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## William Morris Society Newsletter: January 2005

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### THE William Morris Society in the United States

#### Newsletter July - December 2005

#### A Letter to Members from Florence Boos

The Morris Society has been active in these past six months. It organized two well-attended sessions on *The International Morris* and *Taking Liberties with the Pre-Raphaelites* at the Modern Language Association convention in Philadelphia in December, and Mark Samuels Lasner arranged for us to view nineteenth-century and Morris-association manuscripts at the Rosenbach Museum and Library. Members from Japan, Canada and Great Britain, as well as the us, attended our sessions and excursion, and more than twenty of us gathered for dinner and drinks afterwards at a large table at a nearby restaurant.

Six members of the Governing Committee were able to gather for our sessions and the annual meeting, a boon for me in a year of transition to a new president. We met at one end of the dinner table to conduct our business, which in this case included the election of officers, welcoming new Governing Committee members Fran Durako and Adrienne Sharp to the Governing Committee, and the presentation of a first edition of *The Defence of Guenevere* to Mark Samuels Lasner, in token commemoration of his excellent tenure as the Society's long-time president. Among other things, we discussed efforts to make the Society tax-exempt, maintain our accounts separate from the uk Society, increase our revenues, prepare a membership directory, plan future events, sponsor a projected Morris Online Edition ([www.morrisedition.org](http://www.morrisedition.org)), and set up a committee to award this year's Joseph R. Dunlap Fellowship and a newly created William Morris Society Fellowship. I am grateful for the goodwill and active support of the Committee and members of the Society, and believe that our prospects for the future are strong.

This fall and winter our webmaster, Tom Tobin, has also worked to enlarge our web site ([www.morrissociety.org](http://www.morrissociety.org)) to include contributions in several languages, aided actively by Anna Matyukhina of the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, who provided texts of Russian-language articles by and about Morris's art and socialism, and a lovely photograph of the Morris and Co. tapestry in the Hermitage's Museum. Tom has also added some links in Japanese and Hungarian; Sean de Vega contributed a Spanish translation; and my husband Bill and I have gathered a few references for French and German pages. We also hope to coordinate with Graham Seaman and other contributors to [www.marxist.org](http://www.marxist.org) to scan more of Morris's texts in languages other than English, and invite readers fluent in languages other than English and Russian to help us improve these sites.

Finally, we hope to grace the *Newsletter* with brief relevant articles about new lines of research, current events and initiatives, visits to appropriate sites, and reviews of relevant plays, books, and musical settings, and we ask readers to consider submission of such contributions. (*Newsletter* editor: Shannon Rogers, 77 Church Street, Kingston, pa 18704, [rogers@juniata.edu](mailto:rogers@juniata.edu))

I have been teaching this spring at the Université Paul Valéry in Montpellier (in southern France), where *News from Nowhere* has figured in two of the country's centralized national examinations--the capes (for prospective Lycée-teachers) and the Agrégation (for teachers of more advanced courses in the Lycée and universities). The Université Paul Valéry offered three courses and assorted supplementary lectures devoted to Morris's utopian romance, seen in France primarily as a central text in the history of ideas rather than as a literary work. It has been gratifying to see Morris's work featured, and several new surveys and collections have appeared during the year, among them *News from Nowhere: William*

*Morris*, ed. by Isabelle Gadoin, with an introduction by Peter Faulkner, and *William Morris: News from Nowhere*, ed. by Béatrice Laurent, to which I contributed one of twelve articles by US, UK, Canadian, and French Morrisians.

Along with many of you, I look forward to the conference on *Morris in the 21st Century* at London's Royal Holloway College from July 7th through the 10th of this year. Over my lifetime I have attended four conferences in three countries devoted exclusively to Morris's work. Michael Wolff convened the first in 1973 in Amherst, Massachusetts, and Ruskin College at Oxford hosted the second to celebrate the centenary of *News from Nowhere*. Peter Faulkner and others organized the third in 1996 at Exeter College, Oxford, the college where Morris took his degree, and David and Sheila Latham convened the fourth at the University of Toronto in 2000. I met and spoke with many friends and scholars at these conferences, some of whom are no longer alive to attend another--the Italian writer and translator Edwige Schulte, who spoke in 1990; the gifted historian of Morris's socialism, Nicholas Salmon, who spoke at Exeter in 1996; the art historian and former president of the Morris Society, Hans Brill, who addressed the final dinner that year in the College hall; and the Australian poet, critic and publisher Norman Talbot, who invited Bill and me to share a meal in an Oxford pub in 1996. His premature death last year deprived several of us of a good friend and the world of a wise and eloquent poetic voice.

All of these conferences were rare and affirming experiences, evoking anew the importance of Morris' ideals. Mindful of our predecessors, we look forward to another generation of talks, communal dining-hall meals and critical fellowship. And for those who are unable to attend, we hope to provide some account of conference discussions and events.

I am also very pleased to be able to announce that the us Society has organized a trip to the Byrdcliffe exhibition at Winterthur (see details below) on August 13th, in honor of the deep Ruskinian roots of the Byrdcliffe Arts Colony, a twelve-hundred acre turn-of-the-century Arts and Crafts retreat founded in Woodstock, New York by Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead (1854–1929) and his wife Jane Byrd McCall (1861–1955). Whitehead was an Englishman who had studied with Ruskin at Oxford; and Jane, a painter from a wealthy and historic Philadelphia family who had audited Ruskin's lectures, attended the Académie Julian in Paris and appeared before Queen Victoria when she was 27. When they inaugurated Byrdcliffe in 1903, they dedicated it to modern design and to an Arts-and-Crafts vision of a community in which artists and crafts people living together might experience a 'simple and satisfying life amid beautiful surroundings.' Under Ralph Whitehead's direction, for many years it housed visiting painters and crafts workers in a wide range of media, including painting and furniture; and their son Peter willed the property to 'The Woodstock Guild,' which presently hosts a national artist-in-residence program on the site.

Thanks and best wishes, finally, to all who have responded to our newsletters with queries, suggestions and offers of help. We hope to hear from more of you in the months and years to come.

In fellowship,

Florence Boos

*President, William Morris Society in the United States*

### **Notices and Society News**

#### **New Members of the Governing Committee**

We are happy to welcome two new members to the Morris Society Governing Committee. Fran Durako owns the Kelmscott Bookshop in Washington, D. C. She writes that 'My interest in William Morris is part of my broader interests in the book arts, private presses, Victorian literature and art, and the Pre-Raphaelites. As a book collector, I have assembled a modest personal library that includes a few Kelmscott Press titles, and many books by and about William Morris and on the Pre-Raphaelites, particularly Edward Burne-Jones.'

Adrienne Sharp is a second-year master's student at The Bard Graduate Center for Decorative Arts, Design, and Culture in New York City. She writes that 'I've been specifically interested in Morris and the Pre-Raphaelites for many years. In 2002, my interest in Morris, Rossetti and Burne-Jones led me to Oxford University, where as a student enrolled in UMass-Amherst's Oxford Summer Seminar, I completed an independent study on the Oxford Union Murals. I am currently studying various aspects of nineteenth century British art at the BGC, particularly Orientalism and world's fairs.'

Joseph R. Dunlap Memorial Fellowship and William Morris Society Fellowship Winners

This year the Morris Society in the United States awarded two fellowships to support the study and appreciation of Morris's work. The Joseph R. Dunlap Memorial Fellowship was given to Dr. Piers Hale, a historian of science writing on Morris's contributions to the understanding of biology and the environment.

Piers received his doctorate from the Department of History at Lancaster University, England in 2003. In his thesis, entitled *For Ecosocialism: Re-reading William Morris, Robert Blatchford and Edward Carpenter on Labour, Nature and Embodiment, 1884-1900*, he examined nineteenth-century socialist conceptions of the relationship between sustainability and justice. Piers is currently engaged in post-doctoral research at the University of British Columbia, where he teaches classes in ethics and in the history of science. On learning of his nomination, Piers wrote: 'I would like to express my gratitude to the William Morris Society and to Mrs. Dunlap in particular for the generous award you have given me under the Joseph R. Dunlap Memorial Fellowship. I am honoured to be one of the Dunlap Memorial Scholars for the coming year and shall endeavour to extend our knowledge of Morris with my research. William Morris remains a central figure in my research into the relationships among socialism, biology and the environment. Throughout the nineteenth century, concepts of biological development profoundly influenced contemporary theories of social change. This was never more so than in the decades following the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859) in which he first presented his theory of evolution by natural selection.

Throughout the 1880s, people with a range of political commitments attempted to naturalise their own politics in light of evolution--amongst them were the eminent liberal scientist (and 'Darwin's Bulldog') Thomas Henry Huxley, the revolutionary socialist Karl Marx, and the Russian-born anarchist and geographer Peter Kropotkin. I want to argue that Morris also entered the fray, and, indeed, that it is only in this light that we can get a full appreciation of his theory of socialism and social change. Beyond the immediate interest that the fruits of this perspective will have for Morris scholars, I believe that this research will also help to gain acknowledgement of Morris as a significant figure in this period of the history of science.'

In addition, the William Morris Society Fellowship was granted to Mr. Ignacio Zulueta, to help with the completion of his play-in-progress, *Red House*. Ignacio Zulueta lives and writes in Oakland, California. A graduate of Brown University's playwriting program, Mr. Zulueta is a 2005 Tournesol Playwriting Resident at San Francisco's ZSpace Studios. He describes his play as follows: '*Red House* is a full-length play about the entangled affairs of William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti told entirely from the perspective of Georgiana Burne-Jones, the self-effacing biographer of her husband and his circle. In the staid and class-obsessed Victorian era, their art was unheralded in its embrace of egalitarian spirituality, rural anachronism, and tragic romance. But what is splendid on canvas can verge on the sordid when attempted in the real world: one by one, the lives of the Pre-Raphaelites became suffused with the same ill-starred tragedy that permeated their works. The play chronicles Georgiana's rapprochement with these long suppressed betrayals. Though devoted to the legacy of her departed friends, Georgiana struggles to reconcile herself to their failings and human weaknesses. Grappling with vivid memories that make her widowed life seem shadowy by comparison, Georgiana finds herself caught in the paradox of reliving her past while simultaneously destroying it.'

Two of Mr. Zulueta's earlier plays have received awards.

We are very pleased with the high quality of these projects and look forward to hearing more of the results of their work.

#### Morris and the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings: A New Dissertation

In May, Andrea Yount of the University of Western Michigan successfully defended a dissertation largely devoted to the legacy of Morris's work for the SPAB, *Historic Preservation in Late 19th Century England, France and Germany: The Influence of William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings*. Since Florence Boos served as an outside examiner, she forwards the following abstract. Most interesting to her was the chapter on the SPAB's current activities, including a strong campaign to halt a planned expansion of Stansted Airport, which would potentially destroy dozens of historic sites and thousands of acres of natural habitat.

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), founded by artist and craftsman William Morris in 1877, sought to preserve the integrity of historic buildings by preventing unnecessary repairs and additions. William Morris's intention and that of the SPAB, as outlined by the original manifesto, was that buildings of any period had a life that was best protected through the conservative repair of what was falling into ruin and the prevention of injury to buildings by safeguarding them as much as was possible and practical. This practice became known as historic preservation.

The extremes of the Gothic Revival motivated the founding of SPAB. In the mid-nineteenth century, many historic buildings were restored to appear Gothic in style. Although some restoration had occurred in past centuries, it was in Morris's age that this practice became excessive. Early SPAB work involved speaking against restoration and providing alternate ideas to promote preservation. Due to the continued monitoring of preservation practices concerning historic buildings, along with the evolution of techniques and adaptations throughout the years, the SPAB is now the oldest and largest conservation society in Britain. The SPAB so influenced late nineteenth century perspectives of historic preservation that it motivated the foundation of similar societies in Britain, in Europe, and around the world.

This dissertation, based on many original documents from the SPAB archives in London, emphasizes the founding and development of the SPAB in the late nineteenth century. The SPAB is best understood by appreciating Morris's ideology and motivation, the popularity of the Gothic Revival and the preservation issues that evolved from it, and the SPAB's effectiveness in Britain through specific case studies. Then these issues are followed onto the continent, specifically in Germany and France, to examine the SPAB's influence there. Finally, the SPAB's twentieth century success is considered by looking at their current programs and cases.

## CONFERENCES

Victorian Periodicals and Politics: The Research Society for Victorian Periodicals Annual Meeting, Georgetown University, Washington, DC.  
September 16th-18th, 2005.

Session topics include *Domesticity Commercialized and Professionalized, Art Journals and Criticism, Socialism and Anarchism in Fin-de-Siècle Periodicals, Periodical Authorship and Audience*, a discussions on *New Digitization Projects, Periodicals and Political Reform, Fin-de-Siècle Journals, National Identities, Imperial Identities, New Topics in Periodical Studies: Dance, Dining, & Music, Poetry, Periodicals, and Imperial Politics, Feminist Politics, Religion and Religious Periodicals, Women and their Magazines*, a teaching round table and a discussion of *New Digitalization Projects*.

There will be two special lectures: by Sally Mitchell of Temple University, on *Freedom to Write: Negotiating Editorial Politics*; and by Leslie Howsam, University of Windsor: *Narratives and Editors: History and Historians in Victorian Periodical Research*.

Our webmaster, Thomas J. Tobin, is scheduled to speak on "The Politics of Small Victorian Art Periodicals," and another paper which seems of special interest to Morris Society members is Morna O'Neill's "'Good Propaganda': Walter Crane, the Periodical Press, and the Visual Culture of English Socialism."

For a conference program, see <http://www.rs4vp.org/2005conf.html>.

The 2005 Conference of the North American Victorian Studies Association

Organized by Herbert Tucker, Stephen Arata, Alison Booth, Jerome McGann and others, the 2005 NAVSA conference will be held from September 30th to October 2nd at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia. A program is available on the conference web site, <http://www.navsa2005.org>.

The 2006 NAVSA conference will occur from August 31st to September 3rd, 2006 at Purdue University, in conjunction with the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism (NASSR), and the 2007 conference will be held in Vancouver, British Columbia. Although the conference only accepts individual papers, those who might like to coordinate a Morris-related presentation along with others should contact Florence Boos.

The Third International Conference on the Arts & Crafts Movement

Barcelona, Spain. *The Role of the Arts & Crafts in the Quest for National Identity*. 19-22 October 2005.

The conference features speakers from England, Scotland, Finland, Hungary, Spain and the United States and will open with a lecture by Dr. Martin Eidelberg--*S. Bing: from Japonisme to Art Nouveau* and a private view of the exhibition at the Caixa Forum. The program includes visits to several Modernisme buildings and three tours and concludes with a panel discussion among the lecturers, open to the participants. The conference, as were the previous two, is organized by Elaine Hirsch Ellis, a board member of the William Morris Society in America. A special 10% discount offer on the Conference

Fee is being offered to members of the William Morris Society. Information:  
[www.nationalromanticismconference.com](http://www.nationalromanticismconference.com), E: [artsandcraftstours@hotmail.com](mailto:artsandcraftstours@hotmail.com).

The Marion Koogler McNay Art Museum

6000 North New Braunfels, PO Box 6069, San Antonio Texas 78209-0069.

*Waking Dreams: a Symposium on the Pre-Raphaelites*. October 28-29 2005.

Curators and Scholars Margaretta Frederick, Jan Marsh, Malcolm Warner, Stephen Wildman and others explore the historical context for and artists of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Sessions focus on Christina and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, John Everett Millais, connecting the pre-Raphaelites with the decorative arts of the period. The symposium coincides with the eponymous exhibition.

Included in the symposium fee will be unlimited access to the *Waking Dreams* exhibition for the weekend and a private viewing of related works in the Tobin Collection of Theatre Arts. A reduced fee for students will be offered, as well as a discount for early registration. To request detailed information, e-mail: [education@mcnayart.org](mailto:education@mcnayart.org) or call (210) 805-1768.

Morris at the Modern Language Convention 2005-2007

The Morris Society is planning two sessions at the Modern Language Association Convention, to be held in Washington, D. C. December 27th-30th, 2005:

Places and Spaces: Mapping the Pre-Raphaelite Aesthetic

Chaired by Hartley Spatt:

Chris Kierstead, Auburn University, *Morris and the Spatial Poetics of Europe*;

Adrienne Sharpe, Bard College, *The Great Story of the North: Morris and Co.'s Interpretations of Norse Legends for an American Project, Vinland, ca. 1883*;

Cliff Garner, University of North Texas, *Morris and Bloomsbury*;

Betsy Winakur Tontiplaphol, University of Virginia, *Morris, Hopkins and Thingspace*.

Morris and Modern Theories

Chaired by Florence Boos

Rosie Miles, University of Wolverhampton, *Morris's Poetry: (Hyper) Text and Desire*;

Martin Danahay, University of Texas at Arlington, *Toward a Postmodern Theory of Production: Baudrillard, Marx and Morris*;

Richard Kaye, Hunter College of the City College of New York, *William Morris, F. Holland Day, and the Invention of an Aestheticist-Decadent American Publishing Tradition, 1893-1899*.

Since the time of the sessions will not be known until after this newsletter has been printed, we will send out another newsletter with more exact information later this year.

In order for interested members and others to plan ahead, we are also announcing session topics for the following two years.

For 2006, the topics will be Morris and Gender (masculinities, 'new' and old women, eroticism, Victorian reformism) and Pre-Raphaelitism and the World of Victorian Art

For 2007, the topics will be Morris as Metatext: Editions, Printforms, Illustrations and The Pre-Raphaelite Family.

### Exhibitions

An Exhibition, *WAKING DREAMS: The Art of the Pre-Raphaelites from the Delaware Art Museum*, has visited or will visit eight U. S. cities from March 2005 through July 2007. Guest curated by Stephen Wildman, the curator of the Ruskin Library, Lancaster University, England, the exhibition is described as follows:

The Pre-Raphaelite movement began in 1848, when three young British artists--Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt, and John Everett Millais--banded together with other like-minded artists to revolutionize British art. Rebelling against the artistic traditions of the Royal Academy, they preferred the simplicity and monastic principles of late medieval art preceding the Renaissance master, Raphael. The Pre-Raphaelite collection of the Delaware Art Museum is the most significant outside Great Britain.

Included in this exhibition are a large group of oils and watercolors by Rossetti, as well as works by Edward Burne-Jones, Fredrick Sandys, Ford Madox Brown, Hunt, Millais, and others. Complementing

this array of two-dimensional works are decorative arts that embody the genesis of the Arts and Crafts movement, including two chairs designed by William Morris and Rossetti, jewelry, ceramics, and metalwork.

**Dates:**

- Portland Art Museum (Portland, OR) March--May 2005
- Nottingham Castle Museum & Art Gallery (Nottingham, UK) June--September 2005
- Marion Koogler McNay Art Museum (San Antonio, TX) October 2005--January 2006
- John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art (Sarasota, FL) January--April 2006
- Philbrook Museum of Art (Tulsa, OK) April--July 2006
- Frick Art & Historical Center (Pittsburgh, PA) July--October 2006
- Cincinnati Art Museum (Cincinnati, OH) October 2006--January 2007
- Saint Louis Art Museum (Saint Louis, MO) February--April 2007
- San Diego Museum of Art (San Diego, CA) May--July 2007

Baillieu Library, University of Melbourne, Australia: *Kelmscott: A Medieval Adventure in the Age of the Machine*, 14 June – 29 July.

The results of William Morris' desire to create the 'ideal book' through his iconic Kelmscott Press are collected in their entirety and displayed in this exhibition.

According to exhibition curator, Brian Allison, William Morris was one of the 'creative giants of the nineteenth century' and is still widely known as a novelist, poet, and contributor to early socialism. Today he is most remembered for his work as a designer and design reformer. Mr Allison explains that during his lifetime Morris impressively mastered the skills of fabric printing, weaving, dyeing, stained-glass window design, wood cut printing, and calligraphy. 'Many of his luxurious wallpaper and textile designs are still produced today, with some examples forming the backdrop to this exhibition.

Towards the end of his life Morris rented a cottage near Kelmscott House in Hammersmith and established the Kelmscott Press. There he drew on his enduring fascination with the medieval manuscript and early printed texts for inspiration. Using historical examples, he designed three Kelmscott typefaces – Golden, Troy and Chaucer. He printed on hand-made paper using a hand press.'

Co-curator Astrid Krautschneider describes the resulting books as delightfully opulent. 'Many of the volumes are extravagantly ornamented with decorative letters and borders designed by Morris. Works from the Kelmscott Press now constitute one of the milestones in the history of the printed book.'

The exhibition displays all the printed books from the Kelmscott Press, including the 'magnificent' *Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, borrowed from the Rare Books department of the State Library of Victoria.

Join the William Morris Society for a visit

*Byrdcliffe: An American Arts and Crafts Colony*

*Winterthur: An American Country Estate Wilmington, Delaware*

*Saturday, 13 August 2005 · 12 noon*

*"Byrdcliffe: An American Arts and Crafts Colony" is the first major travelling exhibition and publication about Byrdcliffe, an artist colony founded by Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead and his wife, Jane Byrd McCall, in 1902 in Woodstock, New York. Byrdcliffe, which still functions today, was an important force in the Arts and Crafts movement in America and has a rich artistic and social legacy. The colony produced beautiful objects in a variety of art forms, from painted furniture to glazed ceramics and oil paintings. Of equal importance were the utopian ideals of its founders--both were disciples of John Ruskin--combined with the creativity of its talented but under-appreciated artists, and other colorful personalities. Set against the background of a rapidly changing America and other Arts and Crafts colonies in this country and Europe, these facets of Byrdcliffe's history form a compelling exhibit with great relevance and appeal for 21st-century audiences who yearn for simpler, more centered lives. Celebrating a hundred years as a functioning art colony, the exhibition features 191 fine and decorative arts objects (furniture, ceramics, jewelry), historical materials, architecture, music, and literature produced during the colony's first 26 years. Winterthur is the former home of Henry Francis du Pont (1880-1969), an avid collector and horticulturist. In the early 20th century, H.F. du Pont and his father, Henry Algernon du Pont, designed the estate in the spirit of 18th- and 19th-century European country houses. Renowned today for its vast and unparalleled collections of antiques and Americana, Winterthur features 60 acres of spectacular gardens and a research library on the fine and decorative arts.*

*Our group will meet at noon for lunch in Winterthur's cafeteria.*

*The admission price for the exhibition, museum and galleries is \$15 for adults, \$13 for those 62*

and over, and \$5 for children. Winterthur is on Rte. 52 in Delaware, 6 miles northwest of Wilmington; 30 miles southwest of Philadelphia. Directions and information: Tel. 800-4483883, [www.winterthur.org](http://www.winterthur.org).

Please RSVP to Diane Cummins (Tel. 202-387-4874, [dianka63@aol.com](mailto:dianka63@aol.com)). We will try to arrange car transportation for members from the Wilmington Amtrak station.

#### *Background for Morris Society Trip to Winterthur*

*Byrdcliffe: An American Arts and Crafts Colony*

*June 11, 2005--September 5, 2005*

On June 5, 1902, while in Kingston, New York, Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead wrote enthusiastically to his wife, Jane: "We have found a country with a sky--such beauty of sky I have not seen except in France, I mean Northern skies. Such a sky for any painter, a transparent blue with wonderful gradation towards the horizon and such beauty of cloud forms & of distant blue landscape as I never expected in N.Y. State ... Here is an atmosphere for you, dear, which I did not hope for and the beauty of the landscape is very great."

Such was Jane's introduction to the area around the village of Woodstock, in the Catskill mountain region of upstate New York. A painter herself, she must have delighted to learn of this beautiful place. And Ralph, scouting for a site for an artists' community he planned to establish, was undoubtedly equally pleased with what he saw.

The artists' colony Whitehead envisioned came to be known as Byrdcliffe, a name that continues to conjure visions of a rich artistic legacy. Yet, this unique place cannot be fully appreciated without an understanding of the ideals and motivations of its primary founders, Ralph and Jane Whitehead.

A native of England, Ralph Whitehead (1854-1929) was raised among wealth and privilege; his family owned Royal George Mills, which produced felt for piano clappers. In 1873 he entered Oxford and studied under John Ruskin (1819-1900), the English critic and theorist whom many acknowledge as the fountainhead of the Arts and Crafts movement. During the 1870s, Ralph led the life of a student, immersed himself in Ruskinian doctrine, and traveled throughout Europe. He also found love and married his first wife, Marie.

Born in 1861, Jane Byrd McCall hailed from a prominent Philadelphia family. Her ancestors included John Mercer, governor and congressman from Maryland, and colonial Virginia luminaries George Mason and William Byrd. Her father, Peter McCall, served as mayor of Philadelphia in the 1840s. As a child, Jane (affectionately called "Byrd") developed an interest in art, and in her teenage years, she also studied with Ruskin at Oxford and attended the Académie Julian in Paris. Among the noteworthy events in her extraordinary life was her presentation, with her sister Gerty, to Queen Victoria in 1886.

Ralph and Jane likely met in 1885. Having originally found friendship as disciples of Ruskin, by 1890 they had become romantically involved. So strong was their attachment that Ralph divorced Marie. The couple exchanged vows in 1892 in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, and then settled in Montecito, California, where they built an Italianate villa called Arcady. Eventually their family grew to include two sons, Ralph Jr. and Peter.

Both Ralph and Jane became involved in artistic endeavors locally, and Ralph also traveled widely, visiting artists and progressive thinkers in America and abroad. All the while, he was imagining an artists' colony devoted to the betterment of humanity and based on Ruskin's teachings. From Chicago, he wrote to Jane in June of 1901: "I feel so terribly that it haunts me day and night that I have made myself no definite place of usefulness anywhere in this wide world. And I feel that for the boys' sake I must make some place that as they grow up they may be able to respect me as one who bears his part in the march of humanity, as one who is doing his share of the work of the world."

One year later, Ralph found himself standing on Overlook Mountain, near Woodstock, gazing out over the land that would soon accommodate his great legacy. With like-minded thinkers, he established his colony on 1,200 acres, naming it Byrdcliffe, a combination of his wife's middle name and a portion of his own. By spring of 1903, five main buildings had been constructed, including White Pines, the Whiteheads' residence, as well as other houses, workshops, and studios.

People whose names are synonymous with the Arts and Crafts movement came to live and work at Byrdcliffe in the early 1900s: painters Herman Dudley Murphy and John Duncan; designers Zulma Steele and Edna Walker; and furnituremakers Dawson Dawson-Watson and Olaf Westerling. Weaving, jewelry making, and ceramics enjoyed much popularity at the colony as well. The desire to create beautiful, functional objects drew a diverse array of artisans to this pristine setting, where they flourished in a communal atmosphere of shared artistic endeavor.

Many observers consider furniture the high point of the colony's production, although only about 50 pieces were produced there. Whitehead was inspired by furniture illustrated in such English magazines as *The Studio* and *International Studio* and especially by items created by English architect and designer Mackay H. Baillie-Scott. Byrdcliffe furniture was simple, straight lined, and boxy; surfaces were stained or left unfinished. Steele and Walker were responsible for the ornamental designs, basing their imagery on local plant life. Cabinet doors often featured panels painted with floral themes or landscapes.

Whitehead hoped that the furniture made at Byrdcliffe would pay for itself, although the lack of a marketing plan and competition from other Arts and Crafts furniture makers doomed the enterprise. As a result, he ended production in the summer of 1905. Other crafts at the colony languished or were abandoned over time, and instructors and pupils came and went regularly. Inspired by Ruskin's admonition of obedience to authority, Ralph proved to be a force to be reckoned with; most people chose not to and left.

Despite its ultimate failure as an artists' community, Byrdcliffe's influence on Woodstock was real and enduring; indeed, the campus still attracts working artists today. Bertha Thompson, a jewelry and tableware designer who arrived at Byrdcliffe in 1903, commented three decades later that "Mr. Whitehead had dreamed of a community of workers in the arts and handicrafts, associated but independent, living a simple and satisfying life amid beautiful surroundings." She further noted that "many fine, sensitive spirits, in other times and other places, have dreamed this dream so impossible of full realization, forgetting that the human race has yet to learn the true meaning of cooperation in community living." Thompson concluded by asking, "Who can say that Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead's dream has not been realized in this wider community as we know it today?" Surely, to some extent, it has.

from Byrdcliffe Exhibition publicity

#### **FROM THE WEBMASTER**

*"Moving the Morris Society into the 21st Century: Four Socialist Online Initiatives."*

2005 marks the William Morris Society's 50th anniversary, and, since its inception in 1996, the Society's web site has evolved into the primary point of contact for those interested in learning more about Morris himself and about the activities of the Society. As we move into the twenty-first century, the Society has adopted four major online initiatives, designed to demonstrate the continued relevance of Morris's socialism to present-day society:

1. Outreach to non-English speakers.
2. Outreach to young people.
3. Positioning the web site as a socialist tool for communication.
4. Creating scholarly editions of Morris's work to share freely with the world.

In the 1960s, the Society had a strongly international bent, with articles published in our *Journal* in several languages. In order to revive that spirit, the first of the Society's online goals is to bring an appreciation of Morris to those who speak languages other than English. Many web sites these days offer "translation" tools, but such machine-translations are often laughably inadequate (using a machine-translator, try translating an English sentence into, say, German and then back into English in order to see the point). What the Morris Society aims to do is to craft or translate materials in the native languages of Internet users. The Society currently has Morris pages and materials in French, Spanish, German, Hungarian, Polish, Japanese, and Russian--all of which were written by or translated by native speakers.

The second goal for the web site is to make it more friendly to students and those just beginning to learn about Morris. For example, in France, Morris's *News from Nowhere* is one of the featured texts in the *Agregation* project, a national examination for prospective teachers. When the Society learned that French students would be studying *News* in a concentrated way, our response was to help them to understand the book (and Morris) in a wider context. The Society's web page for French readers of *News from Nowhere* offers links to online texts, scholarly criticism, and resources related to Morris's socialism and artistry. The Society also added value to the French readers' web page by re-publishing seven scholarly articles on *News From Nowhere* for free use by *Agregation* students--and the public at large.



*The public at large becomes larger and larger as the Internet expands into the lives of more and more people, either through home connections or public access at libraries, schools, and other institutions. As the Society moves forward into the twenty-first century, its third aim is to act as an 'information commons', linking people not only to each other, but allowing them the freedom to explore and learn from the past.*

*Too often, in order to research historical figures like Morris, people need access to fee-based library databases or pay-per-use online full-text resources. The portion of the Society's web site devoted to the Journal of William Morris Studies is currently under development as a repository of the content of the Journal over its 40-plus year history. Although it is impractical to include the most recent issues of the Journal online gratis, the aim of the Society is to make freely available the content of the Society's official record. The Society has recently unveiled a pilot project containing the full text of a representative sampling of articles, along with a full, cumulative, and searchable index to the Journal, which has already produced several inquiries from scholars and researchers who want to make more use of the work of previous thinkers.*

*Making the Morris Society more accessible to the general public is a laudable goal, but it must be secondary to making Morris himself more freely accessible. In order to accomplish its fourth online goal, the Society has asked leading academics to create scholarly editions of Morris's works, so that they can be published online and used freely. This project is still in its beginning phases, with the first texts scheduled to appear in 2006.*

*Each of the four foregoing goals for the Morris Society Web Site demonstrates that a Socialist approach to the design and content of the Society's web site can have lasting and profound effects. Recent studies by the American Library Association have shown that the free access to information online correlates to an increased use of and awareness of that information in the works of scholars, students, and the general public.*

*Morris himself employed technology in order to spread his ideas and encourage discussion and action toward creating a socialist society--e. g., the use of mass-printing for spreading the message of the Commonweal to as wide an audience as possible. Today, the Morris Society also uses technology to spread and encourage Morrisian ideals. Making information about and by Morris freely available to everyone, encouraging communication among admirers of Morris from all walks of life, and promoting Morris's vision of a just, equal, and beautiful society are all ways to keep Morris in the public eye and the public imagination.*

*Please visit the Society on the Internet at <http://www.morrissociety.org/>. You'll find much more than these four new initiatives, and, of course, your Society is always happy to hear your comments, receive your news, and benefit from your help--the reason the web site has been so successful over the years is because its shape and direction came from those who have used it, making it truly a socialist endeavor!*

*Thomas J. Tobin*

## **POETRY**

### **HIS CARPETS FLOWERED**

*William Morris*

*--how we're carpet-making  
by the river  
a long dream to unroll  
and somehow time to pole  
a boat*

*I designed a carpet today--  
dogtooth violets  
and spoke to a full hall  
now that the gall  
of our society's*

*corruption stains throughout  
Dear Janey I am tossed  
by many things*

*If the change would bring  
better art*

*but if it would not?  
O to be home to sail the flood  
I'm possessed  
and do possess  
Employer*

*of labor, true--  
to get done  
the work of the hand . . .  
I'd be a rich man  
had I yielded  
on a few points of principle  
Item sabots  
Blouse--  
I work in the dye-house  
myself*

*Good sport dyeing  
tapestry wool  
I like the indigo vats  
I'm drawing patterns so fast  
Last night*

*in sleep I drew a sausage--  
somehow I had to eat it first  
Colorful shores--mouse ear . . .  
horse-mint . . . The Strawberry Thief  
our new chintz*

*II*

*Yeats saw the betterment of the workers  
by religion--slow in any case  
as the drying of the moon  
He was not understood--  
I rang the bell*

*for him to sit down  
Yeats left the lecture circuit  
yet he could say: no one  
so well loved  
as Morris*

*Lorine Niedecker (1903-70)*

### **COLOPHON**

*This newsletter is usually written and edited by Shannon L. Rogers; however, this issue was graciously collected by Florence Boos and set by Diane Andrews (after a computer virus destroyed the "proper" newsletter). Items for inclusion, books for review, news from or about members, calls for papers, conference announcements, event notifications, and comments are welcomed.*

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