



William Morris Society in the United States Newsletter July 1990

MLA PROGRAM IN CHICAGO

For this year's Modern Language Association Convention, to be held 27-30 December in Chicago, the Society has organized two sessions. The first, on "Morris and Architecture," will be chaired by Jeffrey Skoblow, of Southern Illinois University - Edwardsville. The speakers are: Gary L. Aho (U. of Massachusetts), "Morris and Chicago"; B. Chakravorty, "Morris, Architecture, and Poetry"; and Charlotte Oberg (U. of Richmond), "In the Footsteps of Morris and Newman: Ralph Adams Cram and Neo-Medieval Architecture."

Linda Zatlín (Morehouse College) will moderate the second panel, "Morris and the Fin de Siècle," with talks by Christopher Benfey (Mount Holyoke College), "Morris and Stephen Crane: Poetry and the Arts and Crafts Movement"; B. J. Robinson (U. of Miami) "The Dreamers' World': William Morris and Oscar Wilde's Utopian Social Visions"; and Margaret D. Stetz (Georgetown U.) "Morris and Fin de Siècle Comedy." Further details will appear in the Convention Program, due out in mid-July, and in the October "Newsletter." Be forewarned that a new policy instituted by the MLA may mean that one of the sessions will be at a rather inconvenient time, either at the beginning or the end of the convention schedule.

'MORRIS AND WOMEN': CONTINUATION OF THE REPORT ON THE 1989 MLA SESSION

Florence Boos has supplied the following addendum to her report on the "Morris and Women" session at the 1989 MLA Convention:

Norman Kelvin, in "Images of Women in Morris's Last Letters and Romances, A Dialogue," a talk he explained was a brief version of one he had given at the William Morris Society [London] in August, focused on the letters to Jane and Jenny Morris from 1889 to 1891 and the romances of the same period. He began by saying that for Morris the most important triangle in his life was the one consisting of himself, Jane Morris, and Jenny Morris: that it was more important to him than the more obvious ones into which he had been drawn such as that of Jane Morris, Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, and himself. Observing that by writing a letter Morris creates the image of the woman who receives it, Kelvin said that when Morris wrote to Jenny he created an image of a woman living her own life. His letters to Jenny, who was often in seclusion or in the care of a nurse, provided her with the materials out of which she could construct an existence and thus an identity; and the materials were his own interests and activities. In the letters to Jane, by contrast, the image that emerges is that of a woman who is intact and complete without the offering of the husband who writes to her; the rhetoric and tone of these letters defer to the image they create. As much as by what he does not say to Jane as by what he does, Morris makes her at once a self-sufficient woman with respect to him and the necessary member of the domestic setting he is also at pains to create in his letters to her, as he is, it should be added, in his letters to Jenny. The domestic setting, Kelvin added, is a place in which the triangle exists and must be resolved. Further discussion of the profound importance to Morris of this domestic setting led Kelvin to consider the house at the end of the journey in "News from Nowhere" as a metaphor for the unity, in Morris's mind, of nature, architecture, and the idea of a home. Turning to the women in the romances of 1889 through 1891, he found them to be independent women, for the most part, and suggested that the images of these women be regarded as in dialogue with the images of Jane and Jenny Morris. These women, too, are often caught up in triangles. Kelvin spoke next of the importance of the journey in resolving the domestic triangle: of the way in which a house is so often the goal of a journey. He spoke of *News from Nowhere* and the dialogue it creates with the narrative inherent in the letters. As Ellen and Guest arrive at the end of "Nowhere" at a house that is multiple in meanings, so, at the end of the period under consideration--i. e., in 1891, as a result of a domestic crisis and a health crisis Morris and Jenny embark on a voyage that ends at the cathedrals of northern France, where, Kelvin argued, a renewal took place, for Morris and his daughter a renewal for the sake of the nature-architecture-home trinity. Jenny returned to London, as did Jane about this time, "all much better for the different wanderings," as Jane wrote to Blunt. It is the image of Jane above all others--above the image of Jenny and those of the feminine figures in the romances--the image created by the scrappy handful of letters to her that survive--that Kelvin said was Morris's supreme triumph in the making of images of women.

"THE WIDOW'S HOUSE BY THE GREAT WATER"

Helen Timo's edition of Morris's unfinished and heretofore unpublished prose romance is now "in the press." There will be 200 copies produced, with a proposed price of \$8.50. An order form will be circulated with the October "Newsletter."

DIRECTORY OF MEMBERS

The updated (thank you all for responding to the forms mailed in April!) Directory of Members is done

and will probably have been mailed before you read this. Should you move or obtain a different telephone number--we assume your interest in Morris will not alter--please let the Society know. There has been some attrition of membership due to faulty or unknown forwarding addresses; remember, too, that the U. S. Postal Service does not forward anything but first class mail, and that for one year only.

"THE KELMSCOTT PRESS GOLDEN LEGEND: A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY OF ITS PRODUCTION"

In 1985 the University of Maryland library (College Park) received, as part of large group of books and manuscripts dealing with Morris, 170 individual leaves from a disbound copy of the Kelmscott Press "Golden Legend." John J. Walsdorf, who had assembled the collection acquired by the university, advanced the idea of producing a "leaf book," which, unlike others made up of such Kelmscott "discards," would contain background information relating to the original material they contained. Now, in an unusual partnership between the Yellow Barn Press, of Council Bluffs, Iowa, and the University of Maryland Library, "The Kelmscott Press Golden Legend: A Documentary History of Its Production" will be issued in September 1990. William S. Peterson, the historian of the Kelmscott Press, has supplied a fascinating scholarly introduction, drawing on unpublished correspondence and diary entries. The production of the book will be in keeping with Morris's own high standards--letterpress, case bound, printed damp, the sheets coming from a remnant of paper made by Batchelor & Son, of Little Chart, Kent, the same mill which supplied the Kelmscott Press. Priced at \$150.00, the book is expected to sell out soon after publication. For further information contact: Yellow Barn Press, 710 First Avenue, Council Bluffs, Iowa 51501.

SPECIAL BOOK OFFERS FOR MORRIS SOCIETY MEMBERS

Two recent publications are now available to Morris Society members at special reduced prices. This issue of the "Newsletter" contains prospectuses and order forms for *Socialism and the Literary Artistry of William Morris*, edited by Florence Boos and Carole G. Silver for the University of Missouri Press, and for *William Morris & News from Nowhere*, a series of papers collected by Stephen Coleman and Paddy O'Sullivan for Green Books, in England.

OTHER NEW PUBLICATIONS

England in the 1890s: Literary Publishing at the Bodley Head by Margaret D. Stetz and Mark Samuels Lasner is due out in July 1990. A catalogue of an exhibition held at the Georgetown University Library this past winter, the book contains several mentions of Morris's influence on trade book design of the period.

Oxford University Press have just published Linda Zatlín's *Aubrey Beardsley: Drawing the Line*, the first major art historical study of the artist whose work, beginning as an imitation of Morris and Burne-Jones, evolved into a unique style which has become almost synonymous with Art Nouveau in Britain. The author is engaged on a catalogue raisonné of Beardsley's oeuvre.

PLANNED EXHIBITIONS: MORRIS IN MINNESOTA AND PRE-RAPHAELITE BOOKS IN NEW HAVEN

There is advance word that the Minnesota Center for the Book Arts (24 North 3rd Street, Minneapolis, MN 55401) will hold an extensive Morris exhibition from April to June 1991. The show, occasioned by the centenary of the first Kelmscott book, *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, will concentrate on Morris's philosophy and influence on printers. Three areas of Morris's work will be highlighted--type design, illustration, and paper making, with much of the material drawn from the Elmer Anderson collection of Kelmscott Press books and Morrisiana. According to Betty Bright, the show's curator, there will be a catalogue and lectures.

Also next Spring, the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven has tentatively scheduled a major show on Pre-Raphaelite book illustration. Morris and Burne-Jones will be represented, though the emphasis will be on the work of Rossetti, Millais, and Hunt, and others associated with books of the period before the founding of the Kelmscott Press. The items displayed will come primarily from Yale's own holdings in the Mellon Center and Beinecke Library, but loans are expected from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and from at least one private collection. Susan Casteras is the organizer.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

On 19 April, Jack Walsdorf, collector and author, gave two lectures relating to Morris in a single day--shades of Morris's own Socialist agitation! The talks, jointly sponsored by the Lincoln city libraries and by the Friends of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries, took place in conjunction with a month-long exhibition of works relating to Morris from the Kelmscott Press and other English and American private presses mounted in the Center for Great Plains Studies at the University. The majority of the fifty items shown came from the Walsdorf library, although the highlight, a superb copy of the Kelmscott "Chaucer," came from the University's own collection. Walsdorf's first lecture, entitled "How to Build a Poor Man's Morris Library," was delivered before a small, noontime audience in the "Heritage Room" of Lincoln's Bennett Martin Public Library. It was taped for later broadcast over the local educational television station. The evening lecture, before a full house, was "On Collecting William Morris: The Private Collector as Author." Walsdorf spoke about the half-dozen books relating to Morris which he has edited or written. Among the items he mentioned--and also on display--were the first page proofs for his latest endeavor, *The Kelmscott Press Golden Legend: A Documentary History of Its Production*, a "leaf book" involving leaves from a disbound copy of the *Golden Legend* formerly in Walsdorf's library.

Judith B. Tankard, who teaches British landscape history, is the co-author (with Michael R. Van Valkenburgh) of *Gertrude Jekyll: A Vision of Garden and Woods*, published by Abrams. Jekyll's work, her friendship and partnership with the architect Edwin Lutyens, was very much an offshoot of the Arts and Crafts movement and by Morris's ideas on preservation and English country life. *The New Yorker*, speaking of "this elegant and appealing volume" went on to say that its purpose is "to display a selection of Jekyll's photographs of her own garden, the famous and now vanished Munstead Wood."

Georgia Pergakis is working on a biography of Marie Spartali Stillman, the Pre-Raphaelite artist who also served as a model for Rossetti, Ford Madox Brown, and Burne-Jones. She needs information about Stillman's art works and would also like to know the location of letters, particularly her correspondence with Aglaia Coronio. As part of her research Ms. Pergakis is also looking for a modern edition of "Sidonia the Sorceress." Members with information may contact her at: 8417 Quinn Ave. S., Bloomington, MN, 55437.

From Anne Gordon we have received the following note about her book business: "I have been a member of the Morris Society since 1977. My studies in Library School led to a great interest in Morris, and I began to collect books about him. After a career as a librarian and archivist, I went into the antiquarian book business five years ago. For the last three years I have operated a bookshop in the Hudson River Valley section of New York State. (The large "G" logo on our shop sign and stationary was adapted from an initial in the Kelmscott edition of "The Golden Legend.") We specialize in Morris, the printing arts, and radicalism, but carry a large general stock as well. The shop is 80 miles north of New York City, on the banks of the Hudson. Those members interested in a copy of our "Morris and his Circle" list can obtain a copy by sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Gordon & Gordon Booksellers, P. O. Box 128, West Park, NY 12493."

NOTES ON AUCTION SALES: BRADLEY MARTIN AND KOCH

While he did not seem to specialize in them, books by the Pre-Raphaelites and their associates formed a small but not entirely negligible part of the wide-ranging library formed by the late H. Bradley Martin. By collecting "Hayward" titles--famous first editions of the English poets enumerated in John Hayward's catalogue for an exhibition held in 1946 by the National Book League in London--Mr. Martin came to possess books by the Rossettis, Morris, Swinburne, and Patmore, which ranked alongside important works such as "The Germ" and "The Stones of Venice." Some of these were sold on 30 May and 1 April, in the English Literature session of the Sotheby sales in which the 10,000 volume library has been dispersed.

There was only a single Morris title, *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858), the first edition of his first book. This copy had an interesting history, having been rebound in a beautiful if somewhat worn binding done by Thomas J. Cobden-Sanderson for the first exhibition of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society in 1888. Maggs purchased it for \$9,000, almost certainly for a well-known London collector. Christina Rossetti's 1847 *Verses*, privately printed in a small edition by her maternal grandfather Gaetano Polidori, went for \$14,000, to the New York dealer Glenn Horowitz. The high price was due partly to the book's status as a "Hayward" catalogue listing--there was much competition for the more than 200 items so listed which the sale included--and partly to its special appeal as a presentation copy, inscribed to the Rossettis' family physician, Dr. Charles Hare. (It also had some manuscript corrections and, inserted in the back, the original manuscript of Christina's early poem "Sleep." Several other of Christina's books appeared in the children's literature part of the auction series, held in late January.) Dante Gabriel's two most important books (again "Hayward" entries), *Poems* (1870) and *Ballads and Sonnets* (1881), both inscribed to Fanny Cornforth, brought \$8,000 for the pair. Interestingly, the "Poems" was not the earliest variety of the book--Fanny received it at least a week or so after most of Rossetti's literary and artistic friends, including Jane Morris, had received theirs. After these heights of price and association interest, the Swinburne titles seemed much more down to earth. "Atalanta in Calydon" (mistakenly dated 1864 in the Sotheby description) brought only \$500, with the first issue of *Poems and Ballads* (another "Hayward") going to the London bookseller Quaritch for a not unreasonable \$1300. These were followed by what has long been known as "Swinburne's treasured Lamb manuscript"--a poetical volume by George Wither bearing Charles Lamb's extensive manuscript annotations. Now elaborated with an original pencil portrait of Lamb, by various proofs, and by a Swinburne letter of 1887, the "relic" also was purchased (for \$12,000) by Quaritch. A final Swinburne lot (\$3750), with more of a Pre-Raphaelite connection, was the series of eight autograph letters the poet wrote to John H. Ingram, the biographer and editor of Edgar Allan Poe. Another expensive Pre-Raphaelite-connected book was a copy of John Ruskin's *Poems*, a collection of youthful (and not very memorable) verse privately printed for the author's father in 1850. James Dearden has determined that 50 copies were printed, of which more than 27 are in institutional collections. Bidding for this title was brisk even though it's not in "Hayward" and even though several copies have been sold at auction in recent years. In the end Ximenes was the purchaser, at a staggering \$8000. Other noteworthy items: *The Germ* in original wrappers (\$2750); Patmore's first book, *Poems*, and his rare 1868 *Odes* (250 copies printed, of which some 100 are said to have been burned by the author in disgust) together for \$500; and Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* in almost new condition at \$2250.

By the time you read this, Christie's New York will have sold, on 7 June, a first selection from the collection formed by Frederick R. Koch through the foundation which bears his name. Mr. Koch, who has dominated the collecting of 19th century art, books, and manuscripts--French, British, American--like no one else during the 1980s, has decided to concentrate on material relating to music. The sale contained a number of Morris-related items. Morris's 6 page letter of 25 November 1872--concerning the "affair" between Jane Morris and Rossetti--must be the most revealing one he ever wrote; the text is printed in full in Norman Kelvin's edition of the "Letters." The lot following consisted of Walter Crane's

original manuscript of his poem, "William Morris," written the day after Morris's death. Burne-Jones was represented by two large groups of autograph letters, illustrated with self-caricatures and drawings of animals, addressed to his daughter Margaret and to "Elsie," the otherwise unidentified daughter of a neighbor. There were also letters from Rossetti (to William Bell Scott, about "The Germ"), Swinburne, and Pater. Among the few printed books was yet another copy of Christina Rossetti's 1847 *Verses*, this one inscribed by William Rossetti in 1896. More Pre-Raphaelite items are expected in a second Koch dispersal, scheduled for September.

And, if this were not enough, June 1990 may prove to have been a unique opportunity--at least for a few rich booksellers or collectors. No fewer than *four* copies of the Kelmscott Chaucer were scheduled to be sold at auction during a one week period, two in the sale of Children's and Illustrated Books at Sotheby's, London, on 7 June; the others a week later, in the final portion of the Bradley Martin collection, and in a Sotheby's New York sale of miscellaneous fine printed books and manuscripts. The estimates range from \$6,000.00 to £15,000.

"UTOPIAN VISIONS," THE TORONTO MORRIS CONFERENCE: BY GARY L. AHO

Five years ago, in March 1985, I was the guest of the William Morris Society of Canada, enjoying three days of Morrisian fellowship and warm hospitality, attending interesting lectures at a Morris symposium, visiting architectural landmarks and a waterfront crafts center. It was a delightful time, and all of my hosts--Hans De Groot, Jean Johnson, Kathy Lachlan, Anna and John Wichelow (who sang Victorian songs while preparing fluffy omelettes)--were thoughtful and convivial. A few days ago, I went back, this time to attend the Society's Sixth Annual Symposium, and I was pleased to see all these fine people again, all still charming and thoughtful, all still commemorating Morris's achievements in civil, humane, intelligent, and jovial ways. The Morris Society of Canada is thriving.

The title of this year's symposium was "Utopian Vision: William Morris and 'News from Nowhere,'" and six speakers enlightened an audience of fifty concerning the continuing relevance, 100 years after its first appearance in "Commonweal," of Morris's utopian romance.

Professor Trevor Lloyd of the University of Toronto spoke on "Possible Worlds," commenting on several other anti-capitalist, romantic narratives published between 1885 and 1897. "News from Nowhere" was not unique, though it might be regarded as the keystone in an arch of several other and often strikingly similar books.

Peter Faulkner, Reader in Modern English Literature at the University of Exeter, spoke on "'News from Nowhere' and the Idea of England," pointing out that the defining of England and Englishness was a major interest of many diverse Victorians and that Morris was aware of their work, of the "newly invented study of history." He was particularly interested in pre-Norman England, in racial and linguistic associations between the Anglo-Saxons and the Norse, and these interests show up in a number of his works. Morris's love for English history and for the English countryside--England as "place, not nation"--are evident throughout "News from Nowhere."

Professor Eugene LeMire of Flinders University of South Australia spoke on "Mind in Morris's England," contrasting Lionel Trilling's indictment of "News from Nowhere" as anti-intellectual to E.P. Thompson's celebration of the utopia for its free play of ideas. Trilling overlooked intense colloquies about books, about work, and about nature, all of which indicate the breadth of Morris's vision and his commitment to secular humanism, to values Trilling accused him of betraying.

Lord Briggs of Lewes (Professor Asa Briggs), Provost of Worcester College at Oxford spoke on "Nowhere and London," recalling the sharp contrasts in the utopia (and in Morris's life) between periods of rest and periods of struggle. Though Morris often castigated London and its miseries, he knew the great city and its defining river very well, and both figure prominently in "News from Nowhere," a utopia that stresses the importance of nature's beauty and of democracy, which cannot be achieved without struggle.

Professor Leo Panitch of York University in Toronto spoke on "After 100 Years--Some Social and Economic Reflections," pointing out how prescient Morris had been in "News from Nowhere" about the nature and dangers of liberal reform, and why its programs will ever be hostage to Reagans and Thatchers. Those interested in radical change can still find both inspiration and instruction in the pages of "News from Nowhere."

Mr. Donald Schmitt, a prominent Toronto architect, gave a slide lecture on "How We Might Live," showing that it is possible to integrate older vernacular buildings and materials into modern structures, arguing that it is possible to preserve open spaces and gardens close to homes and work places, which needn't--indeed mustn't--be separated by miles of freeway. People can live happily, productively, in areas of high density. Several models were shown and discussed.

After a three-hour recess, speakers and audience joined to celebrate William Morris's 156th birthday. There was food, wine, music, a reading from the end of "News from Nowhere," and then Lord Briggs gave the Birthday Toast. After cake (decorated with scenes inspired by "News from Nowhere") and coffee and more general good will, we departed into the frosty night, reminded once again that William Morris was correct about the need for fellowship. We must all be thankful that the Morris Society of Canada has so successfully over the past several years created programs and contexts that have indeed proven that "fellowship is life."

THE WILLIAM MORRIS EXHIBITION IN JAPAN: BY GARY L. AHO

A friend returned from the Far East recently, bringing along an elegant present: a sumptuous book, "William Morris," published by the "William Morris Catalogue Committee." Produced and printed in Japan, by Insho-sha, it catalogues an exhibition that was mounted in Tokyo from 1-28 March, 1989, at the Isetan Museum of Art, and in Osaka from 19 April to 1 May, at the Daimaru Museum. The editorial director of the catalogue, Professor Hiroyuki Suzuki of the University of Tokyo, has informed me that the exhibition was a huge success in both cities: "In Tokyo 63,593 people attended and 18,748 copies of the catalogue were sold. In Osaka 40,724 people attended, and 6,796 copies were sold. Museum staffs were surprised that so many people were interested in Morris." These are surprising, even astounding, numbers. Professor Suzuki characterized this wide interest as "Morris fever," and he pointed out that most of the books on Morris published in the West in the last twenty years, particularly those on design, have been translated into Japanese and that two Japanese scholars, Professors Jiro Ono and Masaa Yamamoto have recently written biographies of Morris.

Professor Suzuki also sent me an article on William Morris and the exhibitions that appeared in the *Asahi*, one of Japan's most important newspapers. This I had translated. It provides biographical data, making expected connections between Red House and the development of Morris and Company, between his attitudes towards art and a decent society, and the like. The article also makes the following points about William Morris and Japan:

It is less than a century ago that Morris was introduced as an artist and craftsman to Japan. Ryunosuke Akutagawa majored in English literature and wrote a thesis on Morris when he graduated from the University of Tokyo, where Koizumi Yagumo (Lafcadio Hearn) once lectured on Morris as a poet and philosopher. Yagumo, a contemporary, made sensible comments on Morris's poetical talent. Thirty years later, early in the Showa period, Morris's ideas about the arts and crafts were discussed by Muneyoshi Yanagi, the founder of the Folk Art Movement. Later, Yanagi and Kenkichi Tomimoto, a ceramist, brought Morris's ideas to the Japanese Folk Art Movement, and the ties between his ideas and that movement were strengthened.[See B. Moeran, "Yanagi, Morris, and Popular Art," "Ceramic Review" Vol. 66 (1980), pp. 25-26]

The exhibition catalogue opens with three short essays: 1) "William Morris as Designer" by Stephen Astley, 2) "William Morris: Art, Work and Socialism" by Norah Gillow, 3) "William Morris and His Company" by Hiroyuki Suzuki. This last, except for the title, is not translated into English. The other two essays appear in both English and Japanese, as does all the rest of the text in the catalogue, from chronologies to the full and specific descriptions of every exhibited item. There were 117 items in the exhibits, many of them borrowed from the Victoria and Albert and the William Morris Gallery, and they appear in the catalogue under eight categories: 1) Portraits and Influence, 2) The Red House and Early Works of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co., 3) Designs for Stained Glass, 4) Wallpapers, 5) Textile Designs, 6) Furniture, 7) Book Illustrations, 8) Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement.

The catalogue, as I said at the outset, is sumptuous: there are 103 full-page color plates, so nearly every exhibited item gets one dazzling page. The colors are beautifully reproduced, and there are several wonderful photographs of Red House, these by Martin Charles. The catalogue is an impressive piece of work, a demonstration of Japanese regard for the achievements of William Morris and itself an artifact, one that suggests the force of that "Morris fever" mentioned by Professor Suzuki.

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