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# Editorial – Peter Faulkner: a critical appreciation

*Patrick O'Sullivan*

With this issue we celebrate the contribution to William Morris studies, and the eightieth birthday, of our friend, comrade, and mentor, Peter Faulkner. The volume contains a range of articles which I hope reflects at least some of Peter's own interests, and Morris's; the book (Morris and the 'demise' of printing', Jan Marsh), the theatre (Morris as playwright [not a phrase one reads every day], Jo George), utopia ('*News from Nowhere* in recent criticism' revisited, Tony Pinkney), the prose romances (The Dream, Image, Vision, Wizardry, and Erotic in Morris's work, Norman Kelvin), education (Morris on Useful Learning versus 'Useless Toil', Phillippa Bennett), landscape (Morris, George Borrow and Edward Thomas, John Purkis), and design and the SPAB (Charles Winston and the development of Conservative Restoration, Jim Cheshire). Perhaps only the poems, of which Peter has of course edited his own selection,<sup>1</sup> are missing from this list.

Although Peter retired from editing this *Journal* in 1996, he has continued looking after the Reviews, for which I am extremely grateful, as no doubt were my predecessors. In this issue we therefore also carry reviews of a novel about Morris in Iceland, of *Illustrated Editions of the Works of William Morris in English*, and of *The Road Not Taken. How Britain Narrowly Missed a Revolution*. Other reviews then follow of books on *Rossetti: Painter and Poet*, on the Pre-Raphaelites as Victorian *avant-garde*, on the early Pre-Raphaelite publication *The Germ*, and on Pre-Raphaelite stained glass. Last, John Purkis discusses recollections of collecting Morris books, and of Kelmscott Manor, at the turn of the twentieth century.

Peter has, of course, published very extensively indeed in these pages on 'the life and times of William Morris' – for example on Morris at Kelmscott, Morris and Oscar Wilde, Morris and Swinburne, Morris and the Two Cultures, Morris and the Working Men's College, and Morris and Yeats; on *News from Nowhere* in recent criticism (see Tony Pinkney, this volume p. 30), Pevsner's Morris, Rossetti at Kelmscott, Ruskin and Morris, on the African socialist Léopold Senghor and

Morris, of the story of Alcestis in Morris and Ted Hughes, and on Morris and the *Scrutiny* Tradition, as well as upwards of fifty reviews, obituaries and editorials. Then there are his Kelmscott Lectures on *William Morris and Eric Gill*, *Wilfrid Scawen Blunt and the Morrises*, and *William Morris and the Idea of England*.<sup>2</sup> In other publications, he has discussed Morris's poetry from Guenevere to *Sigurd*, and 'Goldilocks' and the Late Romances.

However, Peter is not just interested in Morris, and the British Library Catalogue lists books on *William Morris and W.B. Yeats*, *Yeats and the Irish Eighteenth Century*, *Humanism in the English novel*, *Robert Bage*, *Modernism*, *Angus Wilson*, *Yeats: The Tower and The Winding Stair*, and his editions of Morris's *Early romances in prose and verse*, of *Jane Morris to Wilfrid Scawen Blunt*, of *Hopes and Fears for Art and Signs of Change*, John Bruce Glasier's *William Morris and the early days of the socialist movement*, *Arts and crafts essays*, *Anna St. Ives*, Robert Bage's *Hermesprong, or, Man as he is not*, *The picture of Dorian Gray*, *The works of G.K. Chesterton*, and *The white man's burdens: an anthology of British poetry of the Empire* (with Chris Brooks), as well as *A Victorian Reader*, and of course *William Morris: Centenary Essays* (with Peter Preston). He has also published articles on Auden as 'Scrutineer', on Ford Maddox Ford as craftsman and romantic, on Newbolt and Kipling, on William Cowper and the poetry of Empire (all in *Durham University Journal*), Walter Scott as editor of (Robert) Bage, and Wilfrid Scawen Blunt's first visit to Kelmscott Manor (in *Notes and Queries*), as well as others on African literature, Carlyle's letters to Charles Redwood, Ezra Pound and the Pre-Raphaelites, Virginia Woolf and Modernism, and several other articles on Yeats.<sup>3</sup>

Two other books by Peter are probably among those best known to Morrisians; *William Morris: the critical heritage* (1973), and *Against the age: an introduction to William Morris* (1980).<sup>4</sup> In the first, Peter compiled a wide range of contemporary reviews of Morris's work, arranged chronologically, which, in those pre-internet days, must have been a considerable task. And even though today we might well be able to use the web to find many of these sources, the book is full of unexpected gems, in the shape of contemporary views of Morris which other authors do not always cite. Thus more familiar reviews of given works appear alongside those which are less familiar, and consulting the book often produces a delightful serendipity. As explained in the Introduction, the Victorian period was in many ways the golden age of reviewing, but reviewers tended to concentrate mainly on poetry and the novel, so that Morris's later romances and lectures received less attention. However, the student of Morris's political ideas will still find interesting reviews of *Hopes and Fears for Art*, *Signs of Change*, *A Dream of John Ball* (rather short!), and of course, *News from Nowhere*. There are also tributes to Morris by Robert Blatchford, Kropotkin (apparently, in those days, Kropotkine), and Walter Crane.

In her review of *Hopes and Fears*, Ellen Simcox (*Fortnightly Review*, June 1882), gives an early lie to the old canard that Morris abhorred technology ('Mr Morris refrains from any general denunciation of machinery'), and to the idea that he approved of 'art for art's sake' ('the objects of his confirmed distrust and disbelief'), but thought instead that 'art must either be popular, ... or it must cease to exist' – a sentiment for which nowadays (although Peter himself might not agree) there is surely an even stronger case than in Morris's time.<sup>5</sup> *Signs of Change* was reviewed in the *Saturday Review* (19 May, 1888), a publication Peter describes as 'thoroughly hostile to Morris's new political commitment' (to socialism). It is interesting to note that the anonymous reviewer believes that 'under the system of competition, the evils which Mr. Morris would abolish by Socialism are gradually curing themselves', although on the previous page, he (?) also notes that 'action taken by the state through armies of inspectors ... enforces ... better competition' which leads to excellence as well as the vileness Morris describes. Clearly the great god of the free market about whom we have had to listen so much this last thirty years was also operating in those days, although apparently, then as now, he needed regulating in order to make him behave. Shorn of logical argument, the reviewer resorts to that other old Spencerian myth, of 'human nature' ('antagonism is the way of the world') to try to substantiate his (?) case, although, as discussed in these pages in an earlier issue, in scientific terms there is no such thing.<sup>6</sup>

In the *Academy* of 23 May 1891, Lionel Johnson began his review of *News from Nowhere* with a description of Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* ('a book of an ugliness so gross and vulgarity so pestilent that it deserved the bonfire and the hangman ...') in the light of which my recent comparison of it to James Lovelock's *Revenge of Gaia*, or Morris's original dubbing of it as a 'cockney paradise', may, like Cunninghame Graham, be 'too bloody politeful'. Johnson goes on to castigate Morris for his Aristotelean approach ('a long life of virtuous activity'), which he clearly finds too proletarian for his own lofty, Platonic lights, and for not explaining what happened during the 'period of transition' to the revolutionary society of Nowhere. However, it may be that Morris's metaphysics, were they to have existed, which they did not, would have been more Epicurean than Aristotelean: 'let us go back to the sources of "sanity" ... the motherhood of the earth ...', and that humanity 'alone takes double pleasure in (its) life upon earth, a pleasure of the mind and of the senses'.<sup>7</sup>

Maurice Hewlett's review (*National Review*, August 1891) is perhaps more familiar, in that it was Hewlett who described *News from Nowhere* as 'not an earthly, but an earthy paradise'. He too takes a Platonic view, and he too uses the 'human nature' argument, stating that Morris has exaggerated its dependence upon environment. However, a number of Hewlett's statements lead me to wonder just how closely he read the book; for example that Nowhere involves the 'free

exchange of husbands and wives' (which makes it sound like 1960s suburbia), that this is one of 'the attributes of the new State' (Is there a 'state' in Nowhere?), that the people of Nowhere are now *Italian* (his emphasis; this about a book by a man who hated the Renaissance and who revered the values of the Viking North), that 'a great Nature-worship has set in' (where?), and that the extent of jurisdiction of the 'folk-moot' is not explained. (It is!) However, what really gets Hewlett's (Arcadian?) goat is 'free love', and in Nowhere, 'Beauty receives the definition of the *hareem*', and that in this 'Neo-Epicurean' utopia, 'a race of fleshly perfection' will seek satisfaction 'by indulging the appetites of its grosser parts'. He concludes that (Mr Morris) 'must (he really must) read history'.<sup>8</sup> But perhaps he (Mr Hewlett) should (he really should) have read the book – at least more carefully.

Finally, there are the tributes to Morris, including perhaps the most familiar, by Robert Blatchford (*Clarion*, October 1896; 'I cannot help feeling that it does not matter what goes into the Clarion this week ...'), although it is interesting to read that the text usually quoted is a paraphrase of a much more extensive passage. I am not sure I agree with Blatchford that Morris would have been happy in the company of Raleigh or Drake; the latter a notorious pirate and slaver. Surely 'the pikes at Leyden', or Cromwell's Ironsides, were more Morris's style?<sup>9</sup> Kropotkin, I note, while describing *News from Nowhere*, as is well known, as 'perhaps the most thoroughly and deeply Anarchistic conception of future society that has ever been written ... a wonderful personification of the good practical sense of *collective* action', (emphasis original) does not confine himself to politics, but writes of Morris that

As a poet, he stood quite alone in modern poetry. Amidst the whining and morbid poets of our own time, who are plunged into self-analysis and self-complaint, ... he was almost the only poet of the joys of life the joys which (humanity) finds in the conquest of freedom, in the full exercise of (its) powers, in work the work of ... hands and ... brain.<sup>10</sup>

This passage does not read, to me anyway, as a description of an ancestor of Modernism. Kropotkin also explains why Morris, an upholder of the *Scandinavian* spirit, was not understood by people such as Johnson and Hewlett, who had been brought up in the Classical tradition.

Edward Carpenter (*Freedom*, December 1896) wrote that Morris 'hated with a good loyal hatred all insincerity; but most he hated, and with his very soul, the ugliness and meanness of modern life. I believe that this was the great inspiring hatred of his life'. This statement is not so very different from Morris's own famous remark that 'Apart from the desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilization'. Carpenter also explains that Morris's 'chief recreation was ... another kind of work. He could

not understand that form of pleasure which consist in loafing your days away at a watering place'. Last, his tribute to Morris stands at least with that of Blatchford, if not above it:

To hundreds and thousands of unknown toilers and workers by land and sea, and all over the earth, he was and is the object of a real love; and it is at least some poor consolation that, if in the old form we miss him, still in the hearts of men and women thus multiplied his image moves and lives, and will live.<sup>11</sup>

It reminds me, I think, of Barbara Castle, who, perhaps on *Desert Island Discs*, described how when she was a girl, even in homes where people could afford few books, if any, copies of the same two volumes were almost always to be found; *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, and *News from Nowhere*.

Walter Crane (*Progressive Review*, November 1896) maintained that (*pace* Engels' well known remark to Laura Lafargue), 'there is no greater mistake than to think of William Morris as a sentimentalist'. Instead, Morris's intensely practical knowledge gave exceptional advantages in solving social and economic questions. Thus, *Nowhere*, with its rejection of Bellamy's 'mechanistic' socialism in favour of the organic, its emphasis on the countryside rather than the city, and its thesis that if you 'settle the economic question and you settle all other questions', is a 'perfectly practicable utopia', in which life is 'remarkably wholesome, human and sane and pleasurable'. And 'if wholesome, human and sane and pleasurable lives are not possible to the greater part of humanity under existing institutions, so much the worse for these institutions'.<sup>12</sup>

*Against the Age*, elegantly organised around Morris's celebrated letter to Andreas Scheu,<sup>13</sup> continues the tendency begun in the *Critical Heritage* for including the unexpected and the less known. Various myths about Morris – that he was basically a conservative thinker; that he would have nothing to do with machinery; that he is in any way the intellectual ancestor of modernism – are again questioned. Thus Peter explains that Morris's early poetry does not idealise the Middle Ages, but 'reanimates' what was 'exquisite and rare' about them. Neither does Morris's concept of the medieval paradigm of work ignore the 'grievous material oppression' of those times. Similarly, it is the universal belief in the need to make a profit which means that machinery is used (as today with computers) only to increase production, not to lessen labour. And Nikolaus Pevsner's suggestion that 'Morris laid the foundation of the modern style; with Gropius its character was ultimately determined' is – rightly I think – also questioned. Surely no style which substitutes the artificial and the synthetic for the natural, machines and ultimately computers for human labour, and, most of all, the city for the countryside, can be said to owe any intellectual debt to Morris?<sup>14</sup>

Morris's poetry is said to be best read aloud, even though this probably did not happen at the time, and as far as *Sigurd the Volsung* is concerned, I can personally

testify that for someone normally too impatient to read lengthy Victorian narrative poetry, this is correct. An interesting juxtaposition of Morris's political ideas and his poetry is the late poem 'Mine and thine' from *Poems by the Way* (1891), translated apparently from medieval Flemish.

Yea, God well counseled for our wealth  
 Gave all this fleeting worldly wealth  
 A common heritage to all  
 That men might feed them therewithal,  
 And clothe their limbs, and shoe their feet  
 And live a simple life and sweet  
 But now so rageth greediness  
 That each desireth nothing less  
 Than all the world, and all his own;  
 And all for him and him alone

Though the poem is medieval in origin, its sentiments are twenty-first century in their relevance. Included in the same collection is bleak section of *The Pilgrims of Hope* (1885), which, for a man sometimes said to be uncomfortable when writing about 'the woman question', reads not unlike some of the criticisms of bourgeois marriage developed by feminists during the 1970s:

Prudence begets her thousands;  
 'good is a housekeepers life,  
 So shall I sell my body  
 That I may be matron and wife.'  
 'And I shall endure foul wedlock  
 And bear the children of need.'  
 Some are there born of hate,  
 many the children of greed.<sup>15</sup>

Lest all this should begin to read like hagiography, let me illustrate a few instances where I disagree with Peter. For example, surely only someone as charitable as he could write that Rossetti's motives for encouraging Jane Burden to accept 'the reticent and awkward' Morris 'should not ... be interpreted without sympathy'. Less flippantly, I am not sure I agree with Peter that Morris is 'at his least convincing in his suggestion (in *News from Nowhere*) that a large population (*ca* 40 million) could be sustained in a society whose economic methods are small scale and labour intensive'.<sup>16</sup> For example, Morris's contemporary Prince Kropotkin, a man with more science than Morris, and who had done the relevant calculations regarding the relative efficiency of extensive and intensive agriculture, wrote



There is not one nation in the world which, being armed with the present powers of agriculture, could not grow on its cultivable area all the food and most of the raw materials derived from agriculture which are required for its population, even if the requirements of that population were rapidly increased as they certainly ought to be. Taking the powers of man over the land and over the forces of nature—such as they are at the present day—we can maintain that two to three inhabitants to each cultivable acre of land would not yet be too much. But neither in this densely populated country nor in Belgium are we yet in such numbers. In this country we have, roughly speaking, one acre of the cultivable area per inhabitant.<sup>17</sup>

Nor do I sympathise entirely with Morris when he suggested to Georgie Burne-Jones that introducing a profit-sharing scheme into ‘the Firm’ was a less valuable contribution to socialism than ‘the furthering of the great principle’. £16 per annum, which is what he calculated such a bonus might be, may not have seemed much to him, but 6/8d per week may well have made a difference to many Victorian working people. However, Morris was a good employer, allowed flexible working hours, and paid above the going rate. ‘No one, having worked for Mr Morris would willingly have joined any other workshop’.<sup>18</sup>

In any case, I feel I may have been less than just to Peter when I omitted *Against the Age* from what thus turns out to have indeed been a ‘partial’ review of the development of modern ideas of ‘Morris the Green’.<sup>19</sup> For example, even in his Preface, he writes

As long as our industrial society continues to perplex us with such problems as pollution, delinquency, commercial acquisitiveness and violence, so long we will stand in need of Morris’s vision of a society of equals in which every man and woman finds proper fulfillment

and in his conclusions

With the dwindling of the world’s natural resources and an increasing sense that ‘small is beautiful’ we may soon be abandoning the assumption that industrial growth is the highest good.

So, yes, it is indeed ‘Morris’s concern for the *human* (my emphasis) environment’ which makes his lectures, particularly ‘The Lesser Arts’ or ‘Art under Plutocracy’, ‘Useful work versus useless toil’, and ‘How we live and how we might live’, so relevant today. To me, these early references to Morris’s greenness are more convincing than those by Jack Lindsay or A.L. Morton, both of which have always struck me as somewhat opportunistic.<sup>20</sup>

And re-reading his letter to Louisa Baldwin of 26 March 1874, one feels tempted to hazard that it may have been about the time of his fortieth birthday that

Morris eventually turned 'green'. For example

Surely if people lived five hundred years instead of three score and ten they would find some better way of living than in such a sordid loathsome place, but now it seems to be nobody's business to try to better things . . . but look, suppose people lived in little communities among gardens and green fields, so that you could be in the country in five minutes' walk, and had few wants, almost no furniture for instance, and no servants, and studied the (difficult) arts of life, and finding out what they really wanted; then I think one might hope civilisation had begun.<sup>21</sup>

If so, this would imply that Morris had already become a proto-green before he became a socialist, and therefore that he did not bring Marxism to the green movement so much as bring greenness to Marxism (although it is taking a while to 'stick').

So it is indeed his idyllic feeling for the English countryside which sets Morris in sharp contrast to those who believed that industrial development was in itself a human good. Unfortunately, it was his political differences with the Fabians which led to his emphasis on the importance of environmental quality being replaced historically by an ethos which valued *material* economic progress above everything else.<sup>22</sup> If correct, this also probably goes a long way towards explaining why the British labour movement still finds it so difficult to go green – even though for forty years now, it has been the obvious political direction for it to go.

Three aspects of *News from Nowhere* thus epitomise Morris's political ethos – 'the pervasive sense of equality', 'the quality of the environment', and an attitude of mind which places highest value on the ordinary experiences of life; a 'delight in the life of the world'. But there is also the 'problem' likewise highlighted by the *Saturday Review's* review of *A Dream of John Ball*; of whether a revolution might defeat its own ends (according to Peter, 'the most pertinent question which can be directed at a Marxist'): "Competition develops its opposite – Socialism". And would not Socialism develop its [own] opposite – Capitalism?' Or as Ellen puts it, in *News from Nowhere*:

Who knows? happy as we are, times may alter; we may be bitten with some impulse towards change, and many things may seem too wonderful for us to resist, too exciting not to catch at, if we do not know that they are but phases of what has been before; and withal ruinous deceitful, and sordid.

Peter then acknowledges that 'Once the dialectical process of history has been accepted, the Marxist can only move out of it by the metaphysical decision to decree the end of history'. However, *both* questions date from a time when we assumed that infinite material progress could take place on a finite planet,

whereas now we know this can never be. Physics therefore trumps metaphysics; hence once again the importance of Morris to the green movement, were it but to acknowledge it.<sup>23</sup>

Since becoming editor of this *Journal*, I have benefited greatly from Peter's invaluable advice and guidance, much of it expressed in emails written in the style of (pre-electronic) letters, and I know that my predecessor received many of the same. All of these, indeed all of Peter's communications, are expressed with a kind of old-world courtesy now rarely encountered. A friend of mine (now sadly gone to the Elysian Fields) used to greet anyone who had done him a service with the slogan, 'You're a gentleman, sir! And a scholar!' In the presenting these essays to Peter, I would modify that statement in only one way: 'You're a scholar, sir! And a gentleman!'

## NOTES

1. For a more extensive list, please go to [http://www.morrisociety.org/publications/author\\_index.html](http://www.morrisociety.org/publications/author_index.html) (as accessed 3 April 2013).
2. Peter Faulkner, ed, *William Morris. Selected poems*, Manchester: Carcanet, 1992, 156 pp.
3. All in all, a range almost as eclectic as that of Morris!
4. Peter Faulkner, *William Morris: the critical heritage*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973, 465 pp. (Afterwards *CH*); *Against the age: an introduction to William Morris*, London: Allen & Unwin, 1980, 193 pp. (Afterwards *Against the Age*)
5. *CH*, p. 273, p. 275. As we know, Morris approved of machines which relieved drudgery, but liked them even better if they increased the pleasure of work in hand (James Redmond, ed, *William Morris. News from Nowhere*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Chapter XV, pp. 82–83; afterwards *NfN*).
6. *CH*, pp. 312, 311, 313; Patrick O'Sullivan, 'Editorial – Science under Plutocracy', *Journal of William Morris Studies*, XVIII, No. 2, (Summer 2009), pp. 3–14.
7. *CH*, p. 339; Patrick O'Sullivan, 'Editorial – Looking Forward', *Journal of William Morris Studies*, XIX, No. 1, (Winter 2010), pp. 3–8., *CH*, p. 324, 340, pp. 340–341.
8. *CH*, pp. 345, 346, 349, 352.
9. *CH*, pp. 390–391, p. 392; 'The Beauty of Life', 1880, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1882/hopes/chapters/chapter3.htm> (As accessed 4 April 2013); *CH*, p. 399,
10. *CH*, p. 400, p. 399.
11. *CH*, p. 401; 'How I became a socialist', in A.L. Morton, ed, *Political Writings*

- of *William Morris*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, p. 243; *CH*, p. 402, p. 403.
12. *CH*, p. 405. Yet another characterisation, if we need one, of the kind of utopia *News from Nowhere* may actually be to add to the list given in my own '¡Homenaje a Aragón! *News from Nowhere*, collectivisation and the sustainable future', *Journal of William Morris Studies*, XIX, No.3, (Winter 2011), pp. 93–111.
  13. To Andreas Scheu, 15 September 1883, in Norman Kelvin, *The Collected Letters of William Morris, Vol. II, 1881–1884*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987, p. 227–231.
  14. *Against the Age*, pp. 17, 24, 115, 116, 180.
  15. *Against the Age*, pp. 82, 161, 119. No public performances are promised, however.
  16. *Against the Age*, pp. 13, 141.
  17. Peter Kropotkin, *Fields Factories Workshops*, Chapter V, The possibilities of agriculture (Continued); [http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist\\_archives/kropotkin/fieldsch5.html](http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/anarchist_archives/kropotkin/fieldsch5.html) (as accessed 7 April 2013). Originally published London: Hutchinson, 1899, 315 pp. As the book was therefore published after his death, Morris may not have known of this work, but Kropotkin did attend meetings and speak at Kelmscott House, and there are records of Morris having a long talk, and spending the evening with him, on 24 and 25 March 1886, at a time when such matters were surely uppermost in both their minds (Nicholas Salmon with Derek Baker, *The William Morris Chronology*, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996, p. 159).
  18. *Against the Age*, p. 117; Brit. Mus. Add. MSS 45350, as quoted by E.P. Thompson, pp. 321–322.
  19. Patrick O'Sullivan, 'Morris the Red, Morris the Green: a partial review', *Journal of William Morris Studies*, XIX, No. 3, (Winter 2011), pp. 22–38.
  20. *Against the Age*, pp. ix, 181, 100; Jack Lindsay, *William Morris. His life and work*, New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1975 (1979), pp. 382–383; 'Introduction', in A.L. Morton, ed, *The Political Writings of William Morris*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1979, pp. 27–28.
  21. *Against the Age*, p. 85.
  22. Raymond Williams, 'Socialism and Ecology' (1982), in Robin Gable, ed, *Resources of Hope. Culture, Democracy, Socialism*, London: Verso, 1989, pp. 210–226.
  23. *Against the Age*, pp. 134–136; p. 121; *NfN*, Chapter XXIX, pp. 167–168; *Against the Age*, p. 121. Interestingly, on p. 134 Peter names Morris's companion on his journey across London in *News from Nowhere* Chapters IV–VIII Richard Hammond, as opposed to the usual epithet 'Dick'. Those of us who look forward to end of fossil fuels, and therefore of 'petrolheads', are grateful for the second being the more normal use.

# Books in Bottles?

## William Morris and the demise of printing

A BRIEF TRIBUTE TO THE REVIEWS EDITOR  
(AND MUCH MORE) OF THE JWMS

*Jan Marsh*

In 1893, William Morris predicted the end of the book, saying that ‘within fifty years printing books would be an extinct art – we should be carrying all our books about in bottles with patent stoppers. While there was still a chance, [we] should try and produce a few specimens of what was really good printing’.<sup>1</sup>

He was at the time in the third year of the Kelmscott Press enterprise, and had been asked to speak on printing for the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society. This talk ‘On the Printing of Books’ took place on 2 November 1893 at the New Gallery in Regent Street, where the current exhibition was being held, and was reported in the *Times* on 6 November. Morris, who was received with cheers at the beginning and the end of the lecture, ‘demonstrated by means of lantern slides the various stages which printing had passed through from the time of its invention until the third decade of the 16th century’ and concluded with illustrations from Caxton’s *Golden Legend* and *Historyes of Troy*, printed at the Kelmscott Press.<sup>2</sup>

When published, the lecture traced the origins of European printing with moveable metal type when ‘it was a matter of course that ... when the craftsmen took care that beautiful form should always be a part of their productions whatever they were, the forms of printed letters should be beautiful, and that their arrangement on the page should be reasonable and a help to the shapeliness of the letters themselves’.<sup>3</sup> Decline followed steadily and especially, according to Morris, during the later eighteenth century, halted by some small signs of recovery ‘in the last fifty years’. An account of ‘best practice’ in regard to typefaces, typography, page design, leading and spacing, ornamentation and paper quality

set out Morris's printing principles, summarised at the close:

Therefore, granted well-designed type, due spacing of the lines and words, and proper position of the page on the paper, all books might be at least comely and well-looking; and if to these good qualities were added really beautiful ornament and pictures, printed books might once again illustrate to the full the position of our Society that a work of utility might be also a work of art, if we cared to make it so.<sup>4</sup>

The talk, or another version of it, was reported in the trade press on 6 December, where the remark about printing being an extinct art in the next fifty years was quoted.<sup>5</sup> As this is not in the published version, it seems to have been an impromptu comment, maybe in response to an audience question.

Being at this moment deeply engaged in book production to his own rigorous specifications, Morris was speaking sarcastically, satirically, in defence of good quality design and printing. But what did he mean? What did he conceive of as 'books in bottles with patent stoppers'? There seems nothing else in his writings to elucidate this, but a very similar remark was reported a year later by Burne-Jones. In a letter, he wrote that Morris

... railed fiercely against the invention of printing and gave it a hundred years at most to come to an end. Already said he the magazines are driving books out of the field – presently newspapers will have killed magazines – then the telephone will come – bottles of talk – & the newspapers will be ended & that's a comfort – as a centipede eats a cockroach & a cockroach eats a bug – a hundred years will do it said he.<sup>6</sup>

Bottled books and talk? My guess is that the telephone allusion provides a clue, it being one of the newest technologies of the time. The other was the phonograph, graphophone and gramophone; variants on newly-developed devices for recording sound. By the early 1890s, these were on the market as primitive dictation machines and more widely as public amusements. Morris surely read about the phonograph and noted that two of the most celebrated recordings were of contemporary poets. He could have heard Browning in 1889 recite the opening of 'How they brought the good news from Ghent to Aix' (stumbling over the third line with 'I'm sorry but I can't remember me own verses')<sup>7</sup> and Tennyson in 1890 recite from 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' and 'Maud' among other pieces – especially perhaps, since 'Maud' was among the Kelmscott Press titles in 1893. The potential for recorded books and 'talk' could have been evident.

Bottles 'with patent stoppers' – presumably those with sprung wires holding down glass or ceramic stoppers – suggest a release or start mechanism for the recorded voices, which would offer books and talks to customers, and thereby in due course eclipse printed texts. And perhaps the invocation of bottles for this

development came from the fact that phonograph recordings were made on wax cylinders which resembled jamjars or beer bottles without necks

To Morris, this prospect was evidently dystopian. He was prescient, however, because during the succeeding century, sound recording developed at speed and in many forms, including radio broadcasts, gramophone records, tape recordings, audio books, iPods and apps. I think perhaps that Morris the utopian thinker might have welcomed these as ‘bottles of talk’, since he always preferred his reading to be oral. But he would of course have disliked books or poems being read by others. It is surely sad to think that if he only had lived another twenty or thirty years, as he should have done, we might have possessed recordings of his own voice, delivering his own poems and speeches.

He would certainly also have been interested in present predictions and fears over the forthcoming ‘death of the book’, one hundred and twenty five years after his own prophecy. And I don’t think he would be impressed by the current offerings of ‘tablets of print’ in the kindle-style, whose aesthetic appeal to eye and hand is so lamentable. But technology is ever-advancing, and perhaps one day there will be virtual books where ‘a work of utility might be also a work of art’.

## NOTES

1. Report of lecture ‘The Printing of a Book’ in *The Printers’ Register* – Supplement 6 Dec 1893, p.viii, quoted in William S. Peterson, *The Kelmscott Press: A History of William Morris’s Typographical Adventure*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p.254.
2. ‘Mr William Morris on the Printing of Books’, *The Times*, 6 November 1893, p.4.
3. ‘Printing’, in May Morris, ed, *William Morris: Artist Writer Socialist*, Oxford: Blackwell 1936, vol.1, pp. 251–260.; see also <http://www.marxists.org/archive/morris/works/1893/printing.htm>. May Morris mistakenly dated this lecture to 1888, confusing it with ‘On Letterpress Printing’ delivered to the first Arts & Crafts Exhibition by Emery Walker in November 1888, which is credited with inspiring Morris to establish the Kelmscott Press. His own lecture was delivered on 2 November 1893.
4. *Ibid.*
5. See n.1 above. I have as yet been unable to check the original text, as this supplement is missing from the copies of the *Printers’ Register* in the British Library and St Bride Printing Library.
6. Edward Burne-Jones to Helen Gaskell, 12 Nov 1894, BL Add Ms 54217 f. 338.
7. Edison recording available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYot5-WuAjE&feature=related>.

# The Aristophanes of Hammersmith: William Morris as Playwright

*Jo George*

It is widely acknowledged that William Morris was one of the most talented polymaths ever to come out of England, and that his abilities as artist, poet, political essayist, designer and printer are beyond question. Few, however, would make claims for Morris as a playwright. This is partly because his dislike of Victorian theatregoers, and the plays on offer to them is so well-documented, in articles such as the one Morris wrote for *To-day* in 1884.<sup>1</sup>

May Morris also stated that: 'As a form of art my father disliked the modern play, as an amusement it bored him almost (sometimes quite) to swearing point, and modern acting, with its appeal to the emotions, its elaborate realism and character-study, was intolerable'.<sup>2</sup> Morris's attitude to Shakespeare was also surprisingly ambivalent, for although he included him in his list of Best Hundred Books, or Bibles,<sup>3</sup> he clearly felt that the plays were better suited to being read than being staged. Ever the mediaevalist, Morris had, according to his daughter May, a 'dislike for the plays as formalized since Shakespeare's time'.<sup>4</sup> For all this, Morris experimented with dramatic forms on numerous occasions throughout his career. It has been argued that, aside from *The Tables Turned; or Nupkins Awakened* (1887), the long poem *Love is Enough* (1873), and also four poems in *The Defence of Guenevere* (1858) are also experimental dramas in their own right. In addition, as explored below, all of these texts owe something to the main types of theatrical entertainment staged during the Middle Ages; the Mystery and Morality plays.

One of the essential differences between these two kinds of mediaeval drama concerns the types of character they employ; the Mysteries, being based on episodes from the Old and New Testaments, draw upon biblical figures, while the Moralities employ allegorical ones. Overall, however, their ultimate purpose is the same; to offer a combination of entertainment and moral instruction to their audiences. Indeed, this twofold function lies at the heart of a great deal of medi-



aeval art. In *The General Prologue* to *The Canterbury Tales*, for example, Chaucer's Host, Harry Bailley, asserts that the best stories are those which contain the 'best sentence and moost solaas' ('pleasing instruction', in other words).<sup>5</sup> Indeed, Morris's plea to his contemporaries to 'Have nothing in your homes that you do not know to be useful and believe to be beautiful' owes much to Chaucer, as does his stance on didactic literature, a topic explored below.

The average nineteenth-century play-goer, however, would have known next to nothing about the distinctive characteristics of Mysteries or Moralities, for these were not staged in Victorian Britain. According to William Antony Shepherd, this was because: 'By the end of the sixteenth century, in the wake of the Reformation, the performance of mystery plays had been suppressed in England and would remain so until the mid-twentieth century'. He continues: 'Victorian sensibilities had been firmly opposed to the portrayal of religious themes on stage, and nineteenth-century British theatrical censorship strictly reflected this outlook'.<sup>6</sup> Catherine Barnes Stevenson is rather presumptuous, therefore, in suggesting that Morris and Burne-Jones 'might have seen a mystery play in performance' as undergraduates. Indeed, such a performance is unlikely to have occurred, owing to a then ban on the portrayal of biblical subjects on the stage. It is not surprising, therefore, that extant records for Oxford 'do not list any college or University performances during those years'.<sup>7</sup> And yet, as we shall see, Morris possessed a sound knowledge of the mediaeval theatrical tradition. The question to ask, then, is where did this knowledge come from?

Stevenson is of help here, for she informs us that Morris would have had access to scholarly editions of some of these plays:

Printed versions of [mystery] plays were available to him, however, from at least two sources, both of which are owned by the Bodleian Library, where we know that he and Burne-Jones read Chaucer and studied the illuminated manuscripts (...). In 1825 Thomas Sharp had published a detailed and beautifully illustrated study of medieval dramatic practice at Coventry entitled *A Dissertation on the Pageants or Dramatic Mysteries Anciently Performed at Coventry by Trading Companies of that City*. In addition to precise information about the material circumstances of medieval drama gleaned from a study of the records of the guilds that produced the plays, Sharp also printed the complete text of the 'Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors Company'. In addition, William Marriott's *A Collection of English Miracle-Plays or Mysteries* (1838) made available ten dramas from the Chester, Coventry, series, including two of the *Ludus Coventriae* ('Joseph's Jealousy' and the 'Trial of Mary and Joseph') which he wrongly attributes to the Coventry cycle.<sup>8</sup>

It also seems likely that Morris discussed this material with his contemporaries. George Bernard Shaw, for example, tells us that Morris 'used to quote with great

relish as his idea of a good bit of comedy [...] lines of those scenes in the Towneley mysteries between the “shepherds abiding in the field”.<sup>9</sup>

Before examining *The Tables Turned*, however, some mention should be made of critics who argue that Morris was already experimenting with dramatic forms before 1887. Stevenson and Hale, for example, believe that “‘Sir Galahad’ and the poems which immediately precede it and follow it in the *Defence of Guenevere* comprise a kind of nascent mystery cycle based on episodes in Malory’. Their theory is based partly upon the fact that ‘Like these dramas, Morris’[s] “‘Sir Galahad’ opens with a complaint’, as well as the observation that ‘Like the medieval mystery cycle, ... “‘Sir Galahad’ accords a central place to the mystery of the Eucharist’. Most significant of all, however, they note that: ‘Although the first two thirds of the poem are enriched monologue, in the middle of line 153 it shifts into the present tense (‘the bell comes near’) and blossoms into a full-scale drama, complete with stage directions, four saintly ladies, and three characters from the *Morte D’Arthur*’.<sup>10</sup>

Morris’s inclusion of stage directions in ‘Sir Galahad, a Christmas Mystery’ is indeed interesting, and merits further discussion. The directions read as follows:

*Enter Two Angels in white, with scarlet wings; also,  
Four Ladies in gowns of red and green; also an Angel,  
Bearing in his hands a surcoat of white, with a red cross.*<sup>11</sup>

The Angels appear costumed in the manner of those in mediaeval drama, although the scarlet wings give pause for thought. Morris may wish us to think of these figures as Seraphim (those angels believed to be closest to God), for they are associated with the colour red. The colour symbolism may also be allegorical, as is often the case in the staging of Morality plays. In addition, when one of the Angels commands Galahad to

Rise and be arm’d: the Sangreal is gone forth  
Through the great forest, and you must be had  
Unto the sea that lieth on the north:<sup>12</sup>

one is immediately reminded of the scene in *The Wakefield Second Shepherds’ Pageant*, where something similar occurs. In this Mystery play, from the Towneley cycle alluded to by Shaw above, an Angel appears to the three shepherds and bids that they journey to Bethlehem in order to pay homage to the new-born Christ:

Rise, herdsman gentle, attend ye, for now is he born  
From the fiend that shall rend what Adam had lorn,  
That warlock to shend, this night is he born,

God is made your friend now on this morn.  
 Lo! thus doth he command –  
 Go to Bethlehem, see  
 Where he lieth so free[.]<sup>13</sup>

This pilgrimage leads to the shepherds' salvation, thus concluding the pageant on a celebratory note. The ending of 'Sir Galahad' is very different in tone, however, as Sir Bors returns from his adventures bringing 'nought good' news from the court:

Poor merry Dinadan, that with jape and scoff  
 Kept is all merry, in a little wood  
 Was fond all hack'd and dead: Sir Lionel  
 And Gawaine have come back from the great quest,  
 Just merely shamed; and Lauvaine, who loved well  
 Your father Launcelot, at the king's behest

Went out to seek him, but was almost slain,  
 Perhaps is dead now; everywhere  
 The knights come foil'd from the great quest, in vain;  
 In vain they struggle for the vision fair.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike the journey of the Wakefield shepherds, the quest for the Grail is far from complete. Such lack of proper closure in 'Sir Galahad' is due to a number of factors, but most especially to Morris's fidelity to his Arthurian source, as well as his refusal to reiterate the Christian certainties at the very heart of the mediaeval Mystery cycles.

It has further been argued that *Love is Enough* is also heavily influenced by mediaeval drama, although in this instance Morris was channelling the Moralities as opposed to the Mysteries: the reliance on this genre is made explicit in the Argument to the poem, which reads:

This story, which is told by way of a morality set before an  
 Emperor and Empress newly wedded, showeth of a King whom  
 nothing but Love might satisfy, who left all to seek Love, and,  
 having found it, found this also, that he had enough, though he  
 lacked all else.<sup>15</sup>

Interestingly, Morris's use of what we might call a 'theatrical spoiler', where the outcome of the drama is given away before the piece even begins, may be influenced by the preface to *Everyman* which functions in an identical way:

Here beginneth a treatise how the high father of heaven sendeth  
 Death to summon every creature to come and give account of their  
 lives in this world, and is in manner of a moral play.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, the genre of both *Love is Enough* and *Everyman* is established in these prefatory remarks; the former being defined as ‘a morality’ and the latter ‘in manner of a moral play’.

Karen Herbert also addresses the mediaeval influence on Morris’s poem:

From the morality tradition, Morris adapts the central allegorical figure who presents and interprets events, the undramatic debate form, and the motif of the soul’s pilgrimage through life. Common to both the morality and the masque is their retarded progression (...) The lack of distinction between the actors’ space and that of the audience is another characteristic shared by the morality, the masque, and Morris’s poetic drama.<sup>17</sup>

Though Herbert’s analysis of the Morality genre is largely accurate, the question remains as to how Morris would have known about drama of this type. The most obvious answer, of course, is that he again had access to scholarly editions of this material. In 1773, for example, Thomas Hawkins, Samuel Leacroft and Daniel Prince had published *The origin of the English drama: illustrated in its various species, viz. mystery, morality, tragedy and comedy, by specimens from our earliest writers*, and the volume contains two Morality plays: *Everyman*, and *Hickscorner*. The Bodleian Library holds a copy of this book, and there is, then, every likelihood that Morris had read this volume during his undergraduate days. Morris’s own contemporaries were not slow to spot the connections between *Love is Enough* and earlier English drama either. To Rossetti, the poem seemed ‘a sort of [court] masque’,<sup>18</sup> a point on which Herbert elaborates in the following manner:

From the masque, Morris takes the musical interludes and the celebration of a ruler’s love for his ‘queen’ and his people; however, the various perspectives dramatized in the frame section and in the layers of the work as a whole widen the masque’s traditional focus on the monarch, the most important spectator, to include the audience as a whole.<sup>19</sup>

With its indebtedness to various forms of early drama, and its overall theatrical style, it should perhaps come as no surprise that *Love is Enough* was actually staged during the early twentieth century by William Poel (1894–1905), the founder of the Elizabethan Stage Society. Poel, a Fabian Socialist and disciple of Morris, possessed strong ties to the Pre-Raphaelites (as a child he is alleged to have sat for Holman Hunt for the painting *The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple*), an association best summarised by Robert Shaughnessy:

Throughout the 1880s and 1890s Poel's project can be readily aligned with those of Ruskin and William Morris, whom he described as 'that apostle of radicalism'; his Elizabethanism extended the concerns of the Arts and Crafts movement, and the Gothic Revival. In the spirit of his utopian mentors, Poel revived early modern forms of theatrical production in order to attempt to retrieve an unalienated mode of social existence, wherein everyday life, work and culture could become organically integrated; following the lead of the Pre-Raphaelites, whose commitment to 'truth to nature' Ruskin championed, Poel promoted a medievalised, vibrantly colourful, stylised-realist art as a way of restoring a lost wholeness of life to an increasingly mechanised industrial society. For Poel, to revolutionise the Shakespearean theatre was a step towards changing the world.<sup>20</sup>

In July 1919, at the Ethical Church in Bayswater, this Pre-Raphaelite of the theatre staged *Love is Enough* 'coupled with an arrangement of scenes from *Henry VI* called *The Wars of the Roses*'.<sup>21</sup> Though the precise details of this production may well be lost, it is hoped that further research will yield more information regarding this highly intriguing subject.

There is, however, one performance of a fully-fledged play by Morris about which we do know quite a lot. Shaw describes this piece as 'a topical extravaganza, entitled [*The Tables Turned, or*] *Nupkins Awakened the chief "character parts" being Sir Peter Edlin, Tennyson, and an imaginary Archbishop of Canterbury*'.<sup>22</sup> Further information is provided by Fiona MacCarthy:

This political mini-farce was first performed in the Socialist League hall in Farringdon Road on 15 November 1887 to raise funds for *Commonweal*, and it marked William Morris's *début* not only as a playwright but as an actor. He stepped into the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury offered to, but refused by, Walter Crane [...] Shaw, who watched his performance with a critical eye, noted that he had not troubled with stage make-up, insisting that all that was required for stage illusion was a distinctive symbol for the character: the twentieth-century modernist view. 'A pair of clerical bands and black stockings proclaimed the archbishop: the rest he did by obliterating his humour and intelligence, and presenting his own person to the audience like a lantern with the light blown out, with a dull absorption in his own dignity which several minutes of the wildest screaming laughter at him when he entered could not disturb'.<sup>23</sup>

Several points from the above quotation merit further comment. First, it should be clear from everything argued thus far, that *The Tables Turned* does not strictly mark Morris's 'début' as a playwright. It should also be noted that the belief that 'all that was required for stage illusion was a distinctive symbol for the character' is not originally a 'modernist view'; rather, it is one which we see already operating in the mediaeval Morality plays, where symbolic colours, masking and props

were often used. In turn, one is also reminded of what Sir Walter Scott, that most influential of neo-mediaevalists, wrote, along similar lines: ‘Everything beyond correct costume and theatrical decorum [is foreign to the] legitimate purposes of the drama.’<sup>24</sup>

Mention has already been made of the relationship between *The Tables Turned* and morality plays of the Middle Ages. Fiona MacCarthy, again, for instance, defines Morris’s ‘socialist interlude’ as ‘a topical extravaganza with resemblances both to the medieval Morality play and the zany political satire that flourished in Britain in the 1960s’.<sup>25</sup> She does not, however, go on to explain the exact nature of this resemblance. As a consequence, a more extensive comparative analysis will be provided here.

To begin, morality plays are noted for their use of allegorical characters. The *Dramatis Personæ* for *Everyman*, for example, is as follows:

Everyman-----	Strength
God: Adonai-----	Discretion
Death-----	Five-Wits
Messenger-----	Beauty
Fellowship-----	Knowledge
Cousin-----	Confession
Kindred-----	Angel
Goods-----	Doctor
Good-Deeds	

In comparison, the cast of *The Tables Turned* reads:

Usher  
 Clerk of the Court  
 Mr. Hungary, Q.C.  
 Mr. La-di-da  
 Mr. Justice Nupkins  
 Sergeant Sticktoit  
 Constable Potlegoff  
 A Voice  
 Mary Pinch  
 John/Jack Freeman  
 Archbishop of Canterbury  
 Lord Tennyson  
 Prof. Tyndall (1820-93)  
 William Joyce  
 1st, 2nd & 3rd Neighbour

Upon close examination of this list, it becomes clear that most of Morris's characters, like those in *Everyman*, function allegorically, in that their very names are representative of the figures' function and meaning. Mr. La-di-da for example (a name which would not be out of place in Restoration comedy), is, unsurprisingly, a refined gentleman who, because he is upper class, is given special treatment by the law even though he is guilty of embezzling from his friends and relatives. As Mr. Justice Nupkins (the onomatopoeia of whose surname suggests his ineptitude) explains to La-di-da:

[...] I shall take care that you shall not be degraded by contamination with thieves and rioters, and other coarse persons, or share the diet and treatment which is no punishment to persons used to hard living; that would be to inflict a punishment on you not intended by the law, and would cast a stain on your character not easily wiped away [...] You will, therefore, be imprisoned as a first-class misdemeanant for the space of one calendar month.<sup>26</sup>

The foil to La-di-da is Mary Pinch, a woman falsely accused of stealing food for her children (and originally played by May Morris):<sup>27</sup>

*Mr. Hungary, Q. C.:* [...] I shall be able to show, gentlemen, that this woman has stolen three loaves of bread: (*impressively*) not one, gentlemen, but three.  
*A Voice:* She's got three children, you palavering blackguard.

(pp. 35–36)<sup>28</sup>

In relation to her circumstances, Mary Pinch's name is fairly easy to deconstruct. Her role as the good, devoted mother living in poverty and persecution readily reminds us of that of the Virgin Mary, and of her surname Pamela Bracken Wiens has written that: 'Mary's personal testimony reveals that her whole life is lived in a "pinch", a slang term which provided a double edge of humour, as it connoted both stealing (the accusation against poor Mary) and "to bring into difficulties or troubles, to afflict or harass" (OED)'.<sup>29</sup> Mary also, as with the Virgin, undergoes her own Assumption into Heaven in Part II of *The Tables Turned*, although her particular paradise is the *earthly* one brought about by the Revolution. When we meet her in the second half of the play, she is transformed beyond recognition and is now '*prettily dressed*' and deliriously happy: 'And how tired out with happiness I was before the day [of the Revolution] was done! Just to think that my last-born child will not know what to be poor meant; and nobody will ever be able to make him understand it'. (pp. 72–3)

Another noticeable characteristic of the *Dramatis Personae* of the play is that it includes characters representative of the Church (Archbishop of Canterbury), the Nobility (Lord Tennyson) and the Commons (Mary Pinch, Freeman *et al.*). In utilising these types, Morris seems to be drawing upon yet another genre of

mediaeval literature, the Estates Satire. According to Jill Mann, this term may be defined as ‘any literary treatments of social classes which allow or encourage a generalised application’.<sup>30</sup> It also goes without saying that *The Tables Turned* is a satire of the most biting kind. MacCarthy perceives it to be ‘almost a Victorian *Beyond the Fringe* or *That Was the Week That Was*’,<sup>31</sup> while Bracken Wiens suggests that:

*The Tables Turned* does not satirize only the anarchist faction of the Socialist League, however. Morris’s satire is leveled at all the divisions within the current body of British socialism. The play is full of insider jokes and topical allusions [... and Morris] poke[s] fun at the eccentric personal practices of some well-recognized Fabians, among these Shaw’s avid vegetarianism, Annie Besant’s conversion to theosophy, and Sydney Webb’s rigidly mechanical economic theory. (pp. 25–6)

The main thrust of the satire is, however, against the rich and all who use their power in a malign way against those less fortunate. The post-Revolution fate of Justice Nupkins is a case in point. Now living in a world without lawyers, Nupkins must turn to farming to earn his living. As Jack Freeman gleefully explains to him:

Well, to use your own jargon, citizen, the sentence of this court is that you do take this instrument of effodiation, commonly called a spade, and that you effodiate your livelihood therewith; in other words that you dig potatoes and other roots and worts during the pleasure of this court. (p. 83)

Nupkins’s spade, aside from being the literal tool of the former Justice’s new trade, also possesses a symbolic function. This point becomes clear if we think about the use of the spade in the mediaeval Morality *Mankind*, where this tool is carried by the central character. In that play, the spade symbolises both the physical and the spiritual advantages of ‘useful’ work, while also simultaneously functioning as a *memento mori*. Spades are, after all, used for digging graves as well as potatoes.

The way in which Morris chooses to end *The Tables Turned*, with a song, is also influenced by mediaeval drama. We need only examine those ‘Towneley mysteries between the “shepherds abiding in the field” ’ which Morris loved so well in order to see the similarity. *The Wakefield Second Shepherds’ Pageant*, for example, a play as political and topical as Morris’s own, concludes with a celebratory song reflective of the shepherds’ new-found salvation in Christ:



PRIMUS PASTOR.

What grace we have found!

SECUNDUS PASTOR.

Now are we won safe and sound.

TERTIUS PASTOR.

Come forth, to sing are we bound.

Make it ring then aloft.

*[They depart singing].*<sup>32</sup>

Interestingly, Morris does not end his play with a mediaeval song. Instead, he has the cast sing the following words to the tune of the ‘Carmagnole’:

*What's this that the days and the days have done?*

*Man's lordship over man hath gone.*

*How fares it, then, with high and low?*

*Equal on earth, they thrive and grow.*

*Bright is the sun for everyone;*

*Dance we, dance we the Carmagnole.*

*How deal ye, then with pleasure and pain?*

*Alike we share and bear the twain.*

*And what's the craft whereby ye live?*

*Earth and man's work to all men give.*

*How crown ye excellence of worth?*

*With leaves to serve all men on earth.*

*What gain that lordship's past and done?*

*World's wealth or all and every one.* (pp. 84–5)

The choice of this particular tune is convincingly explained by Bracken Wiens: ‘The “Carmagnole”, a lively song and street dance popular during the French Revolution, was obviously more appropriate to the comedic vein of *The Tables Turned* than would have been the more serious “Internationale”, another French tune, but one more often used as an inspirational hymn at socialist meetings and gatherings’.<sup>33</sup> Thus, both Morris and the anonymous playwright of *The Wakefield Second Shepherds' Pageant* were able, in the conclusions of their respective dramas, to strike just the right tone through their use of highly appropriate and uplifting music.

One might think that because *The Tables Turned* was not well-received Morris never wrote another play. This was not the case, however. In fact, the anonymous reviewer for *The Pall Mall Gazette* who was present at the first performance of the drama wrote a highly favourable piece under the memorable headline ‘ARISTOPHANES IN FARRINGDON ROAD: “A Socialist Interlude”, by the Author of “THE

EARTHLY PARADISE”.<sup>34</sup> Of particular relevance to our discussion here, though, is his description of the performance space in which the play was put on):

The hall of the Socialist League is, in fact, a long, narrow garret, with white washed roof and rafters, and red-ochred walls [...] The whole available width of the stage is certainly not more than fifteen feet, with a depth of perhaps eight or ten – rather a narrow cradle for a new art form.<sup>35</sup>

While this may have been ‘a narrow cradle for a new art form’ it would not have been so for an *old* one, for the dimensions of the stage cited above would have been typical of the playing areas in which many mediaeval plays were performed (and the pageant wagons upon which the Mysteries were staged would probably have been even smaller). It is also interesting to note that the Moralities were acted in a variety of venues, both indoors and out, which would not have been that different from the hall of the Socialist League in which *The Tables Turned* was first produced.

It is, perhaps, unfortunate that Morris’ career as a playwright ended in 1887. W.B. Yeats however (whose own interest in mediaeval drama was such that he ‘invited a production of three plays from the Wakefield cycle to be performed at the Abbey Theatre’ in 1912), wrote to Katharine Tynan during the summer of 1888 that Morris was ‘writing another [play] – of the middle ages this time’.<sup>36</sup> It is intriguing to imagine what a Morrissean drama set in the actual mediaeval period would have been like. Perhaps Morris would have taken some inspiration from his friend Burne-Jones’s costume and set designs for Henry Irving’s 1895 production of J. Comyns Carr’s *King Arthur*. The subject was, after all, a ‘sacred land’<sup>37</sup> for them both. But that is the subject of another essay.

## NOTES

1. Nicholas Salmon, ‘The Unmanageable Playgoer: Morris and the Victorian Theatre’, *Journal of the William Morris Society*, XII, No. 4 (Spring 1998), pp. 29–35. (p. 29). Afterwards Salmon.
2. As quoted by Salmon, p. 29.
3. Philip Henderson, ed, *The Letters of William Morris to his Family and Friends*, London: Longman, Green & Co., 1950, p. 246.
4. Salmon, p. 30.
5. Larry D. Benson, ed, *The Riverside Chaucer*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, p. 36.
6. William Antony Sheppard, *Revealing Masks: Exotic Influences and Ritualized Performance in Modernist Theater*, Los Angeles: California University Press,

- 2001, p. 118. (Afterwards Sheppard)
7. Catherine Barnes Stevenson & Virginia Hale, 'Medieval Drama and Courtly Romance in William Morris'[s] "Sir Galahad, A Christmas Mystery"', *Victorian Poetry*, 38, No. 3 (Fall 2000), pp. 383–391. (p. 390, n. 7) (Afterwards 'Sir Galahad')
  8. *Ibid.*
  9. George Bernard Shaw, *Pen Portraits and Reviews*, London: Constable & Co. Ltd, 1931 (1949), p. 231. (Afterwards *Pen Portraits*)
  10. 'Sir Galahad', pp. 383, 387, 386, 388.
  11. *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems*, London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1900, p. 53. Afterwards *Defence*.
  12. *Ibid.*
  13. A.C. Cawley, ed, *Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays*, London: J.M. Dent, 1956 (1993), p. 101. Afterwards Cawley.
  14. *Defence*, p. 56.
  15. *Poems by the Way & Love is Enough*, London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1898, p. 225.
  16. Cawley, p. 199.
  17. Karen Herbert, 'No "Fourth Wall": The Experience of Drama in William Morris's *Love is Enough*', *English Studies in Canada*, XVII, No. 3 (September 1991), pp. 301–317. (p. 302).
  18. *Ibid.*, p. 301.
  19. *Ibid.*, pp. 301–312.
  20. Robert Shaughnessy, *The Shakespeare Effect: A History of Twentieth-Century Performance*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p. 36.
  21. Robert Speaight, *William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival*, London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1954, p. 234.
  22. *Pen Portraits*, p. 213.
  23. Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, London: Faber & Faber, 1994, p. 564. Afterwards MacCarthy.
  24. William Poel, *Shakespeare in the Theatre*, London: Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd, 1913, p. 204.
  25. MacCarthy, p. 254.
  26. Pamela Bracken Wiens, ed, *The Tables Turned, or Nupkins Awakened*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994, p. 34. (Afterwards *Nupkins*). All future references to this text are from this edition.
  27. Unlike her father, May Morris possessed a fervent interest in the theatre, and acted on several occasions. Salmon (p. 30) tells us that: 'In November 1884, for example, Morris was present at an "Art Evening" sponsored by the SDF at the Neumeyer Hall in Bloomsbury at which Edward Aveling and

- Eleanor Marx acted out a play based on their own life. Engels was also present at this event. On another occasion, in January 1885, Morris was in the audience when his daughter May, Aveling, Shaw and Eleanor Marx appeared in the comic-drama *Alone* by Palgrave Simpson and Herman Merivale. May, who later described herself as having “play-fever badly”, [...] later tried her own hand as a dramatist. Her play *Lady Griselda’s Dream* appeared in *Longmans Magazine* in June 1898 [...] and a second, *White Lies. A Play in One Act*, was privately printed by the Chiswick Press in 1903’.
28. Bracken Wiens (*Nupkins*, p. 88, n. 4) writes that: ‘Morris’s friends and comrades in the Nupkins’ audience would have recognized the humorous “role” of the voice interrupting Hungary’s cross examination of the witness against Mary Pinch as a clever allusion to his own role in the trial of the Dod Street affair (20 September 1885), during which Morris was arrested for having called out “Shame” and hissing aloud against the judge in the courtroom. The Dod Street “affair” had been a peaceful – albeit large—demonstration protesting other recent “obstruction” persecutions’. (cf E.P. Thompson, *William Morris. Romantic to Revolutionary*, London: Pantheon, 1976, pp. 394–397).
29. *Nupkins*, pp. 8–9.
30. Jill Mann, *Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire: the Literature of Social Classes and the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1973, p. 3. *Editor’s note*: The character ‘Professor Tyndall (1820–93)’ refers to John Tyndall, the nineteenth-century physicist who was the first person correctly to measure the relative infrared absorptive powers of the Earth’s atmospheric gases (‘On Radiation Through The Earth’s Atmosphere’, 1863), to whom we therefore owe the terms ‘Greenhouse Effect’ and ‘greenhouse gases’, and after whom the prestigious Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research (<http://www.tyndall.ac.uk/>) is named. Tyndall was also a member of a club which strongly supported the ‘application’ of Darwin’s theory of natural selection to human society (other members were Thomas Henry Huxley and Herbert Spencer), and an opponent of Irish Home Rule (he was born in Co. Carlow, but his father was an Orangeman), but just why Morris singled him out for satirising instead of, for example, Huxley, is not clear, to me at least. Tyndall once gave a somewhat notorious address (*Address Delivered Before the British Association Assembled at Belfast*, 1874) in which he was rather scathing about Charles Kingsley the Oxford don, friend of Morris, and author of *The Water Babies*, but whether this dismissal merited his inclusion in *Nupkins* as a target of fun, I have yet to discover (PO’S).
31. MacCarthy, p. 564.

32. Cawley, p. 104.
33. *Nupkins*, p. 95.
34. *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 17 October 1887, p. 1.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Sheppard, p. 119; John Kelly, ed, *The Collected Letter of W.B. Yeats*, vol. I, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, p. 60.
37. Penelope Fitzgerald, *Edward Burne-Jones*, London: Sutton Publishing, 1997, p. 256.

# 'News from Nowhere in Recent Criticism' Revisited

*Tony Pinkney*

In the summer 1983 issue of what was then *The Journal of the William Morris Society* Peter Faulkner published an excellent article with the title 'News from Nowhere in Recent Criticism'. He noted that 'one result of the new structuralist emphases in literary criticism which is encouraging for admirers of Morris is the greater attention now being given to works of fiction outside the canon of nineteenth-century realism', including Morris's utopia itself. While registering a caveat about these new modes of literary theory ('sometimes carried to absurd lengths in the denigration of the realist approach'), Peter then proceeded to give a thoughtful account of essays on *News from Nowhere* by Bernard Sharratt and Michael Wilding which broadly operated in this emergent field of literary study.<sup>1</sup> I have always admired the project that this essay represents, and as my own tribute to Peter Faulkner's long career in Morris studies I wish to repeat it thirty years on, to report back to the wider Morris world from the frontiers of literary and cultural theory in what I hope will be a lucid and accessible way, particularly in relation to *News from Nowhere* itself.

Since Peter wrote his essay in 1983 we have seen an extraordinarily energetic development of the whole field of literary theory, which I was lucky enough to experience as a postgraduate student at Oxford University with Terry Eagleton, who was one of the main movers and shakers in that area. The 'structuralist emphases' which Peter's article invoked were very soon overtaken by broader developments which can be summed up by the terms 'post-structuralism' and 'postmodernism'. These themselves were then superseded by many subsequent movements, to the point, indeed, where, during the early twenty-first century, it can seem that literary and cultural theory have hectically burned themselves out, and books have recently been published with such titles as the 'death of theory' or 'after theory' (the latter by Eagleton himself). What I want to do in this article is to update Peter's now classic essay by evoking in broad brushstrokes the overall ethos of literary theory across these last thirty years (at least as I see it), and then to

raise some questions as to how this might affect our approach to Morris’s utopia. I shall try to do this in a non-technical way, so that the reader can test my theory-inspired propositions about *News from Nowhere* against his or her own experience of the text, or particular sections of it.

If we wanted to sum up in a phrase or two what the literary theory revolution meant to literary studies during the 1980s and beyond, then we might say that it entailed a shift from a ‘hermeneutics of restoration’ to a ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’. Hermeneutics is the practice of interpretation, and a ‘hermeneutics of restoration’ is simply literary-theoretical jargon for traditional literary criticism, which aims through careful reading of the work to ‘restore’ or make manifest the original intention the author had in mind in writing or – a slightly different emphasis – the meaning of the text in its own right as a self-sufficient literary entity. On this viewpoint, criticism is a humble servant to the text, aiming to illuminate the latter’s conscious meanings, and this is without a doubt an entirely valuable thing to do, a skill of close reading which it is always worth teaching and learning.

But a ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ does something quite different. It has absorbed the lessons of those great nineteenth-century masters of suspicion Marx, Nietzsche and Freud, and reads in a more aggressive and sceptical manner, looking for those odd little discrepant details where a literary work suddenly seems to say something other than its official or conscious meaning, where it begins to unravel itself in interesting ways. Marx, Nietzsche and Freud are anti-humanists, which is to say that they believe that human consciousness is not master in its own house, that we are determined by unconscious structures and motivations (economic, linguistic, sexual) which we can never fully bring to light. Perhaps this emphasis is the reason why Peter Faulkner in 1983 cautiously reported on the emergent theory movement at arm’s length rather than whole-heartedly embracing it; for the anti-humanism of it and its great intellectual forebears is at odds with Peter’s own stress on the humanistic dimensions of literature, as with his fine 1975 study of *Humanism in the Novel*.<sup>2</sup>

If all this sounds rather abstract, let us at once move to a specific Morrisian example. I imagine that most readers of this journal approach *News from Nowhere* in the spirit of a hermeneutics of restoration. They believe, that is to say, that in his utopia Morris set out to portray a plausible socialist revolution and the fully-developed communist society which follows from it, and that he succeeded admirably in both aims. Even if we have the odd reservation here or there (perhaps the women get a slightly raw deal in the Hammersmith Guest House, for example), we are likely to agree with A.L. Morton that ‘it is not only the one Utopia in whose possibility we can believe, but the one in which we could wish to live’.<sup>3</sup> I am strongly inclined to believe this myself, but my early training in literary theory, in interpretative suspicion, also makes me fasten on that curious

moment where, as old Hammond expounds this happy and neighbourly new society to William Guest in the British Museum, he suddenly says, 'I am old and perhaps disappointed'.<sup>4</sup> What are we to make of this curious statement, and how much weight should we give it in our overall approach to *News from Nowhere*?

Traditional Morris studies has 'dealt' with this statement for the most part by ignoring it, by pretending that it is not there, that old Hammond simply does not say it; I have found hardly any discussion of this remark in the long history of *News from Nowhere* reception, though it is of course possible that I have missed something important somewhere. Yet old Hammond is utopia's historian and conscience. Installed in the British Museum, he is its very memory and intellectual guardian, and therefore everything he says is necessarily important. Literary theory is sometimes accused by its traditionalist opponents of being abstract and high-handed in its approach to texts, of not bothering with the close, careful reading that criticism from I. A. Richards, F.R. Leavis and William Empson among others made so central to its activities. Yet in the particular case we are dealing with here, in which the 'hermeneutics of suspicion' is fastening on a phrase – 'old and perhaps disappointed' – which conventional Morris studies has hardly ever attended to, literary theory is reading more, not less, closely than traditionalist criticism.

Just what is old Hammond 'perhaps disappointed' about? We don't know – he doesn't elaborate. The remark is made in a chapter 'Concerning Love', so does it refer to his earlier emotional-sexual life? Well, perhaps. But we might also take it as a tiny hint that, in some as yet indeterminate sense, all may not be as well with the Morrisian utopia as we might like to think, that even its most articulate spokesperson has certain significant reservations about it.

Consider another remark of old Hammond's, from the later discussion of incentives to labour in communist society: 'how can you prevent the counter-revolution from setting in except by making people happy?' (pp.79–80). 'Counter-revolution': how can a term as politically dark as this one, with all its connotations of retributive reactionary violence, possibly come up in utopia, and above all from its most politically astute commentator? Again, as with old Hammond's 'perhaps disappointed', the interpretative question is what weight we should give to an unsettling term which traditional Morris studies has for the most part dealt with by ignoring altogether. Does Hammond really believe that counter-revolution is some sort of possibility in Nowhere, which does after all, as we know, have its share of old grumblers and Obstinate Refusers, and that it therefore requires some anticipatory thought? I would suggest that 'counter-revolution' is a startling term in the midst of Morris's sunny and neighbourly utopia; it shocks us nearly as much as his glimpse of the new Hammersmith Bridge shocks William Guest (though in reverse emotional direction) and sends us spluttering under the hermeneutic waters again.



Let us move on to an earlier statement of Hammond’s, which gives us a sense of his relation to the other Nowherians: ‘I don’t think my tales of the past interest them much. The last harvest, the last baby, the last knot of carving in the market-place is history enough for them’ (p.47). It is the tone of that final ‘for them’ which interests me here. Tone is always an important, and difficult, issue in literary interpretation; it is an oral category particularly tricky to ‘prove’ from a written text, and within mainstream *News from Nowhere* criticism we already have significant disputes in this area. For example, Perry Anderson disagrees with John Goode over the tonality of the opening description of the Socialist League meeting, and *News from Nowhere*’s most recent editor, David Leopold, is on Anderson’s side here.<sup>5</sup> So is Hammond in our passage just neutrally recording the fact that his passion for history puts him at a tangent to the other Nowherians, in which case the word ‘them’ is not heavily stressed in this formulation? Or might we not, in the spirit of a hermeneutics of suspicion, let the darker tonalities of ‘disappointed’ and ‘counter-revolution’ play across his words here, so that the younger Nowherians’ lack of concern for history may be a genuine problem for him, even a sign of the shallowness of the lives they lead in Nowhere. In this case, ‘them’ takes on much more emphasis and even perhaps tones of contempt and dismissal, to the point where we might have to turn, for literary equivalents, to Tiresias scorning the typist and house-agent’s clerk in T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, or W.B. Yeats in ‘Sailing to Byzantium’, as he rages against the young who, ‘caught in that sensual music ... neglect monuments of unageing intellect’.<sup>6</sup>

So far I have been identifying moments of unease in *News from Nowhere*, tiny textual awkwardnesses which run against the grain of Morris’s genial utopian world; and you may feel that these examples are too minor to bear the interpretative weight I am beginning to put upon them (and yet they are undeniably there in the book, so if you disagree with my readings, how *do* you propose to deal with them?). Yet such tiny textual fragments surely come to more sustained focus in Ellen’s great warning to Nowhere later in the book, when, Cassandra-like, she remarks: ‘I think sometimes people are too careless of the history of the past ... Who knows? Happy as we are, times may alter; we may be bitten with some impulse towards change, and many things may seem too wonderful for us to resist, too exciting not to catch at, if we do not know that they are but phases of what has been before; and withal ruinous, deceitful, and sordid’. (p.167) Is not this old Hammond’s ‘counter-revolution’ writ large? His lonely worry in the British Museum about such dark matters is suddenly active out there in the wider world of Nowhere, and indeed in the mouth of one of its most energetic younger members; but at this point we pass over into a whole new series of questions about Ellen’s role in the book, and before I address that issue another theoretical detour may be in order.

Literary theory, then, takes us from ‘restoration’ to ‘suspicion’, interpreta-

tively speaking; and it also, and relatedly, involves us in a quite new conception of the literary or cultural text. When I was an undergraduate during the late 1970s, in a Leavisite Department of English Literature, we used to write many essays designed to demonstrate the ‘unity’ or even ‘organic unity’ of the literary works we were studying, the ways in which, as in Coleridge’s famous image of the snake with its tail in its mouth, texts curl back upon themselves in an aesthetically satisfying internal harmony, all the local parts contributing benignly to the greater whole. Thus the Porter scene in *Macbeth*, in its drunken ribaldry, appears to run counter to the weighty issues of regicide at stake in the main body of the play, but a spot of judicious close analysis would demonstrate that, in its comic mode, it raises themes germane to *Macbeth* as a whole (damnation, etc) and thus the play is ‘unified’ after all.

However, literary and cultural theory, for a variety of detailed reasons I will not go into here, abandons this model of the organic unity of the text; and I wish to offer two startling formulations of the new model of the literary work which give, if not the detailed argumentation, at least a powerful *feel* of this new conception of the artwork. The first is from the French critic and theorist Roland Barthes, in his (in)famous essay on ‘The Death of the Author’:

We know now that a text consists not of a line of words, releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God), but of a multi-dimensional space in which are married and contested several writings, none of which is original: the text is a fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture ... criticism is today unsettled at the same time as the Author. In multiple writing, in effect, everything is to be *disentangled*, but nothing *deciphered*.<sup>7</sup>

And the second is from the American Marxist theorist Fredric Jameson, in his magisterial 1991 book on *Postmodernism*:

Our own recent criticism, from [Pierre] Macherey on, has been concerned to stress the heterogeneity and profound discontinuities of the work of art, no longer unified or organic, but now a virtual grab bag or lumber room of disjoined subsystems and random raw materials and impulses of all kinds. The former work of art, in other words, has now turned out to be a text, whose reading proceeds by differentiation rather than by unification.<sup>8</sup>

Now if literary texts are indeed radically self-divided in these ways, then, in turning back to *News from Nowhere* itself, we shall be inclined to see division where traditional Morris studies has seen integration; where it sees a ‘well-knit’ work (to borrow one of *News from Nowhere*’s own favourite adjectives), we shall be inclined to see different threads coming apart at the seams. Let us take three examples here: the genre of the work itself, the journey up the Thames and, finally, the figure of Ellen.

‘Some Chapters from a Utopian Romance’, as the title page of the book tells us: not just ‘utopia’ and not just ‘romance’, but some intriguing new generic hybrid of the two. Now traditional Morris studies takes the word for the deed here: it assumes that these two genres are successfully fused in *News from Nowhere* and proposes to go on and demonstrate this reconciliation in detail, rather as I did in my old undergraduate *Macbeth* essay. A literary theory-inspired approach, suspicious as ever, at once makes the other assumption: that these two genres will be pulling in opposite directions throughout the text, threatening to split it down the middle, with each one of the two tending to undo the characteristic strengths and qualities of the other; and it will then go on to show in detail how that is so. I’m not going to argue the latter case in detail here (I’ve offered a sketch of how the argument might go elsewhere), but am just using this example to dramatise the underlying interpretive stances involved.<sup>9</sup>

Let us take a more concrete case, the wonderful journey by rowing boat up the Thames to Kelmscott which, we can all agree, constitutes one of the most delightful aspects of Morris’s utopia. Instead of just admiring it, however, we need to ask some searching questions here: why does the text include, or to formulate the matter more actively, make such a journey? Again, there will be different perspectives on the upriver trip depending on your underlying model of the literary text. If you are committed to a model of organic unity, then you will see William Guest’s exploration of London and his subsequent river trip into Oxfordshire as benignly complementary: having seen how a communist utopia remakes urban existence, he will then want to see its new modes of rural living too; or, in Krishan Kumar’s terms, the ‘intellectual-urban’ London chapters are complemented by the ‘emotional-rural’ ones in which, through his developing relationship with Ellen, Guest finally comes to belong to the new society.<sup>10</sup>

From the viewpoint of a hermeneutics of suspicion, however, and with a model of literary texts as fractured and self-conflictual, we shall be inclined to see the upriver journey in quite different terms. It is, after all, one of the platitudes of utopian studies that during the nineteenth century a major shift takes place within the genre. In the classic texts, such as Thomas More’s *Utopia* or Francis Bacon’s *New Atlantis*, utopia exists within one’s own time period but in some far-flung corner of the globe and it therefore takes an epic feat of spatial travelling to get there. From the nineteenth century, however, utopia becomes a future political possibility of one’s *own* society: it exists within one’s own social space, but not yet, and it therefore involves a feat of time-travelling to get to it, such as the dream-vision of Morris’s William Guest, which takes him forward from late-Victorian London to twenty-second-century England. Utopian journeying becomes a matter of time rather than space; and this makes sense in a fully historicised period in which utopia has become something one could politically *build* through a mass movement rather than just a hypothetical possibility one

might stumble across somewhere. Oneiric time travelling thus transports William Guest from the dysfunctional Socialist League meeting on the first page of *News from Nowhere* to the fully formed post-revolutionary society of the far future; and once there he briefly tours London with Dick Hammond in order to experience the new world at first hand. Subsequently in the British Museum he encounters old Hammond, who explains to him both the underlying social principles of the new order and how it came into being in the first place. So Morris's utopia seems to conform perfectly to the new model of the genre.

But no sooner has it done so than William Guest is, bafflingly, propelled on a major *spatial* journey: one hundred and thirty miles by rowing boat up the river Thames from the Hammersmith Guest House to Kelmscott Manor. This is clearly a reversion to a mode of utopian voyaging which history seemed to have left definitively behind, as if we were almost back in the world of the great sea voyages of More and Bacon themselves. What we witness here, then, on this showing, is a startling structural self-division in Morris's utopia – its reversion from a fully contemporary nineteenth-century utopian mode to an earlier and now anachronistic utopian form, and its generation, late in the day, of a startling new character in the process.

For as Guest travels up the river with Dick and Clara, he encounters at Runnymede the extraordinary figure of Ellen. If, as Oscar Wilde once asserted, any map of the world which does not contain the country of Utopia is not worth glancing at, then I think we can say equally firmly that any account of Morris's *News from Nowhere* which does not give substantial critical attention to Ellen will not be worth bothering with, because it will have ignored a crucial component of the text. With Ellen, as all *News from Nowhere* critics have acknowledged, a new energy – indeed, an unusual intensity – enters the work. That Morris registered this fact himself is shown by Bruce Glasier's entertaining anecdote: 'when he was writing that book I told him that I had fallen in love with Ellen, and he said that he had fallen in love with her himself!'<sup>11</sup> But the crucial question for us here is: is Ellen simply an organic continuation of the earlier sections of the text, is she consonant with the values which underpin *Nowhere*, even if she intensifies them; or is she, on the other hand, something fundamentally other in the book, a radical new start in a quite unpredictable direction? Traditionalist criticism will obviously plump for the former option and try to show how 'well-knit' she is with everything else in the book; literary theory-inspired readings will incline to the latter option.

Yet even within traditional Morris criticism, the occasional clairvoyant commentator has seen that Ellen is not simply an intensification of what has preceded her in Morris's utopia, but rather something quite different. Here, for example, is Tom Middlebro in 1970: 'the picture is not entirely a subjective dream of peace, as is shown by the figure of Ellen. She is a forecast of the next age, which will be more

vigorous, more intellectual, and more willing to absorb the best from the past; and both Guest and Ellen are in his view ‘misfits’.<sup>12</sup> And an even sharper formulation of Ellen’s relation to the rest of the text is given by Frederick Kirchoff in 1979: ‘Morris’s treatment of Ellen is not merely a new element in the book; it is a repudiation of the earlier chapters of his utopia’.<sup>13</sup> That is finely said indeed, and it points us towards the literary-theory model of the radically self-divided text.

However, if we want to answer my question – is Ellen continuous with or a radical break from the rest of Morris’s utopia? – we don’t need to theorise in the void; for we do in fact have an answer from the text itself on this matter, when William Guest reflects that: ‘of all the persons I had seen in that world renewed she was the most unfamiliar to me, the most unlike what I could have thought of. Clara, for instance, beautiful and bright as she was, was not unlike a *very* pleasant and unaffected young lady; and the other girls also seemed nothing more than very much improved types which I had known in other times. But this girl ... was in all ways so strangely interesting; so that I kept wondering what she would say or do next to surprise and please me’. (p.157) At which point, with Ellen acknowledged as the radically other, we really are in the presence of the self-conflictual text which literary theory had modelled for us, and which we can sum up in *News from Nowhere* as:

Garden-city London (Dick, Bob, Clara, Annie) *versus* Upper Thames (Ellen).

But if Morris’s utopia is indeed self-divided in this way, then what theoretical models can we bring into play to make some sense of this internal self-conflict? There are many aesthetic binary oppositions, both traditional and literary-theoretical, which could be applied here, some of which I have developed myself elsewhere. If garden-city London is the beautiful, then Ellen may be its traditional and dangerous opposite, the sublime. If Morris’s London is a static utopia, then Ellen on the upper Thames may represent a ‘kinetic utopia’ (to borrow H.G. Wells’s useful term). If London is the ‘réactif’ or ‘lisible’, then Ellen would be the ‘actif’ or ‘scriptible’, to borrow pairs of opposites from that most inventive of theorists, Roland Barthes. Or if the new London is ‘utopia as representation’, then Ellen is utopia as process, productivity, enunciation (Fredric Jameson).<sup>14</sup> This game can go on almost indefinitely, with as many binary oppositions as literary theory can afford (monological *vs* dialogical as in Mikhail Bakhtin, or symbolic *vs* semiotic as in Julia Kristeva). I do not intend to expound each of these binary oppositions here, but in all of them, as I hope you will have sensed, Ellen is seen as a disruptive force. So it may now be useful to try to give a feeling for the overall political argument about *News from Nowhere* to which they all, in their rather different ways, add up.

We have seen, in approaching Morris’s great work as suspicious rather than restorative readers, that old Hammond is ‘perhaps disappointed’, that he floats

the notion of counter-revolution and worries about the lack of awareness of history among his younger comrades; and Ellen summarises these minor discordant notes of this otherwise delightful utopia in her alarm that Nowhere is so immersed in immediate sensory pleasures that it may actually backslide towards capitalism. Then, in a second interpretative move, standing back from detail and examining Morris's text more globally, in the light of the postmodern theory of the text as fractured, we grasp the structural self-division of this work, comprising as it does the time-travelling utopia of garden-city London and the (anachronistic) space-travelling utopia of the Upper Thames and Ellen – the latter being radically discontinuous from all the other younger Nowherians in the book. At which point, it seems to me, an overall hypothesis as to the relationship of these two fragments of Morris's text to each other becomes possible.

Green, spacious and unhurried as it is, garden-city London and the kind of neighbourly young Nowherians it produces is infinitely to be preferred to the class-divided late-Victorian city from which William Guest himself hails, no doubt at all about that. To that extent, and in that particular framework of comparison, we must continue to defend it against its critics. But it is not, for all that, Morris's last word on the matter, his last word on utopia – which is precisely that on which there can be no last word. The new London is indeed, in the end, too placid and too pastoral, and its utopians too forgetfully immersed in the pleasurable present, to the point where there is at least some theoretical possibility of slip-page back to capitalism. At which point Morris's text, deeply frustrated by its own initial creation, shatters its unitary structure and breaks dynamically away from garden-city London, launching itself on the Thames journey and generating the uncategorisable figure of Ellen in the process. Ellen is a new kind of utopian, a harbinger of some new kind of utopia which the text can never flesh out – indeed, does not want to, because it too would then, like garden-city London, freeze into a static representation in its own right. Ellen is thus a perpetually transgressive energy, potentially 'disastrously troubling' the culture around her as she already has by her own admission troubled the young men in the Thames valley, (p.162) generating new narrative and political possibilities in the process; she is the place, in short, where the future – a future beyond Morris's own death – can enter his utopia, which thereby continues to resonate for us in the postmodern period in interesting ways.

In picking up the threads of Peter Faulkner's admirable essay, I have had the advantage over him of writing at the end of the literary theory revolution in English studies, whereas he was writing as it just got under way in the English academy during the early 1980s. I have tried, therefore, to give a broader feel of the overall ethos of literary and cultural theory during the last thirty years. However, it should not be thought that I have exhausted the field; for there are many interesting theoretical readings of *News from Nowhere* out there which adopt other

frameworks from those that have concerned me here (Wolfgang Iser’s theory of the ‘implied reader’ or Jacques Derrida’s ‘hauntology’, which would focus on William Guest as ghost, are examples here). And the recent ‘death of theory’ has certainly been much exaggerated, so that there will be many more such readings in the future from theoretical and political perspectives which do not yet exist; these too will merit reporting back on in non-specialist mode. Peter Faulkner’s 1983 essay on and around *News from Nowhere* is thus, like Ellen herself, open to the future in quite radical ways. It is, then, not just the intellectual content of Peter’s own work on Morris that is important to us, but the formats and models he has invented for such work now and in the future, as with the ‘*News from Nowhere* in Recent Criticism’ rubric, which is a task will need to be carried out over and over again.

## NOTES

1. Peter Faulkner, ‘*News from Nowhere* in Recent Criticism’, *Journal of the William Morris Society*, V, No. 3, Summer 1983, pp. 2–7. For a helpful general survey of the field of literary theory, see Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory*, third edition, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009, 338 pp.
2. Peter Faulkner, *Humanism in the English Novel*, London: Elek for Pimlico, 1975, 196 pp.
3. A.L. Morton, *The English Utopia*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1978, p. 221.
4. *News from Nowhere*, Oxford: World Classics, 2003, edited by David Leopold, p. 50 (afterwards Leopold, *NfN*). All future page references to this edition are incorporated in my text.
5. Perry Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism*, London: Verso, 1980, p.170, footnote 30; Leopold, *NfN*, p.183.
6. T.S. Eliot, *Selected Poems*, London: Faber, 1982, pp.59–60; W.B. Yeats, *Selected Poetry*, edited by A. Norman Jeffares, London: Pan Books, 1990, p.104.
7. Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986, pp. 52–53.
8. Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London: Verso, 1991, p. 31.
9. See my ‘The Dialectic of Nature in Nowhere’, *Journal of William Morris Studies* XIX, No. 3, Winter 2011, pp. 50–63.
10. See Krishan Kumar, ‘A Pilgrimage of Hope: William Morris’s Journey to Utopia’, *Utopian Studies*, 5, 1994, pp. 89–107.
11. Bruce Glasier, *William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement*, London: Longmans, Green, & Co, 1921, p.140.

12. Tom Middlebro, 'Brief Thoughts on *News from Nowhere*', *Journal of the William Morris Society*, II, No. 4, Summer 1970, pp. 9–10.
13. Frederick Kirchoff, *William Morris*, Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1979, p.135.
14. For beautiful *vs* sublime, see my 'Dialectics of Nature in Nowhere', pp. 58–61 (Note 9 above). On kinetic utopias, see my 'Kinetic Utopias: H.G. Wells's *A Modern Utopia* and William Morris's *News from Nowhere*', *Journal of William Morris Studies*, XVI, Nos 2 and 3, Summer-Winter 2005, pp. 49–55. On *actif-réactif* and *lisible-scriptible*, see my blog post on 'Roland Barthes on Nowhere', 27 February 2012, at <http://williammorrisunbound.blogspot.com/>; and for the Jameson categories, see my 'William Morris, Fredric Jameson and the Question of Utopia', *Research in Marxist Aesthetics*, Shanghai, forthcoming 2013 (in Chinese).



# The dream, image, vision, wizardry, and erotic in Morris's work

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In the *Envoi* to *The Earthly Paradise* Morris describes himself as 'Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time', and

Folks say, 'A wizard to a northern king  
At Christmas-tide such wondrous things did show,  
That through one window men beheld the spring,  
And through another saw the summer glow'.

'The Prologue' adds in part

Forget six counties overhung with smoke,  
Forget the snorting steam and piston stroke ...  
And dream of London, small, and white, and clean, ...  
While nigh the thronged wharf Geoffrey Chaucer's pen  
Moves over bills of lading, – mid such times  
Shall dwell the hollow puppets of my rhymes.<sup>1</sup>

I shall call the 'dreamer' a creative or imaginative teller of tales, and 'the dream' a persuasion to anticipate pleasure in what follows.

The first of Morris's works to be named such is *A Dream of John Ball* (1888), set in the Peasants Revolt of 1381. Written after Morris had embraced socialism, it is context for memorable words. John Ball, a priest and a leader of the Revolt, preaches under a banner reading 'When Adam Delved and Eve Span/Who was then the gentleman?' The tale also allows Morris, the dreamer, to attribute to John Ball, the words, 'fellowship is heaven, and the lack of fellowship is hell'. And when the Revolt fails, Morris writes, 'But while I pondered all these things, and how men fight and lose the battle ... and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name ...'.<sup>2</sup>

*News from Nowhere* (1891), also a socialist tale and a dream, shifts time forward to the twenty-first century. Guest, the protagonist, visits an idealised future-England. It is no surprise that some of the buildings are medieval in style,<sup>3</sup> but what is most envisioned is revolutionary change. Hardly an aspect of society and human relations has not been radicalised. Money and politics have disappeared; the Houses of Parliament are used to store dung, handicraft products constitute art. 'Force' vehicles and ships have replaced Morris's abhorred 'piston-stroke'. An everyday article such as a tobacco pouch is so decorative as to be a pleasure to the maker and user. Relations between the sexes have been rationalised, and marriage lasts only as long as husband and wife desire it; though remarriage is possible, as Dick and Clara's second marriage illustrates. Most of what Morris advocated in lectures such as 'The Art of the People' (1879), 'How We Live and Might Live' (1884), and 'Useful Work vs. Useless Toil' (1884) has been realised.<sup>4</sup>

The idealised woman of the twenty-first century is Ellen, who is healthy, strong, and cheerful, and as much at home in a hayfield as in an idealised house (which turns out to be Kelmscott Manor). At the Manor, where Guest and Ellen arrive after a trip up the Thames, Ellen touches the wall and cries out, 'O me! O me! How I love the earth, and the seasons, and the weather, and all things that deal with it, and all that grows out of it, – as this has done'. And Guest's final words, as he wakes, in the nineteenth century, in his bed at Hammersmith: 'Yes – surely! And if others can see it as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream'.<sup>5</sup>

I submit that neither dream nor vision mean what they do in the fantasy tales of Morris's last years. The dreams *John Ball* and *News from Nowhere* are metaphors, embracing the entire texts and delivering socialist messages to the real world; whereas in the fantasy tales dreams and visions are elements *within* the text.

Before discussing the fantasy tales, it should be said that all the terms in my title, with the possible exception of the erotic, are at work in the Icelandic literature and also in the somewhat related *Le Morte d'Arthur*. My paper is not to discover these terms as if they had no origin in Morris's reading, but to see how he uses them in his own tales.

*The Story of the Glittering Plain Which Also Has Been Also Called The Land of the Living Men or The Acre of the Undying* (1891) is the first of the fantasy tales which do not pretend to deal with the real world. It is apt, here, to quote Fiona MacCarthy, who writes that these stories 'are pervaded by extreme eroticism'.<sup>6</sup> In *The Glittering Plain* the protagonist, Hallblithe, lives in Cleveland-by-the-Sea and is of the House of the Raven; his betrothed, The Hostage, is of the House of the Rose. Both are kidnapped and separated. In the light of Anna Vaniskaya's persuasive argument that the heroes of *The House of the Wolfings* and *The Roots of the Mountain* fight for their community rather than individual glory,<sup>7</sup> in *The*

*Glittering Plain*, vaguely medieval English and Norse, Hallblithe's quest to find The Hostage is an individual goal. Dreams and visions move the narrative. In a dream, Hallblithe 'was lying in the House of the Raven and his sisters came to him and said, "Rise up now, Hallblithe!"'. For it is his wedding day and they urge him to claim The Hostage. Later, he dreams or sees a vision of The Hostage standing over him and saying, 'Hallblithe, look on me'. As the dream continues, she says, 'Harken then. I am in evil plight, in the hands of strong-thieves of the sea, nor know I what they will do with me, and I have no will to be shamed; to be sold for a price from one hand to another, yet to be bedded without a price, and to lie besides some foeman of our folk. ... And now must even this image of me sunder from thee. Farewell!'<sup>8</sup>

Hallblithe reaches The Glittering Plain, but his quest to find the Hostage runs into difficulty. The King's daughter has fallen in love with Hallblithe and presents herself to him through images in a book. Calling a servant, she says, 'O maiden, bring me hither the book wherein is the image of my beloved ... that I might fill my heart with the delight thereof'. She then calls for another book, as Morris indulges his love of illustrated manuscripts, and Hallblithe sees an image of himself 'and over against me was the image of mine own beloved, The Hostage of the Rose, as if she were alive'; but the King's daughter says, 'O my beloved, why dost thou delay to come to me ... Oh come to-morrow at the least and latest ... Or else why am I the daughter of the Undying King, the Lord of the Treasure of the Sea?' In a moment of peril, Hallblithe says, aloud, though there was none to hear: 'Now foresooth beginneth the dream which shall last forever. Nowise am I beguiled by it'. Later on, Hallblithe dreams three times in one night of the King's daughter. In an illustrated book, she shows him over against his own image that of The Hostage, and turning the leaves, she again reveals The Hostage, but on the other leaf is Hallblithe in a boat and sailing away. In fact, Hallblithe does build a boat and sails to the Isle of Ransom, where he finds Puny Fox, an old enemy now turned friend; and who says he will serve Hallblithe. There is a hint here that Puny Fox is descended from the dwarfs, though this is not made explicit.<sup>9</sup>

In the hall on the Island, Hallblithe fights with a sea champion who turns out to be Puny Fox, and though Hallblithe is the victor, he announces that he knows that the battle was a sham. Puny Fox, in turn, says he is indebted to Hallblithe. The Chieftain of the Isle invites Hallblithe and Puny Fox to sit beside him at the feast, and after some debate among others as to whether Hallblithe should be slain or honoured, the Chieftain decrees he shall be honoured. The Hostage is then brought in and Hallblithe says, 'Art thou a woman and my speech-friend? For many images have mocked me, and I have been encompassed with lies, and led astray by behests that have not been fulfilled'. She answers, 'Art thou verily Hallblithe? For I also have been encompassed by lies, and beset by images of things unhelpful'. The next day, the lovers depart for Cleveland, and Puny Fox

goes with them. At home Hallblithe and The Hostage are married, Puny Fox renounces his wizardry (at one point he had changed his skin) and 'neither they nor any man of the Ravens came any more to the Glittering Plain, or heard any tidings of the folk that dwelt there'.<sup>10</sup>

There are enough allusions to Norse legend, particularly to *Sigurd the Volsung* (1870) to locate both the Glittering Plain and the Isle of Ransom in the North of England. In his own saga, Sigurd,<sup>11</sup> before reaching and wooing Brynhilde, encounters 'the glittering heath', where the evil Fafnir guards a hoard of gold, and is slain by Sigurd. (Perhaps the gold causes the heath to glitter. Perhaps, too, the wish for eternal youth, characterising all who seek the Glittering Plain, is, for Morris, equivalent to Fafnir's lust).

In *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, when the lovers and Puny Fox prepare to leave the Isle of Ransom, the Chieftain cuts a strip of turf 'and propped it up with two ancient dwarf-wrought spears'<sup>12</sup> – another image from Sigurd's story. There is also, on the Isle of Ransom, a reference to the Norns. As for the Glittering Plain itself, descriptions of the land echo what Morris saw in Iceland. Morris has conflated early England, its Middle Ages, and Icelandic sagas in order to create the setting for the Glittering Plain, as if he were reluctant to separate genres out of material all of which lies within the compass of Germanic legend.

Dreams and images are both bad and good. Who or what is in control? For Morris, an atheist but a lover of myth, the suspension of disbelief for the sake of aesthetic continuity allows the presence of the supernatural, expressed through dreams, images, visions, and wizardry, in this work and all the other fantasy tales which follow.

*The Wood Beyond the World* (1894) moves almost entirely through dreams, visions, and 'wisdom' – i.e. wizardry. They shape the narrative. Again, a protagonist will endure for his own sake, not his community's. In a beginning which is almost irrelevant, Boenig, in his Introduction, sees an allusion to Jane Morris, for the story begins by telling of the unhappy marriage of Walter, the protagonist, who lives in Langton on Holm. His father sends Walter's wife back to her family, and a feud between the two families ensues, leading to the death of Walter's father. But the unhappy marriage also sends Walter abroad as representative of his father's merchant business, a detail which tells us that in the vague location of time, we seem to be in the English Middle Ages (though further details will also suggest the Norse period). Standing on the wharf, ready to depart, Walter sees an image of three figures; A Lady, a Maiden, and a dwarf. It is an image, but substantial enough for the three to board their own ship. As we move further into the tale, wizardry; for good and bad, will occur and be so intertwined with the erotic as to make their combination almost another force in shaping the tale. As for community, Langton is Walter's point of departure, but he will never return to it.<sup>13</sup>

He boards his own ship, and, blown off course, the ship's company alight at the Wood Beyond the World. Here we learn that the Lady, whose image Walter has now seen three times, has drawn him through wizardry to replace the King's Son, a lover of whom she has tired. But as soon as Walter and the Maiden meet, they fall in love. She is the 'thrall' of the Lady, and knowing of the Lady's own desire for Walter and hatred of herself, she warns Walter not to disclose their love.

The Lady entices Walter into her bed, while the King's Son plans to seduce the Maiden or if necessary rape her. Walter and the Maiden eventually escape, in a manner combining wizardry and sexuality. The Maiden sends the Dwarf to tell the Lady that she has invited Walter to her own bed. At the same time, she invites the King's Son to come to her. When he arrives she subdues him with a sleeping potion, then lies down on the bed to leave the impression of her body. The Lady is now intent on killing Walter, but the Maiden is also learned in wizardry and casts Walter's shape over the sleeping King's Son. The Lady enters the Maiden's chamber and knifes the sleeper, then kills herself out of grief for the supposed death of Walter.

Walter and the Maiden escape. Then follows their encounter with the wild men known as Bears, who worship a woman as a deity, the goddess re-embodiment of herself in a succession of humans, the Lady having been the most recent. The Maiden tells the Bears that the Lady is dead; and by causing wilted flowers to bloom and bringing much needed rain, convinces them that she is the new embodiment of the goddess.

Walter and the Maiden travel and reach Stark-Well, where Walter is chosen king and raises the Maiden to be his queen. Thus Walter, who was a merchant in Langton, has in his new city been elevated to monarchy. Stark-Well is a medieval Christian city, in whose church Walter's kingship is consecrated and the couple are married. The Maiden, as she predicted, loses her wizardry as she loses her virginity. This negative bond between sexuality and wizardry casts the latter as protection of the first, all in contrast to The Lady's seeking sexual gratification through evil wizardry; and the contradiction demonstrates the ambivalent wizardry Morris found in Norse sagas and *Le Morte d'Arthur*. At *The Wood's* conclusion, we are told that Walter and his queen provide Stark-Well with many generations of rulers, emphasising again the irrelevancy of Langton. It is also worth noting that the 'bears' also provide continuity with Norse myth, in which the bear signifies health and strength.

Chronologically, *The Well at the World's End* (1896) is the next of Morris's fantasy tales. Ralph of Upmeads, the hero, echoes Arthur's knights when he makes it clear that seeking adventure is the serious business of life. When he meets Ursula, who will be his second love, he says, 'I am a knight adventurous; I have nought to do save to seek adventures. Why should I not go with thee [to seek the Well at the World's End]?'<sup>14</sup> The tale divides roughly into two parts, the first domin-

ated by the love between Ralph and the Lady of Abundance, who tells him of her upbringing and her 'Teacher of Lore' but who is killed by the Knight of the Sun. The second part embraces the love of Ralph and Ursula, their reaching the Well, their marriage, their return to Upmeads, and Ralph's anointment as King. Ralph's and Ursula's incredibly long and healthy life after drinking the waters of the Well, reminds one of King Arthur, transported by water to Avalon after he was allegedly slain by Sir Mordred.

Dreams and wizardry are present through the tale. In Ralph's first dream, he was fishing at Upmeads, and he caught many fish, 'but after awhile whatsoever he caught was but of gilded paper stuffed with wool, and at last the water itself was gone'. The meaning possibly is that Ralph will obtain either illusions or transient success, perhaps his love for the Lady of Abundance, who is fated to die. Not only can she not escape death despite her sorcery, but in addition while she still lives, she is a different person to different people. One of the men of the Burgh complains they cannot crush the Men of the Dry Tree, their enemy, because 'sorcery goes with them, and the wiles of one who is their Queen'.<sup>15</sup>

The book as a source of information and imagery appears in the Castle of Abundance. Ralph 'read again in the book that night, till he had gotten the whole tale into his head, and he specially noted ... that it told not whence that Lady came, nor aught else save that she was in the wood by herself, and was found therein by the King's son'. Talking to the Lady about a dream he has had, Ralph says, 'I woke up happily ... for me-dreamed that my gossip [Katherine] came to me and kissed me kindly; and she is a fair woman, but not a young woman'. In the woods Ralph, the Lady of Abundance, and The Knight of the Sun are momentarily together, and the Knight invites Ralph to accompany the Lady and himself to his castle, where he plans to kill Ralph. The dream Ralph has had may signify that Dame Katherine is warning and protecting Ralph, for it was she who gave Ralph the beads required to seek the Well.<sup>16</sup>

As for sorcery, the Lady, as Ralph watches, makes a circle of her fingers, 'and she spake something therewith in a low voice'. Later, she speaks of the House of the Sorceress, where she was raised, and where, like Birdalone to come after her, she had a kind helper, whom she calls 'the Teacher of Lore'. She says to Ralph, 'in those days I learned yet more wisdom of the Teacher of Lore, and amidst that wisdom was much of that which ye call sorcery: as the foreseeing of things to come, and the sending of dreams of visions'. She asks Ralph does he shrink from a sorceress who has done good deeds.<sup>17</sup>

Ralph and the Lady are wedded, but the Knight of the Sun kills her, and Ralph hears her say, 'I am come to bid thee farewell ...'. And as the dream continues, the voice and image change to that of Ursula, who call herself Dorothea, and says 'I am a sending of the woman whom thou hast loved, and I should not have been here save she had sent me ... and it is good that thou shouldst go seek the Well at

the World's End not all alone ... I hight Dorothea'. Since 'Dorothy' means 'gift of God', this misnaming of herself may signify that Ursula will be a treasure in Ralph's life.<sup>18</sup>

But Ursula will become a captive 'thrall' of the evil Lord of Utterbol, and Ralph at that time will have a vision, 'and it seemed to him that he could behold her through the darkness of night ... and she bewailing her captivity and the long tarrying of the deliverer as she went to and fro in a great chamber builded of marble'. Ralph 'deemed this it be a vision of what then was, rather than a memory of what had been; and it was sweet to his very soul'.<sup>19</sup> Finally, through the actions of the Queen of Utterbol and her thrall-servant Agatha, Ursula escapes and is united with Ralph.

Then, after more adventures, the couple come upon the Sage of Swevenham, who, like the Lady of Abundance, has been to the Well and will help Ralph and Ursula reach it. He shows them a book and says 'this book was mine heritage at Swevenham or ever I became wise, and it came from my father's grandsire', but it was not until he reached manhood that he 'turned to it, and read it, and became wise ... Now herein ... is written of that which ye desire to know, and I will read the same to you and expound it'.<sup>20</sup> Ursula and Ralph eventually reach the Well, drink its waters, become perfect in body, and are destined for long life.

Through hazards again, they make their way back to Upmeads, to find it under attack. Ralph rescues the kingdom and his father turns the kingship over to him, but before doing so there is a curious return to early England. An old man, Giles, says, 'there is a woman who dwells alone; not very old, for oft, when she was young, would she foretell things to come to me, and ever it fell out according to her prophecy'. She urges the old man to seek Ralph, 'who is well-beloved of Bear-father'.<sup>21</sup> This reference to the Bear-father, repeating one near the tale's beginning is curious. It may be a reference to the Bearings, or members of The House of the Bear, who ally themselves with Thiodolf and the Wolfings in the war between the Goths and the Romans, in the tale named *The House of the Wolfings* (1888),<sup>22</sup> and thus a reluctance on Morris's part to divide the Middle Ages in England from what he regards as the nation's ancient culture. In any interpretation, Morris is taking advantage of the unspecified historical date of the *Well* to anchor his characters in what he regards as their ancestors' ancient tribal beginnings.

Giles says, 'they are naming the ancient father of our race; and as he spoke, there was a chant, sung by many folk: "Smite aside the axe, O Bear-father"'. Ralph is made captain of the host, assembled to defeat Upmeads' enemies, his father has already turned the kingship over to Ralph, and Ursula and Ralph 'see four generations of her children wax up, and Ralph and Ursula die on the same day'.<sup>23</sup>

What, then, is to be said about the dream and its associated terms in the *Well at the World's End*? The dreams serve two purposes: to move Ralph toward the Well,

and to transfer his love from the Lady of Abundance to Ursula. It would perhaps be inaccurate to speak of the magic power of the Well as the operation of sorcery, but magic has to be seen as the plausible accompaniment of wizardry. The varied wizardry the Lady learned in the Dale of Lore was a power throughout her life, but not strong enough to protect her from the death which substitutes Ursula for herself in the quest for the Well. Her mortality may be also regarded as a touch of realism and an anticipation, as such, of a realism of a different nature which will be part of the mix in the next tale.

*The Water of the Wondrous Isles* (1897) is the most complex, as well as the most clearly plotted of Morris's late fantasy tales. At first the story seems a huge contest between evil and good sorcery, with little else to note, but this is an over simplification. Of equal interest is the way Morris weaves magic of various kinds with realism, the latter often subtle. The protagonist, Birdalone, is placed in a context in which most of these factors operate. As a young child, stolen from her mother by a witch, she grows up in an atmosphere in which the complexities begin to appear. Although a witch is a witch, so to speak, she allows Birdalone to roam the woods, where all wildlife is her friend, and where she learns to fish and hunt (using bow and arrow) to bring home food. Yet, the witch is evil, and the matter of supernatural forces, for good or bad, has been introduced. When Birdalone is seventeen, she meets Habundia, who is the embodiment of good (and a successor to the Lady of Abundance's Teacher of Lore). The eventual question will be, are the forces of evil and good equal in power? Late in the tale, when Arthur asks Habundia whether she is a sorceress, she says, 'Something more than a sorceress'.<sup>24</sup> In fact she represents the Faery realm. Her first gift to Birdalone is to take on herself Birdalone's physical identity: to be a mirror for her and make her conscious of her beauty. She then helps her escape on the witch's 'Sending Boat', and at the same time, a kind of eroticism is introduced, for Birdalone has been swimming and has removed her clothes, enabling the ever-watchful witch to do away with them. For the next three days Birdalone will be naked.

Her initial travels are all within a great lake, and the 'Sending Boat', having a will of its own, first lands her, naked as she is, on the 'Isle of Increase Unsought', whose Queen, a sister of the witch with whom Birdalone has lived, keeps three beautiful young women, Viradis, Aurea, and Atra in captivity. Birdalone is finally clothed by the three captives and sent by them to find the three knights who are their lovers; tell the knights where they are; and what their plight is. Birdalone, traveling always by the 'Sending Boat', makes several more landings on isles where the unnatural rules; and finally arrives at the Castle of the Quest, which is on the mainland. Here she meets the three knights: Baudoin, Hugh, and Arthur. She tells them about their beloveds; and when they leave to rescue them, promises to wait within the Castle. However, she becomes restless, and in exploring the strange land about the Castle becomes the prey of the evil Red Knight, who



would make her his 'bed-thrall' and presumes she has been the whore of the three knights. But the knights, having rescued their beloveds, return in time to save Birdalone, killing the Red Knight, though Baudoin dies in the battle. The erotic had appeared again when the Queen seduced a reluctant Arthur while the knights were on the Isle, and before they escaped with the three captives.

When their fellowship is assembled, Morris begins a gradual, naturalistic depiction of Arthur and Birdalone falling in love. He begins with Birdalone, and tells us, 'Yet, despite of all, trouble and care was on Birdalone's soul betwixt the joy of loving and being beloved, and the pain of fear of robbing a friend of her love. For Atra's face, which she might not hate, and scarce might love, was a threat to her day by day'.<sup>25</sup>

What is striking is that wizardry is not needed to aid their love to develop. The love is a reenactment of Morris's love-trio, this time between two women and a man, for Atra will be supplanted. The love between Birdalone and Arthur is also a fulcrum on which the plot turns. Overwhelmed by the pain she causes Atra and by the guilt she feels for Baudoin's death, a result of her wandering from the Castle and the fight to rescue her which ensued, Birdalone departs, and she will trace a path by land which will lead her to Utterhay, where she was born. One stop in her travels is in the City of Five Crafts, where, a skilled needlewoman, she is admitted into an appropriate guild, allowing Morris to express his favourable view of the Medieval guild system, while at the same time continue to develop the plot; for in the guild Birdalone is reunited with her mother Audrey, another fine needlewoman.

But to focus on the mother-child relationship would divert Morris from his purpose, and Audrey is eliminated by a sickness which sweeps through the town. Now Morris pursues his main goal, the reunion of Birdalone and Arthur and the restoration of the fellowship. For these tasks, Habundia will be called upon. Remembering that the entire tale is a war between supernatural forces of good and evil, with the exception of Birdalone and Arthur's love, it is noteworthy that Morris re-introduces wizardry in order to overcome the difficulties which the reunions impose. Habundia's first accomplishment is joining the half-mad Arthur with Birdalone, and Morris shows Habundia achieving this with psychological realism. It would be too much for Arthur to be immediately re-united with Birdalone, so Habundia devises a step-by-step procedure, first restoring Arthur to his senses, then leading him to the House in the Woods, where Birdalone is waiting. Habundia then brings Aurea, Viridis, Atra, and Hugh into the company of the two lovers, and Morris, with his eye on the restoring of the fellowship, uses language which in tone and excitement borders on anxiety.

But the reunions are accomplished, and when Birdalone, for the sake of being near Habundia, chooses Utterhay for the fellowship's home, Hugh, now married to Viridiris, and the father of two daughters, brings the children from the Green

Mountain to where his wife and the others are assembled. Then Morris ties up loose ends. Atra becomes a devotee of Habundia, visiting her often and learning from her the wisdom of the earth, and Aurea marries Robert Gerardson, first met in the City of Five Crafts; and to the extent that it possible for a Faery to join a human fellowship, Habundia does so. She makes an annual visit from Birdalone a condition for bringing the fellowship together, and develops a friendship with Atra, compensating for her loss of Arthur.

As for dreams, images, and shape-changing, they exist throughout the tale. After leaving the Castle, Birdalone dreams that 'she was alone in the Castle of the Quest, and that her old mistress came to her from out of the Sending Boat to fetch her away, and brought her aboard, and stripped her of her rich garments . . . and she thought that she knew that her friends were all dead and gone, and she had none to pity and defend her. Then somehow were they two, the witch and she, amidst the Isle of Nothing, and the Witch drew close anigh her, and was just going to whisper something of measureless horror, when she awoke'. There is also Arthur's dream or vision. He says to Habundia, when they have first met, 'First I saw the shape of her my soul desireth, and wept and lamented me, and another image blamed me and threatened me'. Atra, too, has a vision of a woman who was Habundia. As for shape-changers, both the Witch and Habundia are capable of it. The tale touches gingerly on a war between two supernatural forces; Evil, and the power of Good, especially when it locates itself in love, for in the 'company of friends . . . love never ends'.<sup>26</sup>

The dominant power in *The Sundering Flood* (1898) is that of the dwarfs, who, as are many in Icelandic literature, contrast with the evil dwarf in *The Wood Beyond the World*. *The Sundering Flood* is a *bildungsroman*, with the dwarfs exerting a strong influence on the developing lives of the protagonists, Osberne and Elfhild, whom we meet when they are nearing thirteen. Osberne, and his farm, Wethermel, lie on the east bank of the Sundering Flood, a river which cannot be crossed, and Elfhild lives with aged relatives on the west. Thus, Osberne and Elfhild are unable to physically meet, but where the river is narrow they converse across the Flood, and their talk, becoming more meaningful as they grow older, quickly develops into love.

Meanwhile, the dwarfs have been busy on their behalf. Steelhead, a dwarf who has taken ordinary human form, has endowed Osberne with strength beyond what is normal for a boy of his age; has given him a knife; a bow with arrows which never miss their mark; and a mighty sword, Boardcleaver. The first use for the knife is the slaying of three wolves who have afflicted the sheep of Wethermel, and eventually Boardcleaver will enable Osberne to slay Hardcastle, an intruder who intends to make Wethermel his own. The dwarfs have also given Elfhild a pipe which gathers her sheep when she plays it.<sup>27</sup>

Eastcheaping, the town at the head of the dale in which Wethermel is located,

is eventually at war with the Baron of Deepdale. Osberne and his neighbors are recruited by Sir Medard, the knight who will lead the battle. Osberne distinguishes himself in combat, and even kidnaps the Baron of Deepdale, with the help of 'Stephen the Eater', a hired man at Wethermel, who is again endowed with 'wisdom'. Sir Medard would like to make Osberne a knight, but he declines, saying 'such had been no wont of his fathers before him; and [I] looked never to go very far from the Dale and for no long while. "And even if I may not live there ... I look to die there"'.<sup>28</sup>

While Osberne was at war, Elfhild had come to the attention of one of the Red Skinners, the worst thieves in the area, and they will eventually carry her off to be sold into slavery. When Osberne hears of the one who has been in Elfhild's home, he is enraged, exclaiming, 'I would I had been there to cleave his skull! Many a better man have I slain for less cause'.<sup>29</sup> But he is also prepared for what lies ahead, which is service to Sir Godrick, a knight whom he meets in Sir Medard's castle. His adventures in Sir Godrick's service are many, culminating in a battle for the City of the Sundering Flood. Sir Godrick, who has made Osberne a captain, and allied himself within the City with the Lesser Crafts, a move Morris would favour, is victorious. He deposes the King who had ruled the City, Godrick himself is elected Burgrave, and will govern along with the Council. All this allows Morris to express his pleasure in the Middle Ages and the lesser crafts, and add a hint of socialism to the tale.

Osberne and Elfhild are at last re-united, the latter having been sustained through her perils by her 'carline', an old woman who has much wisdom. At the conclusion of the tale, Elfhild discovers that her pipe has lost its power to gather sheep, and Broadcleaver, like Excalibur, is thrown into the water by Osberne, where it is drawn to the dwarfs' cave from which it came. It would seem that human love, once achieved, dispenses with need for non-human aid. On a related note, when Sir Godrick, still at war, passes near Osberne, who offers to join him, he discourages the offer. He reminds Osberne of the love he has achieved, and says 'I have seen thee in a dream of the night and in a dream of the day living at Wethermel and dying on the field near the City of the Sundering Flood'.<sup>30</sup>

Of interest is how much has been owed to the Church. At the very beginning, the narrator, somewhat ambiguously, says that 'I, who gathered this tale, dwell in the House of the Black Canons'. And in addition to the Arthurian hermits, who are learned in 'leechcraft' (one heals a wounded Osberne), people in holy orders enable Elfhild to overcome obstacles on her way to Wethermel and the waiting Osberne. Elfhild, speaking to a sub-prior on her perilous final journey, says of her companion, 'And this good dame here, who is my very fostermother, and is somewhat wise, though I would hope not more than Holy Church alloweth, has always bidden me to hope to see my champion again'.<sup>31</sup> Does Morris feel a need to balance the powers of the dwarfs and of Elfhild's fostermother with the powers

of Church in medieval history and literature?

It would be unprofitable to speculate whether the dying Morris, who was forced by ill health to dictate the last lines of the tale to Sidney Cockerell, was, though an atheist, turning his thoughts to religion. It is probably a better conjecture that having called on wizardry throughout the tales written during the last years of his life, Morris was negotiating a truce between Norse sagas and the one main, non-literary institution in medieval English history, the Church.

## NOTES

1. *The Earthly Paradise*. 4 vols, London: Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1905, Vol. I, p. 3.
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3. *News from Nowhere*, *CW*, Vol. XVI, p. 13.
4. 'The Art of the People', *CW*, Vol. XXII, pp. 28–50; 'How we live and how we might live (1884)', 'Useful work versus useless toil' (1884), *CW*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 3–26, 98–120.
5. *News from Nowhere*, *CW*, Vol. XVI, pp. 201–202, p. 211.
6. Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris. A life for our time*, London, Faber & Faber, p. 634. (Afterwards MacCarthy).
7. Anna Vaninskaya, *William Morris and the Idea of Community: Romance, History, and Propaganda, 1880–1914*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010, p. 61 and *passim*.
8. *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, London: Reeves & Turner, 1891, p. 14, pp. 23–25. (Afterwards *Glittering Plain*)
9. *Glittering Plain*, pp. 83, 84, 104–105, 123–124.
10. *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Nibelungs*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1922, pp. 63–64.
11. *Glittering Plain*, pp. 160, 172.
12. *Glittering Plain*, p. 165.
13. Robert Boenig, ed, *The Wood Beyond the World*, New York: Broadview, 2012, Introduction, p. 11; p. 50.
14. *The Well at the World's End*. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1903. 2 vols; Vol. I, p. 60. (Afterwards *The Well*)
15. *The Well*, Vol. I, p. 36; p. 90.
16. *The Well* Vol. I, p. 129; p. 144.
17. *The Well* Vol. I, p. 149; p. 210.
18. *The Well* Vol. I, pp. 248–249.

19. *The Well*, Vol. I, pp. 293–294. The recurrence of women in captivity, especially as ‘bed thralls’, as Ursula is in peril of becoming, is a theme in Morris’s late romances which could be pursued but is not relevant to my purposes here, as similarly could be Fiona MacCarthy’s accurate discussion of armed women (MacCarthy, p. 636).
20. *The Well*, Vol. II, p. 33.
21. *The Well*, Vol. II, p. 225.
22. *The House of the Wolfings*, Newcastle: North Hollywood, 1978, 200 pp. (Afterwards *Wolfings*)
23. *The Well*, Vol. II, p. 233; p. 279.
24. *The Water of the Wondrous Isles*. 2 vols. London: Longmans, Green & Co., Pocket edition. 1914, Vol. II, p. 193. (Afterwards *Wondrous Isles*)
25. *Wondrous Isles*, Vol. II, p. 67.
26. *Wondrous Isles*, Vol. I, p. 187; Vol. II, p. 197; Vol. II, p. 247.
27. This is not first time dwarfs and their magic are helpful in Morris’s tales. Their handiwork is also central to *The House of the Wolfings*. The goddess Wood Sun gives Thiodolf, the warleader, a hauberk made by a dwarf. It will protect his life in battle. The hauberk is, abstractly, a ‘good’, even though Thiodolf eventually casts it off, for it separates him from the community he is fighting to protect from the Romans. An ancient man has said, ‘this mail is for the rescue of a man and the ruin of a folk’. (Richard Mathews, Introduction, *Wolfings*, p. 105)
28. *The Sundering Flood*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 2 vols, 1914; Vol. I, p. 129. (Afterwards *Sundering Flood*)
29. *Sundering Flood*, Vol. I, p. 142.
30. *Sundering Flood*, Vol. II, p. 156.
31. *Sundering Flood*, Vol. I, p. 2; Vol. II, p. 146.

# Educating for Utopia: William Morris on Useful Learning versus ‘Useless Toil’

*Phillippa Bennett*

*This article is dedicated to Peter Faulkner in acknowledgement and celebration of his many years in education as both a teacher and a scholar.*

William Guest, Morris’s time-travelling narrator in *News from Nowhere* (1890), wakes up in the twenty-second century to a world at once familiar and strange. In order to understand how this world works, he engages in a series of conversations with several friendly, accommodating and patient Nowherians. One of these is about education, but the conversation is doomed from the start in that Dick, Guest’s interlocutor on this occasion, admits: ‘I have never met anybody who could give me a clear explanation of what it means’.<sup>1</sup>

Dick’s statement assumes a new and pressing relevance for us during the second decade of the twenty-first century in which debates about the meaning, nature and purpose of education have become increasingly impassioned and partisan. In the UK, these have occurred at every stage of development of the national education system, focusing on such issues as whether schools should be transformed into academies, whether the A-Level 18+ qualification is ‘fit for purpose’, whether there should be distinct academic and vocational routes available, and whether students entering higher education should be asked to pay up to £9,000 a year for tuition fees. The last issue provides a particularly useful focus, in that the debates around the higher education system in the UK have arguably been the most impassioned and partisan of all in the wake of the Browne Report and the Government’s withdrawal of the teaching grant for Arts, Humanities and Social Science subjects. The resulting rise in tuition fees for students entering English universities in 2012 has fostered the idea that a university education is a commodity to be purchased and thus forced the question ‘What is a university education worth?’ It is impossible to answer such a question without reverting to

Dick's problem in *News from Nowhere*; how can we possibly say what a university education is worth if we do not know what it means to receive a university education, and, by extension, what its purpose and its benefits – both individual and social – are?

Such questions do in fact apply equally to primary and secondary education, but have crystallised around current debates regarding higher education because it is here that the price-tag has been more conspicuously attached and the responsibility for paying it shifted more explicitly from the state to the individual. In consequence, a new series of checks and balances has been applied to higher education in order to ensure that prospective university applicants know exactly what they are getting for their money. In their muddled conversation about education, Dick would now have to explain to the bewildered Guest how the Nowherians have rejected not only the standardised education system introduced by the Victorians but also the League Tables, National Student Surveys and KIS data which obsessed university administrators during the twenty-first century.<sup>2</sup> Proponents of these recent and ongoing changes in higher education claim that they are essential if the system is to be properly funded, quality assured and internationally attractive. They also frequently see education, and higher education in particular, as a means to an economic end – a method of equipping individuals with a range of 'skills' which will enable them to contribute to the financial prosperity of the nation and keep unemployment figures down. Opponents of these changes insist that it is essential to take a stand against this unabashed marketisation of education and the pernicious effects of what Thomas Docherty identifies as a 'managerial jargon of three Es (economy, efficiency, effectiveness)'.<sup>3</sup> They also reject the 'employability' agenda which is beginning to infiltrate curriculum content and delivery and that, as Nigel Tubbs argues, 'wilfully ignores how not all graduates (or all graduate jobs) have financial reward as their priority'.<sup>4</sup>

The distance between these two positions in terms of their understanding of education is arguably as considerable as that between Guest and Dick in *News from Nowhere*, and those on opposing sides can appear to be talking as much at cross-purposes as these characters from different centuries. But while Dick, with his Nowherian wisdom, would probably look back with bemused incomprehension at some of the issues being debated during the twenty-first century, Guest would no doubt smile wryly and knowingly were he gifted with a glimpse of these things to come. Guest is, of course, a thinly disguised William Morris, and Morris similarly lived through a period in which education was a fiercely contested subject, not least because it was a period during which the foundations of the education system as we now know it were being laid. This article will thus consider how our own current debates about education revisit many of those that took place during the nineteenth century, and the ways in which the contributions of Mor-

ris in particular to those debates can help us to understand the nature, purpose and value of education in the twenty-first century.

## I. THE AGE OF GRADGRIND

Current debates in Britain regarding the value and purpose of a university education may seem exclusively pertinent to a globalised, late-capitalist, twenty-first century society, but they would in fact have been very familiar to the Victorians. Higher education was the subject of continuing debate during the nineteenth century, and the university system similarly underwent a series of expansions and reforms, the two most significant of which are outlined by Stefan Collini in his recent book *What Are Universities For?* The traditional curriculum at Oxford and Cambridge expanded during the nineteenth century to include a range of new subjects, reflecting, Collini argues, ‘a new self-consciousness [...] about educating the governing and administrative classes of the future’ and a growing awareness of these old universities’ ‘place in the national culture’. In addition, a number of new universities were established in large urban areas during the later decades of the century, and these institutions ‘were not afraid to teach practical subjects such as “commerce” alongside the traditional curriculum’.<sup>5</sup>

In the context of what was perceived by some to be an encroaching utilitarianism, it is not surprising to find a series of impassioned statements by prominent nineteenth-century cultural commentators on the inherent personal value of education, and more specifically higher education, the most famous and enduring of which were made by John Henry Newman in *The Idea of a University*, published in 1852. The book was a compilation of his lectures to students at the new Catholic University of Ireland, but its legacy has far outstripped its original purpose. Newman’s ideas and arguments have been repeatedly resurrected in debates about the role and purpose of a university education during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and are still a favourite recourse for those intent on defending the concept of a ‘liberal education’ – although, as Stefan Collini has astutely noted, this demands some highly selective reading and de-contextualising of Newman’s ideas.<sup>6</sup> For Newman, education is a ‘higher word’ than instruction, for ‘it implies an action upon our mental nature, and the formation of a character; it is something individual and permanent’. For this reason, ‘it is more correct, as well as more usual’, he argues, ‘to speak of a university as a place of education than instruction’.<sup>7</sup>

The aspirational content and eloquent tone of Newman’s various discourses on the nature of a university education were reiterated in various Inaugural Addresses given by notable public figures at British universities during the mid-nineteenth century. In his address to Edinburgh undergraduates in 1866, Tho-



mas Carlyle aligned the university experience with the educational philosophy of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795–96), declaring: 'It gives one an idea that something far better and higher, something as high as ever, and indubitably true too, is still possible for man in this world'.<sup>8</sup> J. S. Mill, the following year, assured Glasgow undergraduates that the better their education, 'the deeper and more varied interest' they would feel in life, 'which will give it tenfold its value, and a value which will last to the end'.<sup>9</sup> T. H. Huxley continued the theme with a socially contrasted audience at the South London Working Men's College in 1868, claiming that the liberally educated man was 'no stunted ascetic', but 'full of life and fire'. 'The world is still as fresh as it was at the first day', Huxley encouraged his listeners, 'still as full of untold novelties for those who have the eye to see them'.<sup>10</sup> For Matthew Arnold, such claims validated the demand for vibrant institutions of higher education, establishments whose intellectual health was vital to the overall health of a nation's culture. Writing in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1868, Arnold concurred with the view of the German educationalist von Sybel that: 'It is impossible to rate too highly the advantage of our highest places of learning having in their inmost nature the tendency to the complete freeing of the human spirit'.<sup>11</sup>

Such impassioned pleas for the value of a true liberal education – pleas in defence of the humanities which resonate just as loudly in our ears today – were deemed necessary in an increasingly industrialised and commercialised world. For Newman, a liberal education meant that 'the intellect, instead of being formed or sacrificed to some particular or accidental purpose, some specific trade or profession, or study or science, is disciplined for its own sake, for the perception of its own proper object, and for its own higher culture'. Such an intellect is most certainly useful, Newman emphasises, but not in a 'low, mechanical, mercantile sense'; it is instead useful because it has a role in 'diffusing good' and can thus be regarded as 'a treasure, first to the owner, then through him to the world'.<sup>12</sup> Such utility clearly cannot be calculated, weighed or measured – cannot be statistically represented in a survey or a league table – but, Newman assures his audience, we can be assured that it is there.

Not everyone during the nineteenth century, however, could be the lucky possessor of such a 'treasure'. However inspirational such statements, however eloquent their justification of the value of higher education, it has also to be remembered that they referred to a system which was not only intellectually, but socially elitist: the young men addressed by these speakers were all drawn from the middle and upper classes of Victorian society. And one of the main consequences, and indeed intentions, of such statements was to reclaim the university experience from the narrow, utilitarian agenda which some of these same commentators publically lamented was the dominant ethos in shaping the earlier stages of education in the nineteenth century, particularly for the children of the

lower classes. It was an ethos given its most famous and emphatic expression in the teaching of Dickens's Mr M'Choakumchild, that most unflinchingly utilitarian of teachers, for whom 'the mechanical art and mystery' of a true education system lay in 'educating the reason without stooping to the cultivation of the sentiments and affections'.<sup>13</sup> Mr M'Choakumchild, a product of the new Victorian teacher training system (equated by Dickens with a factory turning out pianoforte legs), views his pupils as a host of 'little vessels [...] arranged in order, ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim'; thus safely filled, there will be no space for that dangerous interloper, imagination – a hostile concept in the 'model' school of Gradgrindian philosophy.<sup>14</sup>

Dickens presents a grotesque parody of Victorian elementary education in *Hard Times* (1854), but his satirical account of what went on in the classroom was also a reflection of the genuine concerns about curriculum content which were being expressed in education debates around the middle of the nineteenth century, as politicians and educators worked to develop an accessible, effective and efficiently administered education system for the whole nation. Robert Lowe's Revised Code of 1862, with its narrow specification of the elementary curriculum on which pupils were to be tested, and its corresponding 'payment by results', had been, Eric Midwinter suggests, 'a logical development of the Benthamite idea', in which the utility of educational provision was a central consideration, for 'as long as the public acquiesced in child-labour, the three "Rs" were deemed adequate, and few children stayed at school beyond the age of thirteen'.<sup>15</sup> It was this narrow concern with utility which most concerned Matthew Arnold, one of the Revised Code's most outspoken critics, who denounced its inevitable effect of reducing the school to 'a mere machine for teaching, reading, writing, and arithmetic', thereby destroying its true role as 'a living whole with complex functions, religious, moral, and intellectual'.<sup>16</sup> And while the 1870 Education Act increased the range of education provision across England and Wales, its implementation did not necessarily mean an expansion of the curriculum from the dictates of the Revised Code, for it failed to define exactly what should be the constituent elements of a universal elementary education, insisting only that it should be 'sufficient, efficient and suitable'.<sup>17</sup> Such an aim was far removed from the focus on the transformative and the aspirational which dominated Victorian eulogies on the nature and purpose of a university education; state-provided elementary education was clearly intended to be useful in preparing pupils for their working life but not to aspire to a different life altogether.

## II. SOCIALISM AND EDUCATION

It is hardly surprising, in view of the utilitarian and socially hierarchical considerations which informed education provision during the nineteenth century that many in the developing British Socialist movement were highly critical of the system. In his 'Chapters on Socialism', published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1879, J. S. Mill recognised the fundamental importance of education to the Socialist mission, noting that:

All Socialists are strongly impressed with the all-importance of the training given to the young, not only for the reasons that apply universally, but because their demands being much greater than those of any other system upon the intelligence and morality of the individual citizen, they have even more at stake than any other societies on the excellence of their educational arrangements.<sup>18</sup>

His comments reflected the work of earlier 'Utopian Socialists' such as Robert Owen and Charles Fourier, who at the beginning of the nineteenth century had recognised education as crucial to determining the eventual success of their experimental social enterprises. 'It is with education that we must begin', asserted Fourier, in setting out the plans for his proposed Phalanx, while Owen warned that 'it is from the errors of education, mis-instructing the young mind relative to the true cause of early prepossessions, that almost all the evils of life proceed'.<sup>19</sup> At New Lanark he accordingly organised the education of the young on the principle he promoted in the first essay of *A New View of Society* (1816), which asserted that 'any general character, from the best to the worst, from the most ignorant to the most enlightened, may be given to the community, even to the world at large, by the application of proper means'.<sup>20</sup>

Such 'proper means' were not to be found in the standard elementary Board School system according to William Morris, who was one of the most outspoken and persistent Socialist critics of the nineteenth-century education system. In such schools, the dictates of utility continued to triumph into the latter decades of the century, and M'Choakumchild still reigned supreme in the classroom. Only the possession of knowledge useful for their station in life was deemed essential for Board School pupils, and Morris's despair at their limited education was expressed (with a glance at Dickens) in 'Thoughts on Education under Capitalism', in which he lamented: 'I must say in passing that on the few occasions that I have been inside a Board-school, I have been much depressed by the mechanical drill that was too obviously being applied there to all the varying capacities and moods. My heart sank before Mr. M'Choakumchild and his method'.<sup>21</sup>

Morris's Socialist colleague J. L. Mahon wrote in a similarly scathing manner in *Commonweal* of 'the small dose of reading, writing, and figuring which is now crammed into the children at Board Schools', while dismissing the vague aspira-

tions of the Radicals for a more 'advanced' national system which would simply mean 'a superficial smattering of elementary science, and a dabbling in music and literature'.<sup>22</sup> By 1894 an article on education in *Justice* implied a slight expansion of elementary subjects taught in Board Schools, including some singing and drawing, although the author, H. W. Hobart, complained of the narrow imperialist slant by which subjects such as history and geography were introduced, with teachers presenting them in 'a garbled way', and concentrating merely on topics and areas where 'British arms have been successful'.<sup>23</sup> It is worth noting here that Hobart's complaint is strikingly similar to those made in recent months about the current Secretary of State for Education's planned changes to the National Curriculum in English schools, in particular the History syllabus. The consultation document issued by the Department of Education in February 2013 states that the teaching of History should, in the first instance, enable pupils to 'know and understand [...] how the British people shaped this nation and how Britain influenced the world'.<sup>24</sup> As Daniel Boffey has recently observed, many historians and scholars regard the proposed new syllabus as 'overly Anglocentric, highly prescriptive and quite dull', an assessment corroborated by David Priestland's claim that it stresses 'facts and dates over real understanding', while establishing a 'resolutely insular' and nationalistic focus.<sup>25</sup>

Socialist commentators were of course astutely aware of the underlying commercial interests which dictated the emphasis on utility in regard to development of a national education system. As James Murphy notes, as early as the 1860s it was becoming clear that:

Britain could not long remain without a truly national system of elementary education. Competition from abroad in commerce and industry was becoming ever more keen, yet there did not exist in England and Wales a basis for producing a generally literate labour force, or a foundation on which to erect a comprehensive system of secondary, technical and commercial education.<sup>26</sup>

T. H. Huxley gave a stark warning of the consequences of allowing such political and commercial concerns to inform the development of a comprehensive education, lamenting that education was being 'diverted' from its true function 'into a process of manufacturing human tools'.<sup>27</sup> His fears were re-iterated nearly twenty years later by Morris in a lecture of 1886 on education reported in *The Architect*. In his lecture, Morris attacked, with added Socialist vigour, the same narrowness of contemporary educational thought and practice which meant 'our present system of education was simply the education of one set of people to become the machines by means of which the other set could carry on their life to the injury of the community in general'. Current commercial and education systems were, Morris argued, inextricably bound up to the detriment of the whole social fabric, for they ensured that the better-off 'were to be educated merely as slaveholders',

while the working classes 'were educated as slaves, and not as men'.<sup>28</sup>

Notably, the Bryce Report on Secondary Education in 1895 at least partially recognised such concerns regarding the education of working-class children, declaring:

More, much more, than is now done might be done, not merely to fit such boys and girls for the practical work of their respective future careers, but to make them care for knowledge, to give them habits of application and reflection, to implant in them tastes which may give them delights and solaces outside the range of their work-a-day lives.<sup>29</sup>

Nonetheless, it may be argued that the pleasures of learning are effectively relegated here to a useful and consolatory pastime to occupy the non-working hours of the less affluent and less fortunate members of society in their future lives. Thus in 1901 the Independent Labour Party publication *Platform* could still criticise the blatant self-interest of the 'ideal of education' promoted by the commercial classes, who 'believe in teaching boys and girls to read and write because it makes them better instruments to produce profit for themselves as employers'.<sup>30</sup> Notably, this legacy of the Victorians could still be felt during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. In 1995, the then Conservative government created a new Department for Education and Employment, thereby making an explicit policy connection between education and economic productivity. The second change of name under New Labour to the Department for Education and Skills in 2001 took this connection still further, with a policy document from the new Department stating that educated people 'are more productive. This is why they earn more, and are more likely to be employed'.<sup>31</sup>

Morris himself was quick to point to the paradoxical combination of utilitarianism and uselessness inherent in an education system dominated by commercial interests. In 'Thoughts on Education under Capitalism', he asked:

And then supposing the worker to be really educated, to have acquired both the information and the taste for reading which Mr. McChoakumchild's (*sic*) dole will allow to him under the most favourable circumstances, how will this treasure of knowledge and sympathy accord with his daily life? Will it not make his dull task seem duller? Will it not increase the suffering of the workshop or the factory to him? And if so, must he not rather strive to forget than strive to remember? Will not nature force him to that?<sup>32</sup>

George Gissing's *The Nether World* (1889) provides a striking affirmation of Morris's claim, in the shape of the character Clara Hewett, whose poverty-restricted circumstances lead her to lament bitterly: 'I wish I could neither read nor write! I wish I had never been told that there is anything better than to work with one's hands and earn daily bread!'<sup>33</sup> Similarly in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

(1891), Tess, 'with her trained National teachings and Standard knowledge under an infinitely Revised Code', must also suffer the disappointment of ambitions awakened in her by her youthful education. Like Clara, 'she had hoped to be a teacher at the school, but the fates seemed to decide otherwise'.<sup>34</sup> Both Clara and Tess bear fictional testimony to the criticism of Morris's Socialist colleague John Bruce Glasier of the essential cruelty of a contemporary education system which meant 'opening up vistas of knowledge and pleasure in the minds of those whom we know are destined to spend their lives slaving in factories and sleeping in cellars'.<sup>35</sup> For both, their delight in knowledge is denied all future means of cultivation and expression in the drudgery of their daily existence.

But while much Socialist criticism focused on earlier stages of education, Morris expanded his critique to include the whole education spectrum. For him, the utilitarianism and commercialism which began in the Board Schools reached an inevitable and lamentable nadir in the degradation of the true functions and aspirations of the university. It was a concern he articulated at length in a letter to the editor of the *Daily News* in 1885, protesting:

The present theory of the use to which Oxford should be put appears to be that it should be used as a huge upper public school for fitting lads of the upper and middle class for their laborious future of living on other people's labour. For my part I do not think this a lofty conception of the function of a University; but if it be the only one admissible nowadays, it is at least clear that it does not need the history and art of our forefathers which Oxford still holds to develop it.<sup>36</sup>

It was 'the history and art of our forefathers' that, for Morris, invigorated the learning environment of Oxford – a vitality he saw being stifled by the commercial opportunism by which the university was now administered. In 'The Aims of Art' (1886), he scorned the manner in which:

the guardians of this beauty and romance so fertile of education, though profess- edly engaged in 'the higher education' (as the futile system of compromises which they follow is nick-named), have ignored it utterly, have made its preservation give way to the pressure of commercial exigencies, and are determined apparently to destroy it altogether. There is another pleasure for the world gone down the wind; here, again, the beauty and romance have been uselessly, causelessly, most foolishly thrown away.<sup>37</sup>

Morris challenged the very foundations of the higher education system by asserting that what might appear incidental to education – beauty, romance and art – are in fact the most productive stimulus to learning. It was a lesson he had learned early in life at Marlborough, where, he later recounted, 'I was taught – nothing; but learned archaeology and romance on the Wiltshire downs'.<sup>38</sup> The archaeology and romance of the Wiltshire Downs occupy the same status as the

history and art of Oxford; for Morris all are appropriate subjects of study, and as such offered a challenge and an alternative to the limitations of the contemporary school and university curriculum.

Indeed Morris's own early educational experiences and his later Socialist activities clearly fostered a belief that neither the nineteenth-century school – Board or Public – nor the nineteenth-century university, were the most effective means of educating the young. Neither was likely to instil a continuing passion for knowledge – a passion which was central to Morris's concept of the eager life and essential if people were to retain an enthusiasm for 'whatever knowledge there is in the world', to resist the limitations of conventional learning, and to avoid being 'beaten down to a dull level of mediocrity'.<sup>39</sup> Unsurprisingly, therefore, traditional modes of education are absent from Morris's ideals as articulated in the future society of *News from Nowhere*. When Guest comments that the young people who have spent their summer weeks in the woods 'will be all the fresher for school when the summer gets over and they have to go back again', his host Dick is clearly bewildered:

'School?' he said; 'yes, what do you mean by that word? I don't see how it can have anything to do with children. We talk, indeed, of a school of herring, and a school of painting, and in the former sense we might talk of a school of children – but otherwise,' said he laughing, 'I must own myself beaten.'

A perplexed but shrewd Guest confides to the reader, 'I thought I had best say nothing about the boy-farms which I had been used to call schools, as I saw pretty clearly that they had disappeared'.<sup>40</sup>

### III. EDUCATION AS IT MIGHT BE

While *News from Nowhere* provides an intriguing and provocative glimpse of a future alternative to conventional education, it is in his political lectures that Morris outlines most fully his highly personal but nonetheless pragmatic philosophy of education, with a view not only to transforming the present system but also laying the foundations for the nature and purpose of education in a future Communist society. A properly effective education is, Morris argues, a means of cultivating 'an active mind in sympathy with the past, the present, and the future' – a mind filled with 'a longing to know something real of the lives of those who have gone before us'.<sup>41</sup> It is the revelation of 'the stored-up knowledge of the fashion of the universe [...] and of the deeds of men on the earth'.<sup>42</sup> Thus the key task of education in the society of the future will, Morris declares, be the promotion of 'the pleasures of intellectual development' through which men and women 'follow knowledge and the creation of beauty for their own sakes'. Fur-

thermore, future modes of intellectual development would include and indeed honour the experiences of those aberrant in the Gradgrindian system who are inclined to speculate and contemplate – ‘the man who felt keenest the pleasure of lying on the hill-side under a rushen hut among the sheep on a summer night’, or ‘he who took to heart the piping of the wind and washing of the waves as he sat at the helm of the fishing-boat’.<sup>43</sup> Morris thus retrieves the delights of education from the ‘mere word-spinners and hunters of introspection’ whom he criticises in ‘The Society of the Future’ – a criticism he would no doubt find still relevant and applicable to twenty-first century academia – as well as the Gradgrindian utilitarians, and offers a much broader and richer vision of how education might be conceived and delivered in the future.<sup>44</sup>

Indeed, it is the expansiveness and inclusiveness of Morris’s educational vision which distinguishes him as one of the most radical contributors to the educational debates of the nineteenth century. Morris always rejected the traditional – and ongoing – dichotomy of ‘academic’ and ‘practical’ in education, describing in his early lecture ‘The Lesser Arts’ (1877) how he wished to see ‘general cultivation of the powers of the mind’ being developed alongside ‘general cultivation of the powers of the eye and hand’.<sup>45</sup> Hence while in ‘How We Live and How We Might Live’ he could state that he claimed a ‘liberal education’ for all, his concept of such an education was far broader than that envisaged by Newman. For Morris, to receive a liberal education was to gain access to ‘whatever knowledge there is in the world according to my capacity or bent of mind, historical or scientific; and also to have my share of skill of hand which is about in the world, either in the industrial handicrafts or in the fine arts; picture-painting, sculpture, music, acting or the like’.<sup>46</sup> In his later lecture ‘The Society of the Future’ he expanded this vision of liberal education even further, stating that ‘all people should learn how to swim, and to ride, and to sail a boat on sea or river’, while learning at least ‘one or two elementary arts of life, as carpentry or smithying’ in addition to learning ‘cooking, baking, sewing, and the like’, the latter being skills which, he argued, ‘can be taught to every sensible person in a few hours’. If everyone was ‘armed with these habits and arts’, he concluded, ‘life would lie before the citizen for him to enjoy’, and it was one of the ongoing follies of the education system, Morris recognized, that it attempted to separate ‘the pleasures of intellectual development’ from the ‘sensuous life’.<sup>47</sup>

While the vision of education developed by Morris thus rejects the utilitarian ethos of the nineteenth-century Board School and university, it is by no means inherently ‘useless’. Indeed one of Morris’s most perceptive and distinctive contributions to debates about education was his ability to envisage a dynamic rather than reductive relationship between education and work. In a post-revolutionary society the ‘useless toil’ which characterises work for many in industrial capitalist societies will, of course, be eradicated, but there will still be work to do which is



not immediately appealing.<sup>48</sup> With the liberal education he describes, however, Morris claims that men and women will find even ‘their most necessary work grow interesting and beautiful under their hands without their being conscious of it’.<sup>49</sup> Essential but mundane tasks can thus ‘grow interesting and beautiful’ if undertaken by those who know *how* to find interest and beauty in the details of life, an ability which is predicated on being accustomed from an early age to experience romance and beauty on a regular basis. That, for Morris, is the most desirable outcome of education: to foster an imaginative engagement with the everyday world through cultivating a mind eager for knowledge, used to encountering beautiful things – whether natural or created by men and women – and able to respond to and appreciate those beautiful things. And in our own age of online and distance learning, it is worth remembering that for Morris, the best education is an inherently social rather than solipsistic experience, even allowing for necessary or desirable periods of individual contemplation. Being able ‘to give and take in talk with learned and travelled men, with men of action and imagination’ was, he believed, one of the best ways to learn about the world and find one’s own way of acting and contributing in it; ‘believe me’, enthused Morris in ‘Art and Socialism’, ‘that would beat elementary education’.<sup>50</sup>

#### IV. EDUCATING FOR REVOLUTION

Morris thus demonstrated how education in a post-revolutionary Communist future could be useful without being utilitarian – useful to the recipient, and to the wider community in a much more tangible and convincing way than the general ‘diffusing [of] good’ envisaged by Newman. But Morris recognised that if such a varied and dynamic system of education would be useful *after* a revolution, it would also be essential before it. In the discourse of political agitation of the late-nineteenth-century Socialist movement, education was identified as playing a fundamental role in preparing and provoking revolution: ‘a true educationist is necessarily a revolutionist’, claimed one contributor to *Commonweal* in 1889.<sup>51</sup> Socialist activists thus took a particular interest in the official structures and systems by which the nation’s young – the potential Socialists of the future – received their instruction. It was an interest given added impetus with the inauguration of new School Boards following the 1870 Education Act. Socialists – May Morris included – contested elections to these boards recognising that this gave them ‘an opportunity to put their democratic policies and principles into practice’.<sup>52</sup> As Marianne Larsen observes, the development of a universal elementary education system during the nineteenth century ‘was premised on the idea that schooling was to be the cure for the social ills of the time’ by ‘providing children with the foundation they required to become obedient, moral citizens’.<sup>53</sup> In engaging

directly with current education policies and institutions, Socialists thus aimed to demonstrate that education was, in contrast, to be ‘the cure for the social ills of the time’ by educating a new generation *not* to become obedient moral citizens, but rather to question the values and challenge the practices of the system under which they lived, and by doing so to transform it.

Morris and his Socialist colleagues also recognised however that such an education must expand beyond the classroom. As Kevin Manton notes, Socialists believed that ‘ignorance was the lifeblood of the conservatism of British workers and, as a corollary of this, that knowledge would lead to radicalism’.<sup>54</sup> It was this belief which propelled Morris into years of lecturing in meeting halls and on street corners across the country, focused on educating his audiences not ‘to become workmen or the employers of workmen, or the hangers-on of the employers’, as they had been educated at school, but on ‘educating people to a sense of their real capacities as men’.<sup>55</sup> This meant ‘instilling into the minds of the people a knowledge of the aims of Socialism, and a longing to bring about the complete change which will supplant civilisation by Communism’.<sup>56</sup> Once people were aware of the aims of Socialism, he felt assured that ‘hope will arise in them, and they will claim changes in society’.<sup>57</sup> Hence, he argued in his valedictory *Commonweal* article ‘Where Are We Now?’ (1890), it was the primary role of Socialists to ‘make Socialists’, and ‘preaching and teaching’ was the most effective means of doing so and ‘the only rational means of attaining to the New Order of Things’.<sup>58</sup> Thus education was not only a subject of political debate for Morris, it was the primary method of political activism, designed to stimulate the desire for revolution and to generate the will to bring it about: ‘The one thing to be done is to set people far and wide to think it possible to raise the standard of life’, and the way to do this was by ‘stirring up general discontent’, and then ‘educating that discontent into hope’.<sup>59</sup>

## V. EDUCATING FOR UTOPIA

Seeing the stirring up of discontent as the primary aim of education in the twenty-first century would no doubt raise the eyebrows of education ministers, university vice-chancellors and head teachers alike, but for those who work day to day in the classroom, seminar room or lecture theatre, it remains an essential aim and one of the most valuable bequeathed to us by Morris. How else are we to encourage those we teach to challenge received opinion, to rethink what we take for granted, to think differently and, hopefully, to think better? To foster discontent does not mean encouraging students to air their personal grievances through the National Student Survey or on [RateMyTeachers.com](http://RateMyTeachers.com); it means encouraging them to think critically about the world they have inherited, and imaginatively

about the world they might bequeath. And it means stimulating the will to bring about the necessary changes such a world demands, and developing the skills necessary to implement those changes. Some of these will be learned through the study of STEM subjects – those deemed important enough by government to retain their funding – but they will also be acquired via the study of Arts and Humanities subjects – those now deemed unworthy of state support. Because as one recent commentator has expressed it, to study the art, literature, concepts and ideas which constitute the humanities is to ‘explore what it means to be human’, to ‘help us to make sense of our lives and the world we live in’ and to understand ‘how we have created it and are created by it’.<sup>60</sup> For that reason, as Collini observes, ‘introducing students to the study of humanities is more akin to inciting them to take part in a discussion than it is to equipping them to process information effectively’.<sup>61</sup> It is through facilitating such discussion that we can best work as teachers and, with Morris, reclaim education as the fundamental means of achieving social and political change; as Ian Angus puts it, we should ‘love the questions’.<sup>62</sup>

The minds, and the skills, developed by such an educational process will, on a more immediately practical level, be an asset in any number of jobs, and should therefore satisfy those intent on ensuring that students leave school and university ‘employable’ as well as educated. But more important, as Morris perceived, they will help to transform our relationship to our work, whatever that might be – to help us find interest in it and perhaps even beauty. And they will encourage us as a society to think more deeply and critically about what, in Morris’s own words, constitutes useful work as opposed to useless toil and to strive towards eradicating the latter and investing in the former. This is another essential element of Morris’s educational legacy to the twenty-first century – a challenge to envisage a more enriching and constructive relationship between education and work, to see education not simply as a means to a job and a salary but also as a means to find satisfaction and fulfilment in the way we contribute to the world on a daily basis, and to believe that contribution to be a valuable and an important one.

To achieve this goal necessitates overcoming the invidious dichotomy between academic and vocational skills which appears ingrained in our current thinking and practice in education. Why should we choose *either* an academic route *or* a vocational one? Why can’t we choose both? Indeed, why can’t we see them as essential aspects of a truly holistic education? Morris’s envisaging of a world in which people are taught how to be accomplished in carpentry and history, in sewing and science – and how to see all of these as an enrichment of their lives both in a practical and an imaginative sense – might seem a fanciful one in a society which likes to talk about ‘soft’, ‘hard’ and ‘Mickey Mouse’ subjects, but it has much to teach us if we are ever to change the current educational mindset in which those who do not excel academically are made to feel like the failures of the education

system. Morris encourages us to aspire to live in a society in which people are not asked to choose between working with their minds or with their hands, but in which they retain the option and the ability to work with both.

This is the foundation of a truly democratic education system; and to be truly democratic it must be available to all. The issues surrounding the funding of a formal education system – and higher education in particular – are admittedly complex, and in an era of double (triple?) dip recessions, it is perhaps inevitable, if still regrettable, that questions will be raised regarding the cost and the value of post-18 education. In ‘The Lesser Arts’, Morris stated: ‘I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few’.<sup>63</sup> The government and citizens of any truly democratic society should feel the same, but no matter how many and what kind of student loans and bursaries are available, increasing student tuition fees and maintenance costs will inevitably price some out of what has essentially become a market-place for higher education. To recognise education as a public as well as a private good, as a social as well as an individual concern, is to recognise that if anything is worthy of state funding it is this. Billions of pounds have recently been spent bailing out banks, and it is not unreasonable to ask whether in a society in which all are educated, as Morris envisaged, to have ‘an active mind in sympathy with the past, the present, and the future’, and, as Collini describes, to ‘extend their understanding of themselves and the world’, there would be people and professions so motivated by profit and greed that they necessitate such bailouts.<sup>64</sup> Similar questions might be raised in regard to budgets for policing and defence, although there is not space to investigate these here. What is clear is that the short-term policies of governments who always have one eye on the next General Election do not serve the education system well; what is needed is a long-term vision which understands that investing fully and properly in education now will reap social and economic rewards in the future which will more than justify that investment.

## VI CONCLUSIONS

As we debate these issues in an era in which the national system of education is once more under intense scrutiny, Morris’s thoughts on education still have much to say to us. He reminds us that education is not a commodity to be purchased any more than it is a utilitarian means to an economic end. He would no doubt have agreed wholeheartedly with Angus’s claim that education should be seen not ‘as something that one has’ but ‘as something that one does and which changes the person that does it’.<sup>65</sup> And Morris would have emphasised that we do not just ‘do’ education for a specific period of our lives. In ‘Useful Work Versus Useless Toil’, Morris envisages how, in a post-revolutionary society, ‘adults

would also have opportunities of learning in the same schools' as younger people, because true education is about the 'development of individual capacities' at all stages of life.<sup>66</sup> This is something we struggle to accommodate in contemporary educational thinking; it is notable, for example, that recent changes to the retirement age and to pensions provision have taken account of our increasing life-span while our education system has not. As the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education in the UK (NIACE) has noted, the focus on skills and employability in government education policy since 2003 has left funding for continuing education vulnerable. Central to NIACE's campaign is the need for government to identify learning 'as an element of a broader ageing strategy'.<sup>67</sup> We live in a society which still tends to regard education as something we should ideally squeeze into our lives before the age of twenty one, after which if we need to update our knowledge and skills for the purposes of our employment we can do so through various arid processes of 'professional development'.

In the midst of current arguments about what we should be teaching, when we should be learning, how much education is worth and who should pay the bill, Morris asks us to remember that education is a vital and ongoing process of personal and social transformation – a utopian practice in itself, and the only way in which utopias can be imagined and achieved.

## NOTES

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4. Nigel Tubbs, 'The Importance of Being Useless', *Times Higher Education*, 11 October 2012, 40–43 (p. 42).
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  39. 'How We Live and How We Might Live' (1885), *CW*, Vol. XXIII, p. 18.
  40. *News from Nowhere*, Chapter V, 'Children on the road', *CW*, Vol. XVI, p. 28.
  41. 'How We Live and How We Might Live' (1884), *CW*, Vol. XXIII, p. 25; 'The Beauty of Life' (1880), *CW*, Vol. XXII, p. 59.
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45. 'The Lesser Arts' (1877), *CW*, Vol. XXII, p. 21.
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47. 'The Society of the Future' (1888), *AWS*, Vol. II, pp. 462, 467.
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# Morris, George Borrow and Edward Thomas: a Green Road Opening

*John Purkis*

I often go for walks along the Roman road near Cambridge. You can still make out the structure of the Roman *agger*, but now it has become a green road, lined with hedges, with a footpath wandering down the middle. In fact, as you walk along, you see no centurions, but you can imagine you are in the fourteenth century, and waking up like Morris at the beginning of *A Dream of John Ball*: ‘I got up and rubbed my eyes and looked about me, and the landscape seemed unfamiliar to me, though it was, as to the lie of the land, an ordinary English low-country, swelling into rising ground here and there. The road was narrow, and I was convinced that it was a piece of Roman road from its straightness’.<sup>1</sup> During the Middle Ages the road was known as Worsted or Wool Street, and cloth was brought on pack horses from the Suffolk villages to Cambridge and then on into Central England. I also get a sense of those great walkers who passed nearby — George Borrow, who covered the distance from Norwich to London in twenty seven hours, and Edward Thomas, who crossed this road while traversing the Icknield Way.

In discussing Morris’s likes and dislikes in literature, Mackail casually mentions Borrow: ‘he was devoted to George Borrow and read him perpetually’.<sup>2</sup> These were the days when everybody read aloud to adults as well as to their children, and ‘perpetually’ conveys the sense that Morris would not be denied this pleasure. Just to remind you, then, that George Borrow came from Norwich, a place, he said, where they made the best dumplings and spoke the purest English. He possessed great skills as a linguist and so, during the 1830s, while in the employment of the Bible Society, he traveled round Spain, eventually producing an account of his adventures in *The Bible in Spain*, a book which made him a rival to Dickens. He followed this with two autobiographical accounts of traveling in England, *Lavengro* and *The Romany Rye*, the titles showing his acquaintance with

Gypsies and the Gypsy language. *Wild Wales* is a description of a journey through that country which he made on foot in 1854. Borrow was a great storyteller and is, I think, an influence on Morris's narrative style, especially in *The Icelandic Journals*, as we might expect.

He is also a primary source for the idea of England and Englishness, which became so strong during the later nineteenth century.

On I went in my journey, traversing England from west to east — ascending and descending hills — crossing rivers by bridge and ferry — and passing over extensive plains. What a beautiful country is England! People run abroad to see beautiful countries, and leave their own behind unknown, unnoticed — their own the most beautiful! And then, again, what a country for adventures! especially to those who travel on foot, or on horseback.<sup>3</sup>

In case you think this is overdoing it, in the very next paragraph he confronts us with a rat-catcher,

... who communicated to me the secrets of his trade, saying, amongst other things, 'When you see the rats pouring out of their holes, and running up my hands and arms, it's not after me they comes, but after the oils I carries about me they comes.'<sup>4</sup>

It is this combination of unusual opinions together with the extraordinary characters he encountered which led to the popularity of his stories.

In this famous description of England in 'The Lesser Arts' you can see Borrow's simple idea of the unsung virtues of the country being transmuted into a new form:

... but when we can get beyond that smoky world [ i.e. London], there, out in the country we may still see the works of our fathers yet alive amidst the very nature they were wrought into, and of which they are so completely a part: for there indeed if anywhere, in the English country, in the days when people cared about such things, was there a full sympathy between the works of man and the land they were made for: — the land is a little land; too much shut up within the narrow seas, as it seems, to have much space for swelling into hugeness: there are no great wastes overwhelming in their dreariness, no great solitudes of forests, no terrible untrodden mountain-walls: all is measured, mingled, varied, gliding easily one thing into another.... it is neither prison nor palace but a decent home.<sup>5</sup>

The argument is continued in the next paragraph in a rather surprising manner, seeming to demolish everything that people believed at that time in their patriotic pride:

... when we think what a small part of the world's history, past, present, and to come, is this land we live in, and how much smaller still in the history of the arts, and yet how our forefathers clung to it, and with what care and pains they adorned it, this unromantic, uneventful-looking land of England, surely by this too our hearts may be touched, and our hope quickened.<sup>6</sup>

It is an anti-imperialistic statement, amazingly so for 1878, and of course, as in Borrow's version of England, note that that the remainder of the British Isles, already open to Romantic tourism, is totally excluded.

During the later nineteenth century George Borrow's influence grew and grew, and in the period from 1900 to 1914 he was still considered a major writer. You would be asked at parties, 'Are you a Borrovian?' I want to add here that the cult of Borrow led to walking tours and the love of the open air. Hilaire Belloc said that he would use no wheeled vehicle when he set out on the path to Rome. In E.M. Forster's *Howards End*, Leonard Bast walks through the night in order to escape London and reach the open country. And consider how all this is sent up in *The Wind in the Willows*, when Mr Toad shows his enthusiasm for the gypsy caravan:

There's real life for you, embodied in that little cart. The open road, the dusty highway, the heath, the common, the hedgerows, the rolling downs!<sup>7</sup>

Finally, it gives us some insight into the career of Edward Thomas, who imitated Borrow in his lonely walks.

Edward Thomas wrote a study of George Borrow, and the books in which he described his own walking tours are based on Borrow's model. They are similarly interspersed with accounts of the people he met. Thomas can reach the sublime, and he adapted passages from his prose works into the drafts of his poems. For a well-known example consider how 'Rain' is indebted to the description of the 'rain' in *The Ickniel Way*.<sup>8</sup>

When I first began to read poetry for myself, as opposed to school tasks, I read Edward Thomas; I was immersed in the First World War poets, and thought his style was very anti-romantic compared to the others. At about the same time I began to read Morris and started with the prologue to *The Earthly Paradise*, i.e. 'The Wanderers' in the G.D.H. Cole selection. I remember comparing this with Edward Thomas, and thinking, since I knew about Tennyson's ornate descriptions, that Morris was writing in a very straightforward way, and constantly using speech rhythms, which were appropriate as the characters in the story were speaking to each other:

... could I see once more  
The grey-roofed sea-port sloping towards the shore

Or note the brown boats standing in from sea,  
Or the great dromond swinging from the quay...<sup>9</sup>

How far Morris himself can be described as a ‘modernist’ is doubtful, but we live in a time when historical periods are being redrawn. Will it do to continue to think of him as a ‘Victorian medievalist’? He was opposed to ‘Victorian’ values, and ‘medievalist’ strikes the wrong note; for all his love of history, his work seems to be directed at the future. It is no wonder that writers of the Modern period (*ca* 1914–1930) were highly conscious of his work. And so we come back to Edward Thomas.

The facts about Thomas’s acquaintance with Morris are well known, but I wish to make a brief recapitulation here. In his autobiography Edward Thomas explains how his father tried to improve his rather dozy son, and introduced him to William Morris.

My father used to talk to me of books and take me to lectures. At Kelmscott House I heard Grant Allen recommending state endowment of literary genius: I saw William Morris, and was pleased and awed.<sup>10</sup>

It is worth pursuing this connection as far as possible, hoping that in the end it may help us with Thomas’s ideas. When Thomas, still in his twenties, became one of the senior literary critics, he reviewed successive volumes of Morris’s *Collected Works* in *The Bookman*. These reviews show us that ‘bookmen’ had no need to be informed about the actual works by Morris, with which they are assumed to be familiar. Instead Thomas told them about the extra materials which May Morris had introduced; mainly letters but also lectures which were previously unpublished. He knew Morris’s poetry in great detail and told his friend Gordon Bottomley what to read; he explained that he had grown out of some of Morris’s poems. But while discussing W.H. Hudson he said:

Except William Morris there is no other man whom I would sometimes like to have been, no other writing man. William Morris’s *Message of the March Wind* ... reminds me of Hudson, and isn’t it a noble piece of humanity?<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand he was quite prepared to challenge the authority of Morris. In discussing his own book on Oxford he says:

Morris must have had a very eclectic eyesight if he saw a medieval city almost entire, when he came up. For Worcester, Pembroke, Jesus, Christ Church, the Radcliffe Camera, All Saints Church, & many other places were 16th, 17th or 18th century buildings almost unmingled.<sup>12</sup>

This is also the case in the reviews where, for example, he slates *Sigurd the Vol-sung* for driving any reader to sleep by the end of the first paragraph. Though he

included Morris's work in his anthologies, he made some unexpected remarks about *News from Nowhere* in *A Literary Pilgrim in England*, saying that the book 'is saved, if at all, by what comes straight from Morris's experience of the Thames and Thames side houses at Kelmscott and Hammersmith'.<sup>13</sup> In *The South Country* he compares a number of major English poets, concluding:

Under those oaks in May I could wish to see these men walking together, to see their gestures and brave ways. It is the poet there who all but creates them for me. But only one can I fairly see because I have seen him alive and speaking ... he and Chaucer and Jonson and Byron have obviously much plain humanity in their composition. They have a brawn and friendliness not necessarily connected with poetry. We have no ceremony – as we do with some other poets – with Morris...<sup>14</sup>

He goes on to quote from 'The Message of the March Wind' and 'Thunder in the Garden', and contrasts Morris with ethereal poets such as Shelley.

I suppose this will not do as an example of criticism, but only as a way of placing Morris. The real problem in comparing Morris and Thomas as poets is the question of style. Consider how 'The Message of the March Wind', which describes a walk in the countryside, begins:

Fair now is the springtide, now earth lies beholding  
With the eyes of a lover the face of the sun;  
Long lasteth the daylight, and hope is unfolding  
The green-growing acres with increase begun.<sup>15</sup>

You can see how the first two lines are plainly written, but the second two have got themselves twisted round in order to match the rhyme and rhythm; you could say that 'increase begun' is unnecessary. And what to do about 'lasteth'?

Thomas did away with nineteenth century rhetoric. T.S. Eliot once described the qualities of modern verse as follows:

... the colloquial style, the sound of the conversational voice, the range of mood and emotion which requires a more homely diction for its expression...<sup>16</sup>

In all these qualities Thomas was a pioneer, and this may be considered as a good description of the surface texture of his poems. What is going on beneath the surface is another matter. As Thomas himself said in an article on 'War Poetry':

I need hardly say that by becoming ripe for poetry the poet's thoughts may recede far from their original resemblance to all the world's, and may seem to have little to do with daily events.<sup>17</sup>

This strange utterance calls for comment. At this time Thomas was compiling an anthology to be called *This England: An Anthology from her Writers*, in which he

wished to use the main English poets (including Morris), ‘as a riposte to propagandist anthologies’.<sup>18</sup> It helps to explain why many people found Thomas’s own poetry, written during the Great War, seemingly devoid of any reference to it. Indeed, I was myself amazed to read just recently that ‘Adlestrop’ is now being taught as a poem of the First World War. Yet why not?

In fact there is a great deal of mystery about the poems of Edward Thomas, so often promoted as models of straight talking and simplicity. He was originally presented as a Georgian poet, and appeared under that banner in anthologies aimed at school children. I remember, when I was quite small, reading these lines, dedicated, if that is the right expression, to one of his children:

If I should ever by chance grow rich  
I’ll buy Codham, Cockriden and Childerditch,  
Roses, Pyrgo, and Lapwater,  
And let them all to my elder daughter.<sup>19</sup>

I suppose I thought it was a whimsical, even comical little poem, which fascinated me because I lived in South Essex and knew, not perhaps these names, but plenty like them. During the late 1990s, by a strange trick of fate (I was waiting by a bus-stop, and was asked to get on a coach to help on a tour of the battlefields of the Great War), I found myself at Edward Thomas’s grave. This is situated in a ‘sacred grove’ beside the allotments in Agny, a village outside Arras. What do you do in such places? You read poems while the birds swoop and sing. One of the group, a serious Thomas scholar, read this text as her choice, and I realised how it has now deepened into a last will and testament, written by a soldier in 1916, the First World War hidden behind and yet looming over this poem as perhaps it does over all his verse.

The second part of the poem contains a riddling request, suitable for a child used to fairytales:

The rent I shall ask of her will be only  
Each year’s first violets, white and lonely,  
The first primroses and orchises –  
She must find them before I do, that is.  
But if she finds a blossom on furze  
Without rent they shall all for ever be hers ...<sup>20</sup>

It leads us, like the key to the back door, out into the natural world: this will always stay true to us and deliver a genuine bequest of the earliest spring flowers. The furze is a trick because it is always in flower. The rural place-names also contain a legacy of Englishness.

This mysterious side of Thomas is linked into walking the roads, and treasuring their familiar surroundings. In ‘I never saw that land before’ the poet describes

how he remembers a landscape; though seen only once it gave him an experience which is, he tells us, impossible to understand. What began as a simple poem ends with these stanzas:

I neither expected anything  
 Nor yet remembered: but some goal  
 I touched then; and if I could sing  
 What would not even whisper my soul  
 As I went on my journeying,

I should use, as the trees and birds did,  
 A language not to be betrayed;  
 And what was hid should still be hid  
 Excepting from those like me made  
 Who answer when such whispers bid.<sup>21</sup>

What exactly is to be hid? One interpretation is that this refers to the deeper world of the imagination, which is 'not to be betrayed'. But I like to think that it is the roads themselves: consider how he had to trace the 'old roads' when planning his journey along the course of the Icknield Way:

Even when deserted, these old roads are kept in memory by many signs. The grass refuses to grow over the still stream of turf in the same way as at either side of it. A line of thorn trees follows their course, or the hedge or fence or wall dividing two fields. They survive commonly and conspicuously as boundaries between fields, between estates, parishes, hundreds, and counties. It is one of the adventurous pleasures of a good map thus to trace the possible course of a known old road or to discover one that was lost.<sup>22</sup>

The irony is that when he joined the Army Thomas was employed as an instructor in map reading. The Essex villages named by him in the poem to his elder daughter were in the area of his camp at Hare Hall, Romford. But for Thomas time moved inexorably forward, and the roads changed their aspect:

Now all roads lead to France  
 And heavy is the tread  
 Of the living; but the dead  
 Returning lightly dance...<sup>23</sup>

In France he would need the same map-reading skills in his new post as an artillery officer, but he was killed in the Battle of Arras in April 1917. It is not clear what future he saw for the rural England he tried to immortalise, while London continued to grow; as Edna Longley says: 'the war only intensified the elegiac tilt of Thomas's eco-history'.<sup>24</sup> What is amazing now is the present revival of interest

in his work.<sup>25</sup>

Of course Morris saw beyond this, and, in a semi-jocular tone, suggested that in his visionary future even London would be penetrated by green roads.

Quoth Dick: ‘... This part we are just coming to is called Kensington Gardens; though why “gardens” I don’t know’.

I rather longed to say, ‘Well, *I* know’; but there were so many things about me which I did *not* know, in spite of his assumptions, that I thought it better to hold my tongue.

The road plunged at once into a beautiful wood spreading out on either side, but obviously much further on the north side, where even the oaks and sweet chestnuts were of a good growth; while the quicker-growing trees (amongst which I thought the planes and sycamores too numerous) were very big and fine grown.

It was exceedingly pleasant in the dappled shadow, for the day was growing as hot as need be, and the coolness and shade soothed my excited mind into a condition of dreamy pleasure, so that I felt I should like to go on for ever through that balmy freshness. My companion seemed to share in my feelings, and let the horse go slower and slower as he sat inhaling the green forest scents, chief amongst which was the smell of the trodden bracken near the way-side.<sup>26</sup>

To sum up, though the links are often tenuous, we can see the positive view of the green roads that these writers shared, and as Edward Thomas said in ‘Roads’, the very act of walking them brings that vision to life:

The hill road wet with rain  
In the sun would not gleam  
Like a winding stream  
If we trod it not again.<sup>27</sup>

The real green roads of England lead from the past, where they had a clear function, as Patrick O’Sullivan has recently suggested:

the old, hidden roads — drove roads which run direct across the hills between villages which no-one uses now, and in the lowlands direct pathways and roads which people once used to get to church, but which fell into disuse.<sup>28</sup>

Unlike modern motorways they were incapable of eating up and destroying the landscape. Indeed, the green roads seem always to have been part of it, like deer tracks or sheep walks. They lead forward to a future where, in a rejuvenated world, the older forms of transport may have to be revived, and, dare I say, be a pleasure to be enjoyed. In this spirit I shall continue my walk along the Roman road.



## NOTES

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18. Longley, p. 214.
19. Longley, p. 115. 'If I should ever by chance grow rich', lines 1–4.
20. *Idem* lines 5–10.
21. Longley, p. 120. 'I never saw that land before', lines 16–25.
22. *The Icknield Way*, p. 27.
23. Longley, pp. 106–8. 'Roads', lines 53–6.
24. Longley, p. 23.
25. There are many reprinted volumes of his work; see, in particular, the new Oxford editions, e.g. Guy Cuthbertson, ed, *Edward Thomas: Prose Writings*:

*a Selected Edition*, Volume 1: Autobiographies, London: Oxford University Press, 2011, 400 pp. Also Matthew Hollis, *Now All Roads Lead to France: The Last Years of Edward Thomas*, London: Faber & Faber, 2011, 389 pp.

26. Cole, pp. 25–6. (i.e. *News from Nowhere*, Chapter V).

27. Longley, pp. 106–8. ‘Roads’, lines 13–16.

28. Part of an e-mail from Patrick O’Sullivan to the writer, 1 May 2012.

Anybody interested in walking the Roman road I refer to should consult the illustrated booklet: *Fleam Dyke & Roman Road Walk: A circular walk linking two of Cambridgeshire’s ancient sites*, published by the Friends of the Roman Road and Fleam Dyke in association with the Ramblers’ Association and Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridge, 2009. ISBN 978-1-904452-32-4; recommended retail price £2.50. The full walk is twenty five miles long but you only need to do part of it. The booklet contains good route maps, and copious illustrations of flora and fauna. There are lists of places to eat and accommodation.

# Charles Winston and the development of Conservative Restoration

*Jim Cheshire*

The contribution of William Morris to the development of architectural conservation has long been acknowledged. The formation of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) in 1877 is often seen as a landmark: a challenge to the overzealous restorations of the mid-Victorian period, and the beginning of an attitude towards conservation which we might recognise today. Although formation of the SPAB was a crucial moment in the development of conservation practice, the idea that Morris initiated this debate is simplistic, as readily acknowledged by historians of the subject.

Chris Miele provides a detailed account of Morris's experience of mid-Victorian restorations.<sup>1</sup> He may well have been influenced by his early tutor, the Rev. Frederick Barlow Guy, who was a member of the Oxford Architectural Society, an important organisation for the development of new attitudes toward restoration. Morris undoubtedly also owes a debt to John Ruskin's work, especially as portrayed in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. Two early pieces of his own fiction: 'The Story of an Unknown Church' and 'In the Shadow of Amiens', illustrate his engagement with Ruskin's ideas.<sup>2</sup> According to Miele, both Ruskin and Morris shared the idea that the spirit of the original building is acquired through its human use and habitation; restoration can never reclaim this spirit and often destroys it. This is what lay behind Ruskin's comments in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* that restoration 'means the most total destruction which a building can suffer: a destruction out of which no remnants can be gathered: a destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed'.<sup>3</sup>

Miele raises an interesting point regarding Morris's lack of engagement with conservation between about 1857 and the formation of the SPAB twenty years later. He suggests that such disengagement may have been influenced by com-

mercial pressures: from the early 1860s Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. was heavily reliant on revenue from stained glass, much of which was being placed in medieval buildings. And so, to some extent, his firm was reliant on the mid-Victorian boom in church restoration. The same year that the SPAB was formed, Morris sent around a circular saying that Morris & Co. would no longer supply stained glass for ancient buildings, but by this stage, other parts of the business were proving sufficiently lucrative for this stance to be taken.<sup>4</sup>

In order to understand the significance of the SPAB, and the factors which influenced Morris, it is important to trace the genesis of attitudes towards restoration practice during the mid-Victorian period. This article will argue that just such a debate was being conducted, in relation to the restoration of stained glass, from the middle 1840s, and will suggest that within this specialist discipline, quite an enlightened attitude towards restoration can be traced long before Morris became an influence. While it is possible that this activity was influenced by Ruskin's early writing, it began before the publication of *The Seven Lamps*, which is often cited as the key text in forming the critique of Victorian restoration practice.

In addition to the organisations described by Miele, it can be shown that the Archaeological Institute became an important centre for the encouragement of 'conservative restoration'. This approach might be described as an attempt to preserve the true nature of the original object: retention of original material was the priority, even if this compromised the appearance of the object after the restoration was complete. This article will also speculate on the historical factors which determine the form of a restoration. There is inevitably a gap between conservation theory and conservation practice: the way in which a building or window is actually treated is always influenced to some extent by practical difficulties and the power structures surrounding a restoration project.

Charles Winston's reputation as an authority on stained glass was based on his seminal book *An Inquiry into the Difference of Style Observable in Ancient Glass Paintings*, first published in 1847.<sup>5</sup> Between the middle 1840s and his death in 1864, Winston became the best known historian of and commentator on stained glass in Victorian Britain, a status confirmed by his involvement as 'associated juror' at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Most historians see Winston's main contribution as the development of 'antique' glass, a superior type of base material for glass painters, although recent research has shown that he was one of several people attempting to procure or manufacture better 'pot metal' during the 1850s.<sup>6</sup> In addition, Winston exerted a major influence on the debates about stained glass design during the 1850s, and a significant influence on contemporary windows installed at Lincoln and Glasgow Cathedrals.<sup>7</sup>

This article will argue that a third major facet of Winston's influence needs to be acknowledged: the implementation of a conservative restoration programme

for some of England's most important medieval windows. His actions can be seen both as valuable in the preservation of medieval fabric, and influential for furthering the acceptance of a conservative restoration ethic beyond stained glass.

## I. CHARLES WINSTON AND VICTORIAN RESTORATION

Winston's interest in the restoration of stained glass is aptly demonstrated by his first publication on the subject: more than half was concerned with the preservation of medieval windows.<sup>8</sup> He recommended what might now be described as 'preventative conservation' through the maintenance of lead work, and the installation of external wire guards, and cautions against 'cleaning' medieval glass too vigorously, before turning to the issue of how to improve the work of contemporary glass painters. His attitude was dominated by the preservation of medieval fabric, and, where necessary, adding glass which allowed the appreciation of this material:

And here we condemn the practice of what is called *restoring* an ancient glass painting, by supplying its defects with modern painted glass. It may be allowable, in some cases, to fill the place of what must have been plain colour with a corresponding plain piece of coloured glass; or even perhaps to restore a portion of the ornament, or other matter, where sufficient authority exists for the restoration; but in all other cases it is safest to make up the deficiency with a piece of plain white glass, slightly dulled, or smeared over, so as to subdue its brilliancy. It should never be forgotten, that the value of an ancient authority depends upon its *originality*. The moment that it is tampered with, its authenticity is impaired.<sup>9</sup>

In this early publication, Winston explicitly positioned himself against what has been described as 'stylistic' restoration. This idea emerged in France during the early 1840s, and its best known practitioner was Violet Le Duc, who believed that 'the value of a monument was in its form or style; restoration should therefore be concerned with the recovery of that form. This was made possible by studying the history of art, the classification of buildings by schools and epochs, and thorough analogical-comparative analysis'.<sup>10</sup> Apologists for this kind of restoration believed that ancient buildings could be improved or perfected, but this is the approach contested by Winston. Finally, it is important to notice that Winston championed those who funded appropriate restorations of medieval stained glass. He mentions three individuals and contrasts their investment with those who commission contemporary windows:

Such spirited individuals as Colonel Kennett, and the Hon. Mrs Farmer, and other true preservers of ancient glass, have been greater benefactors to the art itself, and are even more deserving of our praise, than those, who with perhaps more ostentation, and with hardly an increased outlay, erect modern painted windows as monuments to their own liberality.<sup>11</sup>

The tension between preservation of medieval stained glass and commissioning new windows points toward the conflict which Morris faced some years later. Winston's approach was double-edged: as well as being a historian he sought to influence the practice of restoring medieval stained glass. He understood that the best way to effect change was to acquire credibility with those who funded restorations, while simultaneously attacking the credibility of other interest groups who sought to gain the same influence.

## II. THE LADY CHAPEL OF BRISTOL CATHEDRAL

Winston's advice about specific projects varied according to the context of the restoration. As modern conservators know only too well, it is often quite difficult to marry theoretical demands with conservation practice, and it would seem that during the later 1840s Winston encountered some difficulty in following his own principles, when he advised Joseph Bell during the restoration of the stained glass in the Lady Chapel of Bristol Cathedral. Sarah Brown has argued that, considering the scant remains of the medieval scheme when he began his work in 1847, modern criticism of Bell's restoration is harsh.<sup>12</sup> Despite broadly approving of the restoration, she points out that several aspects of this project were questionable: many pieces of glass were moved from their original positions, and the disparities caused by moving the glass were disguised. This process has complicated understanding of the medieval fabric; one of the reasons Winston cited in *An Inquiry* for leaving medieval glass *in situ*.

Bell corresponded with Winston in some detail about this commission, and the work on two further Lady Chapel windows. He appealed to Winston on several occasions, mainly asking for his opinion on what the original appearance of the stained glass might have been. Winston willingly complied, happily speculating in a letter of August 1847 as to the content and original arrangement of the window. He was quite frank about the somewhat fragile evidence that underlay his conclusions:

I have now given you what I conjecture to have been the original arrangement of the window, founded on what Mr Carter has informed me, – on the glass you

have sent, – and on the analogy of ancient precedents. But after all it is but a conjecture, and may turn out to be utterly wrong. The window thus restored (if no better plan can be devised) will at all events be intelligible.<sup>13</sup>

This statement would seem to contradict the position of Winston's first article, and his pronouncements on the subject in *An Inquiry*. Winston was fully aware that Bell was planning to make substantial sections of new glass and that the new design would rely on his advice on the configuration of the original window. His conclusion to the letter, however, distances him from this kind of stylistic restoration:

I think I have said all I can say on the subject of this restoration. Of course I can only give you an opinion (such as it is) on the probable design of the original window. I can have nothing to say to any modifications of this design to suit modern tastes or feelings. On this point I am dumb. I regard old glass as a specimen of ancient art, simply without any of the other feelings, – and as such always wish to see the original part preserved most carefully.<sup>14</sup>

Here Winston outlines an intermediate position. As long as the medieval glass is retained, modern work which contextualises the old glass is acceptable, so long as it does not interfere with the ancient fabric.

Winston's allusion to 'modern tastes or feelings' is an oblique reference to the patron's power to steer the glass painter away from his vision of the ways in which stained glass might be restored. More specifically, after a scathing review of *An Inquiry* in the *Ecclesiologist*, Winston became hostile towards the agenda of the Cambridge Camden Society, and astutely showed how their polemical writings regarding the revival of the Gothic style could be seen as encouraging destruction of medieval stained glass.<sup>15</sup> In fact it is possible that Winston's writing was predicated by opposition to ecclesiology: controversies over restorations sanctioned by ecclesiologists were current during the early 1840s, giving individuals such as Winston a target for the criticism of stylistic restoration.<sup>16</sup>

Winston anchored his own historical activities in the Archaeological Institute (he was a founder member and elected to the committee in 1845), and presented his attitudes as those of an objective archaeologist uninfluenced by ideological agendas. This organisation also provided a base for other antiquarians who had come into conflict with ecclesiology, such as Winston's friend the Rev. J. L. Petit, who had publicly opposed George Gilbert Scott over the restoration of St Mary Stafford.<sup>17</sup>

### III. THE RESTORATION OF THE NORTH ROSE WINDOW OF LINCOLN CATHEDRAL

The restoration of the north rose window of the great transept of Lincoln Cathedral was one of the most significant stained glass restorations of the mid-Victorian period. (Figure 1) This ambitious undertaking generated far less commentary than the contemporaneous installation of a whole series of new windows, but is arguably a landmark in conservative restoration practice. The ‘Deans Eye’, as it is commonly known, was restored in 1855 by the well known firm Ward & Hughes, under the close supervision of Charles Winston.

Winston had become involved with the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln Cathedral during the late 1840s, when they were seeking advice about the contemporary glazing scheme. In 1847 the committee of the Archaeological Institute were invited to hold their annual meeting in Lincoln, and after the meeting a proposal was made to replace William Peckitt’s east window of 1762.<sup>18</sup> Winston advised the Dean and Chapter on how to approach the commission, and probably recommended Ward & Hughes as the best firm to carry out the job. For some time Winston had championed Thomas Ward and his partners J. H. Nixon and Henry Hughes. Ward began to work with Nixon’s former pupil Henry Hughes during the early 1850s, and in 1853 Winston went as far as designing a window made by the pair at Bushbury in Wolverhampton. The firm was probably awarded the commission for the Lincoln east window at about this time. The new window was unveiled in September 1855 and almost immediately Ward & Hughes began work on restoring the north rose: the *Lincolnshire Chronicle* of 9 November 1855 reported that ‘The north window of the great transept, which is being restored, will shortly be reset’ although a slightly conflicting account suggested the work was about to be commenced in October 1855.<sup>19</sup>

Following a visit on 28 June 1848, Winston described the stained glass in the north rose as ‘one of the most splendid, and in its present state, one of the most perfect, works of the thirteenth century’.<sup>20</sup> He made extensive notes on the glass during his visit, and in 1850 corresponded with E.J. Willson about the glass. He probably met Willson during the Archaeological Institute visit of 1848, as both men delivered papers. Willson has been characterised as someone who ‘deprecated’ the ‘wholesale spirit of restoration’ prevalent during the early Victorian period, an attitude closely aligned to Winston’s thinking at the time.<sup>21</sup> Winston’s conclusions after his visits of 1848 were condensed into a lecture during the Archaeological Institute meeting, and having examined the glass in much greater detail during the restoration of 1855, he revised some of his conclusions and published another account in the *Archaeological Journal*. The introduction to this account contains a jubilant endorsement of conservative restoration:



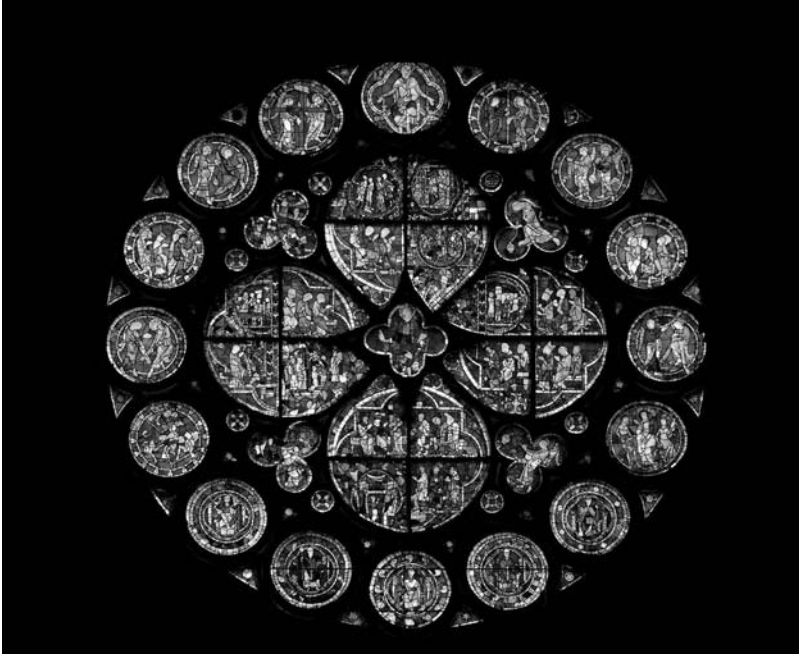


Figure 1 North rose window of Lincoln Cathedral, mostly 1220–1235, restored by Ward and Hughes, 1855. Copyright Gordon Plumb; reproduced by permission.

There is no task more agreeable to the archaeologist than that of recording the preservation of an interesting relic of ancient art. The painted glass in the North Rose of Lincoln Cathedral, which was observed to be in an insecure state during the Institute's visit to Lincoln in 1848, was, in the course of the year before last, releaded, and the stonework in which it is placed reset, at the expense of the Dean and Chapter. It is impossible to speak too highly of the substantial character of the repair; and as no 'restoration' of the glass was attempted, what remains of the original glazing is likely to continue for many generations a trustworthy witness to the state of the arts of the time of its execution.<sup>22</sup>

Winston returns to the idea of restoration as the preservation of archaeological evidence: the use of scare quotes for the word 'restoration' clearly shows his contempt for the stylistic restorations. The fact that he was pleased with the result is also a consequence of the degree of control which he exerted over the commis-

sion. By the middle 1850s, Winston had acquired the complete trust of the Dean and Chapter. In June 1853 he was handed a budget of £800 in order to commission a series of eight new windows to commemorate the recently deceased Bishop Kaye: this underlines the extent to which the cathedral authorities were willing to cede control to Winston over matters pertaining to stained glass.<sup>23</sup>

Examination of the material evidence allows a good assessment of what Ward & Hughes actually did during the restoration of 1855, although several subsequent restorations need to be acknowledged. First, the north rose was taken out and stored underground during the Second World War and then worked on by the cathedral glazier ‘Mr. Strapps’ for seventeen months before it was reinstalled in 1948. Second, the window was conserved between 1989 and 2005, when threats to the structural integrity of the north transept of the cathedral jeopardised the entire window.<sup>24</sup> During the most recent restoration (1989–2005), in line with modern practice, the state of the window before work began was exhaustively recorded. High quality photographs were taken of the glass both *in situ* and in the conservation studio, which allow us to establish what work was carried out in 1855 and in 1946–8.

A comprehensive assessment of the 1855 restoration of the Lincoln north rose is beyond the scope of this article, but an examination of the treatment of two panels is sufficient to assess the nature of the decisions taken during the Victorian restoration. Figure 2 shows a recent photograph of a medallion of ‘Two Angels Holding Instruments of the Passion’ from the north rose.<sup>25</sup> The angels hold a green cross with the words ‘IHC NAZARENUS’ above it, enclosed by a border of white ‘stiff leaf’ foliage upon a red ground. A further white border surrounds this scene. There is clearly much damage to the glass. Enamel paint has been lost from the interior of the glass, making the face painting very faint or invisible. Paint loss is also evident from the clothing of the angels: some sections possess quite clearly demarcated drapery, while others have lost most of this detail. Breaks in the glass are marked by the black lines caused by ‘repair leads’.

Individual pieces of glass in a window of this type were joined during the production process by being cemented into strips of lead with an ‘H’ section. Additional leads were added during subsequent repairs in order to join sections of glass which had cracked or shattered. For example, the section of the left hand horizontal arm of the cross would originally have contained a lead line around its perimeter, but two repair leads are evident in front of the shoulder of the left hand angel: one stretching diagonally up from left to right across the width of the green glass, and a smaller one branching upwards from this diagonal to the upper edge of the cross.

Figure 3 illustrates an image of the panel before the 1989–2005 restoration. The first thing which might strike the viewer is the intricacy of the repair leads, particularly the complex network of leading in the garment of the right hand



Figure 2. Detail of roundel 'H16' of the north rose of Lincoln Cathedral, 1220–35, restored by Ward and Hughes, 1855. Copyright Gordon Plumb; reproduced by permission.

angel, just below the horizontal member of the cross. This lead work tells us a great deal about what Ward & Hughes did to the window. The density of the repair leads show that they made strenuous efforts to preserve the original glass (Figure 4) Faced with a section which largely comprised badly shattered medieval glass, the easiest option for Ward & Hughes would have been to replace the medieval glass with a Victorian copy. The process would have necessitated colour matching, cutting, painting and firing the insertions, but the labour involved would have been far less than the repair leading they undertook. Given the height of the window from the floor of the cathedral, most viewers would not have been able to tell the difference and so complaints from the Dean and Chapter would



Figure 3. Detail of roundel 'H16' of the north rose of Lincoln Cathedral, before the 1989–2005 restoration. Crown copyright. Reproduce by permission of English Heritage.

have been unlikely. More than fifty minute repair leads have been used on this small section of glass in an effort to retain the medieval fabric, a clear indication that Winston's principles, in this instance, were being followed. Another option open to Ward & Hughes was that of repainting and refiring the glass. Again they seem to have resisted completely: the faces of the angels have clearly lost most of their paint, but there is no evidence of any attempt to restore this loss, or to re-fire the glass.

The documentation which accompanies the 1989–2005 restoration supports the thesis that the interventions made by Ward & Hughes were very restrained.



Figure 4. Detail of the right hand angel of roundel 'H16' of the north rose of Lincoln Cathedral, before the 1989–2005 restoration. Copyright Lincoln Cathedral; reproduced by permission.

The conservation team made diagrams which record the origin and state of every piece of glass in every panel of the window. Their 'Condition Diagram 3, Glass Replacements' indicates that minimal additions of Victorian glass were made to this panel.<sup>26</sup> A series of insertions were detected on the outer white border, however: perhaps 60 % of the glass in this outer section is Victorian. The reason is that removing such a panel from the decayed stonework means that much of the outer border of the glass would necessarily be broken. Of the glass within this outer border, the conservation team detected only one tiny section of Victorian glass: a tiny triangle of pale purple glass in the garment of the right hand angel. Far more insertions were detected from the eighteenth and the twentieth centuries.

The central panel of the north rose provides another interesting example (Figure 5). In this case, a good description of the panel before the Ward & Hughes restoration survives in a letter from E.J. Willson to Winston, a response to a request from the latter.<sup>27</sup> Willson began his letter: 'This being a fine, bright, morning, I thought it a favourable time for examining the central figure in the northern round window of our cathedral. I have been upon a ladder, and tried to make out the particulars you want to know'. He continued to describe the poor condition of the window and its vulnerability: 'the glazing has been so bent by the force of violent winds, inwards & outwards; and so much of the original glass is gone, & the places supplied by incoherent fragments, that the outlines of the figure can only be partially discovered'. The description which follows almost exactly coincides with what remains today: the upper half of a seated figure of Christ is relatively intact but 'the feet and all the lower half of the figure are totally destroyed'.

In a 'stylistic' restoration, the lower half of this figure, the focal point of the entire scheme, would have been reconstructed in order to provide visual coherence, but interventions of this nature were resisted. A far more conspicuous intervention of this type was made in 1877 by Clayton & Bell, when they reconstructed the absent central figure of Christ in the famous Seven Sacraments window at St Michael, Doddiscombsleigh, Devon.<sup>28</sup> The contrast between this quite drastic insertion and the restraint of the restoration of the Lincoln north rose over twenty years earlier is telling, and underlines the progressive nature of Winston's restoration programme.

One final factor suggests the sensitivity of the Victorian restoration. The lead used by Ward & Hughes was noticeably narrow. In *An Inquiry*, Winston suggested that medieval glass was normally constructed with lead strips no wider than 3/16 of an inch (ca 4.76 mm), and that the wider leads used by modern glass painters were distracting from the painting in the window.<sup>29</sup> This approach seems to have been carried over into the restoration of the Lincoln north rose, where the Victorian lead work was substantially more delicate than that used in earlier, or in mid-twentieth-century repairs.



Figure 5 Detail of the central figure of Christ in the north rose of Lincoln Cathedral, 1220–35, restored by Ward and Hughes, 1855. Copyright Gordon Plumb; reproduced by permission.

#### IV. NORTH MORETON AND GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL

Just months after the Lincoln restoration was completed Winston canvassed members of the Archaeological Institute for funds for the restoration of the early fourteenth-century stained glass at North Moreton, Berks. This restoration was again executed by Ward & Hughes, and has attracted considerable praise from recent historians for its minimal intervention and sensitive use of toned-down inserts in order to preserve the integrity of the original appearance of the window.<sup>30</sup> Winston reported to the Archaeological Institute, stressing the relatively small cost of the restoration, which he attributed to:

the strictness with which the promise given to the subscribers, that nothing beyond repair should be attempted, has been adhered to. The glass has simply been releaded, and, where a piece of the original white or coloured glass has been lost, a corresponding piece of white or coloured glass has been inserted, simply dulled over for the purpose of toning it down somewhat into harmony with the ancient material. By this means the glazing has been rendered weather-tight, with the least possible disturbance of the original design.<sup>31</sup>

According to Winston, minimal intervention was not just good for preserving ancient fabric, it was also cheap. And it is interesting to note that he managed to gain financial control of the project: of the £34 required nearly £23 was raised by Winston from members of the Archaeological Institute, including £5 5s which he donated himself. Winston's close involvement with the project is clear: it was carried out by his favoured firm, and he executed five drawings of the panels, presumably when he was able to inspect them in detail during the restoration work. After the project he again reported to the Archaeological Institute with the results and took the opportunity once more to criticise overzealous restorations:

... we may apprehend the irreparable damage likely to be done to a painted window by 'restoration', which, however well intentioned, might be more correctly termed wanton destruction, the more extensive and deplorable in its effect in proportion to the wealth of its promoters.<sup>32</sup>

By the time the North Moreton restoration had been completed, Winston and the Archaeological Institute had intervened in another large scale stained glass restoration. The poor condition of the great east window of Gloucester Cathedral had been noticed as early as 1855, and by 1859 'the Chapter was under considerable pressure to remove the glass and replace it with a new window'.<sup>33</sup> William Wailes of Newcastle, and John Hardman & Co. had been approached for opinions, and Joseph Bell also offered advice on the restoration. Wailes proposed making a new window, and Wailes and Bell also advised on restoration options, both suggesting that substantial replacement of the medieval glass was necessary.<sup>34</sup> The atmosphere changed during the summer of 1860, however, when the Archaeological Institute held its Summer Congress at Gloucester. In responding to the welcome from the civic and ecclesiastical authorities, the President, James Talbot, fourth Baron Talbot of Malahide, demonstrated that the idea of conservative restoration was now firmly accepted by the Institute:

From all that Lord Talbot had seen the work of restoration appeared here [Gloucester Cathedral] to be done judiciously. There was the greatest necessity for care in what were called "restorations," many of which he feared were done so recklessly as to destroy all evidence of ancient art, and to mingle the modern in



such as manner that the building became little more than a modern fabric.<sup>35</sup>

‘Judiciously’ is a word Winston used when referring to conservative restorations, and although this may be coincidence, Lord Talbot’s comments suggest that Winston’s attitude towards restoration had influenced the broader policies of the Institute.<sup>36</sup> In 1861 Winston was able to claim:

Only last year the Institute was happily enabled, at least in part, to frustrate a scheme for the “restoration” of the principal window of one of our finest cathedrals, in a manner actually at variance with the original design, as plainly indicated by its existing remains.<sup>37</sup>

The window was restored in 1861–2 by Ward & Hughes, and Winston later described the project in terms which showed that he considered it a victory for conservative restoration:

And upon its appearing, from a careful examination of the glazing in its then untouched state, that a restoration of the missing parts of the existing design would necessarily be for the most part conjectural, and that it would at all events involve the introduction of so much new glass as must of necessity have completely changed the general aspect of the window, it was wisely determined by the Dean and Chapter, at the earnest recommendation of several members of the Institute, to preserve the wreck that remained by a mere re-leading of the glass and to attempt nothing in the way of restoration, beyond supplying such insignificant parts of the coloured grounds as were wanting with modern glass of corresponding hue. So rigidly has this determination been adhered to, that even the figure at the top of the window ... which is evidently not *in situ*, has been reinstated: an expressive intimation that things were left as they were found.<sup>38</sup>

A recent assessment of the window by Léonie Seliger provides a valuable assessment of the nature of the Ward & Hughes restoration.<sup>39</sup> By attributing the vast majority of the lead work to the 1861–2 restoration, she suggests that, as at Lincoln, subsequent twentieth-century repairs were superficial and that much of the Victorian restoration is evident in the current window. She concludes that overall the treatment of much of the glass complies with Winston’s stated position on restoration, but that quite a substantial quantity of replacement glass ‘exceeds what one might assume from reading Winston’s account’.<sup>40</sup> Some of these replacements were in the blue and red background, described by Winston as ‘insignificant parts of the coloured grounds’. (see Note 38)

Seliger found further replacements in two areas. First, gaps in the medieval glazing were filled with dulled down glass in order to cover them in an inconspicuous manner. This is a continuation of the approach used at North Moreton, and described by Winston in 1845, and so not surprising. Second, Seliger found sub-

stantial inserts to sections of the drapery in the window, which is more difficult to explain, and would appear to be beyond what Winston publicly recommended.

At Gloucester, it would seem, Winston gave Ward & Hughes a little more licence than at Lincoln. A very plausible explanation is that his decisions were influenced by the perceived completeness of the window at the beginning of the restoration. At Bristol he allowed Bell to make major interventions owing to the paucity of the remains. He considered the Lincoln north rose to be exceptionally well-preserved, and in this case the intervention was minimal. But Winston characterised the east window of Gloucester as a 'wreck': this is quite possibly the reason why more Victorian replacement glass was inserted during the restoration, even though this contradicts his principle of enabling a distinction between any original and replacement fabric.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

The restorations of medieval stained glass at Bristol, Lincoln and Gloucester supervised by Charles Winston exhibit a progressive approach which sought to preserve medieval fabric through minimal intervention. Winston's position on restoration was rooted in the secular discipline of archaeology, and part of his motivation was to preserve medieval stained glass for future study. The Archaeological Institute gave Winston a useful base, and via this organisation, he was able to construct and disseminate an influential critique of stylistic restorations of stained glass. In the cultural context of Victorian Britain, this was a critique positioned predominantly against ecclesiology, which he effectively portrayed as both ideologically-driven, and destructive of medieval fabric. By way of his experience of specific projects, Winston came to understand that the nature of a restoration would be determined by those funding the project, or by those who possessed the power to influence patrons.

Via his relationship with individual glass painters, and the support of the Archaeological Institute, he was able to influence directly a series of high profile restorations of medieval stained glass. The guiding principle of these restorations was minimal intervention, an ethic normally associated with restoration in the post SPAB era. The extent to which he was able to control the details of the restoration varied. Although he advised Joseph Bell about the Bristol restoration, it is unclear how much influence he possessed over the Cathedral authorities. At Lincoln he had the complete trust of the Dean and Chapter, and there he was able to exert a very tight control over the project. At Gloucester, the predominantly conservative nature of the restoration, and Winston's celebration of it as such, also suggests quite a high degree of control.

Winston's projects did not prevent other drastic restorations. Just as Ward

& Hughes were working on the east window of Gloucester Cathedral, Chance Brothers were restoring the windows at Fairford in the same county in a particularly destructive manner. Two nave windows were replaced, retaining only about one quarter of their medieval fabric, and it soon became apparent that the entire upper half of the famous Judgement in the west window had been replaced with new glass. This project provoked a 'national outcry', and in 1868 the British Archaeological Association appointed a committee in order to oversee the nature of future restorations.<sup>41</sup> A destructive restoration had therefore taken place, but at least attitudes had changed to the extent that the restorer and the project were subjected to public scrutiny. The scale of the protest suggests that attitudes were changing, and that the idea of conservative restoration was gaining consensus.

There is no doubt that William Morris was deeply interested in both restoration practice and stained glass. Whether he was aware of Winston's progressive ideas regarding stained glass restoration is unclear, but he would have almost certainly known of his publications. Although connections between Winston's progressive attitude to stained glass restoration and the SPAB may remain tenuous, the story of Winston's restorations during the mid-Victorian period demonstrate that in one area at least, the theory and practice of conservative restoration had been articulated for some years.

*This article is dedicated to Peter Faulkner, whom I first heard lecture about William Morris when I was an undergraduate in 1990. The subject of stained glass links us both to conservation (through the Devon Buildings Group) and to our friend Chris Brooks, who died in 2002.*

## NOTES

1. Chris Miele, 'Morris and Conservation', in Chris Miele, ed, *From William Morris Building Conservation and the Arts and Crafts Cult of Authenticity, 1877–1939*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005, pp. 30–65. (Afterwards Miele, 'Morris and Conservation')
2. Online editions may be viewed at: <http://morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu/storyofunknownchurch-text.html> and <http://morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu/earlyromanceschurchesnf.html>. (As accessed 22 March 2013)
3. John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, 2nd edn, Smith Elder & Co., 1849, p. 179.
4. Miele, 'Morris and Conservation', pp. 41–42.
5. Charles Winston, *An Inquiry into the Difference of Style Observable in Ancient Glass Paintings Especially in England with Hints on Glass Painting*. Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1847, 384 pp. (Afterwards Winston, *Inquiry*)

6. Tony Benyon 'The development of antique and other glasses used in 19th- and 20th-century stained glass', *The Journal of Stained Glass* 29, 2005, pp. 184–98. For other commentary on Winston see Charles Sewter, 'The Place of Charles Winston in the Victorian Revival of the Art of Stained Glass,' *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 24, 1961, pp. 80–91; Martin Harrison, *Victorian Stained Glass*. London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1980, 96 pp.; Sarah Brown, 'The Stained Glass of the Lady Chapel of Bristol Cathedral; Charles Winston (1814–64) and Stained Glass Restoration in the 19th Century', *Transactions of the British Archaeological Association Conference* 19, 1999, pp. 107–17. (Afterwards Brown)
7. For the Lincoln glass see Jim Cheshire, 'The Post Medieval Period', in Nigel Morgan, Jim Cheshire, Carol Bennett & Tom Küpper, *Stained Glass of Lincoln Cathedral*. London: Scala, 2012, pp. 55–65. (Afterwards Cheshire; afterwards *Stained Glass of Lincoln Cathedral*)
8. Charles Winston, 'Painted Glass', *Archaeological Journal* 1, 1845, pp. 14–23. Afterwards 'Painted Glass'.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.
10. Ascensión Hernández Martínez, 'Conservation and Restoration in Built Heritage: A Western European Perspective', in Brian Graham & Peter Howard, eds, *The Ashgate Research Companion to Heritage and Identity*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008, p. 247.
11. 'Painted Glass', pp. 17–18. The third patron named is William Twopenny (Note, p. 16) who commissioned Thomas Willement to restore the medieval stained glass at Westwell, Kent. Winston had been Twopenny's pupil in the legal profession (see G. Le G. Norgate, 'Winston, Charles (1814–1864)', rev. Stanley A. Shepherd, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed, H.C.G. Matthew & Brian Harrison, Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn, ed, Lawrence Goldman, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29761> (As accessed 17 January 17 2013).
12. Brown, pp. 107–17.
13. Letter: Charles Winston to Joseph Bell, 22 August 1847. This correspondence is now in the Archive of Art and Design at the Victoria & Albert Museum, pressmark AAD 1996/9.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Ecclesiology was an architectural movement which originated in the Cambridge Camden Society, and which promoted the cultural agenda of the Oxford Movement via championing a particular configuration of fourteenth-century Gothic architecture. Winston's recommendation of the 'Cinque Cento' (or Renaissance) style led ecclesiologists to question his authority, resulting in sustained animosity (for the review see *Ecclesiologist* 10 (1850), pp. 92–97). For Ecclesiology see James White, *The Cambridge Move-*

- ment: The Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1962, 272 pp.
16. For an account of the attitude towards restoration at the Cambridge Camden Society and other groups associated with Ecclesiology, see Chris Miele 'Re-Presenting the Church Militant: the Camden Society, Church Restoration, and the Gothic Sign', in C. Webster & J. Elliot eds, *A Church as it Should Be. The Cambridge Camden Society and its Influence*. Donnington: Shaun Tyas, 2000, pp. 257–294. (Afterwards Miele, 'Church Militant')
  17. Miele, 'Church Militant', pp. 275–6. In *Inquiry* (p. 274, note 'p'), Winston refers to Petit as 'My friend'.
  18. For details of Winston's involvement see Cheshire, pp. 55–65.
  19. *Builder* Vol. 13, 1855, p. 500: 'Lincoln – It is understood that the Dean and Chapter propose almost immediately to remove the stained glass from the window of the north end of the great transept, and to have it replaced securely and restored perfectly, Mr. L'Estrange, who some years since inspected it closely, having pronounced that the glass was placed in very insecurely, and was liable to damage from strong gusts of wind'.
  20. Charles Winston. *Memoirs Illustrative of the Art of Glass-Painting*. London: John Murray, 1865, p. 85. (Afterwards Winston, *Memoirs*)
  21. Paul Waterhouse, 'Willson, Edward James (1787–1854)', rev. Helene Furja, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29612>, as accessed 18 Dec 2012.
  22. Charles Winston, 'On the Glazing of the North Rose Window of Lincoln Cathedral', *Archaeological Journal* 14, 1857, p. 221.
  23. Cheshire, p. 61.
  24. For an account of this project see Tom Küpper, 'Conserving Lincoln Cathedral's Glass', in *Stained Glass of Lincoln Cathedral*, pp. 82–88.
  25. The most comprehensive study of the Lincoln glass is that by N.J. Morgan, *The Medieval Painted Glass of Lincoln Cathedral*. CVMA Occasional Paper III, London: British Academy, 1983, 86 pp.
  26. This documentation is held by Lincoln Cathedral. I am very grateful to Tom Küpper for showing me this material, and for illuminating conversations regarding the restoration of 1855. I am also very grateful to Gordon Plumb for allowing me to use his photographs of the Lincoln Cathedral windows.
  27. E.J. Wilson to Charles Winston 30 January, 1850; British Library Add. Ms 33851 letters book, pp. 28–29.
  28. David Evans, Rachel Thomas & Roger Rosewell 'Medieval and Modern at Doddiscombsleigh', *Vidimus* 10, September 2007, <http://vidimus.org/issues/issue-10/feature/> (As accessed 22 March 2013).
  29. Winston, *Inquiry*, p. 297.

30. Fiona Whyte, 'The East Window of the Chapel of St. Nicholas at All Saints Church, North Moreton', *Journal of Stained Glass* 19,2, 1991–3, pp. 105–129; Anna Eavis, 'St. Nicholas, Charles Winston and Conservation at North Moreton', *Vidimus* 25, January 2009, available at <http://vidimus.org/issues/issue-25/panel-of-the-month/> (As accessed 22 March 2013)
31. 'Proceedings at Meetings of the Archaeological Institute', *Archaeological Journal* 18, 1861, p. 153
32. *Ibid.*
33. David Welander, *Stained Glass of Gloucester Cathedral*, Gloucester: D. Welander and the Priests of Gloucester Cathedral, 1985, p. 133.
34. *Ibid.*
35. 'Proceedings at Meetings of the Archaeological Institute', *Archaeological Journal* 17, 1860, p. 323. For Talbot see Thomas Seccombe, 'Talbot, James, fourth Baron Talbot of Malahide in the peerage of Ireland, and first Baron Talbot de Malahide in the peerage of the United Kingdom (1805–1883)', rev. Richard Smail, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew & Brian Harrison, Oxford: OUP, 2004; online edn, ed. Lawrence Goldman, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26931> (last accessed January 15, 2013).
36. Winston, *Memoirs*, p. 160.
37. 'Proceedings at Meetings of the Archaeological Institute', *Archaeological Journal* 18, 1861, p. 153
38. Winston, *Memoirs*, pp. 308–9
39. Léonie Seliger, *A History of Repairs to the Stained Glass in the Great East Window of Gloucester Cathedral*, MA Dissertation, University of York, 2001. (Afterwards Seliger)
40. Seliger, p. 41.
41. Keith Barley, 'Conservation and Restoration', in Sarah Brown & Lindsay MacDonald eds, *Fairford Parish Church. A Medieval Church and its Stained Glass*, Stroud: Sutton, 2007, pp. 118–124.

# Reviews

## Edited by Peter Faulkner

Alex Jones, *Morris in Iceland*, Glebe, NSW 2057: Puncher & Wattman, 2008, 238 pp., Pbk, US \$27.95. ISBN 9781921450020.

I have an abiding interest in William Morris's various connections to Iceland, so I began this novel with real anticipation, hoping to find something fresh on a topic I know fairly well. What I found was not only fresh, but often misleading and ultimately disappointing.

Jones presents two narratives; the first set in England and Iceland in 1871, the second in modern-day Sydney. Morris, both the real one – as he appears in the journal he kept from 6 July to 7 September 1871, on his first trek to Iceland – and hereafter the false one Jones creates (hereafter the 'false WM'). The dual Morris narrates the first of these; a verbose and ageing Australian academic is responsible for the second. The two narratives are divided into segments – thirty for Morris, forty-five for the Aussie – scattered across ten chapters. Introducing the segments, or salted within them, are ninety three quotations, often used in conventional ways, in order to support or illustrate a point, or to cast an ironic shadow, but sometimes dropped in for no apparent reason, perhaps playfully, or to test the patience of reviewers. Many of the quotations are from Morris's prose romances and from *News from Nowhere*, and also from other nineteenth century British writers; there are several from Tennyson. There are also lines from Chaucer, Dante, Malory, Shakespeare, Goethe, Milton, Longfellow, from a few moderns such as Eliot and Nabokov, as well as lyrics from Björk, the contemporary Icelandic singer-songwriter.

The seventy five narrative segments and ninety three quotations – something new (and transitions are rare) turning up every few pages – create confusion, particularly in the Sydney sections, which deal with events during a week or so one recent summer, and with the obligations of the busy academic to his students, his wife, his daughter, his grandson; obligations which jar against one another, often in ways which the academic finds amusing. He is advising several students working on an opera, or masque, or whatever, called *Morris in Iceland*. We wit-

ness rehearsals and discussions of this work in several of the Sydney segments, and the entire performance during the novel's final chapter. Before considering those rehearsals and that performance, I shall comment on the first two Morris segments, for 6 and 14 July 1871.

Those from later in the journey, when the party was out on Snaefelsnes and heading east toward Thingvellir, and then finally back in Reykjavik, often include long passages lifted directly from the *Icelandic Journal*, and are thus in Morris's own voice. The false WM is still there, with his memories and worries, only more briefly. Such is definitely not the case in the first two segments, based on the train journey from London to Scotland (6 July), and on the party in Reykjavik gearing up for the trek (14 July). Here only a few details are from the *Icelandic Journal*. All the rest, several pages in each instance, are from the false WM.

The 6 July segment opens with an apt quotation from Ruskin, on the miseries of railway travel, and then we read three pages of the maundering recollections and observations of the false WM, who follows the Ruskin paragraph with general observations on the pleasures of travel by stage-coach, behind 'hard-breathing horses'. And then this: 'One journey [by horse] is like life, it seems to me, and one is like death [by train], and a third-class railway journey in the middle of the night (for we started at 9:15 p.m.) is more like death than most'. (p. 7) The connection to death is murky, but it allows the false WM to recall his father's death and the horse-drawn carriages at his funeral, and then he remembers another stagecoach journey, this time to school at Marlborough, when he was a teenager. He tells us what he saw at an Inn where they had 'stopped to bait the horses', namely a 'labouring man' happy in his useful work, repairing a cabinet with scrap timber. He contrasts that man with a modern assembly line worker, a wage slave engaged in mere toil. And at the same Inn, he saw 'a maid not much older than myself leaning backwards and kissing hungrily at a young fellow in a reaper's smock, holding his head between both her hands the while. I had not known a young maid would do that'. (p. 8) This striking recollection, his new realisation of what young maids might do, is linked to the Angelica theme, and I shall return to it soon. But now back to the false WM and his handling of the train journey north.

'It is barely dawn as I am putting these thoughts together ... We are stopped, by a signal I suppose, somewhere short of York; Faulkner and Magnusson – lucky fellows – are snoring, almost as if trying to keep up the rhythm that the train has let drop; ... I, meanwhile, stare into the ceiling as if to find written there something I might transcribe into this new journal-book that Jenny – dear child – pressed on me as we left. I daresay 'twas D.G.R. took her to choose it, holding the child's hand in the stationer's, and pointing out what she must have in that way of his that takes no denial. She is certainly too young and too good to lose a father so; too young certainly to read a journal such as I would write in the mood that is on me: *Memoirs of a Milksop*'. (p. 9)



Morris never – the idea is laughable – had to look ‘into the ceiling’ for *Icelandic Journal* material. He looked out the window of the train, and his descriptions of hillside and shoreline, here as the train moves through northern England and into Scotland, are sharply discerning and memorable – harbingers of descriptions to come of the Faroes, and of Iceland’s glaciers, mountains, and lava-fields, descriptions unique in the large corpus of Icelandic travel books.

We note here an aggressive attitude to Rossetti, there at Kelmescott with his daughters and his wife, while he exits the scene, indeed the country, to let them decide their future – and his. Readers of the *Icelandic Journal*, and of the letters which survive from this time, know how ‘fdgity’ Morris was as the journey to Iceland began, and that he then, and at a few other times in Iceland, when he was writing or receiving letters from home, fell into a ‘mood’ when he thought of his wife and children, when he had doubts about his manhood, and the like, but he never put such thoughts into the *Journal*. And of course he never thought of Jenny as one of its readers; its intended and quite limited audience was Georgiana Burne-Jones. The image here of that ‘dear child’, and the suggestion of Rossetti’s cold control over her is, however, evocative and effective. Rossetti is never mentioned in the *Icelandic Journal*, but the false WM speaks of him frequently, and I’ll comment on a few of those appearances later.

But first, let us consider the second Iceland segment, for 14 July, when the false WM picks up the travellers in Reykjavik, ignoring the intervening 8–15 July entries, those describing queasy stomachs as the *Diana* confronts Atlantic rollers, and the wonderful descriptions of the Faroes.

Though Darwin is never mentioned in the *Icelandic Journal*, Jones – apparently inspired by brief descriptions of grassy banks bordering a stream near Reykjavik – opens the 14 July segment with the famous final paragraph, that of the ‘entangled bank’ from the *Origin of Species*, a book brought along, says the false WM, in his stuffy manner, ‘to solace the days of forced inaction that must occur on any journey’. (p. 24) Then he inveighs against Darwin’s ideas of inheritance, of social inequities which they inspire and support, all in a gassy manner which is quite non-Morrisean. There are no such disquisitions in the *Icelandic Journal* – where we find instead sharp descriptions of Reykjavik, the ships in its harbour, the mountains behind, and the wooden houses on its sandy streets; Morris had included here an interesting footnote, an aside to Georgie: ‘Lord! How that little row of wooden houses, and their gardens with the rank Angelica is wedged into my memory’. Morris’s rather fervent recollection of this plant evidently encouraged Jones to have his false WM pay particular attention to the Angelica, which ‘cures all ills, the old herbals say: hence the propitious name; I could almost think of it as a kindly spirit to guide me star to star through this new land’. This is followed by a quotation from Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, one which says of the heroine, ‘So aungelic was her natif beaute, / That lik a thing immortal semed

she'. The false WM then adds: 'Would that I might live to make a Chaucer one day'. (p. 27) This wistful wish, in the final line of this 14 July segment, cleverly reminds us that Morris's *Earthly Paradise* tales had earned him comparisons to Chaucer, while it looks ahead to 1896, when Morris would indeed 'live to make a Chaucer'.

The plant, the honorific adjective, the perfect woman, all coalesce in a country lass named 'Angelica', the most interesting addition which Jones makes to the Morris biography. He has his false WM refer to her several times, first when the Morris party is riding through *Njala* country, down some pleasant slopes near the Rang-river where 'deep flowers and grass went down right into the water on either side'. That line is from the *Icelandic Journal*, and is followed by the false WM's long recollection of a similar small river in the Wiltshire countryside, where he was known to wander when he was an unhappy schoolboy at Marlborough College. And one day he had there seen a naked girl, bathing in a river pool. She asks him if he'd been spying on her, and he replies, 'I wasn't watching you, but I saw you'. . . . 'Have a good look', she said, 'there's nought more to see than nature has given me'. . . . 'They call me Angelica', she said. 'Will you carry my basket?' This segment ends with the pair walking off together, 'side by side'. (p. 99)

Angelica's next appearance occurs when the travellers are at the Geysir site. Resting inside the tent, drinking hot chocolate, they are shocked by an eruption: 'there came a noise like muffled thunder', and then, with nary a transition, for the hot water of Geysir has reminded the false WM of hot tea brewed a dozen years earlier, we are back on that walk home with Angelica: "'Will you drink tea with us, Will?'" she had said, my new friend, as we came to the cottage gate. . . . We went in. An old woman sat in a chair by the light of the window. "Here's a friend has come to see us, Granny". They take tea, and the false WM recalls that, 'I found myself more at ease than I had been since I came to that wretched school, though I knew that had I been found in the cottage, there would follow an explosion . . . a new Geysir'. (pp. 106–7) Distinctive prose from the *Icelandic Journal*, Morris's own descriptions of the party being frightened by an eruption at the Geysir site, are thus woven into the tapestry of the false WM's boyhood, of his deep affection for the beautiful Angelica with whom he seeks solace from his troubles at the College. At their last meeting, she tells him not to lament, that she plans to escape her rural poverty by emigrating to a 'new land, [Australia, and Angelica's great granddaughter appears in some of the Sydney segments] and you will be for Oxford, Will; and you will have done great things when I hear tidings of you'. The false WM closes with this peroration: 'Friend of my youth, maid who taught me many things I was quick enough to forget and now have to learn again; would that you were now here beside me'. (p. 109)

Here are a few examples – there are several more – of the false WM's recollections of Rossetti. I commented earlier on his helping Jenny choose a journal, 'in

that way of his that takes no denial'. In a later segment, the false WM uses this same phrase: 'And if he should ask a young woman to sit for him – that took no denial'. And Janey was one such, who sat for him, famously, often, and before she was wed to Morris. Several critics have commented on Rossetti's malign influence on the young couple from the outset, and Jones is aware of this, for here is his false WM, ruefully: 'Sometimes I thought she had always preferred Rossetti; that in her way of seeming to look past you or over your shoulder, she had in her gaze the image of the more exciting lover'. (p. 48) Later, the false WM recalls that her 'father's preference was clear enough. "Painters", in his coarse way. "Painters is all fashion, and fashions come and fashions go. But Golden Billy here –" and he would chink a couple of coins. "Money is money, girl; money is always money", with which she threw me a glance of sympathy and complicity compounded'. (p. 50) The condescending appellation for Morris seems apt, and the use of 'complicity' adds a dimension to Janey's dilemma which is also interesting.

And Janey follows her father's advice and marries Morris, and the false WM recalls a passionate moment with his new bride: 'I was urgent enough with her, to be certain, and she would press herself against me . . . and she drew me on top of her, and I pulled over us the lap of the rug on which we lay, and nothing else above us but the orchard bows and the clear heavens'. (p. 63) The 'orchard bows' suggest Red House, and the first and happiest years of their marriage. But what seems more significant here is that the false WM recalls pulling a rug over them, for this act conjures up a famous scene, one that Jones is aware of, for he refers to it at least two more times. The scene occurs in the greatest of the Family Sagas, *Brennu-Njals Saga*. When the burners tell Bergthora, Njal's wife, that she is free to leave the burning house, she declines, choosing to stay and die with her husband. She lies next to him and a sheep skin is pulled over them. When the ashes cool, the bodies of the couple are found intact, unburned, under the sheep skin. On the way home, the ship back in the Faroes, the false WM asserts that Iceland has taught him that 'I must find my proper place in the world of men, and having found it might truly be at one with what I loved, and draw the one skin to cover us both'. (p. 197) Using 'skin' here, and thus evoking that scene in the *Njala*, the false WM equates the physical love, indeed the affection also, between Morris and Janey with the deep love of Njal and Bergthora. I wish there were more such moments in the novel.

The second narrative is set in Sydney, and concerns the activities and reflections of an ageing professor whose wife is abroad. She calls him frequently, and his explanations of what he is up to provide some key exposition in each of the first nine chapters of the novel; in the tenth and final chapter she returns, just in time to see *Morris in Iceland* on the stage. Here is an early exchange, when the wife asks him about a new project. He answers, 'If you must know, it's for an opera a group of young people of my acquaintance are developing'. She asks what it's about. His

retort: 'You've heard of *Nixon in China*, I suppose? ... This is along similar lines. Based on William Morris's trip to Iceland in 1871. The working title is *Morris in Iceland*. The William Morris story has all the elements, you know – gratuitous nudity, al fresco copulation – it's just a matter of how to work them in, which is where the contribution of an expert consultant such as myself can be crucial'. She asks 'Is this the same William Morris I've heard about? The wallpaper man?' 'The very same. ... My informants tell me that Morris's route may well have been identical to the one Björk followed in her tour of Icelandic churches in 1990. ... I see a lot of throat singing and weird instrumentals and electronics, and we'll have karaoke and slam poetry too, and some of Morris's own stuff. It will be huge'. Her response: 'It sounds like a postmodern nightmare'. (pp. 18–19)

I am not sure when and where nudity and 'al fresco copulation' come into the Morris story. But I am certain that Björk's tour had as little to do with Morris's 1871 route as do the lyrics of her songs which are dropped into the text a dozen or more times, and for no apparent reason. It's all very strange, and when weird music and karaoke are thrown into the mix, why then the wife's estimation of *Morris in Iceland* as 'postmodern nightmare' seems apt. But my curiosity was aroused. And when, in subsequent Sydney segments, we see these young people discussing the opera in progress, its choreography and symbolism, and the like, my curiosity deepened. I looked forward to the opera itself, destined to be presented in the final chapter.

Here is our first glimpse of the students, obviously familiar with the 1871 *Icelandic Journal*, discussing ways to transform its details into their performance: 'I think we should do something with "railroad travelling", said Michael. He held his forearms parallel to the floor, fingers pointing stiffly straight ahead, and then began to reciprocate each arm in turn, miming the motion of a piston as he circled the little stage. ... as he picked up speed and was joined by other black-clad young men, their shoulders rocking backward and forward in line, their feet meeting the boards in unison, the effect was steam train-like indeed'. (p. 10) The students pass from this strange dancing, from discussions of stage-craft and mime, to equally strange and lengthy discussions of symbolism: 'Morris keeps mentioning the flowers. And it's the urge to procreation we want to bring out ... Magnusson is power, obviously ... when they say goodbye to the Magnusson women, that means power is devalored. And then Morris sets off riding Falki—the bird of prey, i.e., the rapacity of the entrepreneur—but then that pony breaks down. That has to foreshadow the reorganization of the firm with Morris in sole charge. He turns his back on the sole apparatus of retailing; he sees that kind of life is lame. ... He gives up Falki, and now he is riding Mouse, the chestnut. He has taken his old life to pieces, and the elements have to be refecundated. ... The fat body and the long tail: a mouse is a spermic symbol; it's taking him to a place where he can grow again'. One of the students interrupts this silly discourse to

ask, 'is this an opera we're putting on or a gynaecology lesson?' (pp. 59–60) That's a good question, and the use of foreign terminology and strange compounds such as 'refecundated' raise suspicions that Jones, via his sly professor of narratology, is sending up literary critics and modernist theories in general.

Here are a few lines from a rap song by one of the students. The Morris party 'set out for the Arctic Ocean./Faulkner's spewing his guts, but hey, William Morris doesn't mind the motion. . . . He's used to it./The freeloaders, ten years they're bleedin' him white./And the big kahuna himself is hittin' on his wife./That's Dante G. Rossetti./He's comin' on heavy'. (pp. 137–38) And here are the students discussing the deeper – again satire comes to mind – meanings of Morris's companions: 'Evans and Faulkner and Magnusson are all Morris, and they all have to have their say. Evans is the real Morris, Faulkner is the symbolic Morris and Magnusson is the imaginary Morris. So Evans raps, because he's the muse of the present. Faulkner is the muse of the past, . . . So I suppose Magnusson is the muse of the future, . . . "Exactly – he sings in Icelandic, so no one can understand him. Makes sense", said Michael'. (p. 141) I was at a loss as to what sort of sense all this makes, but I continued, hoping that the full-fledged opera would explain why and how the characters are linked to past, present, future, and so forth. And so I pushed on.

But then the plot thickens, and the opera is changed. They begin calling it a masque, one which must be tailored to fit into a wedding ceremony, that of the professor's daughter, Gracie. The complexities of her wedding to a cross-dressing groom, defy simple explanation, but the narrator gives it a try, in one of his many telephone conversations with his wife who is displeased to say the least that her daughter is planning to marry this cross-dresser, a fat fellow named Dave. She hopes that she is not thinking of a traditional ceremony. Far from it, for 'Gracie wants to incorporate a dramatic presentation something along the lines of the wedding masque in *The Tempest*. And where is she going to rustle that up in less than a week?' 'Well, as you may be aware', the husband said, 'there's a group of young performers I've taken an interest in, and it seems likely they will be able to adapt their project [the opera, *Morris in Iceland*] to fit in with what Gracie has in mind'. (p. 189)

So it was with a strong sense of anticipation, mixed with dread, that I opened the final chapter, 'A Foreign Field'. Here there are descriptions of the venue itself, a park which somehow is under Canadian governance (Don't ask!), as well as descriptions of the groom, Dave, with a beer container strapped to his chest, and then there's Gracie's little boy in a mouse costume—also part of the ceremony, pageant, masque (he has quit calling it an opera). The professor's wife has arrived in the nick of time in order to witness the proceedings. There is music, there is dancing, and when one of the characters disrobes, the professor says: 'The disempowerment of Morris awakens the spirit of change'. The wife asks, 'Is that

supposed to be William Morris? I bet he never took off his clothes in a public park'. (p. 215) We see Faulkner, Evans and Magnusson making piston movements, which we, recalling the rehearsals, understand as the train the travellers head north. But the few score people who have gathered in this park, ostensibly to watch *Morris in Iceland*, must be puzzled. After some lyrics from Björk, we learn that 'the elements of the old Morris were disassembled'. The wife is surely correct when she snorts, 'what a lot of nonsense'. (p. 218) A reference is made, once again, to 'the al fresco copulation motif in Morris', and when a dancer with horns crosses the stage, we are told that this is Morris 'coming to terms with his cuckoldry'. (p. 222) Equally tenuous and silly references are made to Geysir, Bulandshofdi, and the Hill of Laws, none of them firmly attached to specific descriptions, often very fine ones, in the actual *Icelandic Journal*. Instead Morris's encounters with, and reactions to Iceland are 'embodied' in the troupe's song and dance. Disappointing to say the least, this is grand opera become masque, and then appendage to a strange wedding in a public park on a hot summer afternoon in Sydney.

And so the novel itself, as I said at the outset, is disappointing. Jones wrote an earlier novel, *Helen Garner and the Meaning of Everything*, which won critical accolades for its literary jokes and erratic and elusive allusions. Such devices are present in *Morris in Iceland*, but they do not fit in very neatly with the serious presentation in the *Icelandic Journal* of Morris's impressions of Iceland. Jones's inventions of incidents from Morris's youth, namely the Angelica encounters, offer fresh insights into Morris's problems, as do descriptions of Rossetti, and the like. And I suspect that most of Jones's readers, like the narrator's wife, would have identified Morris as 'the wallpaper man', but after reading this book, especially the unadorned passages from the *Icelandic Journal*, they will surely gain a new understanding of William Morris, a remarkable man, an intrepid traveller, a lover of all things Icelandic.

Gary L. Aho

Robert L. M. Coupe, *Illustrated Editions of the Works of William Morris in English*, 2nd Edn, Burnaby, BC, Canada: Lonsdale & Young, 2011, 306 pp. Hbk, 41 illustrations, many in colour, CDN \$100. ISBN: 978-0-9867535-0-3.

The first edition of the above volume, published in 2002, was reviewed by me in *JWMS*, Vol. XV, No. 4 (Summer 2004), pp. 158–59. So this is a relatively brief review in order to draw notice to this expanded and improved second edition. While the move to Canadian publisher Lonsdale & Young may well have put the price up, this has also led to the book being produced on better quality gloss paper, and – significantly – many of the full-page images included are now in

colour.

Coupe opens the second edition with a Preface, in which he writes ‘Since the publication of the original edition I have become dissatisfied with many aspects of it. Most importantly it lacks several entries found only after publication’. (p. xi) The new edition has also allowed Coupe to correct a few factual errors and he has on many occasions expanded his original discussions of the illustrated works considered. He is able to give more attention to how effective (or not) he finds the illustrations in relation to the text, and also discusses the effectiveness of the overall book design. This latter point is an inevitable concern of any bibliographic project which follows in the footsteps of Morris, for whom the unity of the book was so important.

Bibliographers are meticulous people. Descriptive detail and accuracy is what they are about, and there is no doubt that Coupe knows more than anyone else on the planet about illustrated responses to Morris’s works (how many people know, for example, that there are three illustrated editions of *The Story of Gretir the Strong?*). Perhaps also inevitably, then, this is a book for the enthusiastic collector and specialist rather than the general reader. But it is also potentially a prompt for those interested in the relationships of text to image to pay more attention to the many visual interpretations of Morris’s works which have been made. Some of these editions are undoubtedly more notable than others (e.g. the The Bodley Head edition of *The Defence of Guenevere* [1904], illustrated by Jessie Marion King, and the Headley Brothers edition of *The Life and Death of Jason* [1915] illustrated by Maxwell Armfield (See Rosie Miles, ‘Illustrating Morris: The Work of Jessie King and Maxwell Armfield’, *Journal of William Morris Studies*, XV, No. 4 [Summer 2004], pp. 109–34), but maybe there is more to say (for example) about the glut of cheap illustrated editions which appeared during the early twentieth century, aimed at schoolchildren.

At the other end of the scale the very last Appendix discusses ‘Unique Copies with Illustration’, such as calligrapher Graily Hewitt and artist Allan Vigers’ 1907–08 collaboration on a manuscript of ‘The Defence of Guenevere’ poem, and Julia Pocock’s marginal ink-drawn illustrations in her 1872 copy of *The Earthly Paradise*.

All in all this is a fascinating book. Its price may deter the general reader, but I hope good libraries will want to stock it as an important part of their Morris holdings.

*Rosie Miles*

Frank McLynn, *The Road Not Taken. How Britain Narrowly Missed a Revolution*. London: The Bodley Head, 2012, 610 pp. Twenty-one illustrations, £25.00. ISBN 9780224072939

Frank McLynn is a popular historian who writes mainly on British history. In this book, as his sub-title suggests, he considers a number of occasions when it might have been thought that a revolution would occur in this country, but this did not in fact happen. He begins with the Peasant's Revolt of 1381, and considers among other confrontations, the Pilgrimage of Grace, Cromwell and the Levellers, The Jacobite Rising of 1751, the Chartists and, most recently, the General Strike of 1926. In his chapter of Conclusions he is properly disinclined to be conclusive, but suggests that the Establishment has shown a great deal of cunning in retaining its ascendancy, and has made skilful use at different times of the Empire, the monarchy and religion in the process. Having outlined the views of four major theorists of revolution, he argues that the dominance of the Labour Party after 1919 'gave the coup de grace to any lingering hope of revolution still entertained on the Left' and ends by quoting Arthur Henderson's view that society can only avoid 'barricades in the street and blood in the gutters' by keeping to 'the path of ordered social change by constitutional methods'.

It will be seen from this account that McLynn does not consider the period in which Morris joined and was active in the Socialist movement as one during which there was any likelihood of revolution, so that his only reference to Morris is as the author of *A Dream of John Ball*. In that work, Morris is said to have followed the positive accounts of Wat Tyler given by the young, radical Robert Southey, and the author of *The Rights of Man*, Thomas Paine, in presenting Tyler as 'an egalitarian outlaw in the tradition of Robin Hood (who had himself been rescued from his medieval "placing" as a merely thuggish outlaw)'. McLynn's view of the late nineteenth century is no doubt well founded, but it is worthwhile to note how much Morris himself invested in the idea of revolution. His joining the Social Democratic Federation was due to its reputation as a Marxist party, and he retained his commitment to the end, in the Socialist League and then the Hammersmith Socialist Society. In 'Art and the People' (1883) he argued that salvation from the 'fearful recklessness' of modern society could be achieved only by 'a Social Revolution', and he therefore directed his advice to those who believed in 'the necessity of revolution, quite irrespective of any date that may be given to the event ...'. (In the *Commonweal* edition of *News from Nowhere* in 1890, Morris placed the revolution described in the chapter 'How the Change Came' at a date twenty years from publication, but in the book version published a year later he more cautiously places it in 1952). As the lecture 'How We Live and How We Might Live' (1884) indicates, Morris was well aware that the word



revolution was 'terrible' for some. But he insisted that it was essential to Socialism, as only through revolution could the necessary 'change of the basis of society' be achieved. As he put it in 'How I Became a Socialist' (1894), it was only 'the consciousness of revolution stirring amidst our hateful modern society' that had given him a focus for his later politics. This aspect of Morris's thought may raise problems for his contemporary admirers, but it is hardly a topic to be tackled in the confines of a review.

*Peter Faulkner*

J.B. Bullen, *Rossetti: Painter and Poet*, London: Frances Lincoln Ltd, 2011, 270 pp, illus, in colour. Hbk, £35.00/US\$50.00. ISBN 9780711232259.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti's star is firmly in the ascendant. Since the millennium there have been at least eighteen different titles published which are either explicitly or in significant part about his art, poetry and life. These include the multi-volume project *The Correspondence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (William Fredeman, ed, 2002–10), and the catalogue to accompany the major exhibition on Rossetti at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, in 2003 (by Prettejohn, Becker & Treuherz). The recognition of Rossetti's centrality to literary and artistic understandings of the later Victorian period has also in no small part been fuelled by the pioneering digital humanities project which is *The Rossetti Archive* (2000–2008) and the work of Jerome McGann (*Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Game That Must Be Lost*, 2000). Practically everything Rossetti ever wrote, drew or painted, in every original format in which it exists, has been digitised and can be seen or read online. Why was Rossetti the exemplar for such a project? Because McGann regards him as *the* Victorian artist above all others who cared about the co-existence in his work of both image and word.

J. B. Bullen's *Rossetti: Painter and Poet* opens by acknowledging its debt both to McGann and to Jan Marsh's 1999 biography *Dante Gabriel Rossetti: Painter and Poet*. The book announces itself as aiming to 'trac[e] the development of Rossetti's painting and poetry in the context of the drama of his life'. (p. 9) On the one hand it is a biographical work, offering a compelling and engaging narrative of Rossetti's entire life. But its coffee-table format and high-quality production convey that the presentation of Rossetti's art is also central to its purpose. Bullen's reading of Rossetti is of a man driven (and riven) by the pulsations, contradictions and ambiguities of libidinal desire. Where is this seen? Everywhere in his art and poetry. Hence the young Dante Gabriel was imbibing the romanticised sexuality of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italian poets at the same time that he was probably seeing pornography in London's Holywell Street.

Desire is one of Bullen's central themes, but he is also very good at highlighting other key factors in Rossetti's make up. His Anglo-Italian parentage made Rossetti always conscious of his outsider status and as a young painter he was drawn to the visionary irreverence of Blake (purchasing one of Blake's notebooks at eighteen). His ambition to be stretched way beyond the artistic training offered by the Royal Academy is seen by his approaching Ford Madox Brown (seven years his senior) to ask for tuition. As Rossetti begins formally to paint, he also commences writing poetry ('The Blessed Damozel' and 'Jenny'), and the book features numerous extracts from Rossetti's poems (sometimes whole sonnets) alongside discussion of them. But central as well to this story are the mythic worlds which Rossetti returns to again and again (Dante and Beatrice, the Arthurian triangle of Arthur – Guenevere – Launcelot), and the women in Rossetti's life who become their own myths (Lizzie Siddall, Fanny Cornforth, Jane Morris) and who are endlessly turned in his paintings into mythic women themselves.

Bullen rightly notes that the representation of women for Rossetti is not portraiture but the projection of a vision ('Not as she is, but as she fills his dream', as sister Christina aptly put it). 'Female approval', Bullen suggests, 'was central to [Rossetti's] psychological welfare'. (p. 57) The tortuous, obsessive and often pained relationship of Rossetti and Elizabeth Siddall is also a cornerstone of the book. Madox Brown's comment that Rossetti developed a 'monomania' (p. 73) about her seems correct in the light of the number of drawings Rossetti made during the 1850s. But Rossetti's resistance to settling down, and his attraction to other women, also made Lizzie's existence very difficult. The pen and ink drawing *A Parable of Love* (1850–52), in which a young man dressed as a knight appears to want to take over the painting of the self-portrait which his seated female lover is engaged in producing, seems (to this reader at least) to say a great deal about what Rossetti did to the women he loved.

Morris enters the story at Bullen's account of the emergence of the 'Second Brotherhood' in 1853, when the young Burne-Jones and Morris met Rossetti. Just as Arthurian legend overtakes Dante and Beatrice in Rossetti's mythic imagination, Bullen suggests (persuasively) that Rossetti's relationship with Morris was founded on a kind of competitive rivalry which was both artistic and sexual. He proposes, for example, that Rossetti was always envious of Morris's capacity to produce poetry. He also suggests that Rossetti was attracted to women who were either already attached or who were unavailable (hence Jane was shared with Morris, and Fanny Cornforth with George Boyce). In this way, the homosocial bond Rossetti made with various men is also emphasised. There has been some significant work on Rossetti's homosociality (I am thinking of Joseph Bristow here), but Bullen wears and distils his research with a light and very readable touch.

The shift from a more medieval 'ascetic' style to a more sensuous Venetian one

in Rossetti's painting, with *Bocca Baciata* (1859), is well known. Significantly the model was Fanny and not Lizzie, and it is an oil and not a watercolour. Lizzie's visual association in Rossetti's work with a sense of asceticism and renunciation becomes a painted language of Rossetti's complex and complicated feelings towards her. This culminates in Rossetti's guilty decision to marry Lizzie in May 1860, and then, after her death, in the repeated versions of *Beata Beatrix* (the most well-known is dated 1864–70). As Rossetti used actual women and men as his models for the faces in his paintings, the autobiographical dramas and love triangles which they appear to be enacting become very compelling indeed alongside Bullen's biographical account.

In many ways Lizzie's death is one of the defining events of Rossetti's life. A new chapter seems to open up after it, in that Rossetti is freed from the confines of marriage and domesticity. And in taking on the tenancy of 16 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, he creates 'an exotic and sumptuous interior' (p. 150) which is home to his collection of beautiful objects and furniture, and is also a bohemian gathering place for artists, writers and wombats. Jane Morris's significant return into Rossetti's life is marked by the series of staged photographs he has taken of her in 1865. Several examples are given of the intensification of the relationship between Rossetti and Jane in 1868, including a detail from Rossetti's notebook which *may* suggest the actual date on which they become lovers. The presentation of Jane as the model for the sumptuous *The Blue Silk Dress* (1868), and also the portrayal of her as *Mariana* (1870 – a painting of which I was completely unaware), seem to speak of not-so-coded love triangles. Bullen also regards Rossetti's letters to Jane during the late 1860s, as he was preparing to publish his first volume of poetry in 1870, as a 'sexual display rivalling Morris'. Morris may be working on to the second volume of *The Earthly Paradise*, but 'See!' says Rossetti to Morris's wife, 'I'm writing all these poems and you're the inspiration'.

Rossetti's anxiety about how his poems would be received is also well known, and as bulwark against negative reviews he primed his friends, including Morris, to publish theirs first. Bullen acknowledges that 'it took a remarkable man to write an appreciative assessment of poems that celebrated another man's physical passion for his wife'. (p. 221) If I have perhaps one minor criticism of this book it is that it makes no attempt to offer images of Rossetti's poetic works or to present visually his very clear interest in book design and illustration. In that sense the art monograph nature of the work predominates. Bullen also brings vividly to life the extraordinarily generous arrangement whereby Morris and Rossetti jointly leased Kelmscott Manor in 1871, in order to allow Rossetti to have somewhere to be alone and private with Jane. If Rossetti's very style and form of painting at any given moment is effectively a visual language of his emotional and psychic response to the women he loved, then it is possible that some of the many canvasses which overflow with Jane Morris are the nearest he ever gets to

love fulfilled. At the same time – and I vividly remember this from attending the Rossetti exhibition in Liverpool in 2003 – Rossetti’s late paintings (e.g. *The Blessed Damozel* [1875–78], *Astarte Syriaca* [1877], etc.) are monumental in scale. They dwarf the human viewer completely. They depict not real, actual women, but goddesses who inspire awe, worship and terror. Bullen suggests that during the later 1870s ‘the figures of Jane and Lizzie merge’. (p. 248) Whether this is a sign of artistic apotheosis, or a facet of Rossetti’s increasing dependence on chloral in a life marked by bouts of mania and paranoia, is difficult to say. Quite possibly it is both.

Bullen concludes that ‘Only after his death was Rossetti’s influence truly felt. Both his painting and his poetry had a substantial impact on European art and literature in the late nineteenth century’. (p. 258) His painting influenced the Symbolist movement, and particularly his revival of the sonnet sequence (in *The House of Life*) was significant (see John Holmes, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the Late-Victorian Sonnet Sequence*, 2005). In respect of the propulsions which fired Rossetti’s personal artistic vision, Bullen says ‘the whole tendency of his creative impulse was the pursuit, the examination and exploration of desire. This was a magnificent achievement, and one that was unmatched in British art’. (p. 261) *Rossetti: Painter and Poet* is a hugely enjoyable, readable and informative account of both the life and art of one of the Victorian period’s major artists, and is a magnificent achievement on the part of J.B. Bullen. The book is lavishly illustrated throughout, including several paintings held in private collections and rarely seen. If it is not quite a *catalogue raisonné* of absolutely every work Rossetti drew or painted, it is the next best thing. The chronological presentation of Rossetti’s art interwoven with an account of his life has never been done before so extensively or so well. By the end you will understand both differently.

*Rosie Miles*

Tim Barringer, Jason Rosenfeld & Alison Smith, *Pre-Raphaelites. Victorian Avant-Garde*, London: Tate Publishing, 2012, 256 pp., fully illustrated, £24.99. ISBN Hbk 978184976 0157, Pbk 978185437 9306.

This is the handsome catalogue of the recent exhibition at Tate Britain, whose organisers argued, as the book’s sub-title suggests, that the Pre-Raphaelites should be recognised as a group playing an adventurous and significant part of the development of modern Western art. In this review, I will mainly be discussing the catalogue, but I will sometimes refer to the exhibition at Tate Britain whence it derives; I hope readers will not find this confusing.

The opening chapter is entitled ‘Victorian Avant-Garde’, and in it Barringer

and Rosenfeld argue their case with energy and conviction. They contend that the early work of the Pre-Raphaelites registered their participation in the rapidly changing world of which London was the economic centre; they rejected prevailing conventions to offer an art which was 'difficult, unruly and distinctive', while the second generation of Pre-Raphaelites offered a 'mythic visual language' for the emerging culture of the end of the century. Influenced by the emergence of photography, they employed an 'original realist idiom' that challenged expectation, as in Hunt's *The Awakening Conscience*, and Millais' *Christ in the House of his Parents*. They were prepared to extend the social range of those depicted, and they shared and contributed to the contemporary interest in natural history. The importance of Ford Madox Brown is emphasised: he was 'both leader and follower, simultaneously teaching and learning from the PRB'. Attention is also paid to the work of the sculptors in the group, Thomas Woolner and Alexander Munro.

Although the Brotherhood was all male, its influence extended to women artists such as Elizabeth Siddall and Rosa Brett, although the latter abandoned a promising career to take on 'a domestic role within her family'. Jane Morris is praised for her embroidery, and 'for collaborating in the creation of the images in which she appears as a sitter', mostly in paintings by Rossetti and photographs by John Robert Parsons. Julia Margaret Cameron is commended for responding to Rossetti's images of women 'by substituting female agency for the dominant male gaze'. Attention is drawn to the creators of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., and to the subsequent development of the Arts and Crafts movement. Morris's movement into Socialism is recognised, and *News from Nowhere* described as a 'Pre-Raphaelite vision of the future' – which perhaps underplays its Marxist insistence on the necessary precondition of revolution. In the concluding section the amount of recent scholarship devoted to the Pre-Raphaelites is demonstrated, and the reader is invited to agree that many of our own preoccupations may be found to have been 'vividly explored by the Pre-Raphaelites, the Victorian avant-garde, at the moment of inception of modern society'. The effective contrast of the implied politics of the exhibition with those of its 1984 predecessor is amusingly pointed up by a photograph of Margaret Thatcher emphatically pointing out to Leslie Parris and Peter Palumbo some qualities in one of the exhibited works. Alison Smith's succeeding chapter 'Medium and Method in Pre-Raphaelite Painting' supports the case from a technical point of view, emphasising the vividness achieved by the use of white grounds.

The main body of the book deals successively with the eight themes, each of which occupied a gallery in the exhibition. We are given detailed information about all of the one hundred and seventy five items exhibited, most of which are illustrated in colour. The first two sections, 'Origins', and 'Manifesto', deal with the early days of the movement, and the next four are more thematic. 'History'

illustrates the appeal to the Pre-Raphaelites of the past, particularly as known to them through literature, especially Dante, Shakespeare, Keats and Tennyson; Rossetti's water-colours and Burne-Jones's *Sidonia von Bork* seem to me outstanding; Morris's *La Belle Iseult* also appears here. 'Nature' was a major theme, as advocated by Ruskin and seen most attractively in Brown's two paintings, *An English Autumn Afternoon* and *The Hayfield*, while Millais' *Ophelia* floats into this category too. In 'Salvation' it is argued that the Pre-Raphaelites contributed to the religious debates of the period by making novel use of traditional Christian iconography in new contexts; there is also a stress on the democratic impulse, as seen in Brown's *Work* and Henry Wallis's *The Stonebreaker* – perhaps this is how some of Brown's simple furniture, now at Kelmscott Manor, finds itself here. Two themes are brought out in 'Beauty'; the turn towards music and suggestiveness in the art of the later part of the century, perhaps originating with Millais' *Autumn Leaves* of 1855–6, and the celebration of female beauty, especially by Rossetti, seen in *Bocca Baciata*, *Beata Beatrix*, *The Beloved*, *The Blue Bower*, *Monna Vanna* and *Lady Lilith* – though his only painting using Jane Morris as a model (*Astarte Syriaca*) appears in the final section (where it will be joined in the Washington exhibition by *La Pia*). 'Beauty' ends with Simeon Solomon's fine *Bacchus* and Burne-Jones's haunting *Maria Zambaco*.

Much is made of the extension of the idea of Pre-Raphaelitism to include the beginnings of the Arts and Crafts movement, and so Morris and his colleagues play a larger part than in previous exhibitions devoted to the Pre-Raphaelites. Their work is mostly to be found in the seventh section, strikingly but un-theologically entitled 'Paradise'. Items of craft include *The Sleeping Beauty* tile panel, textiles, calligraphy, embroideries including two from the *Holy Grail* series, the magnificent *Peacock and Bird* carpet, as well as socialist publications, the Kelmscott Press *Chaucer*, and two Burne-Jones stained-glass windows of 1890 – fewer perhaps than one might have expected. Furniture includes the *Backgammon Players' Cabinet* by Webb and Burne-Jones, the *Ladies and Animals* sideboard by Burne-Jones, a Sussex chair by Webb, a clavichord by Arnold Dolmetsch and Burne-Jones, and the great four-poster bed from Kelmscott Manor, with its pelmet and bed-curtains by May Morris and her assistants, and the 1910 bedspread embroidered by May and her mother. It was surprising and interesting to see the bed in a lofty gallery rather than a small bedroom, and one could perhaps appreciate the decorative work even better here. The catalogue pays a well-deserved tribute to May's work as designer and embroiderer. But it was odd in the exhibition to find that the painting near the bed was Burne-Jones's fine and serious portrait of Georgiana, rather than Rossetti's *Water-Willow*, which would have been more appropriate in the context. Indeed it is surprising to find that, although the book's cover offers the central image of Rossetti's *Astarte Syriaca* – not, in my view, one

of his best works – none of the other major Rossetti paintings of Jane appears, as noted above. This is no doubt due to the organisers' understandable desire to reduce the emphasis on 'stunners' and stunnery so liked by romantic writers – and many members of the public – and to show Jane as a serious person – as she appears in the valuable new edition of her letters recently published by Jan Marsh and Frank Sharp. Jane does, however, appear in Morris's early painting of her, as well as in Max Beerbohm's 1904 caricatural depiction of her, with numerous other art-folk, in Rossetti's back garden.

The final section is called 'Mythologies', and argues that from the 1870s the emphasis on detail in early Pre-Raphaelitism gave way to freer forms of treatment. This was combined with various types of realism by Brown, Hunt and Millais, but was at its most influential on the development of European painting through the proto-symbolist work of Rossetti and Burne-Jones. Some rapprochement occurred with post-Renaissance art, as the artists sought to widen the range of their appeal, using 'the new strategies for marketing works' that were becoming available through galleries such as the Grosvenor, which opened in 1877. Burne-Jones was the main figure, 'offering up his art as an imaginative alternative to the extreme materialism of Victorian Britain'; *The Golden Stairs*, *King Cophetua* and *the Beggar Maid*, three paintings from the Perseus cycle, and *Love among the Ruins* are there to make the case.

The book concludes – apart from the extensive bibliography and notes on the exhibited works – with an account by Elizabeth Prettejohn of 'The Pre-Raphaelite Legacy'. Prettejohn has discussed the British and French avant-gardes in her 2000 book, *The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites*, and so is well qualified to offer a point of view. This she does in some detail, demonstrating the falsity of the view that the Pre-Raphaelites dropped out of public attention until the revival during the 1960s. In fact, they were known and regularly discussed, if sometimes unfavourably, in the intervening period. Rossetti's 'powerful female figures' played an important part in the development of European Symbolism, as in the work of Fernand Khnopff, whose powerful *I Lock the Door upon Myself* is illustrated, as did the work of Burne-Jones, whose obituary Khnopff wrote; their influence, Prettejohn argues, is also felt in Picasso's Blue period, in Munch and in Klimt, and afterwards in Surrealism. Dali wrote an article in 1936 in which he drew attention to 'l'Éternel Féminine préraphaélite', and included among the illustrations *Ophelia*, *The Hireling Shepherd* and *Beata Beatrix*. Prettejohn agrees that the Pre-Raphaelite legacy, accepted by Dali, was repudiated by the 'mainstream modernist movements centred more exclusively on Paris', which she traces to the history of modern art given by Julius Meier-Graefe; this was translated into English in 1908, and influenced Roger Fry among others. She shows that critics in New York in 1957 could see the work of the Pre-Raphaelites as challenging 'the

standard orthodoxies of MoMA and Francocentric modernism', and concludes that it is their 'stubborn refusal to be assimilated into the modernist mainstream that accounts for the vexations and contradictions of the Pre-Raphaelite legacy, as well as its sheer persistence'.

This is a bravura argument, which cannot be ignored. Yet it still seems to me that works such as Manet's *Olympe*, Cézanne's *Mont St. Victoire*, and Van Gogh's *Cornfield* possess an authoritative modernity not challenged by any of the works in this excellent catalogue, except possibly some by Madox Brown. There was indeed one great radical painter in early nineteenth-century England, J.M.W. Turner, but, despite Ruskin, his legacy was not to be taken up in his own country.

*Peter Faulkner*

Paola Spinozza & Elisa Bizzotto, *The Germ: Origins and Progenies of Pre-Raphaelite Interart Aesthetics*, Cultural Interactions: Studies in the Relationship between the Arts Vol. 24, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2012, 284 pp. Thirteen b/w illustrations, £40. Pbk, ISBN 9783034302982; eBook ISBN 9783035104264.

Chaotic, wide-ranging, ambitious and formally complex, the short-lived Pre-Raphaelite magazine *The Germ* embodies all the frustrations and delights of Pre-Raphaelitism. It folded in 1850 after only four issues, when its heady combination of poems, pictures, reviews and didactic manifestos on Pre-Raphaelite art practice failed to attract enough readers to make it commercially viable. Nevertheless, as Paola Spinozzi and Elisa Bizzotto argue in *The Germ: Origins and Progenies of Pre-Raphaelite Interart Aesthetics*, the magazine's cultural significance far outlasted its brief existence. This book contends that 'it was thanks to the magazine that verbal/visual Pre-Raphaelitism gained resonance in and after the second half of the nineteenth century', and furthermore, that its influence on *fin-de-siècle* and Modernist little magazines means that it should 'be appreciated as a major cultural enterprise'. (pp. 8–9)

One of the great strengths of this book is its sensible and logical organisation, complemented by a refreshing lack of jargon. It begins by investigating the origins of the magazine and the artistic biographies of its contributors, then analyses its literary and artistic innovations. Finally, it discusses the influence of its 'interart' aesthetics on the artists' magazines of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The first chapter discusses the magazine's beginnings, placing it within its critical contexts past and present. Chapter Two, 'Biographical Perspectives on *The Germ*', rather daringly argues against the grain of much contemporary criti-



cism by suggesting that ‘Only a biographical analysis on every contributor can shut generalizations and reveal diversities’. (p. 42) Helpfully subtitled ‘Who and How’, this chapter convinces in its refusal to impose a unified project and perspective on a group characterised as much by formal and ideological diversity as any common purpose. In an effort to resist the ‘negative homogenizing effect’ of overlooking individual personalities and proclivities, the chapter points out the ways in which *The Germ* thrives on difference in terms of form, content and authorship. (p. 41) Fourteen subjects are addressed: Frederic Stephens, John Tupper, John Orchard, Coventry Patmore, William Michael, Dante Gabriel and Christina Rossetti, Thomas Woolner, William Bell Scott, Robert Calder Campbell, Walter Howell Deverell, James Collinson, Ford Madox Brown and William Holman Hunt. These are grouped according to their specialties: critics and prose writers first, followed by poets and visual artists. This instructive arrangement helps lay the critical groundwork for the discussion of the creative work in the following chapters, and encourages us to reappraise lesser-known figures. For instance, the section on Frederic Stephens boldly claims him as ‘the most important early historiographer of Pre-Raphaelitism after William Michael Rossetti’, preparing readers for the discussion of his *Germ* essays in Chapter Three. (p. 54)

Closely examining the essays of Tupper, Orchard and Stephens, as well as Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s short story ‘Hand and Soul’, Chapter Three defines and discusses what it calls ‘aesthetic prose’, a mode of Pre-Raphaelite writing which ‘delves into the origin and reverberations of artistic creativity, explores the endeavours of the artist, and enunciates the criteria for evaluating artworks’. (p. 99) Observing that this innovative form prefigures the vocabulary, cadences and concerns of Aesthetic and Decadent writing, it argues that *fin-de-siècle* writers such as Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, Vernon Lee, Arthur Symons and William Butler Yeats were influenced by this highly self-conscious Pre-Raphaelite mode of discussing art. Particularly persuasive is the account of Rossetti’s ‘Hand and Soul’, which examines the ways in which medieval mysticism and Neo-Platonic thought shape the painter-poet’s fictional treatment of his artistic identity. His story becomes an aesthetic space in which his English and Italian heritage can be considered alongside his dual identity as a painter-poet. The chapter suggests that this self-reflexive ‘portrait’, which blends the artistic and the biographical, resurfaces in Modernist works such as James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914–1915), and Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* (1928). Deeper analysis of this provocative suggestion is sadly not undertaken, but this comparison will hopefully stimulate further investigation of the underexplored connections between literary Modernism and Pre-Raphaelite prose.

The fourth chapter returns to the theme of diversity and difference, positing that the poetry in *The Germ* demonstrates that while ‘realism was a major pursuit, none of the contributors could achieve a unified vision of reality’. Yet their

‘poetic language’ shares a desire ‘to capture reality in its outward manifestations as well as in its innermost, concealed essence’ by exploring the ‘contrast between “realistic” and “visionary” attitudes’. (p. 137) It is in this chapter where the challenge of Pre-Raphaelite diversity becomes apparent. While providing valuable insights about each poet’s output, the range of writers and works means that that the poetry cannot always be analysed in sufficient depth, and the inclusion of minor figures here seems over-hasty at times. For instance, only one or two paragraphs are devoted to the poetry of Collinson, Orchard, William Michael Rossetti, and Campbell. The extensive literature review which opens the chapter might have been trimmed in order to accommodate a lengthier consideration of the poems. Yet this background information about the connections between Aesthetic and Symbolist literature, explored through the critical work of Walter Hamilton, John Dixon Hunt and Lothar Honnighausen, is elegantly and usefully summarised here.

Curiously, Christina Rossetti’s ‘Repining’ is also discussed in this section, rather than the more obviously Pre-Raphaelite ‘Dream-Land’, which forecasts the movement’s concentration on pure aesthetic spaces and liminal states. While it is argued that the ‘oscillation between realism and surrealism’ qualify ‘Repining’ as ‘a poem with distinctive Pre-Raphaelite features’, it might have been worth investigating the ways in which Rossetti’s Christian *Germ* poems challenge the amatory medievalism of the male Pre-Raphaelite project.

Chapter five considers *The Germ* as a prototype for later artists’ magazines, tracing a genealogy from *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* through to *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy*. The chapter begins with a thoughtful comparison with *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*. Both were concerned with ‘the pursuit of authenticity’, the ‘longing for beauty’ and ‘the idealization of the Middle Ages’, yet they originated from different ‘cultural milieus’. Founded by partially self-taught Royal Academy artists, and informed by the Anglo-Italian background of the Rossettis, *The Germ* was an urban enterprise characterised by ‘naiveté and eccentricity’. *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine* had a precedent in Oxford undergraduate magazines and therefore ‘must be related to the tradition of university journalism’ which was more concerned with ‘addressing social problems’. (pp. 180–181)

Of these two Pre-Raphaelite journals, it is the more radical and experimental *Germ* which is seen as the progenitor of the Decadent little magazines. The interart aesthetics and self-conscious ambitions of *The Germ* are revived in *The Century Guild Hobby Horse*, *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy*, whose debates on art reframe questions originally raised in Orchard, Rossetti, Tupper and Stephens’s work. A review of supporting critical literature about *The Century Guild Hobby Horse* is interspersed with analysis of its co-editor Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo’s aesthetic manifesto ‘The Guild Flag’s Unfurling’. Arthur Symons’s ‘Editorial

Note' on the first issue of *The Savoy* is read as a reinterpretation of Pre-Raphaelite poetics. Aubrey Beardsley, contributor to *The Yellow Book*, and artistic editor of *The Savoy*, is this chapter's most important figure. His illustrated, unfinished novel, *Under The Hill*, is discussed at length, and finally seen as the realisation of Rossetti's 'quest for simultaneity and indissolubility in visual and verbal art'. (p. 209)

Perhaps this book's most provocative claim is that *The Germ* is not only 'proto-Decadent' but 'proto-Modernist', because its 'writings on aesthetic topics' are 'genealogically related' to 'the manifestos in the little magazines of Modernism'. (pp. 199–200) One wishes this premise were as fully explored as the earlier considerations of the Pre-Raphaelite magazine's influence on Aesthetic and Decadent publications. The chapter's closing section on 'The Germ in the Twentieth Century' regrettably does not analyse particular magazines, images or texts in depth, though it does provide a useful summary of the origins of some Modernist magazines such as *The English Review* and *the transatlantic review*, and indicates directions for further research into the connections between Pre-Raphaelitism and literary Modernism.

Another challenge in writing about Pre-Raphaelitism in general and *The Germ* in particular is that both literary and visual material must be taken into consideration, and it is a testament to the talents of Spinozzi and Bizzotto that they accomplish this task with clarity and grace. Their inclusion of marginal figures such as Coventry Patmore, John Tupper and Robert Calder Campbell will be of use to scholars of early Pre-Raphaelitism; their summary of the magazine's origins will make this a valuable reference work for future scholarship on the subject of *The Germ*. The book's serious analysis of the magazine's 'aesthetic prose' helps to address the dearth of published scholarship on prose works in *The Germ*, and presents a convincing case for taking seriously the neglected work of Pre-Raphaelitism's critical writers. Grounded in meticulous research and defended with convincing close textual analyses, this book is a valuable contribution to Pre-Raphaelite studies.

*Dinah Roe*

William Waters, *Angels and Icons Pre-Raphaelite Stained Glass 1850–1870*, Abbots Morton, Worcs, UK: Seraphim, 2012, 368 pp. Hbk, £50. ISBN 0780953280131.

*Angels and Icons Pre-Raphaelite Stained Glass 1850–1870* is a title which will be eagerly anticipated by those interested in Victorian stained glass, as wide-ranging books on this subject are scarce and thorough research about the major High Victorian studios is badly needed. Waters' book possesses two major objectives;

to connect stained glass from the later 1850s until about 1870 with Pre-Raphaelite art, and to highlight the work of five of the most distinguished High Victorian studios: Clayton & Bell; Heaton, Butler & Bayne; Lavers Barraud & Westlake; James Powell & Sons, and Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co.

The author sets out 'to present stained glass as a fine art', and to re-establish the reputation of 'some of the best windows in existence'. (p. 11) The argument basically asserts that through J.R. Clayton, Pre-Raphaelitism became a major influence on stained glass, and that his windows were essentially a translation of Pre-Raphaelite principles into another medium. Clayton's influence then spread to the other firms, until it was challenged by two factors: increasing commercial success which led to a decline in originality, and a new Classically-derived aesthetic which gave rise to a new pictorial style. Morris, Marshall, Faulker & Co. are associated with this latter development.

Waters provides some interesting material on Clayton's early career as book illustrator, ecclesiastical decorator and sculptor, and unpicks the complex early collaborations between Clayton & Bell and other firms. He does well in acknowledging the work of the little-known designers who worked for the major firms; the reader learns about the work of J. M. Allen and Alfred Hassam, and is shown the major role which they played for Lavers & Barraud, and Heaton, Butler & Bayne. A short section on James Powell & Sons outlines early work for the firm by Burne-Jones, and Madox Brown, before suggesting that Henry Holiday was a major influence in the subsequent rejection of medievalism.

The author's attitude to Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. is peculiar. He argues that the strength of the Firm's stained glass was a consequence of the fine-art background of its designers: 'As painters, the Morris's [*sic*] group was not afraid to introduce looser and wider expanses of enamel with thicker brushes. Previous experience in the studio gave them another advantage; it meant that their colour sense originated with oil and watercolour painting not reared on the range of coloured glass'. (p. 270) This passage is difficult to reconcile with the Firm's goals, and contradicts Waters's own statement that Morris chose the colours. (p. 284) Burne-Jones (styled here as 'Jones') receives most of the attention, but few will agree that he was essentially 'an autobiographical artist', or that he considered stained glass a way of giving the masses access to his art. (p. 296) The account of the Firm's stained glass ends in 1870, in line with the scope of this book and so does not attempt to engage with some of its best-known windows.

Sadly this book contains many flaws. The biggest problem is the lack of editorial control. There are many errors, some of which – such as 'Street's influence on stained glass cannot be underestimated' (p.77) – are quite confusing. The same five-line indented quote is reproduced both on page 37 and page 39, and the text is very repetitive. There is no Contents page, no List of Illustrations and no Index. To all appearances, this book is privately published.

The absence of editorial control also probably accounts for the vague terminology. Problematical words such 'realism' and 'modern' are used repeatedly and indiscriminately, allowing the reader little chance of understanding what the author is trying to say. For example: 'By making the figures occupy the whole of the picture space he [Clayton] has obviated the illusion of depth, a danger when working with this level of realism. The stories, interpreted as modern drama are retold and made accessible to a congregation in search of reassurance after the tremors created by Darwin's recent publication'. (p. 92) What is the reader to make of this? In what way is the *Annunciation*, or the *Betrayal of Christ* either 'realism' or 'modern drama'? Why throw in Darwin, and where is the author's research to show that the congregation at St Michael's Cornhill was upset by his writing? This example is rather symptomatic of the study as a whole: the author makes a statement, supplies little evidence to support it, and then carries on as though his theory had been proven beyond reasonable doubt. Much of the text is essentially an expression of the author's opinion, backed up with a few primary sources. The really frustrating part of this is that Waters clearly has some valuable insights to communicate, but the way the information is presented prevents the reader from understanding how he has reached his conclusions.

One of the fallacies which underlies the narrative is a Whiggish concept of 'Progress', seen as the driving force behind stained glass: 'Not content to stay with the progress Clayton had made, Hassam and Bayne continued to build on his advances and extend the expressiveness of the medium'. (p. 198) The author implies that it was some abstract idea of progress which determined the appearance of windows, rather than more pragmatic factors such as the demands of the patron, the context of the architecture and the manipulation of the materials.

Another consistent flaw is the lack of context applied to primary sources. For example, when discussing the west window of St Mary, Buckland St Mary, Somerset, Waters assumes that Clayton & Bell were commissioned by the architect Benjamin Ferrey, described as: 'a follower of Pugin (he later wrote his biography) whose revivalist views he shared. This, no doubt, directed the design that the window was to take'. (p. 87) Personally I doubt this assertion very much: all the windows in the church were commissioned by an assertive Tractarian priest (John Edwin Lance), and if anyone influenced Clayton's design it was Lance, not Ferrey. In a similar way, Waters seems to take the writings of Pugin and *The Ecclesiologist* at face value, often quoting their polemics as though they were straightforward descriptions of fact, rather than rhetorical attempts to further religious and aesthetic agendas.

Glass painters whom the author does not like are dismissed with simplistic statements: 'In general, with the distribution of Pre-Raphaelite ideas, stained glass was to improve. Less adventurous clients continued to patronise conservative firms who persisted with an alternative tradition that stemmed from the 18th

century. They were content to perpetuate religious platitudes'. (p. 69) This is not only a distortion, it is an irresponsible statement which might well serve to justify removal of Victorian windows. Frederick Preedy is dismissed in a patronising manner, as an example of 'Pre-Raphaelite' glass spreading to 'the provinces', despite that fact that he was producing strikingly original windows before any of the glass painters discussed in this book had made any stained glass. Medievalist historicism is consistently treated as conservative and mechanical, while Albert Moore's classicist historicism is seen as radical and artistic.

When technical issues are discussed there is little real engagement with the processes of glass painting. Picking up on the rhetoric of Pugin and the ecclesiologists, Waters asserts that 'Pre-Raphaelite' glass painters avoided brown enamel: 'This respect for the materials naturally demanded the eschewing of brown enamel that other firms used to create a bogus antiquated look'. (p. 67) All glass painters use brown enamel: this is the paint which is used to create the major outlines (it looks black when applied thickly). Here it is not the material which is significant. It is the way that it is applied. If the author has understood this issue, he has not communicated it to the reader. When the appearance of a window by one of the author's favoured firms is poor, he consistently blames this on the translation of the cartoon onto the glass, but no proof is offered to support these assertions.

The text is outshone by some wonderful photography by Alastair Carew-Cox. Some of the small images are slightly over-exposed or dark, but the large plates are as good as any published images I have seen of Victorian stained glass. This visual element is supported by extensive captions, and while some of the analysis contained within shares the faults of the main text, there is much of use here. This book will be useful to those keen to learn to attribute Victorian windows: the hand of Clayton, Grylls, Hassam, Bayne, Westlake and others are illustrated with such clarity that, in this sense at least, the book will be a valuable reference point.

*Jim Cheshire*

*A critical edition of the private diaries of Robert Proctor: the life of a librarian at the British Museum*, edited by J. H. Bowman, with a foreword by John Goldfinch. Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2010, 428 pp. Eight black-and-white and five coloured illustrations, Hbk £99.95. ISBN 0773436340

Robert Proctor, who was born in 1868, was a famous bibliographer. He began his career by pulling fragments of older books out of the early bindings in Corpus Christi library, Oxford. Then, after taking his degree, he was allowed to catalogue

the incunabula in the Bodleian. From 1893 he held a fulltime post in the British Museum, and managed to establish order among the incunabula there. His method became known as the Proctor system and is still in use today

Proctor met William Morris in 1894 and became 'a fanatical admirer'. He was devoted to Morris, and had collected Kelmscott Press books from the start. He felt he was expected to engage in a similar printing venture himself, and developed a Greek font (Otter); this was based on the type employed in the 'Complutensian Polyglot', and was used for an edition of the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus (1904). He also taught himself Icelandic, in order to translate the sagas. Following Morris's lead, he became a committee member of the SPAB, and expressed political views of a left-wing nature (e.g. he was against the Boer War). Quite unexpectedly, he died in 1903 while walking in the Austrian Alps; he was only thirty five years old.

In this book his personal diaries for the years 1899–1900, 1900–1901 and 1902–1903 – the year in which Proctor disappeared in the Tyrol – are laid out, together with extensive editorial notes by J.H. Bowman. From 1897 Proctor lived with his mother in a large new house at Oxshott near Leatherhead; it was called Midgarth. The train service enabled him to fulfil his commitments in London. He leaves early but is always back home in the evenings, when he finds time to read to his mother; on 28 October 1899 his patience ran out: 'Read Forest Lovers, which is *blasted rot*'. (*The Forest Lovers* by Maurice Hewlett is a medieval romp loosely based on Malory; his mother insisted on his finishing it. See below) It is amazing to observe the amount of time he is away from the British Museum, rushing about London and engaging with booksellers. The diaries are full of references to Morris's books, their prices at sales, and the dispersal of his library. He also kept up with some of Morris's friends.

Therefore from our point of view the diaries are a useful work of reference if you are trying to study Morris's reception and influence at the turn of the century. There is a very full index. Here is a typical entry: the brackets are my explanations.

1899 [Thursday] Nov 2

Very wet all day. I used the new pressmarks for the first time on some 'Imitations'. In aft. got out books for accession showcase. Finished draft of 'Graeco-Latin group'. [All this describes work at Museum]. Went to Hollings for Morris books, but was not very successful. The [Kelmscott] Chaucer fetched £60 at Sotheby's yesterday. In evg. finished first piece of hangings & began second. [He has received 40 yds of Morris and Co. *Brer Rabbit* fabric; he has made the curtains and is redecorating his room.] Two pheasants arrived from Mrs Cuvelje, to whom I wrote. Read Forest Lovers. Slips to 7320 [i.e. bibliographical listing]. A wild night of wind & rain.

The trustees of William Morris's estate were Jane Morris, Sydney Cockerell and F.S. Ellis. Ellis died in 1901. Here is part of the diary entry for 7 March of that year.

Worked like a horse all day in K.L. [King's Library]; did not sit down from my coming till luncheon at 2, & from 2.20 till nearly 4. Got 13 cases in all finished for Tommy [Sir Edward Maunde Thompson, Director and Principal Librarian] to see tomorrow, & set the carpenter to work on the others. ... In aft. a letter from SCC [Cockerell] offering me the Morris trusteeship in place of Ellis! Of course I must accept, tho' I feel doubtful as to my fitness, & must talk it over before deciding. To Antiscrape, where a good deal of work, mostly disheartening, was done. My letter was in today's Times. At Gatti's were Walker Lethaby SCC Firth Winmill (who announced a marriage engagement) Shirley. Walker is now going to print – Paradise Lost! Home as usual, dog tired & not a little worried.

This led to a weekend visit to Kelmscott Manor with Cockerell later in 1901:

S[aturday] May 4. Up by 8 train for which I had a very hard run of it. Felt unsettled & did little, except letterwriting. Started at 11.40, & just caught the 12.15 at Paddington. Got to Oxford at 2.18 ... [visits the Bodleian] ... at 3.45 S.C.C. came, & and at 4 we made for the station where we found Mrs Morris. Got to Kelmscott at 6 & were warmly welcomed by Jenny & her new companion Miss Strong; then walked about the garden. Dinner at 7.30; & sat in Tapestry room; Mrs M. got out the Horace [i.e. Morris's MS version of the odes of Horace] for me to look at. When SCC went to bed (in a closet off the T.R.) I went down to mine own place just underneath, the Panelled room with corresponding closet, & wrote till 11; then to bed, cold; a humblebee on the curtain, very sleepy; I put him out into the larger room. Beautiful day.

[Sunday] May 5. Up at 8 (woke at 5.30) & let my bee out, when dressed; I then found a bath put for me in the larger room. I strolled by the river & in the garden till breakfast (9.15); Mrs Morris did not appear. Quince jelly delicious. At 10.40 for a stroll over fritillary-strewn meadows with Jenny Miss S. and SCC; back at 12, and in garden (with Mrs M. now joining us) till dinner. After this I went up into the Tap. R., found SCC and Mrs M talking business; we turned out many boxes searching for the MS of the Laxdaela, in vain. I then sat me down to read the MS. (copy by Jenny) of WM's first Iceland journey; after skimming 2 chapters went into garden & sat there till 5.35, when we had tea. Then SCC & I went for a walk; first to Kelmscott ch. which we looked at well, finding it open, & then to Langford, a most wonderful ch.; we got there just as evensong ended & the old vicar took us in tow. Got back at 8, & found them sitting down to supper. Afterwards in Tap. R., more MS of Icelandic diary. Mrs M. told SCC privately that I



was to have one of the 6 sets of the Cupid & Psyche prints. Another beautiful day, warm sun, cold in shade; cloudy after 6pm. To bed at 10.30, being cold.

[Monday] May 6. Breakfast with Jenny & Miss S. at 8.30. SCC has had earache all the time & last night could not sleep for it. Off at 9 ...

I hope the reader will forgive me for including this splendid vignette of life at Kelmscott, its joys and its perils, as I do not think it has been noticed before. Though of course he is not Pepys, Proctor has his moments and this is one of them.

*John Purkis*

## Notes on Contributors

Gary Aho was a Professor in the English Department at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst for thirty years, retiring in 1996. He has been a member of the William Morris Society since 1974, and was the President of the William Morris Society in the United States from 1986–1989. He continues to work on Morris, publishing articles in recent Newsletters, and editing the on-line edition of his Icelandic Journals.

Phillippa Bennett is a Senior Lecturer In English at the University of Northampton, and Vice Chair of the William Morris Society. She has published a number of articles on William Morris and co-edited *William Morris in the Twenty-First Century* (Peter Lang, 2010). She is particularly interested in Morris's last romances and their relationship to his aesthetic and political ideals.

Jim Cheshire is Reader in Cultural History at the University of Lincoln. His recent work includes an article on Gustave Doré's illustrations of Tennyson, and a co-written book about the stained glass of Lincoln Cathedral. A monograph, *Tennyson and Mid-Victorian Publishing*, will be published by Palgrave Macmillan during 2015.

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.

Jodi-Anne ('Jo') George is a Senior Lecturer in English and Drama at the University of Dundee, where she also runs the JOOT Theatre Company. She has published on topics relating to Old English poetry, early drama, the Pre-Raphaelites, Lady 'Speranza' Wilde, and the poetry of Don Paterson. Her current research includes a monograph on *Everyman in Performance*, and a major project on the Pre-Raphaelites and the theatre. She is also editor of the Newsletter of the William Morris Society UK.

Norman Kelvin is Distinguished Professor of English Emeritus, at the City University of New York. He has edited *The Collected Letters of William Mor-*

ris; published selected Morris lectures under the title, *William Morris on Art and Socialism*; and critical studies of George Meredith and of E.M. Forster, as well as articles on Morris, Walter Pater and American literature.

Jan Marsh is President of the William Morris Society, and has published extensively on the Pre-Raphaelites. With Frank Sharp, she has edited the *Correspondence of Jane Morris*, recently published (2012) by Boydell & Brewer.

Rosie Miles teaches English at the University of Wolverhampton and is co-editor (with Pippa Bennett) of *William Morris in the Twenty-First Century* (2010). Her *Victorian Poetry in Context* (Bloomsbury) is forthcoming during July 2013.

Tony Pinkney's work on Morris includes *William Morris and Oxford: The Campaigning Years, 1879–1895* (illuminati Books, 2007) and *William Morris: The Blog* (Kelmsgarth Press, 2011). His Morris-and-utopias blog continues at <http://williammorrisunbound.blogspot.com/> and he is now writing a sequel to *News from Nowhere*.

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

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# 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@williammorrisociety.org.uk](mailto:editor@williammorrisociety.org.uk), or on a CD, and marked for the attention of the Editor, *JWMS*, to The William Morris Society, Kelmscott House, 26 Upper Mall, Hammersmith, London W6 9TA, United Kingdom
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