-abstinence

community individual earnings

unequal shares—

state holds the capital difference in tastes—

failure of communities

marriage democratic politics

education
dissolute persons in families
criminal –

NOTES

1. Ms, comma.
2. Ms, colon.
3. Ms, ‘the’ repeated. ‘Socialism’ in this paragraph is underlined three times, not two as shown here.
4. Ms, comma.
5. Ms, every one.
6. Ms, ‘to’ repeated.
7. The Manchester School—Richard Cobden (1804–65), John Bright (1811–89) and other advocates of economic liberalism and ‘free trade’ opposed British military incursions and other imperial ventures. Gladstone, by contrast, during his second term in office instituted an Irish Coercion Act, and actively prosecuted imperial conflicts in Afghanistan, South Africa and Egypt.
8. Ms, [step] added in pencil, possibly by May Morris.

2. ‘WHAT WE HAVE TO LOOK FOR’:

INTRODUCTION

Morris delivered ‘What We Have to Look For’ twice during the year before his death: to his beloved Hammersmith Socialist Society on 31 March 1895 at Kelmescott House, and to the Oxford and District Socialist Union on 30 October 1895 at Gloucester Green. The essay was short and valedictory (Figure 3), but handwritten notes at the end of his manuscript suggest that it aroused debate (see Figure 4, p. 48). May Morris included an excerpt from the beginning, and two shorter passages from the end, in *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist* (1936, vol. II, pp. 357–61), but the essay has never been published in full, and remains in the British Library as Add. Ms. 45,333 (3).

In ‘What We Have to Look For,’ Morris argued (as he had in *News from Nowhere* [1890–1891]) that the underlying aim of sincere socialists should be to bring about an ‘end of all politics’; that even ‘socialist’ political parties are makeshifts, as well as dubious means to untrustworthy parliamentary ends; and that no legislation in a capitalist society will bring about anything more than tenuous

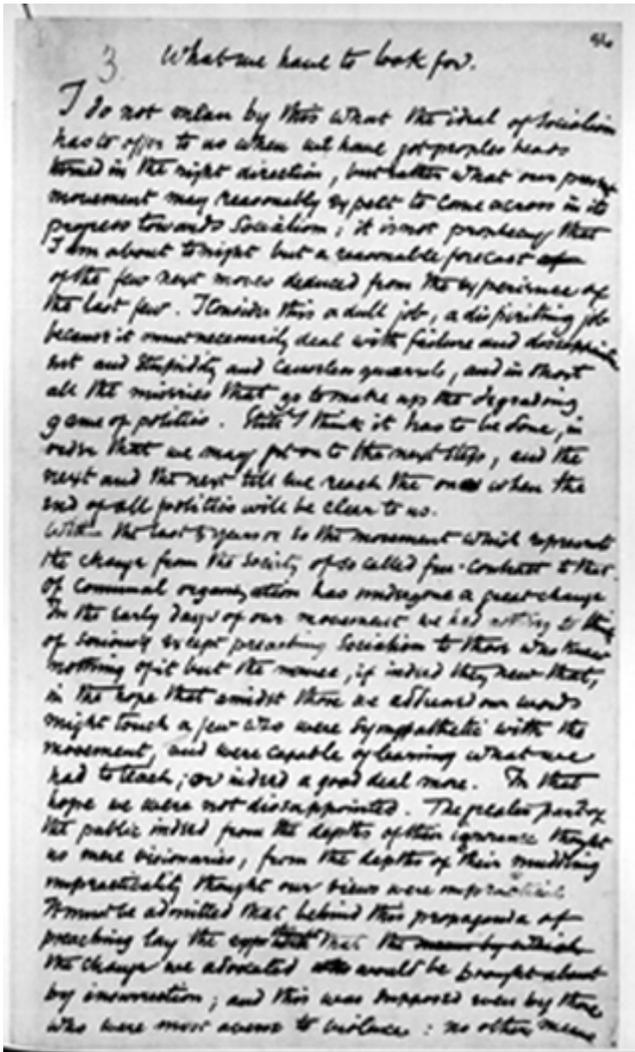


Figure 3—First page of manuscript for 'What We Have to Look For'; B. L. Add. Ms. 45:333, f. 56.

palliative changes in ordinary people’s lives. He began with an admission that his topic was ‘a dull job, a dispiriting job[,] because it must necessarily deal with failure and disappointment and stupidity and causeless quarrels, and in short all the miseries that go to make up the degrading game of politics’ [f. 56].

This statement stands in marked and somewhat poignant contrast with the ardour of the early days of the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League, when ‘we had nothing to think of seriously except preaching Socialism to those who knew nothing of it but the name ... ‘[W]e gained ... adherents, and good ones, and that more speedily than might have been expected ...’ [ff. 56, 57]. Early Socialists had also faced heavy resistance: ‘[F]rom the depths of their muddling impracticality [audiences] thought our views were impractical, [f. 56]’, but there had been a heartening change: ‘the number of those [who] can vaguely be classed as socialists has increased enormously, besides a very considerable increase in those who definitely profess Socialism’ [f. 58], [and] ... it has become a common-place that there is little difference between the two parties except that of ins & outs’ [f. 59]. Or as Old Hammond had put it in Chapter XIV of *News from Nowhere*:

... [the two major parties] only PRETENDED to this serious difference of opinion; for if it had existed they could not have dealt together in the ordinary business of life; couldn’t have eaten together, bought and sold together, gambled together, cheated other people together, but must have fought whenever they met: which would not have suited them at all. The game of the masters of politics was to cajole or force the public to pay the expense of a luxurious life and exciting amusement for a few cliques of ambitious persons: and the PRETENCE of serious difference of opinion, belied by every action of their lives, was quite good enough for that.¹

More than one hundred and fifteen years later, such patterns are hauntingly familiar.

Drawing further on his personal experiences in the Socialist League, Morris observed that ‘election times were the very worst times for our propaganda: no one with any political bias could disentangle his thoughts and aspirations from the great party dog-fight which was going on ...’ [f. 59], and predicted that the Liberal party would eventually divide into two factions, one comprised of potential reactionaries, the other potential socialists. For no longer, he believed, was public opinion credulously trustful of the law of the markets (‘the old Manchester school, the utilitarian Laissez faire business’ [f. 59]):

... everywhere people are shaken as to their views of the eternity of the present system which was once as undoubted a fact to them as the existence of the sun in the heavens [f. 59].

But present-day socialists no longer believed in the imminence of revolution: 'Almost everyone[, moreover,] has ceased to believe in the change coming by catastrophe', a noticeable shift from a period in which [he and others] 'thought that the change we advocated would be brought about by insurrection; and this was supposed even by those who were most averse to violence: no other means seemed conceivable for lifting the intolerable load which lay upon us ...' [ff. 56–57].

Still, capitalism had not receded:

... there are the unemployed. Nothing has been done for them in the mass, and nothing will be done for them ... if [it] should [ever] come to be the case that [it] is understood that they who fail in the competition shall have places provided for them by the state, there will be a tendency for wages to fall amongst those who are generally employed ... [A]ll those measures for improving the material condition of the working classes without altering their positions ... [mean] more or less feeding the dog with his own tail [f. 60].

The Tories might 'make a showy benevolent present (which in the long run will be of no use to you) rather than yield a right however small' [f. 60], and the Liberals, under pressure, might make 'certain improvements in the present creaky and clumsy electoral machinery which will be of some use to you' [ff. 60–61], but such measures were inherently unstable, and Morris could not

... for the life of me see how the great change which we long for can come otherwise than by disturbance and suffering of some kind. Well, since battle also has been made a matter of commerce, and the God of War must now wear a mantle of bank-notes and be crowned with guineas, ... since war has been commercialized, I say, we shall ... not be called upon to gain our point by battle in the field. ... Can that combat be fought out[,] again I say[,] without loss and suffering? Plainly speaking I know that it cannot. [ff. 61–62]

In particular, Morris suggested that 'the Great Change' might not come as he had hoped in *News from Nowhere*: as a 'natural' synergetic result of non-violent resistance, anger at police repression, and emergence of new forms of organisation and governance in England's green and pleasant land.

Against this bleak prognosis, Morris saw only a few tenuous signs of hope. One was a growing 'spirit of antagonism to our present foolish[,] wasteful system

... and a sense of the unity of labour as against the exploiters of labour’. [f. 64] A second, more ambivalent sign was the overwhelming popular response to Robert Blatchford’s *Merrie England*, which eventually sold more than two million copies in Britain and the United States.² Blatchford, a professed admirer of Morris, was a member of the Independent Labour Party and an advocate of unity amongst the various factions of British socialism. But as its nostalgic title suggests, his treatise sidestepped deep questions of oppression, class-conflict, and means of effecting social change. To see why this wave of popular sentiment (in both senses of the word) must have bemused Morris as well as impressed, compare Blatchford’s rosewater characterisation of imperialism as the

present national ideal [which] is to become ‘The Workshop of the World.’ That is to say, the British people are to manufacture goods for sale to foreign countries, and in return for those goods are to get more money than they could obtain by developing the resources of their own country for their own use.

My ideal is that each individual should seek his advantage in co-operation with his fellows, and that the people should make the best of their own country before attempting to trade with other people’s.³

with the following passage from Chapter XV of *News from Nowhere*:

The appetite of the World-Market grew with what it fed on: the countries within the ring of ‘civilisation’ (that is, organised misery) were glutted with the abortions of the market, and force and fraud were used unsparingly to ‘open up’ countries OUTSIDE that pale.⁴

It was not trade with foreign nations which Morris decried, or developing the resources of their own country, but imperial domination, repression of native culture and rapacious extraction of raw materials.

As for the ideal of a single socialist party (cf. the Wobblies’ ‘one big union’), it *might*

... once formed ... not break up any existing bodies but include them, [and if so, it] would, it seems to me, have a claim on all genuine socialists, [but] ... until it is formed, though we may do good propagandist work we shall do nothing worth speaking of in the political way. [f. 67]

However, at the General Election of 1895, all twenty-eight ILP candidates failed to win a seat, and Morris counselled that formation of such a party might need to ‘wait till the general body of socialists see the futility of mere sections attempting to do the work of the whole mass properly organised’. [f. 66]⁵ Well aware that Fabians, parliamentarians and members of the SDF disagreed, he enjoined his audience therefore to let others press for

... measures which may be for the temporary good of their class, which are but temporary and experimental, and adapted only for the present state of things, ... Let our liberal and radical ... friends make these experiments, and take all the responsibility for their failure, for in the long run fail they will' [f. 67].

What Morris sought was not a more comfortable 'machine life of the useful classes' [f. 67], but a genuine liberation—not a freedom 'to sleep under bridges' (in the words of Anatole France), or to choose one's tenth-generation form of interactive electronic entertainment, but a social order in which

those who wish to work happily and unwastefully, to restore what of the earth's surface which is spoilt and keep that which is unspoilt, to enjoy rest and thought and labour without fear or remorse[,] ... will be free because we are equal [ff. 67–68]

Morris was well aware that principled stands and 'negative capability' come more easily to comfortably situated dissidents ('In these matters I always think[,] what should I do myself; and I find it difficult to answer [that] question ...' [f. 64]). But he held firm to his lifelong conviction that the ultimate aim for *all* of us should be 'self-respect, happy and fit work, leisure, beautiful surroundings[—]in a word, the earth our own and the fullness thereof' [f. 64].

Given such utopian ideals, how might Morris have reacted to the contradictions and likely atrocities of 'socialist' revolutions in the wake of a disastrous capitalist conflicts such as the Great War of 1914–1918? He would, I believe, have been sickened by them—as was Emma Goldman by the despotic state-capitalism of the Soviet Union, and George Orwell by the betrayals of the Spanish Civil War. For however 'utopian' Morris may have been, he was no Blatchford. He understood how difficult it is to uphold egalitarian ideals against opportunist pressures to exploit peoples' legitimate fears and illegitimate prejudices. And he understood how readily the instruments of power corrupt revolutionaries as well as reformers, and induce them to condone forms of exploitation and inequities once decried. As his health declined, Morris admitted that he did not know how to break through these barriers. He could only urge his audience to confront them with critical intelligence, and with a measure of tempered hope.

NOTES

1. James Redmond, ed, *William Morris, News from Nowhere, or an epoch of rest*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970, p. 73. Afterwards *NfN*.
2. *Merrie England*, London: Clarion Newspaper Company, 1895, 172 pp. The preface to the 1895 edition notes that when this edition has been sold out, 875,000 copies will have been purchased since its first printing in October 1894. Eventually two million copies were reported as sold in Britain (Laurence Thompson, *Robert Blatchford: Portrait of an Englishman*, London: Victor Gollanz, 1957, p. 101). In addition, according to Jason Martinek (‘“The Workingman’s Bible”: Robert Blatchford’s “Merrie England”, Radical Literacy, and the Making of Debsian Socialism, 1895–1900’, *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, Vol. 2, No. 3, New Perspectives on Socialism I, July 2003, pp. 326–346), more than a million copies were reportedly sold in the United States.
3. *Merrie England*, chapter 2. In Chapter XV of *News from Nowhere*, Morris attacked the effects of global capitalism.
4. *NfN*, p. 80.
5. Three working-men had been successful in the General Election of 1892. The Independent Labour Party, led by Keir Hardie, was founded in 1893, and called for collective and communal ownership of production, distribution, and exchange. When, in 1906, a Labour Party was founded, the ILP became an affiliate.

‘WHAT WE HAVE TO LOOK FOR’

B. L. Add. Manuscript 45,333, ff. 56–68

[f.56] I do not mean by this what the ideal of Socialism has to offer to us when we have got people[']s heads turned in the right direction, but rather what our present movement may reasonably expect to come across in its progress towards Socialism; it is not prophecy that I am about tonight but a reasonable forecast of the few next moves deduced from the experience of the last few. I consider this a dull job, a dispiriting job[,] because it must necessarily deal with failure and disappointment and stupidity and causeless quarrels, and in short all the miseries that go to make up the degrading game of politics. Still I think it has to be done, in order that we may get on to the next step, and the next and the next till we reach the one when the end of all politics will be clear to us.

Within the last five years or so the movement which represents the change from the society of so called free-contract to that of communal organization has undergone a great change[.] In the early days of our movement we had nothing to think of seriously except preaching Socialism to those who knew nothing of it but the name, if indeed they [k]new that, in the hope that amidst those we addressed our words might touch a few who were sympathetic with the movement, and were capable of learning what we had to teach; or indeed a good deal more. In that hope we were not disappointed. The greater part of the public indeed from the depths of their ignorance thought us mere visionaries, from the depths of their muddling impracticality thought our views were impractical. It must be admitted that behind this propaganda of preaching lay the thought that the change we advocated would be brought about by insurrection; and this was supposed even by those who were most averse to violence: no other means [f. 57] seemed conceivable for lifting the intolerable load which lay upon us. We thought that every step towards Socialism would be resisted by the reactionaries who would use against [us] the legal executive force which was & is, let me say, wholly in the power of the possessing classes; that the wider the movement grew the more rigorously the authorities would repress it. And we were somewhat justified by their treatment of us; for while the movement was yet quite young the said authorities began to think that we were not only foolish but dangerous, which latter we may yet turn out to be, though not in the way which they meant by the word: hence all the stupid police interference with harmless meetings, and Black Monday and Bloody Sunday & the rest of it.¹

Now there is another thing; we gained, as I said, adherents, and good ones, and that more speedily than might have been expected, because the spirit of Socialism was alive, and on the way, and only lacked, as it does now, the due body which would make it a powerful force. But for a long time we did not touch the very people whom we chiefly wanted to get at,—the working classes to wit. Of course there were many working-men amongst us, but they were there by dint of their special intelligence, or of their eccentricity; not as working-men simply. In fact as a friend of ours once said to me, we are too much a collection of *oddities*[.] Anyhow the great body of working men, and especially those belonging to the most organized industries[.] were hostile to Socialism: they did not really look upon themselves as a class, they identified their interests with those of their trade-union, their craft, their workshop or factory even: the capitalist system seemed to them, if not heaven-born, yet at least necessary, and undoubtedly indefeasible.

[f. 58] I don't know if we expected this, but I do not think it dispirited us, partly perhaps because we would not admit it, being sanguine to the verge of braggadocio[.] Well now[.] much of this is changed: the idea of successful insurrection within a measurable distance of time is only [in] the heads of the anarchists, who seem to have a strange notion that even equality would not be acceptable if [it] were not gained by violence only. Almost everyone has ceased to believe in the change coming by catastrophe. To state the position shortly, as a means to the realization of the new society Socialists

hope so far to conquer public opinion, that at last a majority of the parliament shall be sent to sit in the house as avowed Socialists and the delegates of Socialists, and on that should follow what legislation might be necessary[,] and moreover, though the time for this may be very far ahead, yet most people would now think that the hope of doing it is by no means unreasonable.

Next it is no longer the case that the working-classes are hostile to Socialism, they even vaguely approve of it generally, and from time [to time] to take action through strikes and other agitation which amounts to a claim to be recognized as citizens, and not looked upon as merely part of the machinery for profit-bearing production; [a]nd the number of those [who] can vaguely be classed as socialists has increased enormously,² besides a very considerable increase in those who definitely profess Socialism[;] and all this has produced so much impression on the possessing classes, that they are beginning to think of making some concessions in the direction, as they think, of Socialism, so long as it can be done ‘safely’.

Another change has taken place outside socialism amongst the ordinary politicians which has surely some relation to the movement; this is that the old political parties and their watch words are losing their importance. When we first began our Socialist work in London the two orthodox parties of Tories and Liberals were [f. 59] so completely prominent that no other possible party was thought of, and it is true that election times were the very worst times for our propaganda: no one with any political bias could disentangle his thoughts and aspirations from the great party dog-fight which was going on at such times. Now on the contrary it has become a common-place that there is little difference between the two parties except that of ins & outs, and many think even that more in the way of the concessions above said [may be gained] from the Tory party than the Liberal, which possibly may be the case, though I don’t think it will turn out so. On the other hand at present the Liberal party is losing ground and even tending towards break up, perhaps because it includes as nominal members men who may be called semi[-]socialists. If it does actually break up, the result will obviously be a coalition of the whiggish Liberals with the Tories, which would make a party strong enough to snap the fingers at socialism and refuse any concessions, and on the other hand the Radical tail setting itself up as a parliamentary party[,] which would be a very weak party while it lasted, and would tend to melt into the general advance of Socialism. Again whatever else has happened, or failed to happen[,] the old Manchester school,³ the utilitarian Laissez faire business[,] has fallen a very short time after its entire acceptance as an indisputable theory by all would-be intelligent people. Doubtless all this[,] apart from whatever advance in the prospects of labour on which it is founded[,] means a great stir in thought and aspirations apart from the actual Socialist movement. It means that everywhere people are shaken as to their views of the eternity of the present system which was once as undoubted a fact to them as the existence of the sun in the heavens.

But what next? There cannot be a great upheaval and ferment in men's minds without [f. 60] something coming of it. But what has come of it as yet? In the first place has any increase in the material prosperity of the workman come of it[?] I do not think so. The strike war[,] taking it widely[,] is necessary certainly, but it has to be paid for. It has been necessary to call attention to the mass of unemployed amongst us. But there are the unemployed. Nothing has been done for them in the mass, and nothing will be done for them, because nothing can be done while the present system lasts. That there should be periodically people out of work who can work, is a necessity of the competition for employment under our present system; and surely if [it] should come to be the case that [it] is understood that they who fail in the competition shall have places provided for them by the state, there will be a tendency for wages to fall amongst those who are generally employed[.]

Now you will find that generally speaking this is the case with all those measures for improving the material condition of the working classes without altering their position; it all means more or less feeding the dog with⁴ his own tail; you better the condition of one group of workers at the expense of the others: and thereby you make partial content out of general discontent, and hoodwink the people and prevent their action: divide to govern is a very old maxim of Scoundrelcraft. Now I gave you no reason when I said just now⁵ that I did not believe that you would get more out of the Tories than the Liberals; but here is the reason ready to my hand; it is just this sort of concession which the Tories will give you: it is their instinct to make a showy benevolent present (which in the long run will be of no use to you) rather than yield a right however small. Of course from neither party can you expect any measure really socialistic, that is an impossibility, but by pressure you may get from the Liberals certain improvements [f. 61] in the present creaky and clumsy electoral machinery which will be of some use to you when you want to get M.Ps. to do your dirty work for you in Parliament.

No[,] I say you are not to expect from the rise of the battle [for] Socialism any serious improvement in the material condition of the working classes; you can only have that from Socialism, while the battle for Socialism is going on you can only have the hope of realizing Socialism. Indeed meantime I believe that the very upward movement of labour, the consciousness amongst working men that they should be citizens and not machines[,] will have to be paid for like other good things, and that the price will be no light one. I have thought the matter up and down and in and out, and I cannot for the life of me see how the great change which we long for can come otherwise than by disturbance and suffering of some kind. Well, since battle also has been made a matter of commerce, and the God of War must now wear a mantle of bank-notes and be crowned with guineas, since human valour must give way to the longest purse, and the latest invention (which I do not much complain of, since it makes it more difficult to exercise the accursed

art of destruction and slaughter)[,] since war has been commercialized, I say, we shall as above said not be called upon to gain our point by battle in the field.

But the disturbance and the suffering—can we escape that? I fear not. We are living in the commercial epoch of the world; and yet it would appear since I am talking to a socialist society, to an audience mainly socialist, in an epoch when commercialism has not all its own way, in an epoch in short when there is combat between Commercialism, or the system of reckless waste, and Communism or the system of neighborly common sense. Can that combat be fought out[,] again I say[,] without loss and suffering? [f. 62] Plainly speaking I know that it cannot. The rise in condition of life, if not in position[,] of the working-classes must disturb the smooth going ways of the market, must reduce the profits of their employers, must reduce therefore their employing power, must reduce their spending power, and injure many forms of the production of useless articles, on which the working men largely live. What harm in that? You may say; none; it would be a gain if we were living in a socialist condition: but as we are now, it would mean the throwing out of work of numbers of industrious men, the greater part of whom, it would be very difficult to find employment for. Take a straw to show which way the wind blows. A few days ago I had a long letter from a lady whom I knew something of, once very rich, and the wife of a very rich manufacturer in Manchester: the drift of the letter was two-fold; 1st complaining of competition, and how they who once made a large profit on their works are now carrying them on at a loss. 2nd expostulating with me for stirring up the men to cry out for higher wages and the like, which injured the power of employment of the masters: the remedy for all being that the men should withdraw their demands [and] work with the employers who loved them so—and so forth and so forth. Well at first when I read the letter I was angry; then I laughed, and thought how true was the old saw: other people[']s troubles hang on a hair: and felt it as difficult to weep for this lady[']s troubles, as⁶ she did for the lowered wages of her husband[']s hands & their diminished comforts. But do you know, at last I said to myself: after all she is right from her point of view; yes[,] and perhaps from her men's point of view also; for I shall like to ask them, before [f. 63] I say anything about your tactics and your demands[,] What is it that you really want[?] Yes, I should above all things like to have a genuine answer to this question; setting aside all convention, all rhetoric and flummery, what is it that you want from the present labour-movement? Higher wages; more regular employment? shorter working hours[,] better education for your children[,] old age pensions, libraries, parks & the rest[?] Are these things and things like them what you want? They are[,] of course; but what else do you want[?] If you cannot answer that question straightforwardly I must say that you are wandering on a road the outcome of which you cannot tell; you cannot have any helpful politics or tactics. If you can answer it, and say yes, that is all we want: then I say here is

the real advice to give you: Don[']t you meddle with Socialism; make peace with your employers, before it is too late, and you will find that from them and their Committee, the House of Commons, you will get such measure of those things as will most probably content you, and at any rate all that they can give without ruining themselves[,] as they phrase it. If this is all you want[,] work with your employers & for them to your best [ability], consider their interests as well as your own[,] be careful not to try the markets over much, make sacrifices today that you may do well tomorrow[,] compete your best with foreign nations; pay the greatest attention to producing exactly what your markets demand and at the price they demand, and I think you will do well. I cannot indeed promise you, that you will bring back the prosperity of the country to the period of leaps & bounds, but you may well stave off the break down, which in these last years does really seem to be drawing near. [A]nd at any rate you will make the best of what prosperity there is left us as workmen and according to their standard of life.

If that is all you want how can we who are not [f. 64] workmen blame you? In these matters I always think[,] what should I do myself; and I find it difficult to answer the question here, What should I do? Wherefore I must own that sometimes when I am dispirited I think this is all that the labour movement means: it doesn't mean Socialism at all, it only means improvement in the condition of the working-classes: they will get that in some terms or another--till the break up comes; and it may be a long way ahead. And yet the workmen of this country seem to me to be going so very far from the right road to winning the slavish peace I have been speaking of, that I cannot think they mean nothing but that: imperfect, erring, unorganized, chaotic as that movement is, there is a spirit of antagonism to our present foolish[,] wasteful system in it, and a sense of the unity of labour as against the exploiters of labour which is the one necessary idea for those who are ever so little conscious of making toward Socialism. One thing alone would make me think that more is aimed at than⁷ the stereotyping of a would be tolerable condition of servitude for the working-classes, and that is the success of our Comrade Blatchford[']s Merry England;⁸ the thousands who have read that book must[,] if they have done so carefully[,] have found out that something better is possible to be thought of than the life of a prosperous mill-hand. For what after all is that something more than a low form of workman's prosperity[,] constant work, to wit, and a 'fair day's wages for a fair day[']s work.['] Surely it is nothing less than that which makes life worth living[:] Self-respect, happy and fit work, leisure, beautiful surroundings[–]in a word, the earth our own and the fullness thereof[,] and if nobody really dares to assert that this good life can be attained to, [let us maintain this aim] till we are essentially [f. 65] and practically Socialized[.] So I will indulge my hope that⁹ all who call themselves Socialists, labour party, and even the fringe of all that would not be contented to make peace with the possessing classes {except} on the terms that all labour questions should

be thoroughly considered, that the interests of the working-men should be the first thing sought for, & so on; and that they really want to bring about Socialism, and are ready to face what may well be the temporarily disastrous effects of the rise of wages and all the detail that goes to make up the present labour war. And then comes the question; What is to be done? A question all the more necessary to ask since at present we are doing very little.

Now we must take it for granted that the first means[,] so to say[,] is as above stated, to conquer the general opinion of the country and gradually to get a majority in the House of Commons: and you must all remember that before that can be done, the thinking part of the population will have gone Socialist, so that nothing but the last act of the play will remain to be played.

Well that is the end, a long way off doubtless but in nowise an impossible end, a dream without form. What is to be done to get there? Well[,] first[,] what are the Socialist forces in this country? Answer two or three—say two bodies partly propagandist[,] partly with electoral views[,] probably of no great strength as to count of noses. More of them I won[']t say at present as I don[']t want to get into controversy as to their relative [merits]; so I will but note that there is at least rivalry between them and sometimes dissension. Besides these two bodies, there are no doubt many pronounced Socialists who are not attached to either, and there are also many who tend towards Socialism, and would be certain to be absorbed by [it] [f. 66] when it takes more definite action than it has yet done; but there is of course no means of finding out how many these unattached socialists and semi-socialists are.

Now what is to be done with these recruits, who are at present not generally acting together, and are for the most part pretty much undrilled? Well[,] are we to be a sect or a party? That is the next question: in that early time I spoke of¹⁰ we were a sect and had no pretence to be a party, and did not need to be one. And mind you I don't mean the word sect to imply any blame or scorn. Sects have before now done a good deal towards forming the world[']s history: but you see we have settled that we want to go into parliament, and for that it seems to me a party is definitely necessary; that declaring ourselves socialists we shall formulate our immediate tactics toward that end: such a party once formed which would not break up any existing bodies but include them, would, it seems to me, have a claim on all genuine socialists, and one thing at least I am sure of[,] that until it is formed, though we may do good propagandist work we shall do nothing worth speaking of in the political way. My hope is, and if people really care for socialism enough, it will be realized, that we shall do so much propagandist work, and convert so many people to socialism[,] that they will insist on having a genuine Socialist Party which shall do the due work, and they will not allow the personal fads and vanities of leaders (so-called) to stand in the way of real business.

Well[,] it may be some time before we can have that party, because we shall

have to wait till the general body of socialists see the futility of mere sections attempting to do the work of the whole mass properly organized. Meantime what [f. 67] should be our tactics? I think that until we can do our party-work effectively, we had better leave off the pretence of doing it at all; that we had better confine ourselves to the old teaching & preaching of Socialism pure and simple, which is I fear more or less neglected amidst the said futile attempt to act as a party when we have no party. I think we have above all to point out to the working-men who feel Socialist sympathies, that there are many measures which may be for the temporary good of their class, which are but temporary and experimental, and adapted only for the present state of things, and that these are not for genuine Socialists to press forward. Let our Liberal and radical, and, if they will[,] our Tory friends make these experiments, and take all the responsibility for their failure, for in the long run fail they will. Our present system will admit of no permanent change in this direction. Unlimited competition, the laissez-faire of the old Manchester school, the privilege of the possessing class, modified if you will by gifts of the improved work-house kind—in a word once more the machine-life of the useful classes made as little burdensome to them as can be; that is all that can be got out of the present system. And again and again I say[,] if that is your ideal, don't fight against your employers, for you will but waste your livelihood by doing so.

But on the other hand, those who have a wild fancy to be free men, to have their affairs under their own control; those who wish to work happily and unwastefully, to restore what of the earth's surface¹¹ is spoilt and keep that which is unspoilt, to enjoy rest and thought and labour without fear or remorse[,] [f. 68] those in a word who wish to live like men, let them say, good wages or bad, good times or bad, good masters or bad, let us use them now as best we may, yet not so much for the present profit we may get out of them as for hastening the realization of the new Society, the time when at last we shall be free because we are equal.

[at bottom of page: March 30th, 1895, in Sidney Cockerell's hand]; (Figure 4)

[on f. 67v., notations, seemingly on the discussion which followed, with the topics raised by each speaker noted; includes floriated design]:¹²

Tochatti – to use our recruits when we've got them

Mordhurst the unemployed

Unknown Henry George and Cooperation

Unknown

Unknown as to society

Bullock giving up the problem Mercer

socialist representatives --

Unknown conscious or unconsciousness

Clergyman rather more depressed than I.

NOTES

1. f. 57, Black Monday and Bloody Sunday—Demonstrations in Trafalgar Square in February 1886 and November 1887 had led to violence. During the former, peaceful meetings in Trafalgar Square and Hyde Park were followed by the smashing of windows; during the latter, two thousand police and four hundred soldiers attacked an unarmed crowd gathered to protest against coercion in Ireland. In the resulting mêlée, at least three demonstrators were killed and several dozen wounded.
2. The version used by May Morris (*Artist, Writer, Socialist*, Vol. II, p. 360) inserts after ‘increased’ a passage which in the British Library manuscript is placed later: ‘the condition of one group of workers at the expense of others; and thereby you make a partial content out of general discontent, and hoodwink the people, and prevent their action: “divide and govern” being a very old maxim of Scoundrels-craft’. [Cf. f. 60; Morris’s version reads ‘divide to govern’.]
3. See Note 7, p. 35.
4. Ms, ‘with of his own tail’.
5. Ms, an extra ‘when I said’ added.
6. Ms, ‘and’.
7. Ms, ‘that’.
8. f. 64, Merrie England—Robert Blatchford (1851–1943), a journalist, socialist campaigner, and novelist, was an admirer of *News from Nowhere* and founding editor of the socialist journal *The Clarion*. Blatchford’s *Merrie England* sold two million-odd copies in the U.K. (Laurence Thompson, *Robert Blatchford: Portrait of an Englishman*, London: Victor Gollanz, 1957, p. 101) as well as many more in the United States. Chris Waters (‘William Morris and the Socialism of Robert Blatchford’, *Journal of the William Morris Society*, V, 1982, pp. 20–31) has observed that ‘[b]oth [men] shared the conviction that the morally transformed life played a crucial role in the battle for socialism ... [and] believed that the most important duty of socialists was education, to make more socialists.’ (p. 22). By 1892 the Hammersmith Socialist Society had begun to sell *The Clarion* at its meetings (p. 21), and when (in 1894) Blatchford proposed the founding of a united socialist party, Morris expressed interest, though in the event this group failed to materialise.
9. Ms, ‘the’ inserted before ‘all’.
10. Ms, ‘off’.
11. Ms, ‘surface which is’.
12. Discussants mentioned at end of essay: (1) James Tochatti. A Canadian, born in Ballater, New Brunswick in 1852, Tochatti was a tailor, lecturer and lifelong campaigner for communist anarchism. An active public speaker and

member of the Hammersmith branch, he represented the Hammersmith branch at the League Conference in 1886, and contributed many notes and articles to *Commonweal*. (2) C(laude) Henry Mordhurst. A founding member of the Socialist League, Mordhurst was an energetic outdoor speaker and member of the Hammersmith branch who remodelled its premises in various ways, and served on its committees.

Aesthetic effects and their implications in ‘Rapunzel’, ‘The Wind’, and other poems from William Morris’s *The Defence of Guenevere*

Alexander Wong

I

Tennyson’s Lady of Shalott was famously ‘half sick of shadows’. Morris’s Guenevere is ‘half mad with beauty’. Compared to many of his contemporaries, and his own later literary works, there is something particularly nervy, gamey, and spicy—a strong taste of distinctive aesthetic intensity and strangeness—in Morris’s first volume of poetry, *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858).¹ There is often a strong note of the *weird*, a strangeness touched by the numinous, the uncanny, the ghoulish; and indeed the very word ‘strange’ and its cognates are frequently employed in the poems.

In relation to this strangeness, we might turn to Walter Pater, who, in his review of Morris’s early work encourages the reader to ‘catch at ... any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange flowers and curious odours, or work of the artist’s hands, or the face of one’s friend.’² We may consider this an echo (‘strange dyes, strange flowers’) of the parenthesised words in these lines from ‘King Arthur’s Tomb’:

Skies, earth, men’s looks and deeds, all that has part,
Not being ourselves, in that half-sleep, half-strife, . . .
(Strange sleep, strange strife,) that men call living . . . (ll. 12–17)

Indeed Morris’s lines fit well with Pater’s position. ‘Skies, earth, men’s looks and deeds’ are equivalent to the various examples Pater gives of the external impres-

sions and stimuli which lead to 'stirring of the senses'. Both Morris and Pater share this idea of life as 'strange', or of its potential to be so to an aesthetic observer—and the notion of the value of such strangeness. In 'The Poetry of Michelangelo' (1871), later part of *The Renaissance*, Pater writes:

A certain strangeness ... is indeed an element in all true works of art: that they shall excite or surprise us is indispensable. But that they shall give pleasure and exert a charm over us is indispensable too; and this strangeness must be sweet also—a lovely strangeness.³

In the 'Postscript' to *Appreciations* (1889), moreover, he specifically relates this quality of strangeness to Romanticism (as opposed to Classicism): 'It is the addition of strangeness to beauty, that constitutes the romantic character in art ...'.⁴ Pater essentially realises the basic strangeness of art in its relation to life, and understands that an appropriate degree of this quality is necessary for a work of art to make itself felt; it is productively disorientating. Simultaneously distancing and intriguing, it forces us to take a fresh look at familiar objects. 'Failure is to form habits,' Pater famously said.⁵

The element of cultivated strangeness in the *Guenevere* collection is distinctive, though not isolated. The poems' patterned intricacy, narrative confusion and rearrangement—indeed, sometimes, lack of narrative; their bright colouring, and emphasis on sound and music; their awkward angularity and twistiness of structure, rhythm, perspective, emotion—indeed of the human form itself; all these qualities align them (some, where such traits are strongest, more than others) with Rossetti's early watercolours, as well as with the work of other painters experimenting with what would later become Aesthetic Movement tendencies. Three poems in Morris's *Guenevere* – 'King Arthur's Tomb,' 'The Blue Closet,' and 'The Tune of Seven Towers' – were inspired by Rossetti watercolours from which they take their name. Of these, the last two are amongst those poems in the collection which demonstrate such characteristics at their most extreme.

Paul Thompson regards the merit of *Guenevere* as 'something of an accident; a vividness of expression which stumbled out of Morris's unconscious almost in spite of himself'. He quotes Morris himself, writing to Cornell Price about his rhymes: 'it is incompetency ...'. But I cannot quite go as far as to say, with him, that 'apparently masterly devices in the poetry were the result of chance'.⁶ When Mackail asked which model the *Guenevere* poems were written on, Morris, he says, replied that they were 'More like Browning than anyone else, I suppose'.⁷ This suggests a deliberate roughness, brokenness, obliquity: the narrative *difficulty* encountered in the poem 'The Defence of Guenevere' does seem indeed cultivated. Alongside strangeness comes difficulty. The obliquity of such works is certainly designed to give pleasure: that of the highly-wrought. But this trait is dependent upon the existence of a relatively small, necessarily elite intellectual

readership, and perhaps may be felt by the artist (certainly, one such as Morris, who would be increasingly drawn into Socialist politics) to be overly self-rewarding, self-indulgent.

What, then, is the particular flavour of these strange, intense early poems? Much is in the experimental forms, the free rein of the lyric, and difficult or unusual rhythms (accidental or otherwise). This early strangeness is diminished in later works in part because of Morris's concentration chiefly on longer narrative poems in consistent metres. Burne-Jones, surely thinking of these later works, commented: 'unless he [Morris] can begin his tale at the beginning and go on steadily to the end, he's bothered'.⁸ It may be that the relatively poor critical and public reception of *Guenevere* contributed to a feeling of obligation in Morris as poet to greater finish, completion and narrative intelligibility.

Morris's career may be followed in terms of a continual tension, growing with his Socialism, between those aspects of his art which could be felt as indulgent, and those which promoted The Cause: anxieties about what Socialist artists are allowed to gratify in their own creative drives and tastes. The recognisable, fully-developed Morris can no longer, *except in translated works*, justify the difficult, abstract, decorated style of his early lyrics, with (what I hope to show is) their ambiguous treatment of social themes. (We might consider Morris's translations as a concession to his private artistic tastes and impulses, especially where they are odd and difficult). If, in the later works, Morris seems much less to be burning with Pater's 'hard, gem-like flame,' it is perhaps because Socialism does not live in the present, but the future. In 'The Beauty of Life,' (1880), Morris famously advised: 'Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful, or believe to be beautiful'.⁹ The contents of *Guenevere* may represent the latter type of 'thing', but over the course of his career Morris increasingly desired to produce work which would fulfil *both* criteria at once.

II

In discussing the judgement that *Guenevere* lacks moral gravity and a sense of social duty, Fiona MacCarthy contrasts the volume with contemporary works more directly engaged with social and political issues.¹⁰ However, she does not take account, as neither does Elizabeth Helsinger, of the note of 'protest' for which E. P. Thompson argues, in what he considers to be the finest of the poems. Thompson infers in this collection a kind of re-invigorated Romanticism, manifested in part as aesthetic, emotional and narrative intensity and violence, and conducive, with time and alteration, to actively revolutionary politics. This is opposed to the passive nostalgia of mainstream Victorian Romanticism, and its 'luxurious misery'.¹¹

Helsingering emphasises the lyric intensity of the poems, and in particular the role played by colour. But this quality is considered mainly from an aesthetic viewpoint, whereas Thompson brings out its political implications as an expression of youthful vigour and protest at the dulled conditions of Morris's contemporary world. When Helsingering does consider wider conceptual or ideological consequences of the aesthetic, she can be a little one-sided. For instance, she writes compellingly about Morris's use of intense colours as 'hinges' or 'triggering' stimuli for memories—often traumatic—and shifts in mental states, or as a mask for traumatic realities. She claims that 'in Pre-Raphaelite practice, colour often speaks less of serene faith than of social and sexual tensions and disturbed emotions': a point which she pushes perhaps a little too heavily, contrasting it neatly with Ruskin's association of 'medieval colour with medieval faith'. Her point is tenable only to a degree, but when she correctly observes that 'dulling and fading out of colour,' often 'compared to the colourless time before sunrise or dusk,' is linked in the poems with 'the general incapacity to feel (sometimes sensory as well as emotional)', her observation implicitly suggests that intensity of colour is very often associated with desirable capacity for, and intensity of, feeling, as well as with the tensions and disturbances which she emphasises (possibly as part of an effort, conscious or otherwise, to redeem the Pre-Raphaelites from charges of sentimentality). Intensity of colour is thus sometimes, if not always, illustrative of what E. P. Thompson sees as a show of youthful vigour, even when associated with trauma, violence, or distress. It is thus to some extent celebratory, vivid; contrasted with and essentially criticising modern drabness.¹²

A reading of 'Rapunzel' may help to show that, in some cases, a compromise between Helsingering's position and Thompson's can be interesting and fruitful; especially as the poem is one of deceptive simplicity disguising extreme complexity, to which neither critic pays significant attention. Isobel Armstrong, however, does offer a politicised reading, but argues (and in my view some of her specific comments belie this point) that:

The poems [in *Guenevere*] are not concerned either directly or indirectly with work or politics. Instead they are an attempt to *be* the form in which modern consciousness shaped by work and labour sees, experiences and desires, to be what it imagines and the myths it needs to imagine with.¹³

My own reading might be taken to suggest that 'Rapunzel' and 'The Wind' (which Armstrong also examines, and which I shall discuss later), are indeed concerned 'indirectly' with political themes and the idea of 'work'.

The opening scene (of 'Rapunzel'), as elsewhere in the volume, uses repeated sense-impressions. Temperature and moisture are particularly noted (ll. 38–48), but colour, as so often, predominates. Near the outset, the reader is faced with wide, indeterminate masses of colour and shade: 'knotted mass,' 'shadows,'

'grass,' 'golden hair!' (ll. 17–20). Moreover, the violent disturbance usually simmering below the surface of Morris's early poems, glints occasionally with the symbolic colour of red. In the opening scene, Rapunzel twice evokes the colour red (ll. 9–10; ll. 27–29) which foreshadows a memory, later in the poem, of violence. Juxtaposition of red with yellow or gold not only anticipates this later memory, but also recurs in other poems: (e.g. 'The Wind', 'The Gilliflower of Gold'). Afterwards, she speaks of 'golden Michael, on the spire / Glowing all crimson in the fire / Of sunset' (ll. 202–04), again linking red with gold. Then, the traumatic memory:

... I saw against the wall
 One knight lean dead, bleeding from head to breast,
 Yet seem'd it like a line of poppies red
 In the golden twilight ... (ll. 218–21)

Helsingier is correct about colour sometimes operating as a trigger or mask for repressed or inaccessible memories: here Rapunzel softens the gory memory of blood into one of symbolically red flowers. But the argument needs to go further. More generally, emotions and memories—especially difficult ones, repressed or partially accessible—come to be associated with sense impressions, abstractions, or objects: all externalities of limited relevance. Rossetti's 'The Woodspurge'¹⁴ takes this habit to an extreme, symbolising objectively an incommunicable emotion by means of an arbitrarily connected external object, the flower. In *Guenevere*, the orange in 'The Wind' is one example of such an object; the gilliflower in 'The Gilliflower of Gold' another.

So far I have concentrated, as does Helsingier, on aesthetic qualities of 'Rapunzel' and their application to psychological readings. Incorporating E. P. Thompson's concerns, I will now suggest that vibrant colour in the poem not only means violence and disturbance, but life: intensity as 'a measure of the intensity of his own revolt against the impoverished relationships of his own society', the vivid aesthetics signalling 'not nostalgia but protest'. Further, 'Rapunzel' may be read as a poem about responsibilities, vanities, and, above all, *action* versus dreamy passivity. Thompson sees Morris as refusing the 'dream-world of imagination' to which 'the aspirations of the great romantic poets' had sunk. 'He refused to relax passively in the currents of nostalgia, however much he felt their attractions.'¹⁵ 'Rapunzel' would appear to address this very conflict.

In the second scene, the Prince dreams of a 'path of stars' (l. 52) to heaven from which humans turn back (mirroring 'the golden stair' of Rapunzel's hair), in describing which he (ll. 69–74) refers to his life at court, from which he has fled. He 'was content to live that wretched way' amongst 'knave[s] and coward[s],' but has now ridden forth 'arm'd beneath the burning sun.' His 'real life had begun,' and he knows he will be 'strong.' The pale, cowardly vanities of court have given

way, apparently, to manly action, life, vigour. There is an increase in sensory impression: music and heat: 'the birds within the thickets sung, / Even in hot noontide' (ll. 76–77). He is 'riding out to look for love' (l. 75). Is this a noble cause? Is it redemptive, or selfish? Is the Prince renouncing worldly vanities or ignoring his duties? Is he correct to see his quest as 'real life'?

What follows is an ebb and flow of colour and colourlessness, which coincides, respectively, in the Prince, with action and dreamy passivity. Such conflict of mood is always present in him. Looking on Rapunzel's tower, he

... saw the proofs

Of a great loneliness that sicken'd me;
 Making me feel a doubt that was not fear,
 Whether my whole life long had been a dream,
 And I should wake up soon in some place, where
 The piled-up arms of the fighting angels gleam ... (ll. 89–94)

Line 90 recalls 'The Lady of Shalott',¹⁶ and Rapunzel is obviously in comparable circumstances. However, this time, the male hero is also lost in dreams: although the above excerpt ends with images of action, defiance and manly assertion, five lines later he lies 'a-dreaming'. A 'strange year' passes in inactivity of 'joyous pain,' his 'heavy body' lying on the ground (ll. 138–140): he fears that it is 'a kind of dream not understood' (l. 144). Time is lost in passive, languishing self-indulgence; but the Prince still feels a need to break away: 'I am not happy here, for I am strong' (l. 151). What is needed is *action*: dreams limit and weaken. Armstrong hints at this point in her discussion of 'powerlessness' in the poem, for she observes that 'The Prince ... can only gain access to Rapunzel when he has assumed the warlike identity urged upon him by his guardians in the "council hall", when he works rather than dreams'.¹⁷

'Fighting angels' reappear in Rapunzel's song. Here the 'moral' of the story becomes increasingly complicated, and there is a difficult irony in Morris's ambiguous diversion of the expected straightforwardness of the fairy-tale. Rapunzel's religious stance is troubling. Her prayer (ll. 162–81) is strongly sensual and material: 'Give me a kiss, / Dear God ...', 'Lord, give Mary a dear kiss ...', '... bring me that kiss / On a lily!' When she prays for 'a true knight' who has

... a steel sword, bright,
 Broad, and trenchant; yea, and seven
 Spans from hilt to point, O Lord!
 And let the handle of his sword
 Be gold on silver ... (ll. 169–73)

the erotic and the materialistic powerfully meet. Even St Michael is imagined in the form of a precious object: 'gold Michael, who looked down, / When I was

there, on Rouen town ...' (ll. 178–79). (Morris probably also had in mind the medieval gold coin the Angel, depicting St Michael—which association further highlights the feeling of religion commodified). And yet, in the midst of the witches' Sabbaths, she experiences religious visions: 'a trance / God sends in the middle of that dance, / And I behold the countenance / Of Michael ...' (ll. 192–95).

Visions, witchcraft, St Michael, Rouen, incarceration—surely Morris is making a bizarre allusion to Joan of Arc? Ambiguous as well, since historical accusations of witchcraft may here be relevant. (It transpires that 'Rapunzel' has taken the name of the witch who imprisons her, suggesting some kind of identity blurring.) Joan is a notoriously ambiguous figure. (Puppet? Propagandist? Saint?) But *her* dreams, so to speak, inspire active social efforts—to fight oppression—whereas in 'Rapunzel,' the Prince's dreams are generally prohibitive of action. Yet, if the poem is to be read in this way, Morris foxes the reader by leading the hopeful narrative to an ambiguous ending, which seems a kind of defeat. Arguably the ending is a subtle critique of the smug, socially elite luxury and 'mere matrimonial existence' which is apparently *not* criticised or censured in *Love is Enough* (1872); a work which disappointed Burne-Jones: 'It's splendid when the King gives up his Kingdom for Love's sake, but when at the end it comes to nothing more than a mere matrimonial existence, that's poor'.¹⁸

The moral confusion of the poem comes to a head when Rapunzel reveals that her name is *not* Rapunzel (l. 280). The Prince explains that a minstrel had prophesied to him of a yellow-haired woman, whose name would be Guendolen. Now he repeats 'that song the *dreamy* harper sung' (l. 286; emphasis mine). Thus, after fruition of the hero's manly action (rescuing the damsel), he *reverts to dreams*. Matters worsen when the damsel accepts this 'new-found name' (l. 305): 'found' for the first time, or found again? She seems to be willing to become a kind of passive commodity. Her words of reassurance to her rescuer then evoke a twilight state—colourless, like much of the imagery surrounding inaction and dream in the poem, and death elsewhere in the volume:

But all my golden hair shall ever round you flow,
Between the light and shade ... (ll. 307–08)

In the final scene (ll. 309–341), the sense of vain materialism returns disconcertingly with unusually frequent repetition of the same colour: gold. Precious materials are not excluded from Morris's utopian vision, even in the Socialist years; gold is for everyone in Nowhere, and not hoarded or fetishised. But here it seems associated with regal pomp, and becomes monotonous. We hear the voices of 'great knights' only—a social elite. When Guendolen says

Nothing wretched now, no screams;
I was unhappy once in dreams ... (ll. 335–36)

is she, so to speak, correct? Is not her new life of royal, matrimonial comfort and luxury in some sense less *real* than the wretched screams of her past? She speaks of her imprisonment as a time of ‘dreams,’ and yet, earlier, during that very period, she has told us that she *cannot* dream except ‘*when they let me dream*’ (l. 175).

‘Rapunzel’ is a poem which explores the idea of ‘dreams,’ their varieties, values, limitations. As such, it makes a valuable case study in the context of a central debate about *The Defence of Guenevere*: how to reconcile (in Florence Boos’s words) its ‘eroticised violence’ and ‘violent, anarchic world’ with Morris’s Ruskinian ‘idealisation’ of medieval society. In her view, ‘Morris went out of his way to document the violence and degradation which flowed from feudal abuses of power’.¹⁹ Whilst I am sceptical of such poems’ ability to ‘document’ any such thing, it is certainly true that the medievalism of *Guenevere* is frequently brutal, and invites politicised interpretation. As Richard Frith observes, these poems ‘tend to be praised today for their rejection of *dreams*’, (italics mine) and for their ‘gritty realism’. Frith sets out, in his readings of the Froissartian poems, ‘to suggest some of the ways in which the ideal infiltrates Morris’s undeniably brutal vision of the medieval world’, attempting thereby to temper the emphasis on ‘ironic and anti-romantic’ aspects of the poems by critics concerned ‘to clear Morris of the charge of mere literary escapism’.²⁰ Frith thus appears to equate ‘dreams’ with ‘the ideal;’ whereas my reading of ‘Rapunzel’ (which was beyond the scope of Frith’s examination) centres on the idea of ‘dreams’ in a sense, or senses, at once more literal and more general. Nevertheless, although I do detect in this particular poem an implied ‘rejection of dreams,’ this inference must be taken in the context of a fairy-tale poem which must surely be considered at least as ‘romantic’ as it may be ‘anti-romantic,’ and I wholly concur with Frith’s argument that elements of idealism or dreaminess in the poems should not and need not be underplayed.

Armstrong makes the obvious connection between Rapunzel’s hair, and wealth, regarding it furthermore as a ‘symbol of mediation’; but she rightly concludes that its ‘importance ... in the poem is not that it can be given a specific meaning but that it is implicated in desire and is substituted for different things in different ways’.²¹ Of course, Guendolen *may* simply be taken as representative of wealth or abundance (susceptible to materialism, but capable of spiritual purposes) brought away from the covetous clutches of the witches (who still clamour, at l. 314, for ‘*One lock of hair*’) to freedom and public *display* (which is all one can really argue) by the Prince. This more obvious reading still reveals socio-political concerns, but does not take account of the complex and ambivalent handling of *dreams* and *dreaminess*, versus action, in the poem; nor thematic links with aesthetic effects—primarily colour. It also feels to me rather too reductive.

The poem gives no real satisfaction to either the hero's anxieties or the heroine's regarding the 'dreams' which cloud their experiences; the images of armed angels come to little; and we suspect that his major impetus might simply be the mundane obligation of a royal heir to contract a marriage of convenience: 'Thou art a king's own son, / 'Tis fit that thou should'st wed.' (ll. 13–14, repeated ll. 23–24).

If Morris really intends the Prince as a moral role-model, then we might very well share Burne-Jones's dissatisfaction about *Love is Enough*, in this poem as well as that. But the beguiling dissonance of 'Rapunzel' dissuades us from such a view. Rather like Keats's *Eve of St Agnes*, but craftier because of its disorientating use (or Bloomian 'misreading?') of a familiar story, it is a morally self-deconstructing fairy-tale, heavy with endless symbolic possibilities, and essentially Symbolist rather than allegorical.

III

I turn last to 'The Wind,' probably the most psychologically disturbed poem in the *Guenevere* collection, and also (and the word seems eminently appropriate) the most *weird*. The title comes from the refrain:

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

Superficially, but significantly, this refrain is disconnected from the rest of the poem, and whether or not it is spoken by the narrating protagonist is unknown. Therefore, on one level, the refrain and the wind it describes function like the little flower of Rossetti's poem 'The Woodspurge':²² an arbitrarily connected externality which becomes a symbol for a mental state in a disorientating way—as well as providing a distraction from it. Going one step further, we see that it may be the protagonist's feelings (sadness, unhappiness, moral self-questioning) which are projected onto this object. The wind's blindness may represent the partial understanding of repressed memories; in any case it is presented as an obstacle to the finding of 'the lily-seed'. The ability to find it is associated with sight; and the quest is for the seed of the lily; white, clean, innocent. This point is significant, because, as before, the traumatic memories are associated strongly with bright colour impressions.

The protagonist in the present moment sits thinking 'of the days gone by, / Never moving my chair ... / Making no noise at all'

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. ...
 If I move my chair it will scream, and the orange 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.

(ll. 10–18)

At first sight even the basic, static scene conjured in the early part of the poem is utterly incomprehensible. What is this gashed orange balancing in the back of the speaker's chair? Are we to imagine it as real (for that is how it is ostensibly presented), or is it embroidered (Florence Boos thinks it most likely to be depicted on a tapestry hanging behind the chair, rather than part of it),²³ or could it be carved in the back of the chair? In fact, the enigmatic orange works in a similar manner to the refrain, as an objective symbol, acting as a trigger to memory, and of superficially obscure relevance. But the memory/hallucination which it helps to recall/summon is one of death, and possibly rape (ll. 34–78). The speaker stands on a hilltop with '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)

When, avoiding the protagonist's embrace, 'Margaret' strikes her head on a tree, the speaker thinks all is well, and claims that 'she kiss'd me on the brow' (l. 49) and 'spread her arms out wide while I went down below' (l. 51). This could plainly be read erotically. He then collects daffodils and piles them on top of her, and eventually, realising that she remains silent and still, removes them: 'Alas! Alas! there was blood on the very quiet breast ...' (l. 76).

We can now see, at least in part, the events which the speaker seems to associate with the threat of the orange falling and oozing blood, and of the chair screaming. The scream is self-explanatory, but the orange, too, begins to betray its relevance. The sphere with its oozing gash recalls Margaret's head, struck (apparently fatally) on the tree. The juice leaking from inside may represent repressed memories escaping control; and the juice is yellow, like the colour of daffodils. Furthermore, as Helsinger has pointed out, the colour orange is a mix of yellow (daffodils) and red (blood),²⁴ thereby becoming a blended aesthetic symbol of the moment when the speaker 'grew hollow with pain' (l. 71), revealing blood beneath the daffodils he removes. One might say that the objective impression (i.e. colour) fills, or acts as a mnemonic substitute for, that interior hollowness. I would add that, originally, the image of the orange produces both 'yellow juice' and the comparison with 'blood,' so that from the outset, light from the orange is decomposed into its constituent primary colours.

The poem seems deliberately and calculatedly *weird*; its discontinuities of thought are compelling. The long hexameter lines, mostly with a middle caesura, but open at times to a non-stop reading which captures a kind of panic of evasion, modulate to a rapid replaying of events perhaps *rather* evaded. 'The Wind,' however, may not be without its portion of social anxieties. We may infer that the speaker's mental state has caused him to withdraw from society and what we might call *useful toil*. He 'used to paint' the shields of warriors. His occupation was thus of an artistic nature, and, for Morris, or for Ruskin, ideally a manifestation of 'Useful Work', and productive of the 'pleasure in labour' and 'the hallowing of labour by art' which Morris, in Ruskin's wake, advocates throughout his work.²⁵ Yet the protagonist remains, instead, alone, unproductive, and unhappy, afflicted by guilt. Boos speculates:

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?²⁶

All of these possibilities are plausible, and merely suggest what was already clear: that the poem is profoundly ambiguous. But in the context of my present reading, it seems to me that this is a guilt of unmet obligation, manifested as a paranoid fear of 'the ghosts of those that had gone to the war' (l. 81). We may infer that the speaker should also have gone to the war, and that this may lie at the root of his guilt. We do not know if the 'war' in which these men have died has been just or unjust, though the closing reference to 'Olaf, king and saint' would appear to link assertive, warlike action with moral calibre, as might also the allusion to Joan of Arc in 'Rapunzel.' 'The Wind', but for one last refrain, ends with the vision of these ghosts, with the 'colours ... all grown faint' (l. 83) on their arms—colourlessness once again associated with death. On this score, Isobel Armstrong echoes E. P. Thompson's arguments about aesthetic intensity as a form of protest against drabness; for she remarks that the 'heraldic colours' on the ghosts' arms

once painted by the dreamer, but now 'faint', and thus unreadable, are the antithesis of the brilliant and hallucinatory colour of objects at the start of the poem. Nevertheless, they are complementary, for a brilliant and fantastic intensity is one of the needs of the consciousness experiencing the faded sense of lack and numbness ...²⁷

I return to the enigmatic orange, which may possess further symbolic or associative consequences. Fruit, as a recurring image in Morris's work, intimates abundance, and a 'benign' nature, able to be enjoyed by humanity in an ideal society. Red House was deliberately built in an orchard; in 'Pomona', the 'ancient apple queen' is 'a hope unseen.'²⁸ The luxuriant growths of fruit in Morris's tex-

tile and wallpaper designs equally suggest the fruitfulness and abundance to be enjoyed by a society fully adapted to nature. The 'red apples' in the second stanza of 'Golden Wings' help to conjure a setting of bounteous wholesomeness, and in Morris's painting *La Belle Iseult* (1858–59), golden fruit adorn the background tapestry, and bright oranges lie in a bowl on the queen's bed-side table, closely matching the burnished gold of her belt and buttons, and the flowers she wears in her hair. Oranges seem to be associated with gold, and thus expressive of nature's bounty.

We find the orange resting among folds of 'sweeping green,' presumably fabric, the colour combination suggesting, of course, an orange tree, here awkwardly recreated artificially. But the greenery is hostile, decorated with grinning dragons, and the orange is spoiled, gashed through the 'rind'. Still, the connection between the interior and natural world outside is compounded by the fact that the green fabric is rustled by 'gusts of the wind,' even inside the house; and when the memory or dream begins, the 'blue roof' parts to show 'blue sky' (ll. 26–27). Even in the psychological move into nature and the outdoors, the artificial is still present in the 'painted book' which Margaret holds (l. 34). When the moment of violence comes, it is a 'tree' upon which Margaret strikes her head (l. 41).

Though the poem resists decisive moral interpretation, these details help to create a sense of a dysfunctional relationship with nature. The protagonist has seemingly committed a violence (his wearing of 'mail' [l. 43] and simile of Margaret's hair as 'like a gold flag over a sail' [l. 45], implying either war or commerce, emphasises such a feeling of aggression or imperialist superiority), but he projects the blame for it onto nature: the tree, the flowers, the natural associations. Intensity of colour in this poem thus refers both to nature as fundamentally benevolent and vivid, *and* to the tension and disturbance which it provokes in the protagonist; so the intensity functions both, implicitly, as a celebratory liveliness (Thompson's youthful vigour of protest) *and* as Helsing's sign of agitation and disorder. Since Margaret's hair is golden, she too is linked with abundance, as are the heaps of golden daffodils. The protagonist kills both.

Remembering this, he leaps up, causing the orange to fall, gashed and unhealthy, from the figurative tree of the chair's green folds. This action invites biblical associations of the anxiety of picking fruit, disrupting humanity's prelapsarian accord with paradisaical nature. As his unhealthy relationship with the natural world thus reaches its representational pinnacle, the ghosts enter, and as in 'Rapunzel,' the ending is ambivalent. We may imagine the war as just or unjust, a duty or a crime, as Boos implies in her speculations about the nature of the protagonist's guilt. The speaker, though, recognises the 'arms' he 'used to paint' (l. 82), which brings his labour into line with Morris's crafting and decoration of functional objects, and reminds us of the importance for the artist of an appropriate attitude to nature, which Victorian writers such as Ruskin and Morris

stressed. Thus the protagonist's observation that 'the colours were all grown faint' (l. 83) might imply not only ghostliness, but the troubling sickness which has arisen in his broken or perverted affinity with nature and society, resultant, it would seem, from a too voracious and indulgent attitude to the abundance which can exist between them.

NOTES

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3. Walter Pater, *The Renaissance*, ed. Adam Phillips, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, repr. 1998, (first published 1873), p. 47.
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16. Christopher Ricks, ed, *The Poems of Tennyson*, 2nd edn, Vol. 1. London: Longman, 1987, pp. 387–95 (p. 391).

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20. Richard Frith, '“Honorable and noble adventures”: courtly and chivalric idealism in Morris's Froissartian poems', *Journal of William Morris Studies* XVII, 3, 2007, pp. 13–14.
21. Armstrong, p. 248.
22. See Note 14.
23. Boos, pp. 13–14.
24. Helsing, p. 72.
25. *CW*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 98–120; Introduction to *The Nature of Gothic: A Chapter of The Stones of Venice*, Kelmscott Press edn, London and Orpington: George Allen, 1892, pp. i–iii.
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27. Armstrong, p. 250.
28. *CW*, Vol. IX, p. 193.

The Kelmscott *Chaucer* and the Golden Cockerel *Canterbury Tales*

Peter Faulkner

The recent production by the Folio Society of fine facsimile editions of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* of 1896, and Eric Gill's Golden Cockerel Press *Canterbury Tales* of 1929–31, provides an opportunity for those of us without easy access to the originals to compare two great pieces of book design. As a person with a twentieth-century sensibility, my immediate response is to find the Gill work the more attractive of the two, but I would like in this article to try to see what it is about the two books that leads me to this conclusion. The task is aided by the inclusion by the Folio Society with the Gill facsimile of a reprint of Peter Holliday's article 'The Golden Cockerel Press, *The Canterbury Tales* and Eric Gill: Decoration and the *Mise en Page*',¹ originally published in 2003. Holliday is a distinguished scholar of typography and book design, and his essay, besides giving an accurate and helpful description of Gill's book, also sheds a good deal of light on the relationship between the two books here considered.

THE KELMSCOTT CHAUCER

Because Morris and Burne-Jones had loved Chaucer since their Oxford days, his works were an obvious choice for publication by the Kelmscott Press. Cockerell recorded that Morris was already thinking of printing a Chaucer in June 1891, and in May 1892 a proof of the first list of books to be issued by the Press included 'THE POEMS OF CHAUCER. Black Letter. Large 4to'.² In December 1892 the definite announcement was made: 'Chaucer's Works. With about 60 designs by E. Burne-Jones'.³ I do not think the change of title was significant; it would

seem that Chaucer meant so much to Morris and Burne-Jones that it did not occur to them to print less than all of Chaucer's works. The volume eventually produced began with the 'Canterbury Tales', and then went on to the twenty-one short poems by Chaucer, from 'An ABC of Geoffrey Chaucer' to 'The Balade of Complaynte', followed by 'The Book of the Duchesse', 'A Treatise on the Astrolabe', 'The Legend of Good Wimmen', 'The Hous of Fame' and 'Troilus and Cressida'. This bulk necessarily caused problems.

Morris's first type-design had been for Golden, a Roman face deriving largely from that created by Nicolaus Jenson in Venice in 1476,⁴ which Morris used for the Press's first publication, *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, in May 1891. Later that year, Morris began work on what he called 'a semi-Gothic type designed ... with special regard to legibility'.⁵ This was to be Troy, the face which Morris wanted to use for his *Chaucer*, and when, in January 1892, the type was delivered to the Press, Morris set two trial pages; but, Peterson states, 'it was immediately obvious that a smaller type was needed'.⁶ Thus in a letter of 14 March 1892, F.S. Ellis, who had taken on the role of editor of the text, wrote to a friend:

I enclose a specimen of the new type in which as you see Caxton's "Recuyel" is to be & Chaucer is to follow but in a size smaller type but same pattern – and in double cols. To print Chaucer in this size would be delightful but I fear buyers would turn resentful [?] at the size which the book would necessarily make.⁷

Morris decided to use a reduced form of Troy; and so the Chaucer typeface was created.⁸ In July 1892, therefore, another trial page was printed, in the new type reduced to 12-point from the 18-point Troy. This style of page was adopted as the basis for the book: it featured two columns of sixty-three lines each in Chaucer type,⁹ with the titles of the longer poems in Troy. Into this tight format, Morris was to insert two borders, eighteen frames, twenty-six large wood-engraved initial words, and the eighty seven wood-engraved illustrations designed by Burne-Jones.¹⁰ These designs were translated into wood-engravings through the skill of Robert Catterson-Smith, in an 'elaborate procedure'¹¹ described by Peterson in his Introduction.¹² Morris was characteristically enthusiastic about Burne-Jones's work; a letter of 22 February 1894 tells Ellis, 'Chaucer getting on well: such lovely designs'.¹³ The book was to amount to 556 pages, which Morris decided could be published in a single volume. On 30 July 1894 he told Cockerell: 'Having gone over the number of lines with Ellis, I find it will not make more than 600 p.p. which will go into one vol.'¹⁴ In all, the reader encounters a great visual feast, but perhaps to modern taste an overly rich one.

Although the *Chaucer* was conceived by Morris as primarily 'a work of art' or, as he put it in a letter of 1 December 1892, 'an *illustrated* work by Burne-Jones',¹⁵ he and Ellis were admirably keen to use the best text available. At this very time

such a text was appearing in Oxford. The University Press published an edition by the distinguished scholar Professor Walter Skeat in 1894, of which it is, as Ethan Knapp tells us in his contribution to *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*, ‘hard to exaggerate’ the importance in beginning the modern era of Chaucer scholarship;¹⁶ Skeat removed several works previously attributed to Chaucer, and chose the reliable Ellesmere Manuscript as his base text for the *Canterbury Tales*. As Peterson tells us in his *Bibliography*, Morris and his editor Ellis encountered difficulty in obtaining permission to use Skeat’s work, being refused by the delegates of the Oxford University Press in November 1892 and May 1894.¹⁷ But eventually permission was granted to use ‘a limited number of readings from Prof. Skeat’s Text of “Chaucer”’ – although Peterson tells us that in fact the text was adopted ‘almost verbatim’.¹⁸ In the course of his discussion with the Delegates, Morris argued that his edition would not compete with the text being produced by the University Press, as ‘only 325 copies will be issued, at a high price (£20) & without notes or commentary. It is intended to be essentially a work of art.’¹⁹

Georgiana Burne-Jones provided some vivid memories of Morris and her husband working together on their great project:

The friends sat down dutifully to read Chaucer over again before beginning their work, and infinitely funny it was when Morris occasionally professed to be taken prosaic and not to understand what the poet meant.²⁰

She had recorded earlier in the biography that at Oxford, ‘when they were alone together, the friends read Chaucer ...’²¹ She refers to some of Edward’s ‘heart-searchings’ as they worked on the book together; he was occasionally frustrated by the lack of detail provided by Chaucer, as he wrote about some parts of the *Romaunt of the Rose*:

I wish Chaucer would once for all make up his unrivalled and precious mind whether he is talking of a picture or a statue – I do wish it, for in the book I am putting myself wholly aside, and trying to see things from his point of view; not once have I invaded his kingdom with one hostile thought.²²

She finds proof of his dedication to detail in the extraordinary illustration he produced for *The House of Fame*, described by Chaucer as ‘made of twigges’, which she found to be a strange and yet convincing ‘whirligig home of whisperings’.²³ She then quotes a letter in which Burne-Jones reflects that he has worked on the designs on his Sundays for the last two and a half years: ‘Now to think of that! And yet I know quite well not ten people in the land will care twopence about it. Yet it will be a very nice book.’²⁴ There can be no doubt at all as to the seriousness with which both men applied themselves to the task.

Several excellent accounts of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* exist in addition to that provided by Peterson. The earliest is H. Halliday Sparling's *The Kelmscott Press and William Morris Master Craftsman* of 1924, which embodies the insights arising from Sparling's having served, as he claims, as 'proof-reader, secretary and general handyman of the Kelmscott Press from its foundation until 1894', as well as 'an adoring and eager disciple throughout'.²⁵ Sparling refers to it as Morris's 'greatest achievement, the glorious *Chaucer*',²⁶ and quotes from A.L. Cotton's encomiastic article in the *Contemporary Review* – 'undoubtedly the noblest book as yet achieved by any English printer' – and the editorial in the *Academy*, 'a great landmark in the history of printing'.²⁷ He also reproduces in his finely printed book the illuminated word 'In' from the *Legenda Ypermis*, and an engraving of Burne-Jones's drawing for the first page of the *Chaucer*, here entitled 'Chaucer and the Birds'. Sparling later makes the very important point that the books of the Kelmscott Press, however impressive, should not be thought of as 'archetypes of perfection to reproduce or approach which all future books are to endeavour or be condemned'; rather, in the Gothic spirit 'as untiringly taught by Morris', they should be seen as a stimulus to the 'free spirit of man' to plan and work towards 'a nobler world in the future'.²⁸ Morris's thought, Sparling eloquently insists, was for the future of humanity, and for him 'the discipline of a living tradition ... has nothing and can have nothing in common with the tyranny or the reign of the dead hand'.²⁹

More down-to-earth in its aims is the Dover *William Morris. Ornamentation & Illustrations from The Kelmscott Chaucer* of 1973. The book reproduces one hundred pages of the *Chaucer* at 72% of their original size – still quite large. All Burne-Jones's eighty-seven woodcut illustrations appear, together with Morris's large borders and decorated initial words, and three double-page spreads. In his Introduction, Fridolf Johnson tells us that in seven years Morris designed no fewer than 664 engraved initials, borders, title-pages, inscriptions, frames and printers' marks, including 384 initials of various sizes.³⁰ He makes an important point about the impression many people have formed of the works of the Kelmscott Press, which ironically this book could serve to perpetuate:

In a Kelmscott book, the decorative borders and large initials are reserved for the opening spread or beginning of a new chapter. The remainder of the pages are quite simple, consisting of text, compactly arranged, perhaps a small initial or two, surrounded by ample, carefully considered white margins. Unhappily, the frequent reproduction of only opening pages gave rise to the misconception that every single page was heavily decorated. This misconception spawned a plethora of overwhelmingly decorated Kelmscott imitations, books stupefying in their monotonous repetition, page after page, of ill-conceived 'designs'.³¹

Elbert Hubbard's Roycroft Press in East Aurora, New York, is fittingly cited as producing 'atrocious specimens of spurious craftsmanship' which had 'a ready sale at the time'.³² Johnson argues that the Press showed Morris's contemporaries 'what a fine thing fine printing can be', and that the 'unity of effect in books that Morris insisted on became a gospel for printers ever since'.³³

Finally we have the distinguished scholarship of Duncan Robinson's *William Morris, Burne-Jones and the Kelmscott Chaucer*, finely produced by Gordon Fraser in 1982; this had originally been published as the *Companion Volume to the Kelmscott Chaucer* when the *Chaucer* was reprinted in facsimile by the Basilisk Press in 1975. In a section entitled 'Structural Work', Robinson comments on the choice of material from the *Canterbury Tales*:

In deciding what to illustrate Burne-Jones showed a clear preference for the more chivalric and courtly elements in Chaucer's work. His early sketches contain marginal notes such as 'no picture to Miller/no picture to Reeve/no picture to Cook's Tale'. All of these, with their bawdy, native humour characteristic of at least half of *The Canterbury Tales*, proved too strong for the delicate feelings of the artist.³⁴

This is largely the case: the tales of the Knight (six illustrations) and the Clerk of Oxenford (also six) receive most attention; but they are followed by the Franklin (five) and the Wife of Bath (four), with the Prioress appearing twice, and the Squire once. Of the other works by Chaucer illustrated, the *Romaunt of the Rose* and the *Tales of Good Wimmen* each receive no fewer than seventeen, and *Troilus and Criseyde* eleven. Robinson provides a detailed account of how carefully Burne-Jones follows his source in the accurate representation of the three different temples in 'The Knight's Tale'³⁵ and illustrates the influence on the designer of early Renaissance painters, especially those of the Siennese school, and of Botticelli and Mantegna.

He also discusses the 'series of formulae' which he believes Burne-Jones employed 'consciously or unconsciously'.³⁶ These particularly concern the treatment of space both indoors and outside, with a flat backdrop and side walls;³⁷ he also uses a kind of 'three-layer composition', with a wall or battlement dividing horizontally.³⁸ But this does not lead to crudity; on the contrary, Burne-Jones uses his formulae with 'subtlety'.³⁹ Finally, the painter is shown to possess a strong attraction to the medieval *hortus inclusus*, as in the Frontispiece, with the figure of Chaucer standing by a well.⁴⁰ Robinson concludes fittingly with Burne-Jones's statement in a letter to C.E. Norton: '... when the book is done ... it will be a little like a pocket cathedral'.⁴¹ Finally Robinson quotes from another Burne-Jones letter: 'my share in it is that of the carver of the images in Amiens, and Morris' that of the Architect and Magister Lapidica ...'⁴² The architectural metaphor may well be appropriate, but is the cathedral one that a modern reader would

care to enter?

The opening spread, of title page and first page of text, showing a figure with a book by a well beside a tree, is probably the best-known part of the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. It establishes the grand scale of the work, with the 425 x 292 mm page, which allows for sixty-three lines of verse or prose in two columns. The opening spread is undoubtedly impressive, with Morris's vigorously flowing borderwork and fine design-backed lettering on the left-hand page, with his border design continuing onto the right-hand page as the frame for Burne-Jones's illustration, with the two columns of text below it, the opening capital W masterly in itself but part of an overall design. Like all the illustrations, this one repays the careful reader with its suggestive qualities: the garden enclosed by trellis, the plants crowded within, the poet looking at his book, his left hand holding a tendril, the tree full of birds, the road leading away into hills beyond, and the water-filled well itself.

These images go well with Chaucer's famous invocation of spring and the beginning of pilgrimages so much part of medieval life, especially in the region of Canterbury, and one cannot fail to be impressed by the skill of all those involved. But does it convey the energetic good humour of the poetry? In her Kelmscott Lecture *The Witch in the Wood*, Amanda Hodgson argued that in the often-repeated frontispiece to *The Wood Beyond the World*, the Maid is an attractive presence, but that 'the illustration as a whole is not about freedom, it is about enclosure'.

She related this to the technique of the woodcut which 'causes her to be on the same plane as the background ... she is placed, flattened, controlled by the representation'.⁴³ Hodgson's argument was advanced in the context of a feminist approach, but perhaps it may be extended: can the little birds and the plant in the foreground break the viewer free from the constrictions of the composition of which they form part? And is there not something slightly disappointing about the text because of the small size of the font? I believe many readers would agree that freedom is not the strongest feeling aroused by these pages.

However, it can well be argued that these are not to be given too much emphasis in an account of a book of 566 pages. As one looks at other illustrations, the deftness of Burne-Jones's art is a continuous source of pleasure. Many of the woodcuts are highly successful, and yield more to the viewer the more they are scrutinised. I respond particularly to the scene opening 'The Knight's Tale', with the two young knights looking sorrowfully out through the bars of their prison cell at the lady whom they both love, as she stands in freedom among plants and birds; by foregrounding the idea of imprisonment, this succeeds in a way that perhaps the opening page discussed above fails to do. I am impressed by the rider admiring the modest young woman on the opening page of 'The Clerk's Tale', and the elegant young women at the beginning of the second part; by the

mounted horseman entering the chamber at the opening of ‘The Squire’s Tale’; by the forlorn maiden by the sea at the beginning of ‘The Man of Law’s Tale’, standing dangerously in the small boat amid the mighty waves and decorative but somehow menacing gulls. But for all one’s admiration, it is still possible to wonder whether the type size is too small to work successfully as text in this context. Many of the pages are of course devoid of illustrations, and these can be very impressive. In this context, it seems to me, the double columns achieve a fine balance, and Morris’s capital letters can give particular pleasure.

So far the discussion has concerned only the illustrations to *The Canterbury Tales*. But, as we have seen, Burne-Jones’s interest extended far beyond these; Chaucer’s more romantic poems, the translation of *The Romaunt of the Rose* and the *Tales of Good Wimmen*, clearly appealed strongly to the illustrator. He was particularly successful in capturing the spirit of *The Romaunt of the Rose*: the scenes with young women standing or dancing on tufty lawn by a flowery trellis are delightful, and the final mysterious vision of The Rose within its enclosure is finely managed. In the *Good Wimmen* series, Thisbe and Dido are treated with particular sympathy. *The Hous of Fame* provoked some unusually dramatic work from Burne-Jones, as in the scene with the giant bird carrying the poet away. The tragic narrative *Troilus and Criseyde*, with which the volume ends, received eleven illustrations, most effectively the one which opens the second book, showing the handsome hero riding past while Criseyde turns her head towards him in an elegantly admiring posture, and the unusually passionate moment when the two lovers first embrace. In these ways Burne-Jones sustained the great work right through to the end, as did Morris with the supportive designs and arrangement of type.

It is also important to recognise the quality of the many spreads which are devoid of illustration and often therefore receive less attention than they deserve in accounts of the book; and there are many such pages. The two sixty-three-line columns of Chaucer type, with Morris’s endlessly inventive capital letters, and occasional use of red in the margins as hanging titles, give thoroughly dignified effect. In my eyes, the typography is at its most effective in the pages of prose; here the columns are indeed solid, and the beauty of the letter forms, together with the generosity of the margins, is easier to appreciate. I hope it is evident from this that I admire the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, but whether this is the best form in which to read that author remains disputable. My experience is that when I come to Gill’s *Canterbury Tales*, I find myself in an altogether more readily enjoyable visual world, and it is this fact that I should like to go on to explore.

THE GOLDEN COCKEREL CANTERBURY TALES

There were only thirty or so years between the two books under discussion, but they were years of great moment. They cover both the appalling suffering of the Great War, and the beginnings of the new cultural movement which was to become known as Modernism, to which the young Gill contributed. When Holliday, in the article cited earlier, explains the social and aesthetic context of Gill's work, Morris is shown to have played a major role. For Morris realised the vital relationship between wood engraving and letterpress printing in which 'the block is printed in the same operation with the text',⁴⁴ which is not the case with intaglio printing (such as etching) or planar printing (such as lithography).⁴⁵ As we are told, Gill started out in the best days of the English Arts & Crafts movement, and shared its enthusiasm for the responsible artist-craftsman working outside the limitations of commerce.⁴⁶ Holliday goes on to show the importance for Gill of the group of artist/craftsmen in Hammersmith at this time, Edward Johnston, Sydney Cockerell, T. J. Cobden Sanderson and Emery Walker: all, like Morris, believed that the maker of books should 'regard the double page of text and illustrations as a whole', preferably using wood-engravings in the process.⁴⁷ Johnston praised Morris's recognition of the congruity between engraving and printing: 'Of all the 'processes' wood engraving agrees best with printing. The splendid effect of Title and Initial pages engraved in wood may be seen in the books of the Kelmscott Press'.⁴⁸ It is from this background that Gill's art grew. But it grew beyond its sources and in new ways.

Gill left Hammersmith for Ditchling in Sussex in 1907; here he developed rapidly from someone mainly concerned with lettering in its various forms, from tombstones to typography, to an adventurous sculptor in the new direct-carving mode. He was supported in this by prominent figures in the art world such as Roger Fry and William Rothenstein.⁴⁹ But he retained his enthusiasm for lettering, and this led him in 1924 to Robert Gibbings, who had recently taken over the Golden Cockerel Press at Waltham St Lawrence near Twyford in Berkshire with ambitious plans for the Press. Gibbings was, in MacCarthy's words, 'an artist as well as an entrepreneur',⁵⁰ who contacted a number of engravers whose work he admired to produce work for the Press. Gill, an enthusiastic convert to Roman Catholicism, was the only one to turn him down – on the grounds that Gibbings was not a Roman Catholic. But he changed his mind when Gibbings agreed to publish a small book of poems by Gill's sister Enid, and after this Gill went on to become Gibbings's chief collaborator during the decade, producing engravings for *The Song of Songs* in 1925, *Troilus and Criseyde* in 1927, *The Canterbury Tales* between 1929 and 1931, and *The Four Gospels* in 1931. (The last mentioned has also been produced recently in facsimile by the Folio Society). MacCarthy remarks that, although other prominent designers worked for the Press, including John

Farleigh, Blair Hughes-Stanton, John Nash, Eric Ravilious and David Jones, 'it was the books and later on the typeface designed ... by Gill which made the reputation of the Golden Cockerel. They have a forcefulness and clarity that still excites one'.⁵¹

It was Gibbings who chose the texts for publication, with a necessary eye to a likely market. Chaucer was a sound choice, but it will be noted that, unlike Morris, Gibbings did not think it appropriate to place Chaucer's two greatest works in the same book. He did not have the allegiance of Morris and Burne-Jones to the medieval poet and all his works, and nor did Gill. Indeed, MacCarthy's biography contains no reference at all to Chaucer's poetry; and Holliday remarks that 'he regarded his work on this project as a jobbing commission'.⁵²

However, a jobbing commission undertaken by Gill with Gibbings was likely to produce a fine book. Gibbings made the decisions about type face and margins, no doubt in co-operation with Gill. For type, he chose Caslon Old Face, a font popular with Arts and Crafts typographers, in 18 point, a large size. In his *Essay on Typography* in 1931, Gill discussed type sizes in relation to page sizes. He claimed that there were usually four sizes of book, each of which should be accompanied by an appropriate size of type: the pocket book, the book to be held in the hand, the table book and the lectern book: 'Table books and lectern books, normally read further from the eye, demand types of still larger sizes, say 14 or 18 point or over.'⁵³ *The Canterbury Tales* clearly falls into one of these larger categories – the page size was to be 12.2 by 7.2 inches (309 mm x 183 mm). With top margins of 1.5 inches (38 mm) and bottom margins of 3.5 (89 mm), this allowed the printing of thirty lines to the page. To complement the poetry, Gill provide one full-page wood engraving, that for the title page, followed by twenty-six half-page engravings (one for each of the title pages of the Tales and three others), numerous border decorations, tailpieces and line fillings, and over sixty initial letters, some printed in red and blue, while the prose sections are left without illustrations.⁵⁴

But Gill's procedure was, according to Holliday, more revolutionary than this description may seem to imply. For the scenes he designed – and here the contrast with Burne-Jones is evident – 'have more to do with decoration than with illustration'.⁵⁵ This was not an accidental effect; it was one of which Gill was well aware, and which he vigorously defended on several occasions. In the Preface to a book of his engravings published in 1934 he wrote:

As to my lack of emotional display I think the business of wood engraving is very much like the business of typography. I think tenderness and warmth in such things are not to be looked at except in the workmanship. You do not want the designer of printing types to wear his heart on his sleeve – my engravings are, I admit, only a kind of printer's flowers.⁵⁶

He put the same point in a letter to Herbert Furst in February 1939: 'the engraving is part of the typography'.⁵⁷ Holliday's case is that Gill was 'concerned exclusively with the *mise en page*'. All the elements of the page must work together, with no single element allowed to assume prominence. In the present case, Gill's intention was 'to rejoice in the Tales rather than to retell them'.⁵⁸ All in all, Holliday claims, this amounts to the birth of a new typographical style, 'a particular variety of English Modernism'.⁵⁹ Later, in an appreciative Appraisal of Gill's work, he develops the argument, pointing out that many of the border engravings were recycled from the Golden Cockerel *Troilus and Criseyde* and that Gill used each of the engravings he made for the Tales more than once: this is seen as evidence that 'Gill conceived them to be decorative ... The imagery is not determined by Chaucer's poem. Rather, its function is to frame the text areas on the page'.⁶⁰ This is an interesting claim. Is it the case that wood-engravings may be related to text in two different ways – as illustration and as decoration – that are usually not distinguished from each other? The argument can of course be extended to all forms of visual material placed in association with texts, as in medieval manuscripts as well as modern novels. As far as the latter are concerned, the illustrated form has never been popular, presumably because readers prefer to 'see' the characters in their own way; I may not like an illustrator's version of Heathcliff's Cathy or Heathcliff himself. The same problem arises in connection with films based on well-liked novels. Although the distinction may not be absolute, there is clearly a range of visual material from the illustrative to the decorative, and Gill's work falls into the second category.

This does not necessarily imply success, however. The question remains as to how well Gill decorates his pages and supplements his texts. Holliday has no doubt as to the skill with which Gill carries out his task: 'Gill's organising principle is masterful', he tells us, with, as its norm, a leafy stem growing up each page, in which a great variety of leaves and fruits⁶¹ and human figures⁶² appear. This is convincing: the stems on all the pages of poetry bring the eye inward from either side of side of the page: integration is beautifully achieved. The decorative stems lead the eye to focus on the text, and are seldom so emphatic as to distract from it. Thus they generally contribute to an agreeable and relaxed mood. Holliday remarks on the variety of what is shown: 'Gill depicts a *comédie humaine* of figures which are historical and mythological, religious and fanciful, and which are presented in a range of poses and combinations.' But he insists that Gill always maintains 'the typographical integrity of the double-page spread of printed text'.⁶³ This seems to me to be the case; the reader may linger briefly and pleasurably over the doleful male at the bottom of page 42, who is balanced by the doleful female on the opposite page, or over the pointing fairy figure on page 564 and the male writer with quill and book on the opposite page, but the text remains neatly within both stems on all occasions.

The more elaborate engravings might be expected to come nearer to the category of 'illustration', but are effectively sketchy rather than detailed. They often contain an erotic element characteristic of Gill, as on the title page where figures of Cupid and Venus beside an upstanding cockerel. Gill seldom neglects an opportunity to depict female breasts, but these create as much a decorative as an erotic effect. He opens the 'Prologue' with a picture of the knights about to attack 'the holy blisful martir', Thomas à Beckett, a scene not in Chaucer but which is appropriate to the pilgrimage about to be undertaken. The engraving celebrates the sanctity of the martyr, but the drama of the scene is played down: the three prominent knights form a decorative pattern, if a threatening one, behind the kneeling Thomas. The opening of 'The Knight's Tale' shows two lovers looking out from their cell at the lady, who is smelling a flower from the right-hand stem. Integrity of the page is beautifully achieved. Gill clearly enjoyed the opportunity to depict the less chivalric behaviour shown in 'The Miller's Tale' – introduced with a depiction of an old man asleep while young lovers celebrate with wine – and 'The Reeve's Tale' – young lovers embracing on a bed, with a baby in a manger at its foot. 'The Man of Law's Tale' produced Gill's most poignant scene, showing Constance, the heroine, with her baby in the boat in which they were sent off to meet their fate. Holliday praises it as 'perhaps the crowning achievement of his designs for *The Canterbury Tales*.'⁶³ He goes on:

Like Burne-Jones in the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, Gill shows her in the boat, but instead of carrying a crucifix, she cradles her child in her arms. The child appears only later in the Tale, so again Gill has taken licence in his rendition by giving his illustration a Catholic – in truth, a Marian – overtone.⁶⁴

It may be significant that Holliday uses the term 'illustration'; the reader does feel as if he is somehow entering into the narrative. But Holliday insists, convincingly, that the illustration is 'emblematic rather than realistic' and that the 'integrity of the page is maintained'.⁶⁵ Other highly effective title-pieces include that for 'The Pardoner's Tale', with the three wealth-seekers looking down, not realising that they are on the way to meet the figure of Death; the splendid figure of the Squire on horseback at the start of his Tale and the fine Pegasus at its close; the weird alchemical experiments of 'The Canon Yeoman's Tale'; and the scene of penitence and forgiveness which introduces 'The Parson's Tale'.

However, perhaps the main reason for the reader's pleasure in this book is simply the splendid quality of the typeface in its 18-point form. The thirty-line page of this type is comfortable to read. Thus the pages of the prose *Tales*, which remain unillustrated, look splendid, enlivened as they are here and there with splendid red capital letters. The final page contains the last part of Chaucer's

'retracciouns' of the works he had come to consider sinful, and reaches an impressive end with the final statement in splendid red capitals in lines of reducing length culminating in AMEN on a line of its own – a fine example of the power of simple typography.

CONCLUSION

I began with my sense of aesthetic preference for *The Canterbury Tales* over the Kelmscott *Chaucer*. In trying to account for this, I have found myself largely in agreement with the arguments put forward by Peter Holliday, a twentieth-century scholar of typography of a generation not far from my own. Holliday compared the two books, remarking first on what they share: 'In common with its magisterial predecessor, it reveals a unity of design across the page openings. Text, image and margins harmonise flawlessly to serve the printed text.'⁶⁶ But in Gill's book, he argues, the atmosphere has changed dramatically: 'But now, in contrast to the Kelmscott tome, light, space and arabesques prevail. A distinct *joie de vivre* has entered in.'⁶⁷ To support his case, Holliday argues that the 'decorative embellishments' with 'trailing leafy stems' often intertwined with figures, do not 'create a tendrilled moody languor'⁶⁸ but rather express a form of classical detachment. Terms like 'tome' and 'moody languor' may be slightly tendentious with reference to the Kelmscott *Chaucer*, but there can be no doubt in my mind about the *joie de vivre* embodied in the later book, and its stronger appeal to readers of my generation. It would be interesting to know the responses of readers younger than myself.

What is it that makes a page of the Kelmscott *Chaucer* a challenge rather than a delight? It has to do with the overall weight of the page. If there is an illustration, the amount of detail in Burne-Jones's wonderfully conscientious work calls the reader in to the task of interpretation rather than encouraging continuous reading. Morris's inventive borders contain but also slightly darken the text in a way that Gill's, with their airy simplicity, do not. And where there is no illustration, the two sixty-three-line columns of 12-point type on the large page do not make for easy reading. We may recall Gill's views about size of type in relation to size of page. The crucial decision made by Morris was to move from Troy to Chaucer as the typeface for the book. It is pointless but not unpleasing to muse on the question of what might have happened if Morris had been prepared to see his *Chaucer* go into more than one volume. By contrast, what particularly encourages the reader of the *Canterbury Tales* to move on with pleasure and sustained interest is the generous size of the splendid type. We have moved from a Gothic Revival work to a modern one, more likely to appeal today, although Morris must be given his due respect, in this sphere as in others, of having been a courageous

and successful pioneer. Gill's success may be seen, in Sparling's terms, as the 'free spirit of man' working towards 'a nobler world in the future'.⁶⁹

This article has been based on a comparison between two facsimiles. Would a comparison between the originals lead to different conclusions? I do not think so. It would of course be a great pleasure to encounter these books in their true forms, to enjoy the superb quality of the paper and the ink on the page, which cannot be approached in a facsimile. But I do not believe that the overall experiences of the reader would be so different as to disprove the argument that I have been putting forward.

NOTES

1. Peter Holliday, *The Golden Cockerel Press, The Canterbury Tales and Eric Gill: Decoration and the Mise en Page*, London: The Folio Society, 2010, 50 pp. Originally published in *Chaucer Illustrated: Five Hundred years of The Canterbury Tales*, edited by William Finley and Joseph Rosenblum, London: Oak Knoll Press and The British Library, 2003, Folio edition, 253 pp. Subsequently Holliday.
2. William S. Peterson, *A Bibliography of the Kelmscott Press*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984, p.106. Subsequently Peterson.
3. Peterson, p. 106.
4. Peterson, p. xxi.
5. Peterson, p. xxi.
6. Peterson, p. 106.
7. Peterson, p. 106.
8. Peterson, p. xxii.
9. Peterson, p. 106.
10. Peterson, p. 104.
11. Peterson, p. 104.
12. Peterson, pp. xxix–xxx.
13. Norman Kelvin, ed, *The Collected Letters of William Morris*. 4 vols. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1984–96, Vol. IV, p. 132. Subsequently Kelvin.
14. Kelvin, Vol. IV, p. 181.
15. Kelvin, Vol. III, p. 476; a note quotes the *Athenaeum* for 22 October 1892 as telling its readers that 'the artist has made very great progress with a series of designs, fifty or sixty in all, which are to be cut in wood under his own superintendence ... These designs promise to be charmingly graceful and beautiful in execution'.

16. Seth Lerer, ed, *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, p.334.
17. Peterson, pp. 108–9.
18. Peterson, p. 109.
19. Peterson, p. 109.
20. Georgiana Burne-Jones, *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, Macmillan 1904; Lund Humphries Publishers, London, 1993, Vol. II, p. 217. Subsequently *Memorials*.
21. *Memorials*, Vol. I, p. 104.
22. *Memorials*, Vol. II, p. 217.
23. *Memorials*, Vol. II, p. 217
24. *Memorials*, Vol. II, p. 259.
25. H. Halliday Sparling, *The Kelmscott Press and William Morris Master Craftsman*. London: Macmillan 1924; reissued by Wm. Dawson & Sons, Folkestone, 1975, p.v. Sparling had married May Morris in June 1890, though the marriage was over by May 1894, and Sparling was divorced as the guilty party in 1898. Subsequently Sparling.
26. Sparling, p. 59.
27. Sparling, p. 88.
28. Sparling, p. 130.
29. Sparling, p. 131.
30. *William Morris. Ornamentation & Illustrations from 'The Kelmscott Chaucer.'* New York: Dover, 1973, p.xi. Subsequently Dover.
31. Dover, p. xiii.
32. Dover, p. xiii.
33. Dover, p. xiv.
34. Duncan Robinson, *William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and the Kelmscott Chaucer*, London: Gordon Fraser, 1982, p. 24. Subsequently Robinson.
35. Robinson, p. 26.
36. Robinson, p. 28.
37. Robinson, pp. 28–9.
38. Robinson, p. 29.
39. Robinson, p. 28.
40. Robinson, p. 30.
41. Robinson, p. 36.
42. Robinson, p. 36. A fuller extract from the letter, as given in *Memorials* Vol. II, p. 278, shows Burne-Jones's gratified sense of shared achievement: 'When Morris and I were little chaps at Oxford, if such a book had come out then we should just have gone off our heads, but we have made at the end of our days the very thing we would have made then if we could. It does look Beautiful, and why should I deceive you? and I may say it, for my share in it is

that of the carver of the images in Amiens, and Morris's that of the Architect and Magister Lapidida.' Magister Lapidida means Master Mason.

43. Amanda Hodgson, *The Witch in the Wood. William Morris's Romance Heroines & the Late-Victorian 'New Woman'*, London: The William Morris Society, 2000, p. 25.
44. Holliday, p. 7
45. Holliday, p. 8.
46. Holliday, pp. 8–9.
47. Holliday, p. 15. In her biography of Gill, Fiona MacCarthy offers a lively account of this time and place, in the course of which she describes Walker and Cobden-Sanderson as 'a kind of Laurel and Hardy of fine printing' and Hammersmith as 'a place of history, activity and mild eccentricity'. Fiona MacCarthy, *Eric Gill*. London: Faber & Faber, 1989; 1990, p. 64. Subsequently MacCarthy.
48. Holliday, p. 15. The quotation is from Edward Johnston, *Writing & Illuminating, & Lettering*, London: Sir Isaac Pitman, 1932, p. 364.
49. MacCarthy, p. 97.
50. MacCarthy, p. 186.
51. MacCarthy, p. 187.
52. Holliday, p. 39.
53. Eric Gill, *An Essay on Typography*, 1931, 1936; London: Lund Humphreys, 1988, p. 106, p.107.
54. Holliday, p. 5.
55. Holliday, p. 7.
56. *Engravings 1928–1933 by Eric Gill*, London: Faber & Faber, 1934, Preface, p.v.
57. *Letters of Eric Gill*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1947, pp. 415–6.
58. Holliday, p. 7.
59. Holliday, p. 7.
60. Holliday, p. 31.
61. Holliday, p. 32
62. Holliday, p. 33.
63. Holliday, p. 33.
64. Holliday, p. 36. Morrisians will be delighted to read Holliday's note on this interpretation of the engraving: 'I am indebted to Mr Ray Watkinson, the William Morris scholar, for this insight and for many others, offered so imaginatively.' (Note 41, p. 47)
65. Holliday, p. 37.
66. Holliday, p. 6
67. Holliday, p. 6
68. Holliday, p. 6.
69. Sparling, p. 130.

Reviews

Edited by Peter Faulkner

Denys P. Leighton, ed, *Lives of Victorian Political Figures IV. Volume 2: Thomas Hill Green and William Morris*, London: Pickering & Chatto, 2009, 486 pp. Available only with volumes on Bagehot and J.S. Mill as a set, hbk, £295. ISBN 139781851969197.

In this second volume of the series 'Lives of Victorian Political Figures', Denys Leighton has gathered much contemporary material about the Oxford neo-Hegelian philosopher and Liberal activist T.H. Green and that other, much more radical Oxford product, William Morris. I have suggested in my *William Morris in Oxford: The Campaigning Years, 1879–1895* that Morris's great socialist assault on Oxford from November 1883 to 1885, during which he lectured there five times and founded a branch of the Socialist League in the city, may have been a response to the premature deaths, in March 1882 and March 1883 respectively, of the two Oxonian Liberals, Green and Arnold Toynbee. Could socialism, we may imagine Morris asking himself, fill the intellectual and political gap amidst the dreaming spires which these two figures had left? In this review, however, I shall leave the T.H. Green materials aside and concentrate on Morris.

In the two hundred pages of fascinating Morris material collected here, Leighton mounts a sterling effort to represent a wide range of his subject's activities. J.W. Mackail, Morris's official biographer, makes two appearances. His Independent Labour Party pamphlet *William Morris* (1900) begins on a gloomy political note, since 'even the movement to which Morris devoted the best part of his life has dwindled and darkened: it has lost its high hopes' in gas-and-water municipal socialism; but Mackail none the less applauds Morris's distinctive political aim to 'make socialists', and concludes that he 'never lost the cheery courage that was willing to start over and over again, even with twelve disciples, as he said, or half a dozen'. Mackail's second piece, a 1902 address on 'The Parting of the Ways', delivered at Leek in Staffordshire, nicely evokes Morris's own energetic dyeing phase in that town between 1875 and 1877, and meditates on the shift from liberalism towards socialism which he was undergoing during those years. On the other hand, Mackail does not have things all his own way in this collection, since there

is also an extended anonymous 1899 review of a cluster of recent Morris books which gives his biography quite a drubbing.

Emma Lazarus offers us a very genial evocation of Merton Abbey and Morris's artistic and business endeavours there, though she knows that, 'to American eyes', things English may take on an old-world glow that never was on land or sea. We receive a further overseas perspective from the German 'father of revisionism', Eduard Bernstein, who fondly evokes a London socialist institution I had not previously heard of (but which we might well consider reinventing), the Socialist Supper Club in Soho, which Morris apparently attended, though Hyndman was clearly its presiding genius. There is a clipped but vivid political vignette from Samuel Hobson; for 'When I was a very young man William Morris said to me in his terse way, "Find out about value"'. Other lively documents here are the police report from *The Times* about Morris's arrest on 20 September 1885, and R.B. Cunninghame-Graham's florid but still moving account of his funeral on 6 October 1896; both of these are unfortunately reproduced from the original documents in such a shrunken format that one needs a Sherlock Holmes-style magnifying glass to read them in any comfort.

Other commentators in the collection focus on Morris's literary works. Frederic W. Myers, after a flippant remark that in *News from Nowhere* 'the future of the human race ... is to be a kind of affectionate picnic', actually proceeds to offer us a searching analysis of the tension between paradise and struggle, stasis and motion, in Morris's poetry. Oscar L. Tripp's too general account of Morris's life and works (which seems to me unscrupulously to take several phrases from Emma Lazarus's piece) none the less contains some shrewd observations on Morris's skill as a literary 'colourist' and on 'the pathos of anticipated calamity' which characterises much of his writing. Peter Kropotkin, in his moving obituary of Morris, makes the challenging observation that *News from Nowhere* is 'the most thoroughly and deeply Anarchistic conception of future society that has ever been written' – though if it was that in its own day, it has surely since been pipped at the post by Ursula Le Guin's utopian novel *The Dispossessed* (1975).

Leighton's selection of materials on Morris in this collection – which includes many other good things there is not space to note here – is always instructive and often entertaining, and many of the items gathered contain curious and memorable Morrisian details beyond their overt literary or political purposes. S.G. Hobson reports from Kelmscott House that Morris 'told me that his grandfather had caught salmon just there'; could that conceivably be true? Mackail adds to the series of recurrent Morrisian phrases he gave us in his biography, noting here another 'phrase which must have clung deep in his [Morris's] mind, for he quotes it again and again in his private letters, "he that shall endure shall be saved"'. The anonymous author of the attack on Mackail identifies himself as the original

witness of a fine anti-Oxford formulation of Morris's which I quoted in *William Morris and Oxford* from a much later source: 'after what he considered the desecration of St Mary's [Church], he could never enter the city again "unless they make me drunk at the station"'. I knew that Morris had been reading Richard Jeffries' *After London* on his visit to Edward Carpenter in Millthorpe in 1885, but not that, in Carpenter's own words, 'he read page after page of it to us with glee that evening as we sat round the fire'. Nor did I know, as Henry Salt assures us here, that Morris was fascinated by the doggerel stanza: 'See o'er the sea Flamingos flaming go,/The Lark hies high, the Swallow follows low,/The Bees are busy on their threshold old,/And Lambs lament within their threefold fold'. Denys Leighton's admirable collection thus gives us much of the necessary personal quirkiness of William Morris, as well as many fine contemporary evocations of his political, artistic and literary endeavours.

Tony Pinkney

William E. Fredeman *et alia*, *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The Last Decade, 1873–1882, Kelmscott to Birchington*. Vol. VII, 1875–1877. Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2008, £125. ISBN 9781843841340; *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The Last Decade, 1873–1882. Kelmscott to Birchington*. Vol. VIII, 1878–1879. Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 2009, £125. ISBN 9781843841319.

It is a pleasure to be able to welcome the continuation of this impressive edition of D.G. Rossetti's correspondence, inaugurated by William Fredeman, carried on by a distinguished group of American scholars, and finely published by D.S. Brewer. It is inevitably the case, because of the less-than-happy shape taken by Rossetti's life, that these later volumes lack the richness and vitality found in the earlier ones, but there is still a good deal to enjoy and admire. These five years show Rossetti trying to keep his life and artistic practice going despite the health problems in which his taking of chloral played a significant part, as carefully explained by the editors in VII, 308–9. But when depression lifted, he could still give abundant evidence of his generosity to fellow artists and his concern for those suffering either financially or in spirit. Above all, we see him, particularly in his correspondence with F.J. Shields, trying to help their common friend James Smetham, who had become bedridden and uncommunicative, leaving his wife Sarah perplexed and fundless.

The letters to Sarah herself are models of tact. Rossetti writes to many friends and patrons to ask for their help in this crisis, with a good deal of success. And he also writes supportively to old friends such as William Bell Scott and Dr Gordon Hake, and to newer acquaintances such as the dealer Edmund Bates, the pitman

poet Joseph Skipsey, and the young writer Hall Caine; the letters show his admiration for the skill of the youthful James Allen in the cutting of silhouettes, and of the dramatist Charles Wells, who died in February 1879 and whom he places improbably near to Shakespeare. His generous response to the poetry of Skipsey, whose subject-matter of industrial life is so distant from his own, is attractive evidence of his range of sympathy; of Skipsey's work in comparison with his own, he writes to Thomas Dixon, 'Mine are full of work which is art-study & speaks a much less universal language than his own.' (VIII, 183)

His relations with his brother William and his old friend Ford Madox Brown went through bad periods in these years, but recovered by the end. His unfortunate choice of Howell as his agent still left difficulties, but he was helped by his young assistants Henry Treffrey Dunn, George Hake (though he forfeited the service of the latter in 1877) and latterly Hall Caine, and by his most constant friend and advisor, Theodore Watts-Dunton. Other correspondents who meant much to him in these years included his mother (with whom he and Christina shared the sad loss of his sister Maria in 1877), Mrs. Cowper-Temple (whom he describes in a letter to Watts-Dunton as 'my most womanly & most queenly hostess' [VII, 298]), and Alice Boyd, to whom he writes on 24 August 1875: 'The sight of your writing is so welcome beyond almost any other friend's that I must avail myself of a rest in my day's work & write in time for post' – although the editorial note tells us that 'AB's letter of the preceding day contained little news ...'

Jane Morris continues to occupy the most important place in his affections. The letters to Jane have been published before and so contain no surprises, but they still give striking evidence of how much she had come to mean to him. They include letters about the arrangements for the settling on Jane of the £1,000 that Rossetti received on the breakup of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. Very unusually for him, he concludes a brief note to Jane, when she was setting out with the girls for Italy in November 1877, with the words 'God bless you'. A long and unusually relaxed letter of 19 December 1877 jokes about the girls, presumably following their father's enthusiasm, as possibly being 'bent on talking Icelandic in Italy'; gives affectionate news of Marie Stillman, who was sitting for him, and of her family, Lisa, Bella and 'little Effie'; tells of his selling to a new buyer, Mr. Turner, his *Proserpine* and 'the little picture of you painted at Kelmscott' (*Water Willow*); points out what he sees as the disadvantages of 'the house in Hammersmith Mall' – 'the garden is generally being overflowed by the Thames'; and concludes with a lengthy 'amusing anecdote' about Howell and Whistler.

In 1878 – the year producing most letters of these five years – Jane was written to in Italy on 10 February about his difficulty in finding a house to move to from Cheyne Walk – he was never to find one – and about Morris's political activities: 'Morris, I hear, is dealing about him on all sides, & you will see my prophecy as to his parliamentary career will come true yet'; Rossetti evidently assumes that

anyone seriously concerned about politics will end up an parliament. The next sentence expresses the concern of a man who was never financially confident: 'However I suppose the picture market will soon be nowhere'. An editorial note confirms this, referring to Gerald Reitlinger's 1961 book *The Economics of Taste*. The letter ends with a reference to a recent visit from P.P. Marshall 'in his usual condition': 'His leading opinion, as I gathered it, is that he ought to shoot down every man he ever knew if he would not be hanged for doing so.' The note tells us a little about Marshall, a founding member of the Firm who 'dropped out when the company was reconstituted in 1875', but makes no comment on his 'usual condition'. Perhaps the most moving of these letters is that of 31 May 1878 in which Rossetti responds to a letter in which Jane told him she had put off a visit because she feared that he would be distressed by her thinness and 'altered looks'. He denies strongly that her looks could have affected his desire to see her: 'The supposition would be an outrage to my deep regard for you, – a feeling far deeper (though I know you never believed me) than I have entertained towards any other living creature at any time of my life'. It comes as a relief to the reader when he goes on to suggest that Jane should take cod-liver oil.

His sense of fun is still able to show itself on occasion, as in his letter to the Morris girls at Christmas 1871 signed 'The Third Gravedigger' and announcing a Christmas Box about to be sent containing 'all Fiends, Spectres, Vampires and other persons of any interest' from 'a well-known series of the British Drama'. His response to the suggestion of F. G. Stephens in a letter of 15 April 1877 that he might consider joining the committee of the newly established SPAB is both amusing and sensible: 'As regards to Top's Society, really I feel so much of an Ancient Monument myself that to sit on a committee for my own preservation might seem like "pardonable egotism". Seriously however, I of course sympathise completely with his & your views, but would feel rather a humbug from my complete inactivity even as to attending meetings. This I wrote to him'. (VII, 376).

The editorial note comments on the foundation of the Society, but makes no reference to a letter from Rossetti to Morris on the subject; no such letter is included here. Kelvin's edition of Morris's letters shows that he wrote to Rossetti – 'My dear Gabriel' – on 3 April asking him to give his name for the committee and concluding 'Please answer', but no answer is recorded there either. We must assume that the letter has disappeared. Rossetti's humour is evident too when he comments that the Evangelicals holding a conference on the Cowper-Temples' estate treat him with 'the utmost toleration ... as an entirely foreign substance'. (VII, 298) He seems to have found in Aglaia Coronio a woman of entertainingly strong opinions; he writes to Jane on 9 October 1879, 'Aglaia's attitude when here would have amused you. The number of people she managed to be nasty about was surprising. Her hatred ... for Poynter & scorn of his works, was very marked.'

References to Morris, as is well known, lack the generosity Rossetti showed to most of his acquaintances. He implies that Morris paid too little attention to Jane's health in taking over Kelmscott House (in which he had originally been interested himself) despite the damp Rossetti attributed to its situation. On 1 August 1879 he remarks to Jane, about a collection being made on behalf of Keats's surviving sister, in terms that suggest he feels that she has been corrupted by Morris's political ideas: 'I know it is vain to try & interest you in such subjects as the sale of Smetham's pictures, or anything one is able to do for any poor unit like oneself & not for wholesale mankind. I suppose Top never gave one farthing to Keats's sister, but then he writes long epistles on every public event'. More amusingly, he writes to Jane on 15 August 1879, 'Ellis I hear has gone to Kelmscott, so I suppose Top is tugging & blaspheming in a boat with him, while he indulges in sonorous British guffaws'.

There are occasional interesting comments about artists, including Guido Reni ('in Guido & those later men I have always thought the soul to be too visibly in a minor ratio, as compared to the body', [VII, 11]) and Botticelli (Fairfax Murray brings 'a most divine Holy Family [photo] in which the Infant Christ is kissing the little St. John – really sweet beyond Words'. [VIII, 331]). Of his own art we learn a certain amount, though a good deal more about his complex relations with his various patrons, and his anxieties over the possible over-exposure of his work, as well as over the fakes that turn up on the market, probably as the result of the dubious activities of Howell, of whom Rossetti remains surprisingly protective. He turns down an invitation to exhibit at the new Grosvenor Gallery in 1877, but indicates to other correspondents later that he is not uninterested in the possibility. His attitude to Ruskin is distinctly unsympathetic, and he finds the Whistler/Ruskin case entertaining rather than deeply significant. He writes to Shields on 26 November 1878, 'What a lark the Whistler case is! I must say, he shone in the box. The fool of an Attorney General was nowhere. I am glad to see that Ruskin is not to be hauled out'. And on 27 November he writes to Marie Stillman, 'What a tremendous piece of fun is the Whistler-Ruskin trial! I forget which of the two litigants you hate the most cordially'. But he adds, more humanely, that he thinks Whistler should have had the costs, 'as I fear the poor fellow must be viewed as ruined', since the pleasure gardens by the Thames have recently been closed so that 'a Fire-King is no longer wanted at Cremorne'. He goes further in the conclusion of a letter to Jane on Xmas Eve 1879, 'I wish I had more news – for instance such tidings as that Ruskin was hanged or something equally welcome. But I haven't, so its (*sic*) no use going on'. His sense of himself as an outsider is suggested by his punning remark on the same day to Edmund Bates, who had loaned a copy of Rossetti's poems to a clergyman: 'I ... apprehend that there may be things here & there in the book which might rather ruffle the nap of "The Cloth", though not a line that is vile, by God!'

The format of the edition, with its introductory documentation for each year in the form of a list of Major Works, a Summary of the year's letters, and a Chronology, makes it easy to put the events into sequence, and the annotations are usually full and accurate, though occasionally one feels that the main point has not been addressed. For example, when Rossetti tells Scott that his brother William has been 'kicked off *The Academy* 'in the coolest way ever heard of' (VIII, 134), the note simply tells us that the editor replaced William with J.W. Comyns Carr on 14 June 1878. Although perfection is not to be expected even in scholarship of this quality, it is surprising to encounter the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings in a note on VII, 297, and Algaia Coronio, in capitals, at VIII, 52. A note on VII, 457 states, not altogether accurately, alas!, that 'Kelmscott House is now the headquarters of the William Morris Society'.

The appearance and printing of the books is a credit to the publishers; the title is printed separately and gummed attractively into the cover. Each volume contains a well-chosen coloured frontispiece, *La Bella Mano* in Vol. VII and *A Vision of Fiammetta* in Vol. VIII. The black-and-white illustrations are fewer than in Norman Kelvin's edition of Morris's letters, consisting of six in the first volume, including two of Rossetti's Fanny Cornforth Elephants, and four in the eighth, including Brown's caricature of the portly Rossetti lying back with his feet up on the back of the couch at Cheyne Walk, drawn on a visit there by Brown in August 1879 and described by the editors as 'Hogarthian'. (VIII, 330) Some three years of Rossetti's life remain to be covered by this scholarly undertaking, and although these will necessarily contain much sombre material, we nevertheless look forward to them and are grateful to all the scholars contributing to this large-scale and important work.

Peter Faulkner

Kevin Jackson *The Worlds of John Ruskin*, London: Pallas Athene & The Ruskin Foundation, 2009, 159 pp, £14.99. ISBN 9781843680444

I have been wondering, if I were given the task of 'turning someone on' to Ruskin, how I would go about it, and to be honest, I doubt that I would put this book into their hands. There are many books about Ruskin, and I have read quite a few of them. Kevin Jackson, I am sure, has read more, and I do not doubt that he has also read more of Ruskin himself than I have, though I have read a fair bit. His is a good book, I think, but reading it with the responsibility of writing a review has caused me to question the usefulness of any 'Introduction' to Ruskin's work, or at least to recognise that it does not really matter how one is persuaded to read him as long as read him one eventually does. My own starting point, for what it is worth, came in 1973 with no weighty or dignified tome but in a Shire book, *An*

Illustrated Life of John Ruskin, 1819–1900, by James S. Dearden.

Dearden did the job for me, though, and I daresay no one will come to any harm if their first acquaintance with Ruskin comes through Kevin Jackson. Appreciating Ruskin is rather like learning to swim, however, and a time comes when one has to stop faffing around in the shallows with water-wings, jump in at the deep end, and tackle the five volumes and three respectively of *Modern Painters* (1843–60) and *The Stones of Venice* (1851–53). Nothing can really prepare one for that experience, either for the effort involved (of course there are longueurs, but you have to soldier on) or for the pleasure afforded.

Reading one of the big Ruskins is like going for a very long walk with a stiff climb at the end. Your feet hurt, and so do your knees and hips. There are moments of despair when you reach the crest of a ridge and realise that you are not as close to your destination as you had imagined. At the summit, though, there is much more to be enjoyed than the mere satisfaction of having successfully endured to the end. It is only when you review the experience from that final vantage point that you can appreciate the whole shape of the thing. Different examples will occur to other people, but I remember thinking that Alain Resnais' *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* was interminably dull whilst I was watching it, and coming round to the view that it was a masterpiece from which not a frame could be removed without loss by the time the lights came up at last.

There is also a very useful comparison to be made between listening to the whole of Wagner's *Ring* cycle and ploughing through *Modern Painters* volumes one to five. In the end, albums of highlights just will not suffice. Nor is there much point in excerpting Ruskin. *Fronde Agrestes* will not do, and neither will Kenneth Clark's *John Ruskin: Selected Writings*. It is difficult to say what is the essence of the man (it is not for nothing that the title of Jackson's book refers to the 'worlds' of John Ruskin) but it is safe to say that it does not reside in brevity (Jackson notes without comment Clive Wilmer's suggestion that Ruskin's 'chronic inability to bring any of his books to a satisfactory conclusion' might be a symptom of bipolar disorder). I think that there may be something self-defeating about the very idea of a short book on John Ruskin (though clearly Jackson disagrees with me: not only has he written one, but in his recommendations for further reading at its end he lauds the biographies by Robert Hewison and Francis O'Gorman as 'refreshingly brief').

The pleasures of reading Ruskin, for me, are two-fold. His prose can be extraordinarily beautiful. Again, other people will know their own favourite passages but no-one, surely, will disagree when I cite as one example the section near the beginning of the famous chapter 'The Nature of Gothic' in volume II of *The Stones of Venice*, when he imagines the northbound migratory flight of birds:

Let us, for a moment, try to raise ourselves even above the level of their flight, and imagine the Mediterranean lying beneath us like an irregular lake, and all its ancient promontories sleeping in the sun: here and there an angry spot of thunder, a grey stain of storm, moving upon the burning field; and here and there a fixed wreath of white volcano smoke, surrounded by its circle of ashes; but for the most part a great peacefulness of light, Syria and Greece, Italy and Spain, laid like pieces of a golden pavement into the sea-blue, chased, as we stoop nearer to them, with bossy beaten work of mountain chains, and glowing softly with terraced gardens, and flowers heavy with frankincense, mixed among masses of laurel, and orange, and plummy palm, that abate with their grey-green shadows the burning of the marble rocks, and of the ledges of porphyry sloping under lucent sand.

‘There is in you something of prophet, of priest, and of poet’, gushed the young Oscar Wilde in a letter to Ruskin (Jackson quotes it), ‘and to you the gods gave eloquence such as they have given to none other, so that your message might come to us with the fire of passion, and the marvel of music, making the deaf to hear, and the blind to see’. The gods denied him other gifts, though. His love life was a notorious disaster area and his mental health was not to be relied upon.

Nonetheless (for me) the other great pleasure of reading Ruskin is the sense of contact with his mind. However elaborate the rolling periods of his prose (and some of his sentences go on for whole wonderful, fissiparous paragraphs, splitting and sub-dividing into clause after clause. Look again at the extract above – one sentence, and far from being one of his longest) and however complex his argument, one never seems quite to lose awareness of the man behind the words. Thin-skinned and uningratiating, yes, but how lucid! And there is a quality to his intelligence – alpine might almost be the best word for it – an impression of unimpeded perspectives and fresh air – that is extraordinarily attractive. But then there is the question of his ‘madness’, as Jackson calls it. ‘Ruskin’s enemies’, he suggests, ‘have always liked to say that the madness of the last years is already present in the eccentricities and quirks of the earlier writing. His admirers’, he goes on, and I begin to bridle, ‘see little if any connection, save in the sense that the savage indignation stirred in him by the vile things he saw may have been more than the most robust mind could bear’.

Hang on! First, surely, the antitheses of ‘Ruskin’s enemies’, the people who hate him, should be not merely those who admire him but those who love him (and how can one withhold love from the writer of a passage such as the one quoted above)? And second (I am sure that all members of the William Morris Society will have experienced the same reaction to Jackson’s suggestion as I did) Morris felt just as savage an indignation as Ruskin, but bore it without going

mad, and did something about it. Ruskin never possessed 'the most robust mind'. Insofar as he was aware that he was 'damaged', the man himself (in a letter to his father written just before the older man died) sought an explanation in his childhood (he was coddled and indulged but simultaneously domineered over by truly appalling parents), and I am sure that most modern psychologists would agree. He was obsessive, absolutely sure that he was right, and (at least in his writing) uninterruptably garrulous. As early as 1849, his poor wife Effie wrote to her parents: 'John excites the liveliest astonishment to all and sundry in Venice and I do not think they have made up their minds yet whether he is very mad or very wise.' Jackson wonders whether she was quite sure herself.

I do not see why we cannot decide that he was both, and celebrate the fact. Ruskin was a strange man, in ways which were reflected both in the greatness of his writing and in the eventual disintegration of his sanity. This is not to say that he was actually 'mad' when he wrote *Modern Painters* or to harp on the 'eccentricities and quirks' of his writing, which are not its defining characteristic (and it certainly does not make me one of 'Ruskin's enemies'). That Ruskin was what he was turned out to be a good thing for the world, though uncomfortable for him and the people around him. As George II said when people criticised his great commander, James Wolfe, 'Mad, is he? Then I hope he will bite some of my other generals'.

Simon Poë

Andrew Saint, *Richard Norman Shaw* (Revised Edition), New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010, 498 pp., 349 pls, £40.00. ISBN 9780300152666.

The first edition of Andrew Saint's *Richard Norman Shaw* is now something of a classic. Published in 1976 to much critical acclaim, it set a benchmark for architectural biographies. Its success can be measured by the fact that during the intervening thirty-four years, few scholars have ventured to tackle an architect who, in his own time, was spoken of in the same breath as Wren. This apparent lack of interest is acknowledged by Saint, who in the Preface to this Revised Edition, ponders that he might have 'killed him'. In a sense this is true, as it is difficult to see how the first edition could be bettered as the definitive work on the architect.

In terms of size, the second edition has grown in height and width (and weighs over 1 kg more). This increase is largely in order to accommodate the excellent, specially commissioned colour photographs by Martin Charles. It also allows the earlier photographs, drawings and plans to be given the space on the page they deserve. The quality of reproduction has also been upgraded, and the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art in association with Yale University Press has produced a very handsome book.

Contrary to Yale's launch publicity, revisions to the text, as the author points out in the Preface, are 'light to middling'. Since the first edition appeared, little new information about Shaw has emerged, but where it has this has been incorporated, such as in the expanded section on Cragside which concludes Chapter 2. The most notable addition to the text is the introductory essay. Here Saint re-assesses Norman Shaw's career and reputation in the context of an increased understanding of the architectural climate of the period: an exercise which would have been far more difficult during the 1970s when the subject was comparatively unstudied. Conversely, increased academic interest and consequent expansion of the pantheon of 'great' Victorian and Edwardian architects may have partially eclipsed Shaw, who no longer stands so above and apart.

In the new Introduction, Andrew Saint explores the reasons for this apparent diminution of reputation. Amongst the explanations, the author identifies the eclectic nature of Norman Shaw's work, which makes him a difficult architect to pigeonhole stylistically. The broad classifications of 'Old English' and 'Queen Anne' are convenient labels, but do not begin to do justice to just how fresh and free Norman Shaw's domestic designs appeared during the 1860s and 1870s, as the Gothic Revival began to lose momentum. Shaw did use Gothic for the handful of churches he designed, and late in his career his domestic and commercial architecture also embraced Classicism. This eclecticism, often evident within a single building, makes the study of Shaw challenging. Saint tackles this head-on, comprehensively dealing with the full breadth of Shaw's work.

Of all Norman Shaw's buildings it is perhaps his early country houses, designed for the prosperous middle-classes on their way up, which stick in the memory. Shaw instinctively understood his clients' requirements, and in order to accommodate them, he needed a new, less formal kind of house. In the picturesque, vernacular style known as 'Old English' he found the additive architectural vocabulary which gave the flexibility of plan and elevation he required. With his early commissions in and around what was to become the London commuter-belt, and in Shropshire and Northumbria, Norman Shaw redefined the English country home.

This 'Old English' style drew most heavily on the vernacular buildings of south-east England, which Shaw, with his early architectural partner W.E. Nesfield, visited on a sketching tour of the Sussex Weald in 1862. In Shaw's hands, the tall brick chimneys, tile-hanging, mullioned windows with leaded lights, and timber-framing of the Sussex Weald were, however, transported far away from their traditional heartland; in the case of the magnificent Cragside, to a rocky hillside in distant Northumbria. Neither did Shaw always use these vernacular elements in an authentic manner. In particular, the non-structural applied half-timbering remains an anathema to those, sympathetic to Morris and the SPAB, who maintain that 'truth to materials' is paramount. In terms of 'authenticity',

it is easier to justify Shaw's use of iron girders, upon which his 'half-timbered' overhangs, as well as other structural elements of his designs, depended. The disguised nature of this ironwork drew some, according to Saint, misplaced, contemporary criticism, including from Morris, who, speaking of 180 Queen's Gate, Kensington, asked 'if you will have railway architecture, why don't you show it?'

Given Shaw's strong disapproval of Morris's 'glaring wallpapers' on the grounds of their obtrusive designs and high price, it is ironic that the now demolished 180 Queen's Gate was once well known for its collection of Morris papers and furniture installed by the client. The house itself was built in the 'Queen Anne' style which Norman Shaw utilised for his town houses. Harking back to the more recent past, 'Queen Anne' drew from a different architectural palette from 'Old English', characterised by the use of red brick, rubbed brickwork, large white painted windows, and asymmetrically placed bay windows. Shaw was an undoubted master of this style and something of the range of his variations on this theme can be seen along the Chelsea Embankment where he built Swan House, Cheyne House, Clock House and Farnley House. At the time, the 'Queen Anne' style was not universally admired, however, and the Chelsea ensemble was described dismissively by Morris in his 1888 essay 'The Revival of Architecture' as 'elegantly fantastic'.

In the latter part of his career, Shaw moved away from both 'Old English' and 'Queen Anne' towards the symmetry of English classicism, termed wittily the 'Wrenaissance' style. Amongst these late buildings, the architect Reginald Blomfield, an earlier biographer, regarded Shaw's 1890 remodelling of Chesters, Northumbria, as the architect's greatest work. It is now accepted, however, that in terms of inventiveness and freedom, this final phase is one of decline, a thesis with which Saint is in broad agreement. Whilst Shaw's late classical buildings do not display the intuition of his early work, there is little doubt that this last phase of the architect's career did leave a legacy of strikingly memorable buildings. Among these is Bryanston, Dorset, the colossal country house he built for Lord Portman, which is so unlike Cragside, built early in his career, that it is almost impossible to believe the same architect could be responsible. During the 1890s, Shaw also undertook a number of commercial commissions in the city centres of Liverpool and London. Not all of these projects were devoid of difficulty, and in the final chapter Saint skilfully navigates the reader through their trials and tribulations, including the rebuilding of The Quadrant in London's Regent Street, which troubled Shaw almost until his death.

It is not surprising that it is the buildings which dominate this architectural biography. Saint skilfully weaves the biographical information throughout the text but in contrast with the architect's imaginative and free-spirited buildings, Norman Shaw, the man, cuts a rather grey figure. The portrait photograph

reproduced in the Introduction depicts Shaw aged 58, at ease, living a quiet and uneventful family life in Hampstead; tall, clean-shaven, every inch the successful and respectable professional, with the aspect, according to a contemporary journalist, of a cabinet minister. His early upbringing, however, was not easy. Of Irish-Scottish ancestry, the premature death of his father meant that from the age of three, young Richard's middle-class existence was far from secure and his education was consequently sporadic. From this background, Norman Shaw emerged as a disciplined, decent and strong-willed individual who became a dedicated architect.

Norman Shaw's sensibilities were, however, those of an artist, and he became a Royal Academician rather than a member of the R.I.B.A. His Royal Academy-sponsored European trip, sketching tour of the Sussex Weald, pupillage with William Burn and Anthony Salvin, and a stint, like Morris, in the office of G.E. Street, honed his exceptional drawing talents. It was also at the Academy where he exhibited his work, most memorably of Leyswood in 1870. Shaw was also an early adopter of photo-lithography, which allowed the accurate reduction of his large perspective drawings for publication in the building press. This proved a double-edged sword, for whilst it spread Shaw's fame, it also led to his ideas being widely copied in debased forms.

That Norman Shaw's *oeuvre* was ceaselessly copied should not devalue it, but as Saint points out, at the end of his life he felt at least partially responsible for this diffusion: but happily he did not live to see the full extent of what Osbert Lancaster later termed 'By-Pass Variegated' spreading through the inter-war suburbs of English towns. Nevertheless, it is still sad to read the extracts of his correspondence with Muthesius, reprinted in the Introduction, where Shaw denigrates his own work. Although Shaw was self-effacing, he was certainly well aware of his professional standing and was pleased by the offer of a baronetcy five years before his death in 1912, although his desire for a quiet life meant that he declined it.

Norman Shaw may have turned down this honour but he was undoubtedly, in Andrew Saint's words, 'the highest type of architectural knight errant'. Whilst enough of Shaw's buildings survive for them to 'speak for themselves', it takes a writer of real skill to make sense of their eclecticism, place them in context and present such a coherent case for Shaw's continuing place as the foremost architect of his generation. With this revised edition, Andrew Saint, with the help of the architectural photographer Martin Charles, has certainly achieved this. If you own the first edition, the superb new colour photographs, and higher production values of this revision will make it a very tempting proposition. For those who do not own it and who have an interest in what was this most inventive period of English architecture, this book is an essential acquisition.

Nigel Pratt

Laurence Davis & Ruth Kinna, eds, *Anarchism and Utopianism*. Manchester University Press, 2009, xvii + 285 pp. Hbk. £60.00, ISBN 978 07190 7934 4.

I was not looking forward to reading this book. Although I have a considerable interest in literary utopias; not because I find them – with the notable exception of *News from Nowhere* – socially plausible, or consider that they would be pleasurable to live in, but because they are most revealing of their author, or of the time and place in which they were written. As Morris himself commented, ‘the only safe way of reading a utopia is to consider it as the expression of the temperament of its author’. (quoted on p. 94 n. 14) Whilst the most widely read utopias of the twentieth century – *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – are better designated as dystopias, the classic utopias – Plato’s *Republic* and More’s *Utopia* (the work which gave us the category) – are dystopian for most of us; and it was Morris’s dislike of Edward Bellamy’s statist and authoritarian *Looking Backward* which was largely responsible for the writing of *News from Nowhere*.

Just because one person has conceived of an alternative, supposedly ideal society does not mean that it is humanly possible. And the calamities ensuing from social engineering undertaken, in particular, by Communist regimes ought to make utopianists pause for reconsideration. Anarchists have generally shared my reservations, resisting ‘blueprints’ which might be imposed on them and others. Indeed Frank and Fritzie Manuel, authors of the classic *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (1979) concluded that there was no ‘significant utopian novel or full-bodied description of a future utopian society whose author would identify himself as an anarchist.’ (quoted on p. 224)

I was therefore surprised – but delighted – to find that most of these points are repeatedly made throughout this collection deriving from papers given to meetings of Utopian Studies Societies in Colorado Springs and Tarragona. In the opening chapter, ‘Anarchy and the Dialectic of Utopia’, John P. Clark ably criticises what he calls the ‘utopia of domination’, not just of ‘the state capitalist east’ but also of the consumerist ‘corporate capitalist west’ (p. 12); ‘utopian elitism’ used for ‘purposes of power and manipulation’, of which Bakunin as well as Plato is identified as a perpetrator (p. 13); and the ‘utopia of escape’, practised by both ‘leftist sectarians’ and ‘academic utopians’ – or ‘utopologists’ – for whom ‘utopia is neurosis, a defence mechanism, a convulsive reaction against self and world.’ (pp. 15–16) Yet as Peter Marshall emphasises in an appealing preface, ‘without the utopian imagination it would be impossible to imagine a different world from the one in which we live ... Without the generous vision of a better society, there would be little hope and less change’ (p. xiv); and Clark similarly applauds utopia as ‘a critique of domination’ as well as ‘a vision of a reality beyond it’, the prefiguration of a ‘re-channelling in a liberatory direction of desires and passions’ currently tamed or repressed. (pp. 16, 20)

Clark further – and most perceptively – identifies two other kinds of utopia (not recognised by the ‘utopologists’): utopia in the present and utopia in reality. He explains the first by citing Blake’s assertion that ‘when the doors of perception are opened we perceive all things as infinite’ and Gary Snyder’s belief in the ‘truly experienced person’ who ‘delights in the ordinary’, and concludes: ‘The most liberatory utopianism affirms this existence of the eternal, the sublime, the marvellous, as a present reality and an object of present experience.’ (p. 20) The second kind refers to ‘utopian practice in the real world and in actual history’ and draws from the anthropological record, the history of social movements, revolutionary reconstruction and experiments in communalism and grassroots democracy. As Clark observes, ‘it would be a mistake to look at utopia primarily as a literary genre, as is often done today.’ (p. 23) He receives support in the otherwise very different contributions of Uri Gordon and Saul Newman. Gordon, for example, in his compelling chapter quotes a contemporary New Zealand activist, Torrance Hodgson:

The revolution is now, and we must let the desires we have about the future manifest themselves in the here and now as best we can. When we start doing that, we stop fighting for some abstract condition for the future and instead start fighting to see those desires realized in the present. (p. 270)

Newman, for his part, invokes Foucault’s concept of ‘heterotopias’, which, although ‘real places in society as it currently is’, are, because they are ‘radically different or heterogeneous to it ... actually realized utopias within the existing order.’ (p. 217)

Clark introduces Morris as ‘perhaps the one other figure who ranks with Fourier among nineteenth-century utopian imaginative geniuses’, itemising his contribution to utopianism not only as *News from Nowhere* but also his political essays and varied creative work. (p. 18) It is left to one of the collection’s editors, Laurence Davis, to focus on Morris in his ‘Everyone an Artist: Art, Labour, Anarchy, and Utopia’, in which he compares him to Oscar Wilde and Ursula Le Guin. Davis greatly admires Morris, whom he does not attempt to claim as an anarchist, instead describing him – ‘uncontroversially’ – as a ‘libertarian socialist.’ (pp. 74, 93 n. 4) He blunders by believing Ruskin to have been Morris’s ‘Oxford mentor’, (p. 75) but gives an excellent account of Morris’s thought. *News from Nowhere*, he says,

... depicts a society organized around artisan production, with its emphasis on individual initiative, responsibility, and self-imposed time-scales and rhythms set in an environment of spontaneous co-operation. In this profoundly democratic society, people are free to decide for

themselves what they need and want, balancing those desires against how much work they want to do ... The denizens of Nowhere have recovered a strong sense of place rooted in the land, and their community is bound together by the natural order of work rather than the coercive powers of the state (p. 77).

It is Morris's rejection of the artist and high art in favour of the craftsman and the 'lesser arts' which leaves Davis dissatisfied, critical of 'a thoroughly socialized world in which artistic activity is judged primarily by the gender-coded "manly" criterion of social usefulness.' (p. 82) In 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' Wilde, in contrast, gloried in artistic individualism, arguing that

... the community by means of organization of machinery will supply the useful things, and that the beautiful things will be made by the individual. This is not merely necessary, but it is the only possible way by which we can get either the one or the other (quoted on p. 88).

Yet Davis is equally unhappy with Wilde's vision. He considers that 'Morris and Wilde each glimpse a fragment of a larger truth about the relationship between art and society', believing both are 'right in part, and that what is now needed in the way of a sustainable counter-cultural challenge to capitalism is an anarchist utopian cultural politics that balances individual and society in a way that simultaneously protects the autonomy of art and firmly rejects the assumption that it must be something precious and elitist maintained by the joyless labour of an enslaved majority.' (p. 86) This synthesis he locates in Le Guin's novel, *The Dispossessed* (1974).

Le Guin is easily the most revered utopian in *Anarchism and Utopianism*. Whereas Morris is mentioned by only three of the fourteen writers, by one (Newman) erroneously as contributing to 'anarchist thought' (p. 207) – or if he did so, it was as a non-anarchist – Le Guin appears in six chapters. Several of her works are cited approvingly, but attention is centred on her portrayal in *The Dispossessed* of the anarchist society of Anarres, somewhat oddly since it is a decaying anarchist utopia, which the hero Shevek attempts to regenerate. It should be noted that whereas Huxley's dystopia, *Brave New World*, appears from time to time in *Anarchism and Utopianism*, his libertarian utopia, *Island*, upon which he placed great store and which unusually it would be enjoyable to be inhabit, is never mentioned.

What of the other chapters? John A. Rapp argues plausibly for the inherently anarchistic nature of Daoist thought, even though bamboo strips discovered in a tomb at Guodian in 1993 have been interpreted it as being 'more accommodationist toward government ...'. (p. 33) Brigitte Koenig examines four previously unknown novels published in the United States during the 1890s, all delineat-

ing – in contrast to Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* of 1888 – ‘a maternalist society in which free sexuality, voluntary motherhood, an affective relations would replace patriarchy and competition.’ (p. 182) And Ruth Kinna, the other editor, compares the attitudes to utopian thought of Kropotkin and the always interesting Gustav Landauer, while usefully bringing in Kropotkin’s neglected close associate, Waarlam Tcherkesov (or, in a more modern transliteration, Varlaam Cherkezov).

On the other hand, Brian Greenspan’s arresting study of ‘The Triumph of Freedom’, a manuscript by an Australian, John Arthur Andrews, does not really belong in this collection, since Andrews intentionally held back from describing the coming anarchist utopia, instead revelling in the breakdown of society in late-nineteenth-century Melbourne. Yet it is the two Latin American contributions which really baffle. Gisela Heffes compares three supposedly anarchist novels, two by Argentinians, the other by a Mexican. Only one of these is demonstrably anarchist, the Mexican work is definitely not, and insufficient information is given about the second Argentinian novel for the reader to decide. The late Nicholas Spencer bizarrely uses the publications of the French anthropologist Pierre Clastres, a specialist on the Indians of South America, especially Paraguay, to read B. Traven’s best-known novel, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. Spencer’s emphasis is on the white prospectors, not the Indians of Northern Mexico, with no reference to Traven’s celebration of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas in his other fiction, of which *Government* (despite its title a novel) possesses obvious correspondences with Clastres’s *Society against the State*.

To sum up: this is a typically mixed academic collection with several of the contributions well worth reading but with others which either do not belong or, I regret to say, should be shunned.

David Goodway

Grace Lees-Maffei & Rebecca Houze, eds, *The Design History Reader*, Oxford: Berg, 2010, 544 pp., 70 b&w illus. Pbk, £24.99. ISBN 9781847883896.

The Design History Reader is an anthology of writing about design aimed at ‘students coming to design history for the first time’, (p. 5) and is divided into two roughly equal parts: ‘Histories’ and ‘Methods and Themes’. Each part is then subdivided into sections, each of which contains an introduction, and a guide to further reading. Primary and secondary sources are presented alongside; thus an extract from Mary Guyatt’s essay on ‘The Wedgwood Slave Medallion’, published in 2000, follows an extract from Adam Smith’s *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776).

The general introduction signals the ambition of the editors to present design

history as a broad and eclectic discipline: 'The Design History Reader is distinguished by a concern for all fields of design history and a holistic approach to common debates.' (p. 1) This approach is conveyed by the selection of extracts, which seek to encompass broader debates within cultural history: the work of sociologists, philosophers, economists and writers associated with structuralism and post-structuralism are included. Some sections contain themes such as 'Gender and Design' and 'Consumption' which engage with the preoccupations of critical theory. It thus possesses the advantage of making the reader aware of the diverse angles from which design history can be approached, and offers a few seminal primary sources such as Thorstein Veblen on 'Conspicuous Consumption', and Walter Benjamin on 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'.

The selection and arrangement of the texts is well thought out: the editors have evidently taken care to connect the extracts. In the section on the nineteenth century, Gottfried Semper's reflections on 'Science, Industry and Art' are followed by a good lengthy extract from Ruskin's 'On The Nature of Gothic' followed by Morris's 'The Ideal Book'. Ruskin and Morris are linked by an illustration from the Kelmscott edition of Ruskin's work. The final part of the section is 'The Art and Craft of the Machine', in which Frank Lloyd Wright muses on what he has learned from Morris, and then pushes that knowledge towards a more machine-based vision of the future.

There is much discussion in *The Design History Reader* of the influence of Nikolaus Pevsner's *Pioneers of Modern Design* (1936), particularly in the interesting section 'Foundations, Debates, Historiography 1980–95'. Pevsner's book is often seen as the foundation for modernist design historiography, an approach which seeks the roots of modernism in the work of Ruskin and Morris. Although the editors of this anthology are clearly aware of the limitations of this approach, from the perspective of someone interested in Victorian design, this anthology retains a strong bias towards the twentieth century. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century design are presented as the build up to debates which dominated twentieth-century practise. The structure of the 'Histories' section makes this very clear: the long eighteenth century and long nineteenth century contain one section each, whilst the twentieth century is given four.

Extracts from earlier historical periods have been selected with reference to their pertinence towards debates important in twentieth-century design. At times this decision is acknowledged, as in the introduction to the eighteenth century: 'Section 1 therefore begins with two extracts that explore examples of localized design and production as a negotiated and complex phenomenon, feeling the effects of modernity spearheaded in Britain and the US.' (pp.13–14) Students would receive a narrow vision of nineteenth-century design history from this book; for example they would be unlikely to realise that debates about truth

to materials and the appropriate role of ornament, emerged within those about ecclesiastical design, a situation exacerbated by the decision to omit Pugin, who is mentioned in introductions and further reading but not chosen for an extract.

The extracts also fail to reflect (or perhaps deliberately avoid) the legacy of the Arts and Crafts movement. This can be a difficult task for an editor, as many strong links between Arts and Crafts designers and their later followers are primarily visual: the influence of Voysey's patterns on Art Nouveau, or the impact of the studied simplicity of certain Arts and Crafts objects, is difficult to convey *via* textual extracts. Having said this, if Viennese design during the early twentieth century had received more attention, this relationship might have been more effectively articulated.

The book is relatively cheap and as a consequence illustrated sparingly, but represents good value for a student budget. For the most part the production values are pleasing, but I could not help feeling a twinge of irony on finding that my reading Morris's section on 'The Ideal Book' was slightly impaired by an illustration on the previous page showing through the rather thin paper.

This book will be a useful text for students on studio-based courses: it gives a nice sense of the range of secondary approaches to the subject and allows glimpses of primary material which they might follow up. It is also clear why the book is biased towards twentieth-century design: design-practice students tend to be interested in recent developments, and are far more numerous than those specifically studying design history. Specialist design history students might find this anthology rather limited, and I would not recommend it to serious students of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century design, as it does not really begin to map out the necessary material. No anthology will ever be comprehensive, but the thematic and theoretical breadth of this book, although admirable in one sense, allows little room for historical breadth: I feel that this would have been a stronger publication if its bias towards twentieth-century design had been made explicit.

Jim Cheshire

Charlotte Gere, *Aesthetic Circles: Design & Decoration in the Aesthetic Movement*, London: V&A Publishing, 2010, 240 pp. 214 illustrations, many in colour. Hbk, £35.00. ISBN 9781851776023.

In this attractive and informative book, Charlotte Gere provides a wide-ranging account of what she calls 'the influence of artists' houses and households' on house decoration more generally during the late nineteenth century. This is a topic which makes good sense as soon as one thinks of it, but had been treated before once only, in Giles Walkley's *Artists' Houses in London, 1764–1914* in 1994,

which was more narrowly socio-economic in its focus. As her Preface explains, Gere was able to make use of material assembled by the late Jeremy Maas, whose son Rupert provides a graceful Foreword.

The material is presented in four substantial and very well-illustrated chapters. The first is 'Princes of Bohemia: The Art World and Victorian Society', which brings out the striking advance in wealth and social position achieved by successful artists during the later nineteenth century. Dramatic evidence of this is offered in the form of the 'large Neo-Renaissance palazzo' built by John Everett Millais in Palace Gate in 1876 – although it was not until 1896 that Millais was to become President of the Royal Academy, as well as receiving his knighthood. In building his impressive house, as Gere says, Millais, the erstwhile Pre-Raphaelite, 'pushed boundaries physically as well as socially ... challenging his new-rich and, in some cases, aristocratic neighbours with a grander house than had yet been achieved by either Leighton or the Dutch emigré classicist Lawrence Alma-Tadema'.

During the following year Leighton was to plan, with his architect George Aitchison, a spectacular 'Arab Hall' to complement his studio-house in Holland Park, Kensington; Leighton House was to be described as the Eighth Wonder of the World by Vernon Lee in 1883; Leighton was to go beyond mere knighthood, and achieve a peerage in 1896. The public interest in such artists' homes was encouraged by journalists such as Mrs. Haweis in her *Beautiful Houses; Being a Description of Certain Well-Known Artist Homes* in 1882 – a volume bound in vellum with deliberately anachronistic initials and long 's' – and Moncure Conway's *Travels in South Kensington* published in the same year. Gere shows that the spirit of these developments was thoroughly eclectic, with elements from the Gothic Revival, the Chinese, the Japanese and the Persian, but points out that 'William Morris was the Aesthetic decorator of choice; his legacy is probably the most long-lived at any time before or since'. She also suggests that, unlike many artists who encouraged the public to visit their studios as a form of advertisement, Morris and Burne-Jones 'evolved' what she engagingly terms 'a socially evasive lifestyle'.

In the second chapter, 'The Victorian Artist's House. Art and Architecture', Gere stresses the significance of the developing interest in artist's houses: 'Considered together, the houses reveal interesting architectural, decorative (as in the ubiquitous Morris wallpapers, blue-and-white china, decorative tiles and Oriental rugs) and style associations, as well as social patterns and connections.' It is indeed a strength of this book that the artistic and the social are so well integrated. The numerous illustrations include paintings like W. P. Frith's *The Private View* of 1881, H. Jamyn Brooks' *Private View of the Old Masters Exhibition at the Royal Academy* of 1889 and G. Greville Manton's *The Royal Academy Conversazione* of 1891, all reminding us of the social importance of art in the London of the time. The chapter also includes a discussion of the development of department stores

later in the century, with particular reference to Liberty's in Regent Street. As Gere puts it, 'Morris had shown how it was possible to retail the artistic look, and the new department stores made it fatally easy' – though the adverb 'fatally' seems to indicate a more critical attitude to the developing consumerism than is shown elsewhere in the book.

It is interesting to discover that the Metropolitan Board of Works was far from keen on the red-brick houses in the Queen Anne style favoured by the artists; Philip Webb and, more prolifically, Norman Shaw were prominent among the architects satisfying this demand. Gere makes an important point about the involvement of middle-class women in 'the new decorating scene', arguing that they became increasingly important 'both as arbiters of taste (and authors of ... decorating manuals) and as practitioners of interior design in either a professional or amateur capacity'. In her account of Bedford Park, built, mostly by Shaw, during the early 1880s, Gere quotes Moncure Conway to the effect that so many of the houses contain Morris & Co. wallpaper and designs that 'a branch of the Bloomsbury establishment will probably become necessary in the vicinity of Bedford Park'. The chapter ends with a section entitled 'Rural Idyll: Escape to the Country' which shows how the building of railways in the period made it possible for artistic communities to develop outside the city: 'Not long after the arrival of the railway in 1859, the area of Surrey around Guildford and Godalming saw a great influx of the art world'. Myles Birket Foster at 'The Hill', his picturesque house at Witley (of which there is an attractive illustration), was one of the first to install a complete decorative scheme provided by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., in 1862; a full account of this is provided.

The third chapter, 'Amateurs and Aesthetes', takes us into the worlds of fashion and patronage. Among the most important patrons discussed are George and Rosalind Howard, for whom Webb built 1, Palace Green in 1870, and the Wyndham family of 'Clouds' who also had a house in Belgrave Square. In this connection, attention is drawn to the excellence of the decorative output of Leighton's architect and collaborator, George Aitchison, whose work – shown in three attractive colour illustrations – surely deserves to be better known. Later, there is an account of the Ionides family, beginning with Alexander at 1 Holland Park and including Constantine's splendid donation of his collection to the V&A in 1900; this included the beautiful Broadwood grand piano decorated in gesso by Kate Faulkner to a design by Burne-Jones.

The fourth chapter focuses on a number of 'Houses and Their Owners': Watts and Leighton in Kensington, Morris at Red House and 'the two Kelmscotts', Rossetti and Whistler in Chelsea, Burne-Jones at 'The Grange', Alma-Tadema and Tissot in Regent's Park and St. John's Wood, and a number of artists in the Northern Retreat of 'Sweet Hampstead'. Here Gere's research shows itself to advantage in the detailed accounts she is able to give of the relevant houses and the

parts they played in the lives of their owners. Although all are interesting in different ways, Leighton it is who appears to have created, with Aitchison, the most remarkable of all the houses, furnished with a quite astonishing variety of works of art. When the contents were sold at Christie's soon after his death, the sale lasted for more than a week, and realised no less than £31,549. The most attractive visual material in the book is undoubtedly provided by Tissot, whose paintings *Young Women looking at Japanese Articles* (1869), *Reading the News* (1874), *Lady at a Piano* (1881), *Croquet* (1878), *In the Conservatory* (1875-8) and *Hide and Seek* (1880-2) all pleasingly convey the appeal of the aesthetic lifestyle. I was also pleased to see examples of aesthetic interiors by Atkinson Grimshaw, a painter whom I had previously associated only with uncompromising northern landscapes. The account of Morris ends with a generous assessment of his influence:

He transformed the way in which people of modest means decorated their houses, by making art available not through an elaborate process of commissioning, but from a shop. Although the full-blown Morris & Co. treatment was not affordable by any but the very wealthy, Morris's influence was pervasive, especially among cultivated professionals. The most popular of his wallpapers, 'Daisy', covered the walls of many of the little red-brick 'Queen Anne'-style houses that sprang up in garden suburbs on the fringes of London.

But it is worth remarking that this creditable achievement fell far short of what Morris had come to hope and work for in his socialist years. It was not just the lives of 'cultivated professionals' that he wished to improve, but those of all his fellow-citizens. His inability to achieve this set him inexorably apart from the aesthetic movement that he had helped to bring about.

A brief Afterword brings the story into the twenty-first century, and comments on the present condition of a number of the houses considered in the book, including The Grange – inexcusably demolished in 1957 – and Red House, in discussing which Gere remarks on the problem confronting those concerned with preservation, 'whether it is better to strive for a continuum or a specific moment, frozen in time'. She ends with three case histories. Watts's Little Holland House was demolished in 1965; Alma Tadema's house, expensively renovated, is now in private hands; and C.R. Ashbee's Magpie and Stump in Cheyne Walk was demolished in 1966, though some of the fittings were taken to the V&A. Gere's conclusion is realistic: 'Public opinion has turned against the destruction mania of the 1960s and it will probably not be repeated, but money speaks. So long as art and tourism are valuable commodities and the prices for outstandingly original or unique properties remain staggeringly high, their relics will survive'.

The book finishes with a full and informative Cast of Characters, from Maurice Bingham Adams (who published *Artists' Homes* in 1883) to Marie Zambaco

(‘model and sculptor cousin of the Ionides family’). This is followed by an unusually thorough Bibliography and an excellent index. The endpapers of Morris’s ‘Pomegranate’ are particularly attractive. My only criticism of the book is that its designers have adopted the questionable practice of providing wide left-hand margins on each right-hand page, so destroying the unity of the double spread. I hope that V&A Publishing will not repeat this unMorrisian practice.

Peter Faulkner

Donald Insall, *Living Buildings, Architectural Conservation: Philosophy, Principles and Practice*, Mulgrave, Victoria: Images Publishing Group, 2008, 272 pp, £39.50. ISBN 9781864701920.

Architectural conservation has come a long way during the last fifty years, and this book, celebrating half a century of Donald Insall’s architectural practice, admirably charts this progress. Insall, one of the leading conservation architects of his generation, is a principal driver behind the modern conservation movement. Operating from London, but with seven regional offices, his architectural practice, Donald Insall Associates, currently employs forty architects and has undertaken some of the highest-profile conservation projects in Britain and overseas. The breadth and quality of this work is highlighted throughout the book, which cites a truly impressive range of projects, illustrated with excellently reproduced photographs and exquisitely executed plans, elevations, sketches and axonometric projects by Insall and members of his practice.

Yet *Living Buildings* is far more than a glorified glossy brochure showcasing the achievements of a single architectural practise. Its central ethos is that buildings are ‘alive’ and that we must get to know and understand their individual essential character in order to allow us to make appropriate decisions to ensure their conservation. This philosophical approach is a constant theme throughout the book. In a myriad of practical examples, encompassing some the most important buildings in the country, Insall shows how it underpins the thought processes necessary before practical interventions into the fabric of historic buildings are carried out.

It is enlightening to compare this approach with Insall’s previous offering *The Care of Old Buildings Today: A Practical Guide*. Published in 1972, this was a pioneering work and one of the rare books aimed at the practitioner since A.R. Powys’s *Repair of Ancient Buildings* of 1929 first sought to ally conservation techniques with the principles embodied in Morris’s 1877 SPAB *Manifesto*. As a practical handbook, *The Care of Old Buildings Today* deals in-depth with the legal and financial aspects of a conservation project and the techniques and methods

involved in carrying out the work. The intervening thirty-eight years since it appeared has seen a proliferation of publications dealing with these issues. As a consequence, in *Living Buildings*, Insall does not need greatly to concern the reader with this fine detail, although a bibliography or further reading section referring to some of these might have been helpful for the non-specialist. It might also have been useful to include a greater acknowledgement of the legal restrictions governing work on some of country's most important historic buildings, of which, as a founder-commissioner of English Heritage, Insall is fully aware. Whilst this may have toned down the slightly swashbuckling tone which surfaces from time to time throughout the text, readers might on occasion need to be reminded that such considerations often affect the choices made, and in many cases can be an overriding factor.

Freed from the necessity of providing a detailed administrative framework and technical guidance, Insall instead offers fascinating insights into how the solutions to the buildings problems or requirements may be informed by 'understanding', or as he terms it, 'befriending', the building. In the case of Kelmscott Manor, where he carried out repairs and reordering between 1965 and 1967, a key clue to decisions was the important question 'what would Morris himself, if he lived today, have wished to do?' This essential pre-intervention assessment stage was implicit in Insall's work at the time but was seldom articulated in print before the Australian ICOMOS Burra Charter of 1981 codified the concept of 'understanding significance'. The idea that a building must be 'understood' and a conservation plan formulated before any intervention takes place, has since been adapted and enthusiastically taken up by the major heritage bodies in the UK, forming the philosophical basis for much of the intervening policy and guidance. Essential as these documents are, they often seem divorced from the first-hand experience and insights which he is able to call upon.

Insall's guiding voice comes through strongly throughout. Although not a practical handbook, *Living Buildings* does include some sections on project-management and these are instructive. As a practising architect, mindful of his client's interests, he offers valuable guidance on assessing the needs of owners, such as HRH the Prince of Wales (who contributes the Foreword) at Chevening House, Kent, as well as those of the building, and gives useful advice on report preparation, project-planning and working on-site with contractors.

The bulk of *Living Buildings*, and I suspect for many readers its main interest, lies with what Insall terms as the 'Ten Degrees of Intervention'. Here he uses his vast experience of engaging with sometimes seemingly insurmountable issues to produce a challenging and coherently argued rationale behind his conservation works. It opens with sections on daily and programmed maintenance, resonating with the prescient words of Morris to 'stave off decay with daily care'. Despite the best intentions, however, unexpected events often trigger conservation works.

One memorable example is the Lords' Chamber in the Palace of Westminster, where Insall was called in after a late-night debate was interrupted by a heavy wooden pendant falling and narrowly missing a sitting peer. The resulting remedial works involved Pugin's richly decorated ceiling being disassembled, then carefully conserved, with new elements introduced where necessary. An even more extensive project was the post-fire restoration at Windsor Castle during the 1990s, the importance of which is reflected in the extended treatment it receives in the book.

Change is the mainstay of even those architectural practices specialising in conservation, and half of Insall's 'Ten Degrees of Intervention' are concerned with alteration, improvement and adaptation of historic buildings to suit clients' needs. This is an area where the conservation movement has partially drawn back from Morris in his assertion that it is preferable to 'raise another building rather than alter or enlarge an old one'. Closer to Morris's original *Manifesto* is the section dealing with new build in an historic context. Among many examples this includes The Stephen Hawking Building at Cambridge University, where the sensitivity of the site was heightened by the presence of modern buildings by notable British architects.

The final 'degree of intervention' introduces the concept that it is not just buildings but also the built environment which can be viewed as a living organism. This section highlights Insall's long involvement with the historic city of Chester. It was here during the late 1960s that he pioneered area-based assessments, which at his instigation led to the appointment of the country's first local authority Conservation Officer. Area assessments and conservation-led regeneration and enhancement are now a mainstay of local and national planning policy and practice, but Insall's work at Chester helped the city to be among the first historic urban centres to demonstrate how the long-term prosperity of an area could be secured through conservation works.

The book concludes with an appendix containing themed casework, including a very brief synopsis of Insall's work at Kelmscott Manor. We are also presented with his wide-ranging personal views on past, present and future issues affecting conservation. With half-a-century as a pioneering conservation architect, Insall is uniquely positioned to ponder these. It is this experience and the marrying of the philosophical and practical aspects of building conservation, which has produced an inspiring and rare book in a field dominated by worthy, but often grey, government-guidance, text and reference books. With *Living Buildings*, Donald Insall has succeeded not only in putting life into the buildings but has accomplished the almost singular feat of bringing personality and colour to a building conservation publication.

Nigel Pratt

Kate Baden Fuller, *Contemporary Stained Glass Artists: a Selection of Artists Worldwide*, London, A. & C. Black, 2006, 212 pp., hbk, £45.00, ISBN 0713654287.

Contemporary Stained Glass begins from the premise that many people who see stained glass are unaware of its significance or relationship to a particular site; the book therefore seeks to provide some 'artistic interpretation' to aid people's understanding of the medium. A selection of glass painters was asked to write about some of their most important commissions; the book divides the artists by their nationality and each national section is preceded by a brief introduction.

In the general introduction, Baden Fuller proposes to reject the label 'stained glass' in favour of 'architectural glass', a policy which is not consistently applied in the book and a feature which creates more confusion than it banishes. This tactic seems linked to one of the subtexts of the book: stained glass has historically been associated with ecclesiastical design, an area which now produces relatively few commissions. In order for the medium to develop, architects and those responsible for commissioning architecture need to take the medium seriously. The introduction seems to be pitched at a non-specialist audience. Baden Fuller briefly discusses the origin of glass, how stained glass is made and some of the problems and potential that it offers to artists. It also attempts a 'brief outline of late 20th-century architectural glass' which, like most of the history in the book, is really too brief to make any but the most general assertions, a situation not helped by the absence of footnotes to direct the reader to more detailed sources.

Although emphasis is on 'contemporary' glass, examples dating from the 1950s onwards are illustrated, with many from the 1980s and 1990s and this highlights a crucial aspect of stained glass: its permanency. Whilst a painting or a sculpture can be moved or covered up, a building must develop a long-term relationship with its stained glass. In the context of installing windows in historic buildings, this initiates an interesting debate about style: anything too contemporary risks seeming dated within years and leaving the window neither in sympathy with its surroundings or recent artistic developments. When in 1877 Morris & Co. decided to cease supplying stained glass to medieval buildings, it would appear that they could find no resolution to this dilemma. And the opinion of the artists in this book would suggest this is still an issue.

One side of the argument is expressed forcefully by Jochem Poensgen, a German glass painter, who suggests that 'architectural stained glass is not an end in itself' (p. 95) and should be subordinated to the building, thoughts illustrated by his restrained, geometrical and non-figurative glass. Others, such as French artist Carole Benzaken, delight in the 'blank canvas' (p. 106) of simple Romanesque window apertures; illustrated in this book by attractive glass based on the form and colour of tulips.

Away from historic buildings, recent stained glass seems to possess less diffi-

culty fulfilling its potential, often aided by being involved in the architectural design process from an early stage. From a personal perspective I was uncomfortable with what the German artist Hella Santarossa did within the confines of gothic tracery, but liked the look of her 'Blue Obelisk' (p. 98) in Berlin, a free-standing structure cloaked in glass, which commemorates a politician. Stained glass is used in impressive architectural contexts by Alexander Beleschenko at Southwark Underground Station (p. 10) and Japanese artist Michiyo Durt-Morimoto: a photograph shows an extraordinary stained glass ceiling for an underground chapel which creates an 'underwater atmosphere' by reflecting blue light on to the walls. (p. 197)

Some of the most interesting writing comes from the older contributors. Lawrence Lee's piece is forthright and stimulating: 'The artist working in a church is the servant, he is there as a special kind of craftsman who helps people to understand about religion. I don't like the prima-donnaish attitude of some artists.' (p. 30) Lee is known for his work in a modernist manner, famously in Coventry Cathedral, but identifies himself as working within the figurative tradition. He chooses to illustrate the Beckett window from Penshurst Church in Kent (p. 31), a project which seems to enjoy quoting the economy and vigour of early medieval drawing. Lee then explains that the window was inspired by T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. He was present at the first production of the play in 1935: this is surely a unique example of modernist medievalism. He ends with the satisfied resignation of an artist who is no longer seeking commissions: 'I've said what I want to say in glass. Now I just enjoy being with my family, seeing how family traditions are handed down.' (p. 34)

Patrick Reyntiens is another glass painter with a longstanding reputation: he writes frankly about the challenges of translating John Piper's designs to stained glass and illustrates two windows at Christ Church Oxford and Southwell Minster which work comfortably within the parameters of the medieval style while retaining hints of more recent influence. (pp. 50–1) I must admit to not having seen the work of Johannes Schreiter at first hand, but the photographs of his work at St. Johannes, Kitzingen, Germany (p. 99) and other churches makes me want to remedy this. Several younger glass painters cite him as a crucial influence, and there seems to be a consensus that the German glass painters who received plentiful commissions following the second world war developed an assured twentieth-century manner, which was influential across Europe.

Asking artists to write about their own work possesses advantages and disadvantages. Some, like those cited above, write well and are able to articulate interesting ideas about their creative practice. Others, inevitably, are less interesting. It is a much safer bet to select passages from existing writing, where the editor's chances of forming the excerpts into a good shape are favourable. When contributors are invited to write a piece to the same brief, editorial control is limited

and, as a result, we read many of the same opinions expressed again and again.

This is a worthwhile book but rather like its subject it has a slightly ambiguous identity. Despite trying to promote the potential of stained glass within contemporary architecture, the contributions inevitably locate stained glass within an ecclesiastical tradition. Whether it will manage to make the transition to more fertile areas of patronage on a large scale remains to be seen.

The book is lavishly illustrated with colour photographs. Most of the photography is good, which makes the handful of poor images very disappointing. The design is quite basic, adequate but somewhat unrefined. However, it is weak in terms of scholarly apparatus. I can see the logic of omitting footnotes and a bibliography if the target is a non-academic audience but, if this is the case, the absence of a 'further reading' section seems odd. And the book is not really a survey either, despite being described as such on the jacket. Its geographical range is extremely patchy: nineteen of the artists featured (just under one third of the total) are from Britain and Ireland, whilst other large areas such as 'Eastern Europe' are covered by just two. In Britain, if someone wanted to find out about a window and its artist, they are more likely to identify it from Pevsner's Buildings of England Series than this book.

Jim Cheshire

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 the following guidelines when submitting articles and reviews:

1. Contributions should be in English, and word-processed or typed using 1.5 spacing, and printed on one side of A4 or 8.5 x 11 paper. They should be *ca* 5000 words in length, although shorter and longer pieces will also be considered.
2. Articles should ideally be produced in electronic form (e.g. as a Word.doc, or .rtf format). Please send your article as an email attachment to editor@williammorris-society.org.uk, or on a floppy disk or CD, and marked for the attention of the Editor, *JWMS*, to
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3. Contributions in hard copy only are also accepted, and may be sent to the same address.
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5. An expanded version of these guidelines, which contributors are also urged to consult, may be found at <http://www.williammorrisociety.org.uk/contributors.shtml>, or may be obtained from the Editor. Articles which do not follow *JWMS* house style may be returned to authors for re-editing.
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7. At the end of your article please include a short biographical note of not more than fifty words.

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

Notes on Contributors

Florence Boos is a professor of English at the University of Iowa, and has written monographs on D. G. Rossetti and William Morris's *The Earthly Paradise*, and has edited Morris's *Socialist Diary*, his *Earthly Paradise*, and *Working-Class Women Poets of Victorian Britain: An Anthology*. She also edits the Morris Online Edition (<http://morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu>). *Art, Ethics and History in the Early Writings of William Morris*, her most recent manuscript, is forthcoming from Ohio State University Press.

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

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

David Goodway is an historian who worked for almost forty years in adult and continuing education at the University of Leeds, and has been a member of the William Morris Society since 1965. Since his *London Chartism, 1838–1848* (1982), he has written widely on anarchism and libertarian socialism, and a second edition of his *Anarchist Seeds beneath the Snow: Left-Libertarian Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward* (2006) is to be published in 2011.

Tony Pinkney is Senior Lecturer in the Department of English at Lancaster University. He has edited *We Met Morris: Interviews with William Morris, 1885–1896* (Spire Books, 2005) and has recently published *William Morris in Oxford: The Campaigning Years, 1879–1895* (illuminati Books, 2007). His blog on matters Morrisian and utopian is available at: <http://williammorrisunbound.blogspot.com>.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Simon Poë is an independent scholar. He is writing a book about John Roddam Spencer Stanhope and has recently contributed an entry on the painter to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

Nigel Pratt trained as an archaeologist before specialising in historic building conservation. He is currently working as local authority Conservation Officer in Somerset.

Alexander Wong is a graduate of Peterhouse, University of Cambridge, where he is continuing his studies in English literature. His current research is in the area of seventeenth-century religious verse and the semiotics of church ritualism. He has recently published an essay on Richard Crashaw in *The Cambridge Quarterly*.

ERRATUM

Volume XVII part 4, Summer 2010, p. 96: Notes on Contributors, Anna Vaninskaya. Dr Vaninskaya is Lecturer in Nineteenth Century Literature at the University of Edinburgh, not the University of Newcastle.

