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## William Morris Society Newsletter: March 2006

### LETTER TO MEMBERS FROM FLORENCE BOOS

We are very pleased to announce the award of this year's Joseph R. Dunlap Memorial Fellowship to Anna Matyukhina. A teacher of English, specialist in the history of tapestry-weaving and curator of the New Acquisitions Department of the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, she is completing a doctorate at St. Petersburg State University with a dissertation on *The Traditions of Medieval Tapestry Weaving and the Tapestry Revival: William Morris*.

Ms. Matyukhina, who has contributed generously to the Society website's collection of Russian texts, also spoke about "William Morris and Tapestry Weaving: The View from Russia" at the Morris in the 21st Century Conference in London last July. Her article on "The Adoration Tapestry" appeared in the last *Newsletter*, and the present issue includes her review of David Mabb's current exhibition of his work in Lithuania. Currently at work on a new half-year course on Morris to be taught in the fall, she plans to use her award to do more research into Morris and Co. tapestries in Oxford, Cambridge and Birmingham this summer.

Next year we hope to expand the potential scope of our awards to include a possible prize for translation, described more closely below. Most of Morris' literary works have never been translated into major languages such as Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, Swahili or Hindi. Sean De Vega, for example--a bilingual graduate student at my university in Iowa--has discovered that *none* of Morris's poetry has been made available in Spanish, and has begun to translate *Los Peregrinos de la Esperanza (The Pilgrims of Hope)*. As native speakers become more aware of each other's languages and literary traditions, it seems incumbent on organizations such as the Morris Society to encourage and reward such efforts on the part of interested international scholars.

We gathered as usual at the Modern Language Association Convention in Washington, D.C. last December. After excellent sessions devoted to "Mapping the Pre-Raphaelite Aesthetic" and "Morris and Modern Theories," we met for dinner and spirited conversation, and Mark Samuels Lasner and Margaret Stetz hosted a reception at their Wyoming Avenue apartment for members of the Society and other friends.

We also held our longest-ever annual business meeting, in the home of Diane and Richard Cummins, where we discussed financial details, *Newsletter*-articles, a prospective teleconference, new materials for the website, ideas to attract new members to the Society, and participation in a tour the Canadian Society has planned for 2007 as well as an international Morris conference scheduled for 2010.

Our most principled and persistently felt need is for outreach--talks, events, exhibitions, educational materials, and a wider range of materials for our newsletter and web site, and we welcome News about such possibilities from Anywhere. Our webmaster, Tom Tobin, has updated <http://www.morrisociety.org> so that members may join, renew or contribute directly on the site, and he plans to add interactive links for insights, suggestions and observations in 2006. Judith Hanks-Henn, one of our Washington members, suggested at the dinner that we consider preparation or sponsorship of children's books about Morris's life and work. We are also tentatively planning at least two events for this year, one of which will be held in the Washington, D. C. area.

Last December I paid a visit to a local exhibition of the works of Grant Wood in Cedar Rapids, where the painter lived much of his adult life. I had admired Wood's works since I saw one of his pictures in a volume for children when I was nine, but was unaware of the depth of his engagement in the American Arts and Crafts Movement. As a boy, he studied the art-lessons in Gustav Stickley's *Craftsman*, and he focused his studies as a young adult in Minneapolis on gem-work, metalwork,

furniture, glasswork, sculpture, interior design and household ornamentation. His professed ideals of simplicity, respect for regional traditions and faith in the value of all the decorative arts clearly derived from and complemented those of the Arts and Crafts movement.

Last December, I endeavored to focus a good part of a midyear graduate-commencement speech at Iowa on Morris' interrelated ideals of "fellowship," social justice, egalitarian work and "art for the people." Recalling--through a glass darkly--Edmund Spenser's warning in the "Mutabilitie Cantos" that ". . . all things stedfastnes doe hate/ And changed be . . . ," I expressed the hope that we might draw on human compassion to create new forms of "consciousness", temper forms of "Change" which "raigne" over us in brutal ways, and replace (or supplement) theological "*evidence of things not seen*" with forms of *solidarity* not (yet) seen.

As I struggled to formulate all this, Bill (my husband) suggested I close with quotation of the following lines--spoken by the doomed priest in the Morris' eponymous *A Dream of John Ball*--to the hall's expected audience of a couple thousand people:

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

Everything Ball saw "the great" doing, they are still doing, and they doing it with a tenacious (and all too literal) vengeance. Mindful of this, I was grateful for a fleeting chance to preach *John Ball's* "sermon at the crossroads" to an audience of several hundred international graduate students as they prepared to rejoin their friends and families, and (re)disperse throughout the world.

By the time you receive this it will probably be be May--still early in the *Earthy Paradise's* year. We hope to see some of you in person, wish all of you a peaceful and inspiring spring and summer, and look forward (as always) to any comments or suggestions you may have.

Florence Boos  
March 10th, 2006

## **EXCITING PLANS FOR THE COMING YEAR**

### **William Morris Society Sessions at the 2007 Modern Language Association Convention**

The topics chosen for our December 2007 sessions are "Morris as Metatext: Editions/Printforms/Illustrations" and "The Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic Family." Please send abstracts by March 20th, 2007 to [florence-boos@uiowa.edu](mailto:florence-boos@uiowa.edu).

### **2007 Morris Society Fellowships**

Since 1996 the Society has offered an annual award, now called the **Joseph R. Dunlap Memorial Fellowship**, which is intended to help scholars, researchers or creative artists in early stages of their careers. It will provide up to \$1000 to be used for research and other expenses, including travel to conferences. Projects may deal with any subject--biographical, literary, historical, social, artistic, political, typographical--relating to Morris.

A second award, the **William Morris Society Award**, may be offered at the Society's discretion. The amounts of the award also may vary, and several smaller awards may be offered up to a total of \$1000.

In addition, if it chooses the fellowship committee may offer some or all of the William Morris Society award in recognition of a recent translation of one of Morris's works from English into another language. The translation should have been completed or published within the three years prior to the award. We would like (though we do not require) that the translator grant permission for some portion of the translation to appear on our web site. For the translation prize, the "early stage" restriction does not hold.

Please send applications by December 15th, 2006 to [florence-boos@uiowa.edu](mailto:florence-boos@uiowa.edu). Applications for assistance with research or travel should include a two-page description of the proposed project, including a timeline and indication of where the results might be published, a c. v., and a letter of

recommendation (which may also be sent by e-mail). For a translation award, please include a copy of the translation, an explanation in English of its scope and contents, publication information if relevant, a c. v., and if possible, a testimonial to the quality of the translation from another native speaker.

Further details may be found on the web site, [www.Morrissociety.org/fellowships.html](http://www.Morrissociety.org/fellowships.html).

NEWS FROM THE MLA MEETING, DECEMBER 2005

Morris and Modern Theories

Modern Language Association Convention, December 30th, 2005

Martin Danahay, Brock University

### **Toward a Postmodern Theory of Production: Baudrillard, Marx and Morris**

Jean Baudrillard claims in *The Mirror of Production* that in Marx's writing, "the liberation of productive forces is confused with the liberation of man" and so Marx's approach is indistinguishable from that of conventional Political Economy (21). There is a bias in Marx toward the definition of labor power as the source of 'concrete' social wealth (Telos Press, 1975, 25). Work in Marx as for other thinkers in the nineteenth century becomes the basis for all definitions of human value. Marx's scheme raises the working classes to the apex of a hierarchy of value, but does not question the value of this hierarchy founded in the idealization of work as material production. Ideas and intellectual production, ironically, have little place in the philosophy of one of the nineteenth century's foremost philosophical critics of capitalism; Marx privileges the production of material goods over intellectual labor.

In the context of Ruskin's thought, P. D. Anthony has argued that "capitalists and communists agree about the absolute importance of 'homo faber' " (*The Ideology of Work*, 1977, 166). Expressed in less theoretical terms than Baudrillard's, Anthony's argument nonetheless makes the same point that there is much agreement between Marx and Political Economy when it comes to the importance of 'production' in both systems of thought. I would add that both systems enshrine the 'man at work' as the basic productive unit of their systems and thereby codify masculinity as self-imposed labor in the ideal of the 'man at work' as the symbol of the capitalist system.

The same aporia is to be found in the thought of William Morris who approached most closely a Marxist critique of Victorian social conditions. While Morris mounts a cogent critique of the position of the working classes in such lectures as "Useful Work vs. Useful Toil" the word that recurs through his text is "production." Morris does not criticize the compulsion to 'produce,' but rather intensifies it into a self-imposed desire to work rather than something imposed from outside.

This approach to work may arise because, as Alasdair Clayre argues, "Marx and Morris were both writers [who] in their own lives . . . gave a very high place to work and most of their own 'play' . . . was integrated with their work" (*Work and Play*, 1974, 122). Clayre astutely contrasts the intellectual's approach to work with the value placed on 'play' by people who worked with their hands, underscoring their respective class positions. For Morris and Marx, then, the boundary between 'work' and 'play' can disappear in a magical transformation; because they have internalized the work ethic, both Marx and Morris can redefine work as an internalized compulsion. Both writers accept 'production' as the basis of masculinity because of their own ease in turning 'work' into 'play' in their utopian visions.

The same procedure is carried out in *News from Nowhere* where the abolition of private property leads to the abolition of law and the imposition of the new commandment that "thou shalt work in order to live happily." Since work is happiness, it does not need to be imposed by violence (*News, Collected Works*, 81). All work in the utopia is pleasurable and undertaken voluntarily (News, 92). Like Engels, Morris believes that making work voluntary will cure the problem of exploitation, but does not question the conjunction of productivity with the definition of being a man, which places work at the heart of masculinity.

It should not be surprising that Morris has this aporia in his thinking, because even Marx had difficulty mounting a critique of work that did not privilege material production. As heirs to the Victorian division of labor, we still struggle with the contradictions inherent in the injunction to be 'productive' workers when many activities are not considered productive and are not paid and are thus 'unproductive.' Many tasks that people (especially women) carry out are vital to the reproduction of social conditions, but do not receive any symbolic or actual capital in return. Much of the work of society therefore goes unremarked and unrewarded.

The Victorian definition of work as masculine, therefore, trapped men into a relentless life of labor that could not accommodate idleness or pleasure. Idleness and pleasure could not, however, be banished simply by proclaiming the industrious male to be the epitome of virtue. The forces of pleasure, represented most powerfully by sexuality, reasserted themselves at the margins of representations of

sweaty, muscled labor as the ultimate in masculine productivity and troubled the serene assertion of Victorian masculine values. The history of work in the Victorian period is, therefore, the history of the attempt to define work as masculine and the male body as productive and free from the threats of the feminine, idleness and sexuality.

A postmodern theory of production would make the excluded values of play and *jouissance* central to the definition of work, and reject the premise of individual production. The Victorian thinker who came closest to this view was John Ruskin in *Unto This Last*. Ruskin severs work from production and makes the human body central to his critique of Political Economy. A postmodern theory of production, as Baudrillard says and Ruskin implies, has to sever its affiliation with the concept of "labor power" and escape the gendered definition of work in terms of male power.

Rosie Miles, University of Wolverhampton

### **Morris's Poetry: (Hyper) Text and Desire**

My own work to date on Morris's poetry has argued that his work can be read as bound up with various theories of desire. From Morris's use of the medieval as a form of the Lacanian lost real to the imaginative possibilities of the utopia, his writings are suffused with an intense sense of longing that is both melancholic and yet full of hope for what is still unrealized.

Morris's ultimate desire in relation to his poetry was for the transformation of the verbal sign into one that was concomitantly visual, and the Morris Online Edition ([www.morrisedition.org](http://www.morrisedition.org)), which is 12 months into its first phase as of December 2005, has the potential to exploit the visual qualities of Morris's texts in new ways, and to integrate verbal and visual elements in ways that Morris struggled to do with the print technologies of his own day.

This MLA panel has offered me the opportunity to present to a North American audience an account of my work on producing a new scholarly edition of *Poems by the Way* for MOE over the past year, as well as to explore the desire inherent in *Imagining What You Don't Know*--Jerome McGann's phrase in relation to the conceptualization and practical making of born digital projects. Whilst I make no claim that MOE is some kind of utopian new world, its potential for making possible new kinds of research and scholarship in relation to the study of Morris is part of its fundamental rationale. By December 2006 I hope to have a demonstration model of some of the prospective features of MOE.

Richard Kaye, Hunter College and CUNY Graduate Center

### **William Morris, F. Holland Day, and the Invention of an Aestheticist-Decadent Publishing Tradition, 1893-1899**

This talk explores an important, underexplored moment in the history of William Morris's aesthetic influence--his paramount effect on the American photographer and publisher F. Holland Day, who, with his fellow Bostonian Herbert Copeland, formed the publishing house of Copeland and Day. Inaugurated in 1893, the firm had as one of its primary aims the introduction of Morris's values in book design to a sophisticated American reading public. Day had met Morris in the summer of 1890 (meeting, as well, the publisher John Lane) and it was this crucial personal encounter--as Morris was founding the Kelmscott Press--that helped to inspire Day in his enterprise of printing finely crafted volumes of works by such innovative writers as Stephen Crane, Walter Pater, William Butler Yeats, and Oscar Wilde, as well as illustrations by such controversial illustrators as Aubrey Beardsley. The passage of the International Copyright Act of 1891, which secured trans-Atlantic cooperation in publishing and ended the American piracy of English authors, gave a timely rationale to the new firm of Copeland and Day, a company that drew on the bohemian cenacles located in and just outside Boston, where Day had been a life-long resident. Although the first books published by the firm were unmistakably modeled on Morris's book designs (especially Copeland and Day's very first published volume, Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "The House of Life"), the American publishing house had its own values and original designs.

In my talk I argue that Day's relatively short career in publishing helped to shape a uniquely American (and in some ways given its high-minded ethos of social consciousness, highly Bostonian) synthesis of Morris's aesthetic ideals and fin-de-siecle Aestheticist and Decadent artistry. But even as Aestheticism and Decadence had come to acquire an aura of scandalousness in England in the wake of the Wilde trials, Copeland and Day were able to refashion Aestheticist and Decadent ideals for an American reading public unfamiliar with the Aestheticist and Decadent Movements' associations of dissident sexuality increasingly prevalent in Britain. Moreover, with the collapse of Copeland and Day in 1899 due to financial constraints and Day's intensifying interest in the New Pictorialist Photography, Day found himself drawn to many of Morris's socialist ideals, as he sought to wed aesthetic principles in art to egalitarian ideals of social reform. His pictorialist photographs of Black Americans in 'authentic'

African dress, for example, intimated that African-Americans had their origins in an exalted African past, one that rendered them more than entitled to full citizenship. Drawing on original research at the Library of Congress (where most of Day's archives are housed), and building on the scholarship of writers on Day such as Estelle Jussim, my talk explores the afterlife of William Morris's aesthetic aspirations outside of Britain in the work of a neglected American artist and publisher.

## **Places and Spaces: Mapping the Pre-Raphaelite Aesthetic**

MLA Convention, December 2005

Christopher M. Keirstead, Auburn University

### **Morris and the Spatial Poetics of Europe**

While the cosmopolitan outlook of William Morris's political commentary and activism is widely acknowledged, his poetry is rarely characterized as such and is more likely, in fact, to be grouped with nationalist efforts to re-locate Britain within a nostalgic, Anglo-Saxon medievalism: whatever border-crossing impulse exists in his poetry, it would seem, remains restricted to Northern European countries such as Iceland that in various ways mirrored Morris's idealized vision of pre-industrial Britain. As I argue in this talk, however, to insist upon reading Morris's poetry through the prism of Victorian nationalist myth-making is to miss a more radical pan-European dimension to his work, one that reveals itself most clearly in *The Earthly Paradise* (1868-70) and, later, in *The Pilgrims of Hope* (1885-86)--poems that in complex ways incorporate the same internationalist socialist ideology that defines other aspects of his work.

One of my primary objectives is to introduce a new critical context for interpreting Morris's poetry, one that examines his achievement alongside that of other Victorian poets, such as the Brownings, who sought to craft an international, broadly European outlook in their work. Matthew Arnold perhaps best captures the objectives, and limitations, of this earlier form of internationalism in *The Function of Criticism at the Present Time* (1864), where he describes Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common result. Arnold carefully steers away from the more radical idea of European *political* union: his vision seems more indebted to the language of free-trade liberalism which, despite its international overtones, insists nonetheless upon stable and clearly defined national boundaries. Even a poem as progressive as Barrett Brownings *Casa Guidi Windows* (1851), for instance, remains dependent upon a melding of Christian fellowship and Romantic nationalism that poses no challenge to the economic structures that largely determine how nations interact with each other. In a later context, Robert Browning's *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* (1873), with its fierce condemnation of the Paris Commune, ends up endorsing a less politically threatening kind of cosmopolitanism restricted to middle and upper class consumers of culture. For both poets, class politics becomes a kind of unacknowledged problem that compels them to re-erect national and class boundaries even as they struggle to remove them.

Morris's socialism, however, allows him to imagine the possibility of a Europe unified culturally and politically. Even if he insisted upon composing the Great story of the North, as he characterized *Sigurd the Volsung* (1876), his vision in *The Earthly Paradise*, his most ambitious poem, remains an expansive one. The poem is throughout informed by notions of trans-European travel, migration, and cultural hybridity, most pointedly in the encounter between Norse and Greek cultures that sets the poem in motion. Morris strives to integrate a mythical European past with contemporary internationalist political ideals. This same effort informs *The Pilgrims of Hope*, a poem that presents his most strident critique of nationalism by demonstrating its dependence on economic and political structures favorable to the middle class. Overall, by conceiving of Morris's poetry as an attempt to articulate an idea of Europe, one can begin to connect what are often regarded as divergent or competing strains within his poetry: on the one hand, a backward looking, nostalgic preoccupation with Norse myth and, on the other, a more progressive socialist vision located in the Europe of the present. Morris's poetic engagement with Europe thus in specific ways undermines the rhetoric of nation and empire, free-trade or otherwise. His work ultimately comprises one of the most sophisticated literary attempts in the Victorian period to manage the political and cultural multiplicity offered by Europe.

**Cliff Garner, University of North Texas**

### **"A Cultural Study of William Morris's Bloomsbury and Frequent Haunts"**

**The years 1865-1881 are of special interest to William Morris scholars, as they were some of the most eventful of his life. During these years Morris built his design firm into a well-regarded and successful business, wrote the two works from which his fame as a**

poet derived in the eyes of his contemporaries, made his only attempt at a contemporary novel, and co-wrote several translations of Icelandic sagas as well as making two rugged excursions into the wilderness of Iceland. This period also encompasses the greater part of his two daughters' childhoods as well as the height of the love affair between his wife and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

These were the years in which Morris leased a house at No. 26 Queen Square in Bloomsbury. For the first eight years, the Morrises lived like the family of a medieval craftsman, using the upper rooms as living quarters, while the lower were used as showrooms for the Arts and Crafts products of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co., with workshops in the back of the house. In 1871 Morris and Rossetti co-let a house in the country called Kelmscott Manor. For the next couple of years Rossetti lived with Jane Morris and her daughters during the spring and summer, while Morris often stayed alone in the city so as to manage his business. It was around this time that Morris became the most famous poet of the 1870s and also the time when he began a flirtation with a Greek woman named Aglaia Coronio. In 1873 he moved his family to a house on Turnham Green Road, keeping Queen Square as a shop and keeping a room there for himself.

A cultural study of the Bloomsbury district of London during these years sheds light on certain biographical questions; as well as providing context for both the work Morris produced during this period and for his work for the socialist cause beginning at the end of the period. With the marital strains Morris endured, a sense of the nature of his surroundings should be of interest when contemplating his ways of coping with those strains. As for Morris's work, much of it constituted a war against vulgarity of taste. It should be interesting to note the standards of taste in his neighborhood. Finally, with the level of commitment Morris eventually invested in the socialist cause, it seems logical to expect that his mind must surely have been at work during these years, leading him to his eventual determination. In consideration of this development, I examine what knowledge Morris is likely to have had of the working poor. Although Morris would have made regular excursions to various parts of London, it would appear that the closest neighborhood of drastic poverty would have been Clerkenwell just to the east, while most of Morris's destinations would have been in the West End. One of Morris's most regular contacts with the working poor would have been the cabmen who drove him about town. Along with considering Morris's neighborhood, this talk discusses the working lives of London cabmen. The talk concludes with an examination of one of Morris's destinations, Hampstead Heath, a point of further possible contact with the working poor.

Betsy Winakur Tontiplaphol, Trinity University

Where, Where Was a, Where Was a Place? Morris, Hopkins, and Thingspace

Part of a larger exploration of place and poetics in the nineteenth century, my talk describes Gerard Manley Hopkins's debt to Morris-inspired notions of place and pleasure. Pre-Raphaelite painting suggested artistically what the aesthetic reform movement asserted commercially: In addition to lending significance and beauty to the places in which we live and work, the best made things constitute sites in their own right, inhabitable environments that encourage their users to enter, explore, and linger. A handmade tapestry, Morris maintains, might almost turn your wall into a rose-hedge or deep forest, but in addition to mimicking a space, such an object simply *is* one: [I]ts material and general capabilities almost compel us to fashion *plane above plane* of rich, crisp, varying foliage with bright blossoms, or strange birds showing through the intervals (emphasis added).

Inspired by Morris and other anti-industrialist sages, Hopkins created poems that function as both sites and objects, goods that evoke a golden era of artistic integrity and whose rich craftsmanship consumes the consumer. Since, in Hopkins's understanding, the stuff of the world derives from language Gods original Word verse is as material as wool, and although the carefully wrought patterns in Hopkins's poetry evoke reformist handicraft, his own terminology of inscape and instress defines the poem as an interior space or internalized landscape. Sprung rhythm, Hopkins wrote to Robert Bridges, is the native rhythm of the words bodily imported into the verse, and his choice, in casual correspondence, of a spatial lexicon imported into dovetails nicely with his more systematic descriptions of the sprung poems rugged topography. However, sprung

rhythm, emphatic, balanced, and inspired by the natural, is also reminiscent of Morris-made goods. Its reliance on meticulous craftsmanship affiliates Hopkins's metrical innovation with reformist decorative principles and, significantly, the guidelines Morris articulates in *Some Hints on Pattern-Designing*. My analysis of late-century "thingspace" privileges Morris's lectures (on pattern, *Useful Work versus Useful Toil*, and *The Lesser Arts*) as well as Hopkins's best known sonnets.

#### NEW ON THE WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY WEB SITE

Dear Members,

Since our last Newsletter, the Society has been busy making improvements to our web site in order to achieve three goals for the 2006 calendar year:

- making it easier for members to take an active role in the Society,
- expanding the amount of material freely available by and about William Morris, and
- ensuring that the Society continues to embody Morris's ideas, aims, and goals.

Under each of the three heads, we've created new resources and made updates to long-standing ones. We invite you to visit these web pages and explore what your Society has to offer!

#### GET ACTIVE!

- **Join/Renew by Credit Card:** you can now join or renew your membership to the U. S. Society through our web site. All you need is a major credit card or U. S. checking account (<http://www.morrissociety.org/membershipinfo.html>).
- **Re-designed Home Page:** individual members of the Society are getting involved more and more these days, volunteering to help with projects and adding content for our web site to share with other Morrisians. Because of the expansion of the site, we've re-designed the site to be more user-friendly. The news for all three branches of the Society is still listed right up front, and there are now links to membership information, exciting events and Society projects, and online resources freely available to all (<http://www.morrissociety.org/>).
- **Updated Bylaws:** during the 2005 Annual Meeting of the U.S. Society, the by-laws were updated to allow greater flexibility of operation and greater potential for our geographically diverse membership to take an active role in the Society (<http://www.morrissociety.org/bylaws.html>).

#### LEARN MORE!

- **Morris in Many Languages:** in order to reach out to folks worldwide who want to learn more about Morris, we are translating Morris's works (and locating out-of-copyright translations) into several languages, including Russian, Polish, Dutch, French, Spanish, and Hungarian. If you would like to help translate or proofread for this project, contact us at [us@morrissociety.org](mailto:us@morrissociety.org), and help to spread Morris's ideas around the globe (<http://www.morrissociety.org/worldwide.html>).
- **Presentations and Meeting at the MLA:** the U. S. Society holds a panel of lectures and its annual meeting at the Modern Language Association meeting each December. Read about this event, and learn what the topics for the 2006 lectures will be (<http://www.morrissociety.org/mla2005.html>).
- **Updated JWMS Index:** the *Journal of William Morris Studies* is the scholarly organ of our worldwide Society; the latest issue is a special double issue for the 50th anniversary of the Society. You can see the contents of this issue and every previous issue on the *Journal's* web page. If you find an article from a back issue that sounds interesting, you can order a copy of that issue (<http://www.morrissociety.org/jwms.html>).

#### SUPPORT MORRIS!

- **Joseph Dunlap and Morris Society Fellowships:** read the reports from the 2006 recipients of the Joseph Dunlap and Morris Society fellowships. These awards help to support scholarship and creative work that helps to further Morris's aims and ideals (<http://www.morrissociety.org/fellowships.html>).

COMING SOON . . .

For 2006, the Society plans to continue adding to our collection of Morris texts online through the translation project (contact us at [us@morrissociety.org](mailto:us@morrissociety.org) if you'd like to volunteer) and through our scholarly-edition web site <http://www.morrisedition.org/>, where leading Morris scholars are preparing hyper-text editions of key works by William Morris. Also in 2006, look for the Society to inaugurate an online members' forum where you can share your Morrisian experiences with others. All of the Society's online initiatives are designed to work best when *you* get involved, so please attend your Society's events, volunteer for projects, and help continue the Morris Society's tradition of working toward Morris's ideals of beauty, preservation, and equality.

In fellowship,

Thomas J. Tobin  
[webmaster@morrissociety.org](mailto:webmaster@morrissociety.org)

## ARTICLES

### MORRIS, ICELAND AND ALCOA

BY GARY AHO

On his first journey to Iceland in 1871, from the pitching deck of a small Danish steamer, on a chill August morning, William Morris caught his first glimpse of Iceland: 'a terrible shore indeed: a great mass of dark grey mountains worked into pyramids and shelves, . . . we see the first of the great glaciers . . . and black peaks sticking up out of the glacier sea . . . and the sides of the Vatnajokull, an ice tract as big as Yorkshire' (*Icelandic Journals*, London: Centaur Press, 1969, pp. 14-15).

And in "Iceland First Seen," a later poem, Morris more subjectively recalls his impressions of 'this mountain waste voiceless as death . . . dreadful with grinding of ice and record of scarce hidden fire' (*Poems by the Way*, London: Longmans, 1891).

Morris's 1887 lecture, "The Early Literature of the North--Iceland," opens with the following descriptions:

If you look at the map of Europe, you will see in its northwestern corner lying just under the Arctic circle a large island considerably bigger than Ireland. If you were to take ship and go there you would find it a country very remarkable in aspect, little more than a desert, yet the most romantic of all deserts even to look at: a huge volcanic mass still liable to eruptions of mud, ashes, and lava, and which in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was the scene of the most tremendous outpour of lava that history records. . . .

It is a country of no account whatever commercially: the whole centre of the island being high above the level of the sea is a desert indeed, partly glacier, partly rough rock and black volcanic sand, the moraines I suppose of ancient glaciers across which the wind sweeps with a fury unknown . . . It is not a thirsty desert however; every valley almost has water in it and huge rivers rush towards the sea from the glaciers, turbid and white with the grinding of the ice, cleaving for themselves the most fantastic channels amid the blocks of lava and basalt. Awful looking are these Icelandic wastes, yet beautiful to a man with eyes and heart (*The Unpublished Lectures of William Morris*, Eugene LeMire, ed., pp. 179-80).

Morris's prose here is both precise and emotional, using adjectives that evoke a



sense of the Sublime, of nature distant, dangerous, and inscrutable. Though 'voiceless,' it is able to convey a sense of fearful awe, as well as ideas of truth and beauty, especially to those who are both keen and sensitive, to those with 'eyes and heart.' And here we can understand why critics like Graham Hough placed Morris among *The Last of the Romantics* (London, G. Duckworth, 1947).

Iceland's blasted and dramatic landscapes, the effects of fire and ice, the volcanos and geysirs, the snowy peaks and vast glaciers, the marvels Morris first glimpsed in 1871, have drawn travellers and tourists to Iceland from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (and the advent of the steamship), right up to the present day. Those visitors, often with similar notions of the Sublime, have been humbled and exalted by the roaring cataracts of Gullfoss, by the broad vistas at Thingvellir (the vast sunken plain where the 'parliament' met each summer), and by thermal displays of hot pots and spouting geysirs. A visit to the main Geysir site was, and remains, a must for every pilgrim. A few dozen had been there in the summer of 1871, and Morris was disgusted by the chicken bones and litter they'd left behind. What would he think of that site today, with its acres of asphalt parking lots, scores of tour busses lined all in a row, hundreds of tourists in the crowded restaurants and squat hotel?

Gullfoss and Thingvellir and Geysir, destinations on what today's tourist brochures call 'The Golden Circle,' are close to Reykjavik and can be visited, recorded on video cameras, in one leisurely summer afternoon. But those eastern highlands, the Iceland Morris first glimpsed that August morning in 1871, those snowy wastes dominated by Vatnajokull, Europe's largest glacier, they remained silent and distant and vast and empty, far off the beaten track for tourists, and home only to migrating geese, a few herds of reindeer, a shepherd looking for animals that had strayed up there from small steads down in one of the lower valleys.

One such shepherd appears in Halldor Laxness' Nobel-Prize winning novel, *Independent People* (NY: Knopf, 1946). That shepherd, well-known to all Icelanders, is Bjartur of Summerhouses, who roamed those highlands in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I am confident that Morris would have appreciated this epic narrative, with its stubborn hero who knew the sagas by heart, who composed perfect skaldic verses, and who once captured a reindeer with his bare hands:

Next instant he was sitting astride the reindeer's back holding on to its antlers--and said later that though this animal species seemed light enough on its feet, a bull reindeer was as rough a ride as he had ever come across, and, indeed, it took him all his time to hang on. But the jaunt was not to be a long one. For when the bull had hopped a few lengths with this undesirable burden on his back without managing to shake it off, he saw quickly that desperate measures would have to be taken and, making a sudden leap at right angles to his previous course, shot straight into Glacier River and was immediately churning the water out of his depth. Well, well. Bjartur had set out on a trip after sheep right enough, but this was becoming something more in the nature of a voyage. . . . up to the waist in Glacier River, and that on no ordinary steed, but on the only steed that is considered suitable for the most renowned of adventures. . . . The rush of the water swept the animal downstream for a while, and for a long time it seemed as if it intended making no effort to land. Across the river the banks, which rose high and steep out of the water, showed intermittently through the snow, but in spite of the nearness of land Bjartur felt himself as unhappily situated as a man out in mid-ocean in an oarless boat (pp. 88-89).

Until very recently this same Glacier River, site of Bjartur's excellent 'voyage,' churned north from Vatnajokull, as it had for thousands of years, cutting a canyon ever deeper into the high heaths amidst the 'dark grey mountains.' That mysterious wilderness had remained as 'dreadful' as Morris had imagined it, a 'mountain waste voiceless as death.' But now, in these opening years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, significant changes have occurred. In fact, that river has disappeared, and that high country is no

longer silent. By no means. There is in fact a great deal of noise, harsh industrial noise from diesel engines in bulldozers and trucks and earth-movers. And it is far from 'voiceless' up there. The voices of hundreds of workers can be heard, and they are speaking many languages: Italian, Chinese, Romanian, even Estonian.

How can this be so? What has happened in the highlands? Let me approach an answer with a small story.

In early August of 2003, I was a Group Leader for an ElderHostel contingent a few dozen strong, on a two-week visit to the Faroe Islands and to Iceland. After an overnight boat ride from the Faroes, a small bus met us at the dock in Seydisfjordur, and we drove round the rugged coast before going to our junior college/hotel in Egilsstadir for the night. There we verified our itinerary for the remainder of the trip: south down the Ring Road, in and out of several fjords, and then east to Reykjavik, five days later.

The next day dawned bright and clear and and dry, and so instead of the planned visit to a local museum, our Icelandic guides suggested a change: a visit to those high heaths south of Vatnajokull, where work on a massive hydro-electric project, the largest in Iceland's history, was underway. They had not been there themselves, for the area had only recently been opened to tourists, and though the four-hour drive might prove a bit tedious, they thought that seeing the project, called Karahnjukar (after an adjacent mountain) would be interesting and worthwhile.

We agreed, and--most importantly--so did our savvy driver. All of his skills were tested as he took us up narrow gravel roads, up and up, back and forth on tight switchbacks, eight or nine in a row, up and up, and then along straight stretches for ten or so miles, across the gray, moss-covered heath. Then came more switchbacks, up and up, and then another ten-mile straightaway. Blue skies, Vatnajokull gleaming white to the south, the vast isolation all round, conjured up those feelings of awe and majesty so dear to far travellers. And we saw reindeer herds in the distance. But at times the slow speed of the bus, the constant bumping, did prove monotonous; at other times, the ride was a bit scary, especially when we had to pull over for empty trucks going down the hill. Near the top, we passed stacks of pipe, lumber, machinery under canvas, evidence of men at work.

And then, finally, we approached the main work site. Many trucks and earth-movers chugging back and forth on a tangle of roads. Gravel and mud. Noise. We climbed again and stopped at a viewpoint on a small plateau--barely room for the bus to turn around--where we could see the entire horizon. We tumbled out of the bus, refreshed and then quickly chilled by the sharp wind. Here to our left was Karahnjukar mountain; below us was Dimmugljufir, a dramatically deep and jagged cleft, often called Iceland's Grand Canyon. It had been carved by the aforementioned Glacier River. But that river, the one that carried the bull reindeer and Bjartur downstream so famously, had become a mere trickle. Why?

A few billboards planted round the edge of the parking area offered explanations. We learned, those of us who stayed out in the bitter wind to ponder the signs and compare their illustrations to the topography beyond, that the Glacier River had been diverted, for just here a huge dam was going up. Concrete was being poured for the dam's foundations and buttresses. Bulldozers were scraping gravel, rocks, boulders from an upper slope, putting it all into huge trucks--there must have been 20 of them--chugging back and forth, dumping the fill into the canyon.

What will thus become the largest rock-fill dam in Europe (190 meters high and 730 meters wide) was slowly rising. This dam and two smaller ones will interdict the two rivers flowing north from Vatnajokull. They will create a lake, to be called the Halslon Reservoir, that will be 250 meters deep at the dam face and that will cover 56 square kilometers of Icelandic wilderness. It will swallow up 60 waterfalls, several unique canyons, and miles and miles of high heath, with many varieties of plants, lichens and mosses, the habitat not only for the reindeer but for several varieties of birds, among them the rare pink-footed goose, and scores of small animals and insects. The southern edge of the lake will splash onto the great glacier itself, Vatnajokull. Morris, in his *Icelandic Journals*, called it 'an ice tract as big as Yorkshire.' Thanks to global warming, it's now a bit smaller, but still immense, Europe's largest glacier.

Further down the gorge, and already far underground, three giant TBM's (Tunnel

Burrowing Machines) were at work on headrace tunnels that will carry the water from the reservoir to the hydro-electric plant, under construction in a distant cavern. There the water, now under great pressure, will turn the turbine blades, and--however it happens--electricity will follow. Two sets of power lines will convey the electricity to a plant out on the coast, at Reydarfjordur. This plant, or smelter, will manufacture aluminum, 350,000 metric tons a year. Aluminum: Aha! Here is the reason for all the activity in the highlands, for the transformation--many would say the ruin--of one of Europe's last wilderness areas.

When Morris said that Iceland 'is of no account whatever, . . . commercially,' he could not have known that the power of those 'huge rivers [that] rush towards the sea from the glaciers . . . cleaving for themselves the most fantastic channels' could in the future be employed to turn the blades of machines that would generate another and greater power: electricity, source of the great heat needed to turn bauxite into the light and shining metal so important to modern civilization, for everything from beer cans to airplanes. No, Morris knew nothing of aluminum, or the peculiar conditions of its manufacture that would in a hundred years make Iceland of considerable 'account . . . commercially' to outfits like Alcoa.

This MultiNational is an entity whose motives Morris would have understood immediately. It exists to make profits, mainly for its directors and for its shareholders. And that--monetary gain-- is why Alcoa, this boisterous giant (Morris might have been surprised by its size--280 facilities in 32 countries) strode onto the high heaths of the Icelandic wilderness. Alcoa has built smelters all over the world, often in third world countries, where labor is cheap and where pollution controls are--or were--unknown. Since the smelters that forge aluminum, whether with coal or electricity, produce horrible pollution, to both air and water, Alcoa has left a world-wide trail of misery and law-suits. A few examples:

In 2003 the US Justice Department and the EPA found Alcoa guilty of violating the Clean Air Act at its Rockdale aluminum smelter in Texas. While producing 260,000 tons of aluminum each year, it emitted from its smoke stacks 40,000 tons of nitrogen dioxide and 60,000 tons of sulphur dioxide.

Alcoa's smelter at Masena, New York dumped so many PCB's and dioxins into the St. Lawrence River that the Mohawk Indians, whose reservation is nearby, suffered birth defects, miscarriages, and cancer. In 1986, Alcoa was thus fined 3,750,000 dollars, a record criminal penalty for hazardous waste violation.

There were also violations, fines, and lawsuits in foreign countries:

In Australia, in 2002, Alcoa paid nine workers at its Wagerup plant 200,000 dollars each to compensate for respiratory and renal failures, due to exposure to pollutants. In Surinam a smelter/dam combination forced 6,000 natives to be relocated. A proposed new dam and smelter in Sarawak, Malaysia, would lead to the resettlement of 10,000 indigenous peoples. And so it goes. (In Iceland only reindeer and geese need to be relocated--so far).

Alcoa had, from the 1960's onward, built dams and smelters in the third world, where labor was cheap and where pollution controls were lax, and the like. Problems like those mentioned above have caused Alcoa to close some of these plants. And so they looked to Iceland, partly because of the abundant and cheap hydro-electric power and also because in 2001 under the Kyoto Accords, super-clean Iceland, with its thermal heat, few factories, etc., got favorable scores for pollution! So Alcoa is in effect getting relatively cheap power, and--this seems perverse--permission to pollute. And that new smelter on Iceland's north coast, though completely modern and with new safeguards in place, will still emit dangerous chemicals into Iceland's chill air, poisons into its waters.

For all the obvious reasons, Alcoa's initial proposals in the 1990's to build a smelter and the huge hydro-electric works that go with it were met with skepticism. Environmentalists pointed out that that highland wilderness, because of its size and remoteness, over time, was unique. It should remain so, and inviolate, a pristine habitat for the reindeer and geese, for varied flora and fauna. And for a few human visitors who would approach it with care, and wonder, treating it as something rare, even sacrosanct on this our crowded and dirty and noisy planet..

Scientists pointed out that Iceland sits atop the Atlantic Rift and earthquakes and

volcanos are therefore common. Only Hawaii has as many. The earth's crust is thin in Iceland. As Morris pointed out, it has a 'record of scarce hidden fire.' A volcano erupted under Vatnajökull in 1996. Smoke and ash poured forth from a deep split in the glacier. Then, for two weeks, all was quiet. And then came something truly frightening and dangerous, a 'jökul-hlaup'--a glacial burst/flood. Upwelling lava had melted the underside of the glacier, and the resulting water was trapped and became an underground lake that grew larger, and larger, and larger. And when it burst forth, it was a wall of water, equal in force and volume, said one geologist, to the Congo River in full flood. It rushed south toward the sea, carrying with it chunks of ice weighing up to 30 tons each. This abrupt and savage event, a sort of quick tsunami, destroyed everything in its path, from the glacier down to the beaches of the Atlantic. Luckily, there wasn't much to destroy. But it took out several hundred yards of the Ring Road, twisting the girders of a long steel bridge, washing most of it out to sea. For some frightening pictures, see 'Iceland's Trial By Fire,' *The National Geographic*, May, 1997, pp. 58-77.

It's quite likely, the scientists pointed out, that there'll be another volcanic eruption--big ones occur in Iceland every 60 years or so--in the area, even under Vatnajökull. If it were to occur under the northern edge of the glacier, say just above the new dam, or near it, and the melted water pooled again, and then burst forth in a 'jökul-hlaup,' the flood and the chunks of ice would surely take out the dam, releasing all of the water behind it, and then . . . well, it's fearful to contemplate. The farms in the northeast would be inundated, and so would a few towns, perhaps even the new smelter out on the north coast. Surely, there'd be loss of life.

And even a mild earthquake--much more frequent in Iceland than a volcano--could weaken and bring down that dam we saw going up on that August afternoon in 2003. And, again there'd be death and destruction. So, argued the scientists, this would be a stupid place to build a dam. Let's forget the whole thing.

Their arguments were telling. They influenced a Special Parliamentary Commission that recommended that Alcoa's plans and project be denied. But, in December 2001, Siv Fridleifsdottir, Minister for the Environment, overrode the recommendation and signed accords that permitted Alcoa to begin work on the Karahknúpar Project, the largest and most expensive such undertaking in Iceland's history. And the work has proceeded rapidly, pretty much according to schedule, on all fronts. The large dam was rising up out of its foundations, certainly well begun, in August of 2003. Projections have electricity emerging from the Power Plant in 2007, the smelter itself operating in 2009.

Alcoa has mounted an impressive public relations campaign, assuring Icelanders that 'valuable lessons' have been learned from past experiences, from those law-suits, and the like. And this new smelter, they promise, will be state of the art in every respect. It will cost nearly a billion dollars. At ground-breaking ceremonies, the CEO of Alcoa said, 'We'll be spending a million dollars a day here for the next four years. It's your responsibility to keep as much of it as you can in Iceland.' I'm not sure how much of it remains in Iceland, but Landvirkin--the state-owned power company--has had to float large loans to pay for the dams, tunnels, power plant, and the like, for just about everything but the smelter. And recently Fitch, the rating agency, citing deep current deficits, moved Iceland's economic outlook from 'stable' to 'negative.'

Alcoa has also promised to be a 'community steward,' and they have planted trees, sponsored soccer teams, and come up with a 150 page *Sustainability Report*, replete with tables and charts and lists, with research that has uncovered, for instance, how many reindeer calves were born pre-dam, how many survived, and so forth. Its prose is gray and opaque, its conclusions sometimes misleading. Someone has pointed out that if Alcoa were really interested in sustainability, they'd mount campaigns to recycle beer-cans. But Alcoa, like the industrial firms Morris despised in the 19th century, is much more interested in growth, in profits, in bottom lines that share-holders can understand.

An Icelandic writer has said that Iceland's politicians (a large majority have welcomed Alcoa, saying that the Project will create jobs, that very few Icelanders had ever visited those highlands anyway, etc.--much like American politicians advocating drilling for oil in the Arctic) and businessmen favor Alcoa and the Project because they think globalization is 'in,' and so

They want to be part of it. If the international community can show them how truly ridiculous it is to destroy nature, the very thing they love most, for one aluminum smelter, they may start to think for themselves. They might finally have the guts to speak up and tell their dictatorial government how absolutely they have got this wrong. You have to shame us.

There are some groups who have offered concerted and convincing protests, via the internet, groups like Friends of the Earth, International Rivers Network, and several others. A group called SOS Iceland has urged activists to organize, to travel to Iceland, to join demonstrations, to confront the capitalist exploiters, to bring the work to a halt, and the like. A few score, mainly from Denmark and Britain, came to Reykjavik last summer. There were speeches and songs in the central square, not too well attended. A few activists--some call them 'eco-terrorists'--travelled to the site itself, a rather difficult journey from Reykjavik. They managed to stop work for a few hours, chaining themselves to bulldozers, climbing up cranes to spread banners, and the like. The police roughed up a few of the more boisterous ones and unceremoniously put them on planes back to Europe. There have been charges of police brutality, fascist Vikings, and the like. More demonstrations are scheduled for July of 2006.

I don't think anyone believes that work on the Karahnjukar Project will stop. And it looks like the 2009 deadline might be met. But Alcoa has run into quite serious objections to its plans to build yet another smelter, this one at Husavik, up on the north coast. So, perhaps the protests have had some effect. We can only hope so.

DAVID MABB IN LITHUANIA

BY ANNA MATUKHINA

The year started with a pleasant tribute to William Morris: on January 20th a new exhibition of Morris-based works by David Mabb opened at the Contemporary Art Center in Vilnius, Lithuania, where it remained until March 19th, 2006. There is no need to present David Mabb to the members of William Morris Society, for several articles on and notices of his work, as well as his recent interview with Rosie Miles, have appeared in the *Journal of William Morris Studies* and those Morrisians who took part in the 2005 conference on "Morris in the 21st Century" were able to enjoy his spectacular, informative and interesting lecture about his own work.

As with any piece of modern art, David Mabb's works can be regarded in different ways according to the personal tastes and aesthetic ideals of the viewer. Some of them may seem even questionable to those devoted to Morris's ideas, but the main consideration is that in using Morris designs for his paintings and other projects this artist attracts attention to this great celebrity of the past and introduces him into the sphere of contemporaneity, an especially important role in countries such as Lithuania or Russia, where Morris is known mainly to art or literature historians.

David Mabb was invited to Vilnius by curator Simon Rees to create works constituting a link between the United Kingdom and Lithuania. On the same day as the opening of "David Mabb: Art into Everyday Life," the Contemporary Art Center also opened the exhibition "My World: The New Subjectivity in Design," presenting a new generation of British designers who combine individual creativity with closeness to material or "hand crafting." After several months of research into the Lithuanian art of the Soviet era, the artist chose several buildings dating back to the so called "Khrushchev Thaw" of the 1960s, and depicted them according to the manner peculiar to him, superimposed on William Morris patterns. The chosen period is not accidental, for this was a time when a political initiative called "art in everyday life" was developed to place artists in charge of the design of household objects.

The exhibition includes five oil on fabric paintings, three of which are reproduced in tufted carpets created at AB Kilimai, at Lentvaris outside Vilnius. David Mabb turned to carpet making for the first time and the outcome of this venture is highly impressive: the Vilnius Sports Hall placed on the Honeysuckle pattern, the Lietuva Cinema on the Willow Bough pattern, and the United Colours of Benetton Shop (also a former Cinema as well) on the Fruit pattern are extremely refined, combining beauty with use as items of applied

arts production, embodying principles so important for William Morris.

One can feel a slight inexplicable wrench looking at these carpets: it seems the image of the Sports Hall is disappearing little by little before our eyes, beyond the shroud of the flowers falling like snowflakes, and the images of Lietuva and the United Colours of Benetton Shop are in the process of being overgrown with branches running wild. This slow but inevitable process of mysterious and bewitching disappearance cannot help casting a spell on those who look at these works.

Two of the three buildings depicted in the carpets are to be destroyed in the near future as obsolete and moreover devalued because of their Soviet associations; the third has already been turned into a shop. William Morris was an ardent advocate of the preservation of historical buildings, and saved many of these from "reconstruction." No doubt the Vilnius structures chosen by David Mabb will not avoid demolition, but they will continue to exist as images in these carpets of rare beauty.

## BOOK REVIEWS

### GARDENS OF THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT, by Judith Tankard.

Harry N. Abrams Inc., Publishers. Hardback, US \$50.00 CAN \$75.00 UK £29.95

~~— For William Morris readers, it may be surprising to know that Morris' contribution to the theory and development of garden design is another of his many achievements. In this original study, Judith Tankard features Morris in the center front row among the many and varied types of garden concerned designers and their influences in her beautiful book, *Gardens of the Arts and Crafts Movement*.~~

~~— She begins by outlining a philosophical debate between two schools of thought on garden design. Both claimed their approach was consummately English and, therefore, right. The author includes a bit of comedy in quoting the views of each on the opposition. One side—which evoked Elizabethan precedents—consisted of architects who advocated outdoor garden rooms, extending from the house, clipped evergreen hedges, rooms arranged in geometric design (and in popular use, filled with bright, exotic annuals). Those on the other side of this debate consisted of horticulturists and gardeners who advocated perennial native flowers, instead of showy annuals, placed in naturalistic settings.~~

~~— It was Morris who embraced aspects of both ideas while creating the Red House and its surrounds. With those beginnings, garden making became another discipline born into the Arts and Crafts Movement.~~

~~— And what is the signature look of an Arts and Crafts garden? Judith Tankard believes its central elements are found in medieval manuscript illustrations. As such, the Arts and Crafts garden reflects much of the architect's viewpoint. Morris sited the Red House and gardens as a whole idea, making square garden plots near the doors and windows, arranged in seclusion from the neighbor surrounds using natural barriers: clipped yew, stone wall, or watted fence. From the viewpoint of the horticulturist and gardener, he advocated native plants, not the flamboyant popular exotics. The Arts and Crafts style uses herbs, fruit trees, and simple native perennials such as lilies, sunflowers, and roses which symbolized earthly paradise in a medieval tapestry. Valuing the natural over the showy, Arts and Crafts ornament eschews the use of ostentatious sculpture, preferring practical sundials and small secondary architectural elements as focal points such as the Red House garden's well head.~~

~~— Thus begins Judith Tankard's bird eye perspective of the movement, from the doorstep of the Red House in Chapter Two, flowing outward. She covers the designers influenced by Morris in his era up to the present day in Chapter Twelve. And while she narrates the history of the Arts and Crafts garden movement, she suffuses her text with a continuous visual story. Her work serves as an important visual reference for architects, landscape architects, and architectural illustrators of the modern day. Old garden plans in ink, old perspectives of houses and gardens in the media of watercolor, pen and ink, etching, and pencil, old sections of houses in watercolor and gardens in ink—all these visual documents communicate the design in its most aesthetic and understandable way. Their success conveys a "sense of place."~~

—Professionals today formatting their plans and illustrations with the ubiquitous media tool CAD (Computer Aided Design) and popular software like Sketch-Up, would do well to analyze the successful aspects of the older renderings. Much is lost when using modern computer templates of trees, plants, benches, computerized colors and textures when rendering computerized perspectives, sections, and plans. These renderings begin to take on a visual sameness. Judith Tankard has supplied a book that can help the modern day illustrator to ponder the advantages of hand-applied color, textures and elements when adopting modern, time-saving tools. And she uses two new and excellent graphic artists' pen & ink plans and perspectives when describing the estates of the Arts and Crafts movement. Their beautiful graphic flourishes show a reintroduction of the aesthetic sensibilities that modern standards have overlooked. Yet, from this book's examples, the sensitivities to the landscape expressed graphically are superior in the Arts and Crafts period and the modern day professional has a challenge to reintroduce what has been lost.

—In addition to the observations that can be made from a professional landscape architect's point of view, one should emphasize that Judith Tankard has created a beautifully designed book. Books are always beautifully designed when Morris is the subject. Yet her chapter layouts, often using Morris papers, are among the most attractive and easiest to read. This level of attention extends to the inside chapter design: new high resolution photographs printed full page and double page are large enough to feel as though one can enter into the landscape. To place the Arts and Crafts within the greater movement, this book includes garden theme illustrations from prominent figures of the time: a Kate Greenaway watercolor, a Walter Crane book jacket watercolor, a Morris tapestry, a C.F.A. Voysey book cover. Another remarkable aspect of the book is the use of double pages that are color toned to unify a single idea. One example is the color toned lime peel green double page layout which integrates a subtle screened Morris leaf design. It features the garden and house images of a trio of multi-faceted designers, inspired by Morris, who moved to Cotswolds to make their mark and left a legacy. The color, type, photos, and written text are all unified and skillfully positioned to make a complexity of elements effortless to read and study.

—Last of all, Judith Tankard does the reader a service by knitting the past into the present, providing current opportunities to the reader. Her epilogue features an interesting artistic publication of garden related topics founded and edited by a pair of modern designers working in the Arts and Crafts manner. Her appendix features a listing of Arts and Crafts gardens opened for visits. **GARDENS OF THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT** does so very many things well, in its instruction and in its presentation. Fulfilling the Morris ideal in being both beautiful and useful, it will find its way to those of us undertaking Morris' challenge to use our skills to make the world a better place. Judith Tankard, it seems, has done her part.

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*Elliott, David B. **A Pre-Raphaelite Marriage: The Lives and Works of Marie Spartali Stillman and William James Stillman.** England: Antique Collectors' Club, 2006. 247 pp.*

—It is somewhat surprising that this is the first full scale biography to be written about the Pre-Raphaelite artist, Marie Spartali Stillman, and her artist/journalist husband, William James Stillman. Marie was a serious and gifted painter, a great beauty who modeled for fellow artists, and both were an integral part of a remarkable circle of friends and associates who were major figures in English art, literature, and culture in the second half of the nineteenth century. They include such names as William and Jane Morris, Dante Gabriel and William Rossetti, Edward Burne-Jones, James Abbott MacNeill Whistler, John Ruskin, Ford Madox Brown, and Henry James.

—That this is the first extensive biography is in part explained by the fact that the author, David Elliott, is a grandson of the artist Charles Fairfax Murray, a lifelong friend of Marie Stillman. As such, he is the first person to be granted access to the

*Stillman family archives. This access, in addition to Elliott's extensive research in other artists' archives and in printed sources on the major cultural figures and history of the time has resulted in a fascinating biography that was well worth the wait. Although scholarly in its research, the book is a lively, informative account of the Stillmans' lives and relationships, and we are given absorbing new details and perspectives on them and their circle.*

*—The book includes almost ninety color and black and white illustrations, including reproductions of many of Marie Stillman's works from private collections that have not been seen publicly since the early 20th century. There are extensive endnotes for each chapter, and also a chronological list of her known works, which gives the title, date completed, and first exhibition or sale. This is followed by a selected bibliography and extensive index.*

*—Marie Spartali was born on March 10, 1844 in London to wealthy expatriate Greek parents. Her parents exposed her and her sister Christine from their early years to the creative world of their time. The sisters were educated at home, were fluent in several languages, and both were accomplished musicians. They were also both noted beauties.*

*Marie fervently wanted to become a professional artist, despite her parents' objections. It took her several years to convince her father of how serious she was about this, but he finally allowed her to start art lessons. She began her formal training under Ford Madox Brown and continued with him for over five years. It was through Brown that Marie met Dante Gabriel Rossetti. She quickly became part of his circle as well as his model.*

*—Born in 1828, William Stillman was an American writer, artist, and critic. During his early manhood he embarked on a number of ventures, which included journalism, painting, photography, and travel. He eventually went to England and became friends through his art with John Ruskin and the Rossetti family. He returned to America in 1860 to marry Laura Maek. After a short and unhappy marriage that culminated in his wife's suicide, William returned to England in 1869 with his three small children. There he soon met Marie Spartali. Despite their many differences—age, temperament, and outlook—their relationship developed over the next many months into love. They became engaged in 1870 and married in 1871. Her parents violently objected to the relationship, and this led to a long estrangement between the Stillmans and the Spartali family. Also alarmed and unhappy about their marriage were many of Marie's friends, including Dante Rossetti and Ford Madox Brown. They thought that the dour William and the sparkling Marie were unsuited for each other and that the marriage would be unsuccessful. Despite everyone's fears and objections, the Stillman's marriage continued contentedly enough for thirty years, until William's death.*

*—The first six years of the Stillmans' marriage was spent in England, but over the following eleven years they divided their time between England and Italy. During this time they had three children of their own. The book chronicles the events of these years, and the many years thereafter, writing about their professional lives, their family and their associates. The narrative captures the diversity and range of their lives and those of their friends, with fascinating detail. Elliott follows the paths of the Stillmans' lives and those of their children and friends through William's retirement in 1898 and his death in 1901, Marie's life following his death until her own in 1927.*

*—Despite the demands on her time and energies throughout her life, Marie steadfastly continued her painting career, and exhibited regularly in England and in the United States. Although Marie's artistic career is woven throughout the narrative, the book ends with a several page "envoi," which focuses on Marie Spartali Stillman, the artist. This section discusses the influences on and quality of her work, changes in her subject matter and techniques over time, and her productivity. Her output was remarkable—over 170 works—and she continued painting almost until her death.*

*—At the close of the book, Elliott states that Stillman's reputation as a painter has revived in the late 20th century, and reassessment of her work has resulted in her being seen as a more significant artist than previously understood. And on this note, the book ends. A Pre-Raphaelite Marriage is a welcome and thoroughly enjoyable introduction to its subjects, the Stillmans, and their time.*



*Fran-Durako*

*March 2006*

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF MEMBER ACTIVITIES**

*U. S. Morris Society member John Le Bourgeois is the author of a recent book, Art and Forbidden Fruit: Hidden Passion in the Life of William Morris. An interpretation of Morris's relationship with his elder sister Emma, Art and Forbidden Fruit may be obtained by sending \$8.00 for the first copy and \$4.00 for additional copies to The Lutterworth Press, P. O. Box 60, Cambridge, CB1 2NT, England.*

**CHARLES SHANNON: LITHOGRAPHS & LUMINARIES**

*An Exhibition at the Delaware Art Museum*

*March 17-July 9, 2006*

*—London in the late 19th century was home to many artists and literary figures. Charles Haslewood Shannon (1863-1937) was an active participant in and keen observer of this world of refined tastes and bold ambitions. This is the first comprehensive exhibition to be held in the United States devoted to the lithographic work of this versatile painter, printmaker and collector.*

*—One section will be devoted to Shannon's revealing portraits of members of the incredibly rich milieu of fin de siècle London, which included artists and literary figures such as Alphonse Legros, Max Beerbohm, Oscar Wilde and Lucien Pissarro. The remainder of the display will spotlight Shannon's subject lithographs, focusing almost exclusively on the female form. Shannon's style combines Pre-Raphaelite sensuousness with impressionistic softness, and boldly modern asymmetric composition. Also on view are examples of the artist's book illustration and design done in collaboration with his life-long partner, Charles Ricketts, along with related works by the caricaturist Max Beerbohm and the photographer Alvin Langdon Coburn.*

*All the items in this exhibition are drawn from the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, on loan to the University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware,*

*—Join the Delaware Art Museum for an Evening with Mark Samuels Lasner*

*In conjunction with the exhibition, on Wednesday, March 22, Mark Samuels Lasner will speak informally on Charles Shannon, his circle of friends, and his stunning prints. A collector, bibliographer, and expert on the literature and art of late Victorian Britain, Mark Samuels Lasner is Senior Research Fellow at the University of Delaware Library, Wednesday, March 22, 2006, 5:30 pm.*

*Delaware Art Museum*

*2301 Kentmere Parkway*

*Wilmington, Delaware 19806*

*For more information:*

*Tel. 302-571-9590*

*[www.delart.org](http://www.delart.org)*

**CONFERENCES AND CALLS FOR PAPERS**

***Teaching William Morris***

*Where and how are the works and legacy of William Morris being taught in educational institutions across the world? The Summer 2007 issue of the Journal of William Morris Studies hopes to address this broad question through a wide range of contributions from practitioners responsible for bringing Morris to life in the classroom. Topics for consideration might include:*

- *Teaching News from Nowhere.*
- *Teaching Morris's poetry and prose works (anyone teaching *The Earthly Paradise*? *Sigurd*? *The Late Romances*?)*
- *Morris in the English Studies / Victorian Studies / Politics / History of Design / Other curriculum.*
- *Morris in schools.*
- *Morris and 'alternative' education.*
- *Examples of using online resources and/or Virtual Learning Environments to teach Morris.*
- *Are there particular challenges or difficulties associated with teaching Morris in certain contexts?*
- *Student responses to Morris.*
- *What do Morris's ideas have to offer the educational systems in which we work?*

*Responses of between 2500-5000 words welcome. Deadline: September 15th 2006.*

*Submissions to the Editor, Dr Rosie Miles: [R.Miles@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:R.Miles@wlv.ac.uk)*

#### *NACBS Essay Contest for Undergraduates at U.S. Colleges and Universities*

*The North American Conference on British Studies is pleased to announce the inauguration of an essay contest in British Studies for undergraduates at U.S. colleges and universities. The essays should be submitted no later than 1 June 2006. Six prizes of \$100 each will be awarded. For further information please contact Professor C.R. Perry at [cperry@sewanee.edu](mailto:cperry@sewanee.edu) or refer to NACBS website at [nacbs.org](http://nacbs.org).*

#### *SCBS Travel Grant for Graduate Students*

*The Southern Conference on British Studies is pleased to solicit applications for the 2007 Sheldon Hanft Travel Award from graduate students in British Studies at universities within the SCBS region: the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia and the District of Columbia. The award carries a grant of \$1000 to underwrite travel expenses incurred while doing research in British Studies. Applications for 2007 are due no later than 15 September 2006. For more information, please contact Professor John A Hutcheson, jr. at [jhutcheson@daltonstate.edu](mailto:jhutcheson@daltonstate.edu).*

#### *Inaugural English Literature Conference: IRRESPONSIBILITY*

*Division of English, NTU, Singapore, 28-30 September 2006*

*Literature tells us before psychoanalysis, before deconstruction that our crimes are overdetermined, our ethical concepts unstable. Yet the facile deployment of the rhetoric of responsibility and irresponsibility, in all manner of debate, indicates the widespread abuse of the concept of responsibility, if not its bankruptcy. With our title *Irresponsibility*, we hope to provoke a conversation aimed at assessing both the contribution of literature to our understanding of the concept of responsibility and its vicissitudes, and the possible resistance within literature and literary studies to cheap distinctions between responsibility and irresponsibility. Please send abstracts of 300 words either by email to [irresponsibility@ntu.edu.sg](mailto:irresponsibility@ntu.edu.sg) or by mail to Conference Committee, English Division, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, NTU, Nanyang Avenue, Singapore 639798. Further information will soon be available at our conference website: [www.hss.ntu.edu.sg/english/eng\\_conference.asp](http://www.hss.ntu.edu.sg/english/eng_conference.asp) Deadline: 10 April 2006*

#### *Politics and Middle-earth*

*The 2006 Tolkien Society Seminar will be held on Saturday 22 July in the Pierce room at the Assembly House, Norwich, England.*

*Papers are sought on any aspect of the seminar theme. In particular papers may wish to address one or more of the following:*

- *Politics portrayed within the fictional world of Middle-earth*
- *Real world political use of Tolkien's works*
- *Tolkien's role in/influence on academic politics*
- *Tolkien's personal politics as revealed by his life and works*

*Papers should be either 20 or 45 minutes long to fit into half-hour or hour slots with time for questions/discussion. There may also be scope to accommodate a number of short 10 minute presentations. Please send the title, a short summary/abstract and the intended length to the seminar organiser: Trevor Reynolds, The Tolkien Society, 65 Wentworth Crescent, Ash Vale, Aldershot, GU12 5LF, United Kingdom or by email to: seminar@tolkiensociety.org by 30 April 2006.*

#### ***NINETEENTH-CENTURY REPRODUCTION***

*An interdisciplinary graduate student conference*

*Temple University, Philadelphia, PA: February 24, 2007*

*The Nineteenth-Century Forum at Temple University seeks papers for its first interdisciplinary graduate student conference. Proposals are invited for 15-20 minute presentations that consider reproduction in the nineteenth century, broadly construed. Send a 300-word proposal and one-page CV by May 1, 2006 to 19c.Reproduction@temple.edu.*

*Midwest Conference on British Studies 52nd Annual Meeting*

*27-29 October 2006 Indianapolis Museum of Art Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis Indianapolis, Indiana*

*The Midwest Conference on British Studies is proud to announce that its fifty-second annual meeting will be hosted by Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis at the Indianapolis Museum of Art. This year's plenary speakers are: Linda Levy Peck (George Washington University), who will speak on "Murder, Mayhem and Marriage in Restoration England," and Mrinalini Sinha (Pennsylvania State University), who will speak on: "Imperial Citizenship: Britain, the United States, and the Death of a Political Ideal." The MWCBS seeks papers from scholars in all fields of British Studies, broadly defined to include those who study England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and Britain's empire. We welcome scholars from the broad spectrum of disciplines, including but not limited to history, literature, political science, gender studies and art history. Proposals for complete sessions are preferred, although proposals for individual papers will be considered. Proposals should include a 200-word abstract for each paper and a brief c.v. for each participant, including chairs and commentators. All proposals should be submitted online by April 15, 2006 to:*

*Phyllis L. Soybel*

*Program Chair, MWCBS Department of History/Social Sciences  
College of Lake County  
19351 W. Washington St.  
Grayslake, Illinois 60030  
psoybel@clellinois.edu*

*The Victorians and the Arab World: Creative Connections*

*Friday 13-Saturday 14 April 2007 School of English, University of Leeds, UK*

*Proposals are invited (up to 300 words) for an inter-disciplinary conference on The Victorians and the Arab World: Creative Connections to be held in the School of English, University of Leeds, UK, on 13-14 April 2007. Papers should be 20 minutes. The aim of the conference is to examine ways in which the Arab world broadly defined had some*

*form of creative role to play in the formation of aspects of Victorian culture (literary, visual, plastic, musical). Proposals should be received by 1 December 2006 and sent to*

*Dr Francis O'Gorman  
Reader in Victorian Literature  
The School of English  
University of Leeds  
LEEDS, LS2 9JT, UK  
f.j.o'gorman@leeds.ac.uk*

### ***THE MORRIS MARKETPLACE: A Shopper's Guide***

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*Designers Forum is the world's leading producer of needlepoint kits based on the 19th century designs of [William Morris](#) and [William De Morgan](#) and other members of the Arts and Crafts Movement. Kit items include bell pulls, cushions, stool tops, pillows, chair seats, rugs, firescreens and hangings. Morris patterns include Acanthus, Acanthus Leaves, Artichokes, Honeysuckle, Lodden, Strawberry Thief, Trellis, and Tulip and Rose. Special Feature: Discount for Morris Society members. When ordering via the web, enter WMSOC for a 10% discount on all kits. Alternately, mention you are a member when phoning in.*

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  - "Pomona" Tapestry (51"Wx83"W) Item #TX7108 \$975.00
  - "Vine and Acanthus" Tapestry (37"Wx28"W) Item #TX5200 \$125.00
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- *Compton Watch. Stainless steel face, with vinyl strap. Item #I2804 \$48.00/Met Member Price: \$43.20*
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#### **COLOPHON**

*This newsletter was written and edited by Shannon L. Rogers. Items for inclusion, books for review, news from or about members, calls for papers, conference announcements, event notifications, and comments are welcomed.*

*Shannon Rogers  
77 Church Street*

**Kingston, PA 18704**  
**us\_news@morrissociety.org**

**~~LAST UPDATE 30 APR 2006 - PLEASE REPORT BROKEN LINKS TO~~**  
**~~WEBMASTER@MORRISOCIETY.ORG~~**

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