Useful and Beautiful:
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“Defence of Guenevere” Word Frequency Design, created in Voyant
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A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

One of the speakers at the Mark Samuels Lasner symposium talked about a lost generation of book collectors. He anecdotally noted how there seemed to be less interest among people in their late thirties and early forties in book collecting than in twenty-somethings and sexta- and septuagenarians. I could not help but to observe the crowd at the symposium (and it was quite a crowd!). It did appear as though forty-somethings were under-represented. I then wondered: Is there a similarly lost generation of Morrisians? I did an admittedly un-scientific survey of dissertations written about Morris using WorldCat (it yielded a more complete record than Dissertation Abstracts) and it seems to confirm that the high point of interest in Morris among master’s and doctoral students came in the 1960s and 70s and then there was a dramatic fall-off in the 1990s and early 2000s. The Age of Aquarius represented a Golden Age for Morris studies in the US. Perhaps the Times of Trump will be as well. We certainly are seeing encouraging signs in the number of recent theses and dissertations about Morris. But where are the early forty-something Morrisians?

I asked Florence Boos about this lost generation and she responded by describing the contextual forces that brought her into the Morrisian fold back in the heyday. “The parents of people my age all experienced the Second World War, and so their childhoods were filled with accounts of major social upheavals. I was also in graduate school during the Vietnam War with all the associated strikes and movements—the Eugene McCarthy campaign, the black studies sitdowns, the teaching assistants’ strikes, the Cambodian strike, etc.—a living laboratory of social conflict. Even if young people didn’t directly witness police violence they all knew people who had. Historical studies of 19th century socialism made sense because these movements seemed to be possible predecessors for the present.”

She then had this to say about why interest in Morris declined: “[I]n literature, there were quite a few books published on Morris between 1969-75, and after that a great gap. For one thing literary studies turned against ‘single author’ studies; and further, the new methods proclaimed ‘the death of the author,’ that is, an emphasis on text rather than biographical or cultural context. In addition, the form of narratology which rose to prominence was one which worked better for detective fiction, hidden deceptive meanings, unreliable and indirect speakers, etc. Further, neither of Morris’s two major genres—epic poetry or prose ‘fantasy’—were much respected as the psychological realist novel became the standard.” But, like me, she sees the beginnings of a renaissance, “In recent years there seems to be a shift; the onset of ‘cultural studies’ has helped, as well as the interest in utopian and speculative fiction. Also the Pre-Raphaelite commitment to a merging of the arts suits the returning respect for interdisciplinarity of all kinds. It is cheering to read all these enthusiastic proposals by young people, who are coming to the matter tabula rasa, as it were.”

Discovering just how much of a seesaw of interest there has been in Morris led me to the archives for a closer look. In particular, I pored over early print copies of News from Anywhere, which began appearing in 1959 as a yearly Morris Society newsletter. It was edited by Joseph R. Dunlap, the Society’s “Eastern Secretary.” Barbara Dunlap is listed as co-editor starting in 1970. The March 1959 issue was a two-page, single-spaced letter but by 1973 News from Anywhere was up to a thirty-two page booklet. Very little of the unrest of the sixties makes its direct way into the pages of the newsletter. The University of California at Berkeley gets a mention, but it is to inform Morris Society members of a Morris wallpaper and fabric exhibit that took place there in the fall of 1962, two years before the Free Speech Movement rocked the campus. George Harrison of the Beatles gets a mention, too. Dunlap, in an article looking at Morris references in Dorothy Sayers’s mystery novels, mentions a character by the name of George Harrison and humorously adds in parentheses, “not the Beatle.”
I learned about the first New York area Morris Society meeting. It appeared in the inaugural issue of News from Anywhere. "The first meeting of the William Morris Society in the New York area took place on the evening of January 26, 1959," Dunlap tells us, "when four members and a visitor gathered in the intimate office of Herman Cohen's appropriately named Chiswick Book Shop. The conversation, which began in the office and was transferred later to a nearby restaurant, ranged widely over books and bookmen, and brought out the interests of the members present who, alphabetically: Herman Cohen, Joe Dunlap, Herman Kapp, and Stuart Schimmel." Given the origin story presented here, it is not surprising that Morris's artistic and printing endeavors take precedence over his radical politics in News from Anywhere. What passes for gossip is the possible whereabouts of lost Morris items, a Kelmscott Press ledger that was not included with others acquired by the Morgan library and a particular stained-glass panel.

News from Anywhere makes one telling reference about the new generation of scholars coming of age at this time. In a piece from 1967, Dunlap quotes Margaret Nielsen of Lock Haven State College (now University) who describes what happened when she mentioned Morris as forerunner to fantasy fiction at the Tolkien-Lewis panel at the 1966 Modern Language Association conference. The young Tolkien-Lewis scholars responded with, "Oh, Morris, of course!" to which she added, there was "the strong implication that the pupil far outshone the master." These young scholars were already well familiar with Morris's contributions to the genre.

As expected, exhibit and book reviews dominate the newsletter. But personally, I was drawn to two articles in particular. I was excited, for example, to see a contribution by Marvin Sanford in the October 1959 issue. Sanford's papers are now at the Huntington Library and I had the chance to examine them a few years ago. Sanford's father was a Debsian socialist and radical newspaper editor. When Marvin was sixteen he started his own socialist newspaper, The Searchlight, making him the youngest socialist editor of the Debsian era. I ended up referencing him in Socialism and Print Culture in America: "He was the son of DeForest Sanford, who, himself, had a long career editing labor and socialist newspapers, including the Knights of Labor Advocate, People's Advocate and Whidbey Islander, the last of which was the official newspaper of the Freeland Rochdale community in Puget Sound, Washington. In his type-written, eight-page monthly, the younger Sanford saw his purpose as publishing for the 'rising generation'. He called his monthly The Searchlight, and, like other socialist editors he truly believed that 'education' was 'the way to liberty'. Sanford understood well that a vital press was arguably among a political organization's most important resources, a lesson he undoubtedly learned from his father. It would be a lesson that he would carry with him for the rest of his life as a union printer and avid collector of radical and labor ephemera."

Sanford's contribution to News from Anywhere was to tell Society members about a Morris Club that had existed in 1920s San Francisco. "When the Morris Club was in bloom here, early 20's . . . it was housed in a big old 3-story 'mansion house.' Principal activity was its Morris School, devoted to modern education for children suited to their individual needs." He continued, "In those days there were a plethora of such clubs—named for Morris, Ruskin (2 of them, highly successful), Marx, Jack London, Shelley, also New Life Fellowship, etc." Boos has told the story of the first US Morris Society, that founded in Chicago in 1903. It would be fascinating to see someone reconstruct the history of the second iteration of the Morris Society.

I was also struck by references to John Collier, who was commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs under Franklin Roosevelt. Collier had a deep affinity for Morris. In 1913, Collier had waxed poetic about Morris in "The Utopias of William Morris," and Dunlap reprinted a few stanzas. We also get a glimpse into how Morris's ideas influenced Collier in his professional life. In a review of Collier's On the Gleaming Way, Dunlap wrote, "Dr. Collier mentions Morris in his final chapter as one of the few who saw the dire effects of the dissolution of the local community when exploitation took the place of the cooperation and reciprocity which had been the 'way of men through many thousands of generations.' There is the makings of a great article about Morris's influence on Collier from these tantalizing tidbits.

I hope that I am right that we are at the dawn of another Golden Age of Morris. We need to make sure that we keep a permanent archive of our current digital version of News from Anywhere so that future scholars can one day meditate on the Morris renaissance of the 2010s. That is not to put the pressure on the new News from Anywhere blog editor—Michael Robertson of The College of New Jersey—but it is game on.

In fellowship, Jason D. Martinek

5. Socialism and Print Culture in America, p. 79.
“OBJECTS OF MOST INTENSE AND INTIMATE FEELING”
ARTS & CRAFTS, AESTHETICISM, AND THE BRITISH ORIGINS OF THE NEWCOMB POTTERY ENTERPRISE

Meghan Freeman

“Here is a quaint little building, shadowed by huge oak trees, and covered with the charming green ficus vine, [where] all day long may be seen and heard ‘the potter thumping his wet clay,’ and by the time the finished ware comes forth from its dangerous lodging in the kiln, we may feel assured everyone will cry aloud, ‘who is the potter, pray, and who is the pot?’”

Newcomb College Pottery Building, Tulane University. Designed by New Orleans architect, Rathbone de Buys.

Taken from the 1901 edition of Jambalaya, the Tulane University yearbook, this quotation describes the recently constructed, freestanding “art building” of its coordinate women’s institution, Newcomb College. In this lovely, pastoral image of a “quaint little building,” the student author might be said to capture the essence of just what it is about the Newcomb Pottery enterprise that continues to charm both scholars and collectors—specifically, the notion that it is an embodiment of the Arts & Crafts ideal of labor both rigorous and pleasurable, creating objects both useful and beautiful. Moreover, in her references to the art building’s picturesque location among “huge oak trees,” its façade covered by “the charming green ficus vine,” the author gestures towards another particular aspect of Newcomb’s appeal and, commercially, its continued collectability: the idea that the pottery is inherently an indigenous product, created from locally-sourced materials, handled by inhabitants of the region, and decorated using motifs inspired by local flora and fauna, resulting ultimately in objects that are concrete expressions of the spirit of New Orleans. Yet, at the risk of dispelling the magic of this romantic, picturesque image of Newcomb Pottery, circa 1901, I would ask that you look once again at the quotation and direct your attention to something so minor, so prosaic that it probably escaped your notice: the two sets of quotation marks around the phrases—the ‘potter thumping his wet clay’ and the description’s concluding question, ‘who is the potter, pray, and who is the pot?’ What this tells us is that this description of Newcomb’s art building—a description that seems to get to the heart of the allure of Newcomb College Pottery—is not entirely in the author’s own words, that she is, in fact, borrowing language from a preexisting text. So, why is this important? Well, for the purposes of this essay it allows me to demonstrate a very simple point, that the Newcomb Pottery enterprise, as both an institution and an idea, was built on the foundations of Victorian aesthetic philosophy and literature.

Before explaining this claim, I’d like to delve a little deeper into the literary allusion of the epigraph. When this student author claims that anyone fortunate enough to witness the spectacle of production at Newcomb Pottery would ask themselves, “who is the potter, pray, and who is the pot?,” she is making two, interrelated inferences. First, she is assuming a commonality of perspective on the part of the public, by which I mean she is taking for granted that others would be capable of “reading into” the image she has put before them and recognizing from that image Newcomb College Pottery as an educational venture that did not simply create pots, but also created potters as well as a slew of other talented craftswomen, art teachers, and cultured connoisseurs of arts and crafts. Secondly, as she does not name the source of the quotation, she also is presupposing that her readership shares with her a familiarity with the text she is alluding to, a fair enough assumption, as both quotations are taken from a tremendously popular book of poetry: Edward Fitzgerald’s translation of The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám. First published in 1859, Fitzgerald’s translation of the medieval Persian poet Khayyám went through five editions in the author’s lifetime and, by the end of the nineteenth century, had become one of the most well-known poems in the English speaking world. While much could be said about The Rubáiyát, in which pottery is a recurrent theme, in relation to Newcomb, I offer it up here as only one of a number of popular nineteenth-century texts that I will argue impacted how the Newcomb Pottery enterprise was conceptualized by those within the Newcomb community as well as how it was perceived by the wider public.

What I am going to explore is how the identities of Newcomb Pottery and the Newcomb Art School emerged out of their position in the midst of a num-
ber of different intellectual cross-currents, all of which served to influence how the administrators, instructors, students, community supporters, and consumers of Newcomb Pottery understood its mission, its products, and its legacy. As the title of the 2015-16 exhibition on the Newcomb Pottery enterprise foregrounds, the enterprise brought into dynamic relation three things: Women, Art, and Social Change. Previous commentators have displayed Newcomb through the various lenses of the art historian, architectural historian, ceramics specialist, economist, and museum curator. My remarks will be focalized through a lens of my own unique intellectual prescription: that of literary studies, as informed by a deep and abiding interest in nineteenth-century aesthetic theory and art and material culture. For this reason, as much as my initial interest in Newcomb was sparked by its beautiful handicrafts, the majority of this essay will focus on textual materials—on the books in the Newcomb Art Library; on the sections pertaining to its curriculum in the Tulane course catalogues; on the notes, lectures, and articles written by its founder, Ellsworth Woodward (1861-1939); and on the extensive coverage that Newcomb’s Art School and Pottery received in local and national newspapers and periodicals during its years of production. My goal is to encourage us to think about Newcomb Pottery as an educational institution that for more than forty years produced a diverse array of handicrafts that were aesthetically distinct and superiorly crafted. What I want to put before you is the idea of Newcomb Pottery as a “concept” derived from and circulated within broader contemporary discussions of British and American art culture, I am hoping to uncover its significance not simply as a maker of beautiful and useful wares but also as a byword in the public imaginary for a particular kind of intellectual and artistic community, a crystallization of numerous aesthetic ideals concerning education, right living, and the power of certain “magical places” like that of the city of New Orleans to inspire widespread and enriching social change.

Newcomb’s Art Library and its Arts Curriculum: Sources, Influences, Inspirations

The origin stories of famous institutions most often begin with an overview of the conditions, events, and personalities that came together at a specific moment in history to bring forth the institution itself. Yet, for all the logic attached to the idea of beginning at the beginning, I open my own history of Newcomb with a document published in 1898 (a little over a decade after the college’s founding) in the inaugural volume of a magazine called *American Art Annual*. An extensive part of the first issue of this magazine is devoted to listing (alphabetically, by city) the major American art galleries, private collections, art societies, and schools, as well as providing brief overviews of their facilities, holdings, and functions. H. Sophie Newcomb Memorial College is the last entry in the section devoted to New Orleans art culture, but it has by far the longest write-up, including something not to be found in any other art school entry: a partial list of the volumes in the art department’s “small working library.” I have yet to satisfactorily account for the inclusion of this list—our only clue is to be found in editor Florence N. Levy’s prefatory comment that readers should treat Newcomb’s “catalogue of standard works” as a useful supplement to the list of recently-published art books found elsewhere in the magazine, which suggests that Newcomb’s art school was already recognized nationally as a “model program” whose taste in the matter of scholarly material was worthy of emulation. Whatever the reason, we must be grateful to the American Art Annual for providing us with conclusive evidence as to at least some of the authors being taught in the art school’s classes.

While I don’t have the time to exhaustively dissect this list, I have grouped these volumes into three loose categories, with the intention of highlighting the major schools of thought that might be said to have provided the intellectual backdrop for the instruction of Newcomb students in the history and production of art. A quick glance over the list, first of all, confirms that,
however contemporary and, even in some ways, radical the school was in its commitment to teaching the decorative as well as the fine arts, its educational philosophy rested on a solid foundation of what we might call “classic” works of art historical criticism. Starting with the Renaissance-era writer Giorgio Vasari’s work Lives of Painters (1550), Newcomb’s art library also included such canonical texts from the Continent as da Vinci’s Treatise on Painting (1651), J. J. Winckelmann’s History of Ancient Art (1764), G. E. Lessing’s Laocoön (1766), Hippolyte Taine’s Lectures on Art (1875), and several volumes of the art historical writings of Franz Kugler, including his influential work, the History of Painting (1842-46). Yet, even amidst this esteemed company, there is one writer on this list who stands out, a name that has become nearly synonymous with Victorian art culture: John Ruskin. Bursting onto the art scene in 1843 at the tender age of 24 with the publication of the first volume of Modern Painters, the polemical and very prolific Ruskin quickly became the most famous British art critic of his generation. His entertaining and accessible works on art, architecture, and culture were eagerly consumed by the reading public, inspiring a sea-change of sorts in the aesthetic sensibilities of Great Britain and, more generally, the Anglophone world. Whether in his championing of the landscapes of the Romantic watercolorist J.M.W. Turner or in his assertion of the superiority of Gothic architecture, Ruskin had a profound effect on the public taste, and he can be credited as a guiding force in the widespread flourishing of interest in the visual arts beginning in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Newcomb list includes three titles by Ruskin: two early works, The Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849) and The Stones of Venice (1851-1853), and one late one, St. Mark’s Rest (1877-1884). I will confine myself at the moment to St. Mark’s Rest, a history of Venice. In this volume, Ruskin states:

Great nations write their autobiographies in three manuscripts—the book of their deeds, the book of their words, and the book of their art. Not one of these books can be understood unless we read the two others; but of the three, the only quite trustworthy is the last. The acts of a nation may be triumphant by its good fortune; and its words mighty by the genius of a few of its children: but its art, only by the general gifts and common sympathies of the race.

Ruskin here eloquently testifies to a foundational belief of nineteenth-century art culture, a belief that would support the rise of the public art museum and inspire later movements in the arts such as the Arts & Crafts-revival (with its turn to the decorative arts and handicraft) and Aestheticism (with its belief in the elevating power of aesthetic experience). It is a belief in the fundamentally democratic nature of the visual arts and in their ability to speak for and to both the individual and the general populace. As opposed to politics and literature—which Ruskin here represents as reflections of the will of the social and intellectual elite—art is the language of the people, an expression of the values and preferences of their common culture.

And yet if art for Ruskin was a common language, he still was what we might call “a stickler” for its proper usage. His works are filled with authoritative statements on how to draw a beautiful as opposed to an ugly “line,” on how to distinguish a good painting from a bad one, even on how to choose a “noble” instead of an “ignoble” subject for ornamentation. For example, although Ruskin deemed all “heraldic decoration” an inferior category of ornamentation, he did acknowledge the “fleur-de-lis” symbol to be beautiful in its simplicity, and encouraged people to use it freely. Accompanying these pronouncements were often hand-drawn images, providing his readers with “correct” and “incorrect” examples of the forms he was discussing. In this aspect, Ruskin’s works also have something in common with another category of art book well-represented in the Newcomb art library: the technical handbook. Indeed,
there are numerous examples on this list of volumes devoted to teaching the aspiring artist or artisan the basics of such fundamentals as perspective, freehand drawing, illustration, colors and pigments, and, most importantly, as regards the Pottery, ornamentation and design; a few worth mentioning here are Lewis Day’s Nature in Ornament (1892), Henri Mayeux’s Manual of Decorative Composition (1888), Franz Meyer’s Handbook of Ornament (1886), and the 1856 landmark study The Grammar of Ornament by British architect Owen Jones. What might initially seem rather surprising at the juncture is the relative paucity of handbooks regarding the science of ceramic-making; the only two works listed here, devoted to teaching the aspiring artist or artisan the basics of such fundamentals as perspective, freehand drawing, illustration, colors and pigments, and, most importantly, as regards the Pottery, ornamentation and design; a few worth mentioning here are Lewis Day’s Nature in Ornament (1892), Henri Mayeux’s Manual of Decorative Composition (1888), Franz Meyer’s Handbook of Ornament (1886), and the 1856 landmark study The Grammar of Ornament by British architect Owen Jones. What might initially seem rather surprising at the juncture is the relative paucity of handbooks regarding the science of ceramic-making; the only two works listed that fit this category are Alexandre Brongniart’s Traite des Arts Ceramiques (1854) and Charles Davis’s A Practical Treatise on the Manufacture of Brick, Tile, and Terra-Cotta (1895). Yet, if you will recall that description from the Jambalaya, at the time of this list’s publication, Newcomb had—officially, at least—only one “potter thumping his wet clay”: the irascible, long-bearded Joseph Meyer. If we go by the course catalogues, it wasn’t until around 1917 that the Newcomb Pottery curriculum explicitly required its fledgling potters to learn the “dirtier” parts of their vocation, such as the chemical composition of clays and glazes, the throwing of pots, and the use of the kiln. That said, Newcomb’s substantial collection of technical handbooks still does much to dispel the idea that the decoration of pottery is “easy,” “amateur” work, requiring only an artistic eye and a deft hand. For all the premium that Newcomb placed on originality of composition, these myriad handbooks attest to the fact that it was originality of vision hard won through learning the many “rules” governing the discipline of design. Taken together with the works of classical art criticism—whose presence indicates Newcomb’s commitment to providing its students with general guidelines in the history of art—the plethora of these handbooks in its art library suggest that rigorous “technical” training in the performance of art was also prioritized.

Having now covered those volumes in Newcomb’s library list devoted to engendering artistic appreciation and to developing technical expertise, I turn to a third class of books represented in the American Art Annual, which I would organize under the rather general heading of Aesthetic Theory and Art-centric Social Criticism. While not so easy to categorize as the previous two groupings, the works included here are united in their common preoccupation with the function and value of the arts, both for the individual and for society at large. Here, we might include volumes such as the Art for Art’s Sake (1892) by John Van Dyke and the Science of Aesthetics (1872) by Henry Day, both American academics concerned with improving the nation’s taste and its level of refinement through arts appreciation. Yet, the significance of this category is perhaps best represented by one book on the list: William Morris’s 1882 collection of essays, Hopes and Fears for Art.

Morris is perhaps best remembered as one of the most eloquent spokesmen for the wider Arts & Crafts Movement, whose central ideology he articulated and disseminated through a hectic schedule of writing and public speaking in the last three decades of the nineteenth century. A committed Socialist, Morris believed that the return to handicraft was about more than reforming the way goods were made; it was about reforming how lives were lived and how society functioned. The essays in Hopes and Fears for Art should be understood as nothing less than a call-to-arms (and hands); as he says in the volume’s first essay, The Lesser Arts, one of the major ills of modern culture is that art has become divorced from life. In a world of increasingly mass-produced, machine-manufactured goods, workers no longer are able to derive pleasure from the objects that they make or consumers from the objects they possess. At bottom, as Morris saw it, this modern condition was linked to the increasing obsolescence of the “decorative” or what he ironically called the “lesser arts” of life. Citing Ruskin’s Stones of Venice, wherein Ruskin painted an idealized picture of the life of the medieval craftsman, able to exercise his creative faculties in a way the nineteenth-century factory worker is not, Morris asserted that it is only by a rejuvenation of these lesser arts that the citizens of contemporary society would be able to save themselves from becoming hopelessly alienated from their work and from each other. Art needed to be freed from its solitary confinement in museums and like spaces and returned to the home, where it could beautify everyday life, in the form of simple wares that each bear the mark of the craftsman, the general excellence of which also serves to raise the public standard of taste.

However, it must be said, if we relied solely on this 1898 book list for insight into the intellectual foundations of Newcomb Pottery, the emphasis I am placing on Arts & Crafts philosophy, particularly...
as it was articulated by Morris, might seem disproportionate to the textual evidence. After all, *Hopes and Fears for Art* is the only title by Morris listed in the *American Art Annual*. If we shift our focus, though, to another resource—the course catalogs from the early years of Newcomb—it becomes clear just how profoundly Morris’s ideas regarding the social function of art and the value of handicraft influenced not simply the goods Newcomb’s students produced but also the education they received. From the very beginning, Newcomb College sought to remedy what Morris saw as modernity’s disastrous segregation of labor and leisure by making art classes a requirement for all courses of study. At the same time, it is important that we do not overemphasize the influence of Morris to the exclusion of the other authors on the list. One of the things that became increasingly clear to me as I scrutinized Newcomb’s textual footprint is how inclusive, how catholic, it was in its utilization of art and aesthetic theory in crafting its mission statement. It is not “handicraft” specifically that Newcomb sought to re-invest with cultural value—it was the study of art more broadly, in many different forms and applications to life.

For example, even in Newcomb’s inaugural 1887/1888 catalogue, the reader is encouraged to notice that in all four of its academic courses or tracks—“Classical, Literary, Scientific, and Industrial”—“special prominence has been given to the study of Art, in the conviction that the advantages to be derived are of the highest value in the education of the eye and hand, and in the cultivation of correct taste, at the same time that it offers a desirable relaxation from the more exacting work of the class-room.” The centrality of the study of art to Newcomb’s institutional identity is one of the things that distinguished it from other contemporaneous American women’s colleges such as Vassar and Barnard, to which it was often compared. Newcomb’s arts program was also unique in its early opposition to what in the 1892/93 catalogue was identified as the then-predominant “systems of fundamental art training, in this and other countries,” systems found in art schools such as Pratt that focused exclusively on art history and the fine arts. “The failure” of these systems, the catalogue goes on to assert, “is due to the separation of the so-called fine and useful arts, and the consequent adoption of different courses of training for the artist, the designer, and the artisan.”

Adopting instead a more expansive, all-encompassing model of arts education, Newcomb insisted that its future “art-workers,” whatever their eventual vocations, share a common sense of purpose, a core of common courses, and most importantly a common space. I stress this last point because it is often obscured in histories of the Newcomb Pottery. While it is certainly the case that the erection of the aforementioned, freestanding Art Building in 1895 was crucial in providing the proper conditions for the making of pottery, it is worth noting that the building—as it was initially conceived—was not a Pottery building first and foremost, but rather a common location for the intermingling of multiple perspectives on and approaches to the study of art. In the words of the 1893/94 catalogue:

The desire to furnish the fullest possible advantages in theoretical and practical art education has led to the adoption of plans for a building specially devoted to the industrial and the fine arts. The new art building will contain art galleries, [an art library], studios for oil and water color classes, life classes, drawing, design, cast drawing, wood carving, clay moulding, casting in plaster, etc. Instruction will be given in the elements of sculpture, manufacture and ornamentation of pottery, etc. A kiln for burning pottery and terra-cotta will be erected.

In this description, Newcomb’s new Art Building was envisioned as almost a utopian space in which different theories of and relations to the arts could intermingle, even interpenetrate each other. Under its sheltering roof,
Newcomb students would be fully immersed in art culture in all of its facets, and in interacting with each other, they would bridge that divide “between the aesthetic and the industrial arts,” learning to speak a common language, to work collaboratively, and to explore new forms of intellectual, artistic and artisanal production best suited to their individual tastes and temperaments.

To gauge the success of this “model” program in arts education, one has to look no further than the course catalogue fifteen years down the line; the 1910/1911 catalogue makes manifest its myriad gains as well as the almost breathtaking scope of its ambitions. By now officially the “School of Art,” Newcomb’s arts program had spawned four different coursework tracks—“Collegiate Courses” (primarily devoted to “the development of artistic culture and the formation of taste”); “Normal Art Courses” (focusing on arts pedagogy, “for those who may desire to be teachers”); “Studio Classes” (offering mostly fine arts courses, such as would be found in a conventional art school); and finally, the “Newcomb Pottery Courses” (encompassing the ever-increasing number of handicrafts created and sold through Newcomb College Pottery). In the years that followed, the catalogue shows that the teachers and students of Newcomb were busy putting Arts & Crafts as well as Aestheticist theories into practice, creating a community of invested aesthetes, artists, and artisans. By the 1920s, the Newcomb Art School offered instruction in what is, frankly, a staggering number of artistic and artisanal mediums. Over the years of its existence, the Newcomb Pottery enterprise encompassed everything from the weaving, dyeing, and embroidering of textiles to book-binding and illustration, from silver-smithing to jewelry-making to glasswork. Yet, over and above this, Newcomb’s art students also took classes in subjects such as “the History of Painting” and the “History of Sculpture,” “Drawing from Life” and “Cast Drawing,” “Art Criticism” and “Aesthetics,” “Domestic Art,” “Interior Design,” and Arts “Education.” Thus, while Newcomb Pottery as an enterprise might be seen as one of the more exotic flowerings of the British Arts & Crafts revolution, it is worth remembering that that enterprise was only part of a larger arts program that drew from numerous sources of inspiration, artistic and aesthetic, practical and theoretical, with the goal of creating a vibrant arts culture within its cloistered academic setting. That a small women’s college in the Deep South was the site for such a successful revival of interest was something that astounded even Woodward, its principle architect. Reflecting upon the enterprise’s success near the end of his career, Woodward remained firm in his conviction that “to see young women drawing from nature, arranging their drawings into designs, and applying them to ware having the unmistakable quality of something new and beautiful, was to see a miracle.”

**NEWCOMB AND NEW ORLEANS: INSIDER AND OUTSIDER PERSPECTIVES**

There is one problem, though, in resting easy with the common representation of Newcomb College Pottery as a “miraculous” triumph over adversity, as a flowering of Arts & Crafts sentiment which came into being in spite of a daunting number of obstacles in its path, not least among them its location in the Reconstruction-era South. Such a representation overlooks the role that the city of New Orleans itself played in the Newcomb Pottery Enterprise, a role far more complex than simply a romantic locale that offered its students regionally-specific flora and fauna for the decoration of their handicrafts. I bring this up not to imply that the city’s live oaks and crocodiles when painted on its pots and embroidered onto its textiles were not crucial to the particular appeal of its products. They were. Instead, I want to suggest that there were other factors connected to the Pottery’s location in this Old World-New World city that contributed to the unique shape of Newcomb’s arts program and its distinctive legacy within the larger history of the American Arts & Crafts Movement. For this, I must turn to another textual resource: the writings of Ellsworth Woodward, who, in addition to his role as Newcomb’s Art Director, might also be designated its first official Historian, for the history of Newcomb emerges as a central preoccupation in his myriad speeches and publications. Indeed, nearly every piece of extant writing by Woodward includes at least some reference to the singular social and economic conditions that necessitated the college’s foray into industry, its fateful decision to move the study of art “beyond the classroom into avenues of life” (Ellsworth Woodward Papers, 10).

So, what exactly was it about New Orleans in the late-nineteenth century that distinguished it from the other American cities associated with the Arts & Crafts revival—cities such as Boston (Grueby), Cincinnati (Rookwood), and Buffalo (Roycroft)? First and foremost, these cities were all recognized centers of industry, with thriving economies that offered myriad job opportunities for commercial artists and that possessed well-established markets for the sale of “luxury” items. Yet, in the decades following the Civil War, New Orleans, like much of the South, was far removed from the industrial hustle-and-bustle that defined life in the commer-
cial centers of England and in the American Northeast and Midwest. Economically decimated, politically disenfranchised, and socially fragmented, the South was in the process of rebuilding itself and refashioning its identity. It was in this transitional environment, the environment of the “New South,” that Newcomb College came into being, and from the beginning, its administrators and educators looked for innovative ways to contribute to the reconstruction. In his writings, Woodward repeatedly makes explicit how the “reconstructed scheme of education” pursued at Tulane and Newcomb was understood as crucial to creating a “new [social] order” in New Orleans, a difficult task, he argues, in a community whose wealth was previously largely dependent on agriculture and trade. Unlike those industrial centers in the North, New Orleans had no means of offering the “opportunit[ies] for art workers usually furnished by a city.” Thus, it was up to the college itself to generate them through the institution of its own cottage industry, which would train the workers and provide them with the means of earning a livelihood through their work.

Viewed through the lens of Woodward’s writings, we might make the argument that the revival of the decorative arts in New Orleans was not the end of the Newcomb Pottery enterprise, but instead the means for the achievement of something even more ambitious: the economic rehabilitation of the city and the restoration of its national reputation through the promulgation of a regionally-distinct art culture. Woodward makes this goal explicit in a 1905 article published in *Brush and Pencil*, where he states,

The art department of Newcomb College has from its inception wished to participate in the active life of the community in which it was founded, and to be useful in furthering the belief that the application of art culture to industrial needs, is the initial step in the progression of a people towards a democratic appreciation of art as a value in life.

In this respect, Woodward’s conception of Newcomb diverges greatly from Morris’s Arts & Crafts ideal. Morris’s stance was anti-industrial, anti-institutional, and, in some respects, even anti-educational; a confirmed autodidact, Morris was determinedly skeptical of yoking handicraft to systematized education. Woodward, though, was, at bottom, an educational reformer, focused on working *within* the system, and as he understood it, “the social value of art” would never be fully recognized unless the community as a whole underwent a collective consciousness-raising in “art appreciation,” a feat he believed could only be achieved by instilling in the next generation “a conviction … as to the absolute need of art in life.”

—E. Woodward

...to see young women drawing from nature, arranging their drawings into designs, and applying them to ware having the unmistakable quality of something new and beautiful, was to see a miracle.” —E. Woodward

There is a certain defensiveness to Woodward’s insistence here on the “progression” of the people of New Orleans “towards a democratic appreciation of art as a value in life” that I suggest requires further scrutiny, specifically because it reveals another problematic of the Arts & Crafts philosophy, especially when applied to the art and culture of the American South. While British Arts-Crafters such as Morris were fundamentally politically progressive, seeking to rectify what they saw as glaring social inequities in industrial capitalism, aesthetically, they were conservative, locating in the art and production methods of the pre-industrial past an ideal vision of an organically-unified Anglo-Saxon culture. When considered from this angle, the “revivalist” energies of the movement might be seen as possessing potentially reactionary, even “nativist” undertones, promoting the art of the past at the expense of the contributions of immigrants and laborers not recognized as intrinsically “British.”

A thorny enough issue in its original context, the wider ramifications of the Arts & Crafts desire to “revive the past” are even more politically volatile when placed in relation to the history of the slavery in America, which might serve to explain Woodward’s insistence on Newcomb and New Orleans’s alignment with the forces of progress and his conflation of artisanal handicraft with democracy, the free market, and voluntary labor. It also helps to account for some of the ways that Newcomb Pottery—as represented in Woodward’s
writings—diverges from the Arts & Crafts formula as it was more conventionally applied in other American artisanal enterprises like Roycroft and Rookwood. In short, Woodward did not have the luxury of espousing a dismantling of art from industry or of calling for a complete return to the social conditions of a pre-industrial past. To do so would have risked undermining Newcomb’s contributions to the building of a “New South” in New Orleans, to the repairing of the city’s economy and the rehabilitation of its identity and image in the cultural climate of post-Civil War America. And, ultimately, one of the things that comes across most clearly in Woodward’s writings is an overarching belief that the fortunes of Newcomb and New Orleans were inextricably tied, that the success of one was vital to that of the other. Whereas the regionalism of other American Art-Craft collectives might be said to be incidental, to Newcomb regionalism was integral to its mission. The value of Newcomb, as Woodward understood it, was primarily as “an interpreter” of the “innate beauty and home sentiment” of New Orleans, a heretofore “unexpressed need” that was all the more important as the city strove to put itself back on the national map. The ideological framework of the Arts & Crafts movement did not provide Woodward with a means of justifying this regionalist imperative within the context of the Newcomb Pottery enterprise. Thus, he had to look elsewhere for a way of articulating Newcomb’s importance in terms of engendering a pride of place within the collective consciousness of the city as well as in promoting the unique contributions of New Orleanian culture to the country at large. He found what he was looking for, I would argue, in the writings of British art historian and aesthetic philosopher Vernon Lee.

Though less well-known today than William Morris, Vernon Lee—the pseudonym for the female author Violet Paget—was another tremendously important voice in discussions of art culture in the late-nineteenth century. Lee shared with Morris the belief in the “usefulness” of art, but her theories align her more closely with Aestheticist writers such as Walter Pater and Oscar Wilde, who championed the viewing of “art for its own sake” and argued that aesthetic experience was vitally important for its ability to refine the sensibilities of individuals, thereby making them more discerning critics of their environments, capable of recognizing the “splendor” of ordinary things at specific moments. It is with this aspect of Aestheticist philosophy that Vernon Lee comes into play in Woodward’s narrativizing of Newcomb’s history, particularly her theory of the “Genius Loci.” A “spiritual reality” of “old cities,” the “Genius Loci,” Lee asserts, is the “deep power” of certain localities to transform themselves through their effect on the sensitive individual into “objects of intense and most intimate feeling.” In this way, she argues, “quite irrespective of their inhabitants, and virtually all of their written history, they can touch us like living creatures; and one can have with them friendship of the deepest and most satisfying sort.” For Lee, the “Genius Loci”—which translates to the “genius or spirit of the location”—is a mutually-beneficial relationship between a special person and a special place, whereby the individual may live in this spot “habitually, yet never lose the sense of delight, wonder, and gratitude,” and the location itself is elevated, enlivened, even sanctified by the devotion of the individual. The result is a specific kind of aesthetically-charged atmosphere, having the effect “of turning a locality from a geographical expression into something of one’s very own.”

In an undated fragment of a lecture entitled “The Magic of New Orleans,” Woodward quotes at length from Lee’s essay on the Genius Loci, to which he accords great influence in terms of helping him to articulate his feelings for his adopted city. He says,

The spirit of this essay, the things it suggests, parallel so nicely with my own romantic nature that I reread it every once in so often…This whimsical philosopher professes to find in certain favored places a personality and charm which exerts a spell
over sensitive souls yielding themselves to its influence... And so partly shaping, partly being shaped, in the long deliberate alchemy of usage, a harmony results which is the Genius Loci. It is something like this, though it is much more. New Orleans is one of these favored locales.

I would argue that this idea of the Genius Loci provided Woodward with an invaluable intellectual construct that informed his sustained effort to reframe Newcomb’s regional identity, by transforming what many might have considered its major weakness – its Southern location – into its greatest strength. Understood as an incarnation of “the genius” of New Orleans, Newcomb became so much more than simply an educational contribution to local industry in the form of an art-product utilizing local decorative motifs. Instead, it was to be cherished as the offspring of a quasi-spiritual relationship between the college’s arts program and the city in which it was situated, an institutional manifestation of a particularly New Orleanian experiential reality, not to be found anywhere else. To put it another way, Woodward promoted—one might even say advertised—the mission of Newcomb as an institution as something akin to the work of a potter. Newcomb used the “sensitive souls” of its students as instruments to shape and mold the raw material of New Orleanian culture into something beautifully characteristic of the “personality and charm” of its “natural situation.” Seen in this light, Newcomb Pottery – the place where the pots were made – itself was to be recognized as one of those “objects of intense and most intimate feeling” to which Lee referred in her essay, a hallowed spot animated by its own presiding “genius”: the spirit of a regionally distinct art culture.

While all of Woodward’s writings bespeak his sincere belief and, indeed, almost messianic devotion to the artistic and aesthetic ideals that informed the arts program at Newcomb, we should not forget that his lectures and periodical publications were more than simply expressions of personal belief; they were also deliberate rhetorical efforts to enlist audiences in support of his cause. One of the things that made Newcomb Pottery a recognizable “brand” in American Arts & Crafts was Woodward’s savviness as an administrator, his awareness that Newcomb’s success as an enterprise depended as much on the coherence of its identity and the resonance of its message as on the quality of its handicrafts. He states as much in another lecture entitled “Arts as a Means of Expression,” when he argues that

In other forms of social activity—economic welfare for example, we know and have witnessed the psychic force of enthusiastic conviction upon a group of people having previously no interest in each other or cohesive power. Immediately, when such enthusiasm is recognized upon a concrete object the spirit aroused is irresistible... Enlist this conviction of the evangelist on the side of art in a community and almost anything may happen, and why not? There is among the pupils we influence a high percentage with this amazing gift of personality, with a conviction once aroused to the absolute need of art in life, the helpful attitude takes the place of indifference.

Woodward’s talent for arts “evangelism,” particularly his ability to inspire in Newcomb’s students with a conviction as to “the absolute need of art in life,” is evidenced in the tributes of numerous alumnae found in various publications, all of whom credit the school with arousing in them a passionate dedication to connecting art to life, in whatever way they were most equipped to do so. Had Woodward narrowed the explicit mission of Newcomb Pottery to the production of handicraft, he would have excluded a “high percentage” of those students who did not go on to pursue careers in the industrial arts but who nevertheless served a crucial func-

Vase, 1897. Underglaze painting with glossy glaze. Unknown decorator; Joseph Meyer, potter. On loan to the Newcomb Art Gallery from Ruth Weinstein Lebovitz. (Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service)
tion in spreading the gospel of Newcomb far and wide, students such as Edith Mahier, who in a 1920 publication of the sorority Gamma Phi Beta, asserted that her “faith” in the “work” of Newcomb and its “wonderful director Ellsworth Woodward” inspired her “with the most wonderful spirit and enthusiasm and with even a sort of divine power.” Even once she left Newcomb, she asserts, its influence remained, giving her the emotional strength she needed to “paint pictures” and “dream dreams.” Mahier’s faith in Newcomb is echoed by many others, who also credit the college’s arts program with awakening in them a sense of purpose, a drive to (as Woodward himself put it) use “what they acquire[d] in the way of skill as a means of personal expression, that they may give to others what they themselves think and feel about the world of their immediate environment.”

What these speakers—and there are many more whose voices need to be heard—attest to is the fact that more than a material embodiment of a single or dominant aesthetic tradition, Newcomb was a site of convergence for a number of different ideas in nineteenth-century British and American art culture. To be a part of the Newcomb Pottery enterprise—as a lived experience—was to be immersed in an environment in which the function of art—in all of its aesthetic, technical, economic, social, and political complexity—was a question that was never definitively answered but rather endlessly explored through numerous interrogations, both theoretical and practical. I would argue that it was Newcomb’s overriding preoccupation with art culture conceived thus broadly that accounts for its enduring importance in the history of American art. If we look at the Newcomb Pottery enterprise as Woodward would have us do—as a “concrete illustration of the working out of the principles for which [he] contend[ed]”—we can see the richness and intricacy of Newcomb’s intellectual tapestry; as much as it was a producer of beautiful objects, it was also an “object lesson” in how to weave together the threads of influence from numerous published aesthetes, artists, and artisans in such a way as to create something wholly original in composition and yet, at the same time, deeply resonant of the materials of which it was comprised. And if we shift focus slightly in order to see how Newcomb was represented in the periodical literature of the period, this rich and intricate tapestry is made visible in other ways, as those same threads are disentangled by various writers who, each, depending on their respective interests, prioritized or highlighted different aspects of the college’s arts program and its handicraft enterprise. Thus, from the perspective of The Craftsman, Stickley’s Arts & Crafts magazine, it is Newcomb’s place in American handicrafts that is underscored, whereas if we look at The Pottery, Glass, & Brass Salesman, the focus is on Newcomb’s importance in the history of American pottery more narrowly defined. And if we turn to the magazine Vocational Education, it is Newcomb as an educational effort to “make friends with industry” that is important, while the periodical Art and Progress stresses the Pottery’s role in raising the profile of Southern art both nationally and internationally. Newcomb also makes an appearance in books and magazines concerned with women’s issues, an example being an article in Sunset magazine that finds in Newcomb hope for a future in which women “can be bread winners as well as bread eaters.” Taken all together, these various textual iterations of what Newcomb was reveal the philosophical density of its central message and suggest that its value as both a practical enterprise as well as a theoretical model was located in its ability to be many things at once as well as different things for different people. By incorporating into itself multiple perspectives on the relation of art to life, Newcomb ensured its legacy as multiply meaningful, as its name continues to evoke a polysemy of various ideas, issues, and images. Though it took down its shingle as a working enterprise in 1940, Newcomb’s deep engagement with the aesthetic, artistic, and social issues of its time guaranteed its afterlife as an ideal, as an “object of intense and most intimate feeling” capable of reminding us of the possibilities of self-culture, of shaping our own lives and our environment through a rigorous education in beautiful ideas. Thus, even today, Newcomb continues both to be shaped and to shape discussions of the history and future of American art, raising once again that question quoted in The Jambalaya, “Who is the Potter, pray, and who is the pot?”
WOMEN AND TREES – THE TRANSFER OF AN IDEA: REFLECTIONS ON THE TITLE PAGE OF “A BOOK OF VERSE”

Michaela Braesel

This essay highlights an iconographical motif in the early artistic œuvre of William Morris, the cycle of heroines/lovers, which were planned as embroideries for the dining room of Red House. The aim of the series was to symbolize womanly virtues and to celebrate Morris’s new wife Jane and his love for her. In what follows I will explore the notion that Morris may have consciously transferred a characteristic compositional scheme from this early cycle into another context, while adapting and infusing its images with altered meaning. We will examine how the ideas of the earlier series reappear on the title page of Morris’s manuscript “A Book of Verse,” and what significance these assume in the new context.

In the years after 1860 William Morris designed for the dining room of his newly built Red House a series of drawings of heroines based loosely on the mediaeval example of Giovanni Boccaccio’s “De Claris Mulieribus” and Geoffrey Chaucer’s “The Legend of Good Women”. In the context of Red House these served as a celebration of womanhood and especially of his wife Jane, suggesting in the selection of mythological and mediaeval figures and female saints her virtues and his love for her. The conception of such an elaborate decorative cycle for the dining room links the decoration of Red House to Morris’s ideal of communal aspects of the mediaeval house, since the decoration in mediaeval houses was found especially in rooms where people gathered together and which served as communal rooms. In Red House the theme of the loved one and of love itself is continued in other parts of the building and its decoration, forming a “Leitmotiv” in the embellishment of the newly built house and transforming a habitat into a modern “Minneburg.”

Although the designs for the series of women were intended to be executed as embroideries, only a few were finished. Nevertheless Morris reused these early designs for other purposes, as was customary with Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Co. (after 1875 Morris & Co.). Some of them reappear, for example, in windows or tile panels of the firm.

In his choice of subjects Morris did not follow one of the established series of heroines, which are to be found in Boccaccio or Chaucer, nor known decorative cycles of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. It might be astonishing to find included in these cycles of exemplary women and lovers figures like Medea, who today are not considered entirely admirable characters. But still in considering these figures John Ruskin had been able to emphasize certain aspects of their personality that made it possible to include them in these exemplary cycles. However instead of following one of these earlier models, Morris seems to have selected his own court of heroines by combining elements of different antecedents.

Not only have the models and sources for Morris’s selection remained partly unresolved until now, but also the idea behind the compositional conception remains somewhat of a mystery. Morris’s designs show the women standing between long stemmed fruit trees, with heraldic shields hanging from the branches of the latter. Designs executed around the same time show that Morris also explored an alternative compositional idea, in which the figures stand in front of a drapery behind which trees are visible, a device which was later repeated in countless designs for windows and also found its way into the œuvre of his friend and colleague Edward Burne-Jones. But Morris rejected this idea in favour of placing his standing figures in elaborately ornamented dresses between fruit trees, thus exchanging the rather enclosed concept of the alternate design for a more open garden scene. A combination of both approaches is to be found in Burne-Jones’s contemporaneous design of another series of heroines, this time based
on Chaucer’s “The Legend of Good Women,” commissioned around 1863 by his mentor John Ruskin. This design was also intended to be used for embroideries and was likewise left uncompleted. Burne-Jones’s design combined the parting trees with a confining fence, with rose bushes framing the heroines in the background.7

The combination of heroines standing on a flowery meadow and parted by slim fruit trees, from which heraldic shields are suspended, seems closely related to the cycle of heroines in elaborately patterned dresses at the Castell Saluzzo at Mantua which was executed around 1411/1416 by a follower of the court painter Giacomo Jacquerino.8 Although the configuration of Jacquerino’s series departs from Morris’s, the compositional parallels are so close that it is tempting to see the murals in Mantua as the model for Morris’s cycle. Yet neither Morris nor artists from his circle are known to have visited Mantua, and the paintings were only published in Italian sources. Delﬁno and Carlo Muletti’s “Memorie storico-diplomatiche appartenenti alla città ed ai marchesi di Saluzzo” (pub. Saluzzo, 1830) contained in its fourth volume a partial engraving of the murals in which the compositional scheme is clearly evident. It is thus far not known if Morris knew of these decorations, and if so, where he might have encountered them.

Morris’s sketchbook (British Library London, MS Add. 45336, fol. 23v) shows female figures standing between slim trees on a meadow with bushes or flowers. Here Morris combines the idea of the heroines with garden imagery, the garden symbolizing ideal nature and ﬁguring as a peaceful place of lovers as it was also formulated in Morris’s painting on the settee in the hall of Red House.9 This painting also ﬁts into the general theme of the celebration of womanhood and of Morris’s love for his wife Jane.

In the drawing in the British Library’s sketchbook it is only possible to identify the ladies by a comparison with later designs by Morris. For example, the lady on the right-hand side is related in pose and headdress to Morris’s embroidery designs for Isolde or Guinevere.10 The ﬁgure in the middle seems to carry a portable organ, which links her to designs of St. Cecilia by Burne-Jones and Morris.11

Interestingly Morris repeated this easily recognisable scheme of heroines and trees with variations in a completely different context. It reappears on the title page of the illuminated manuscript of his own poems, “A Book of Verse” (Victoria & Albert Museum London, National Art Library, Inv. no. L. 131-1953), which he gave to his friend and confidante Georgiana Burne-Jones, the wife of his friend Edward Burne-Jones, on the occasion of her birthday in 1870.12 Here the heroines are exchanged for minstrels and placed in front of an ornamental design of ﬂowering branches framing a medallion with a proﬁle portrait of the author, illuminator and giver. To make things more complicated, “A Book of Verse” was in fact a collaborative project with William Morris as initiator, executing the writing and most of the ornament, and Burne-Jones and Charles Fairfax Murray painting the illuminations. Morris stated in the colophon of the manuscript that the ﬁgures of the minstrels were executed after his designs by Murray and therefore it is to be assumed that he conceived the overall appearance of the title page since he also painted the ﬂoral branches.

On the title page of “A Book of Verse” four minstrels with harps, lyre and ﬂute stand below the proﬁle portrait of the author in front of a small wooden fence. These are parted by small, slim poplar-like trees and comparatively large red roses and red poppy ﬂowers, while by contrast all the other ﬂowers on the branches which ﬁll the page are white. Roses and poppies traditionally suggest love and sleep. The importance of this grouping of ﬂowers, emphasized by their unusual size, might hint at the relationship of Morris and Georgiana Burne-Jones at this time, with associations of love, sleeping and quiet, as well as longing. As tempting as this interpretation might be, however, there is no evidence of a closer relationship between these two, and also the strong moral codes and loyalty of both Morris and Georgiana Burne-Jones have to be taken into account. Furthermore the production of the manuscript was a private but not completely secretive undertaking, involving the work of other artists includ-
ing Georgina Burne-Jones's husband. The manuscript would have been looked at by members of their circles, so that despite its personal character, it would not have been an appropriate medium for extremely private revelations. Nonetheless these images might allude to the strong relationship between the artist and the presentee.

More immediately, the title page also serves as a hint of the content of the following verses, which deal with issues of love, longing and loss. The fence and the flowers indicate a related theme: the idea of the garden as a peaceful meeting place for lovers, therewith anticipating the content of the following poems. It is to be assumed that Morris as well as Burne-Jones in his design for the Chaucer cycle refer to mediaeval miniatures showing lovers in gardens that feature similar combinations of fences and flowers, for example in the miniature on fol. 12v in one of the most often referenced manuscripts by Morris and Burne-Jones: The “Romance of the Rose”, British Library London, MS Harley 4425 (Bruges, 1490-1500). The miniature on fol. 12v of this volume shows lovers in an enclosed garden with flowers, trees and a sumptuous fountain. Miniatures from this “Romance of the Rose” also served as models for the design of Morris's garden at Red House.13

Taking into account the importance of the decorative motif of the heroines/lovers cycle to both Morris and Burne-Jones and the close relationship to the compositional study in Morris's sketchbook in the British Library, it seems tempting to view the title page of “A Book of Verse” as a transference of the earlier motif of the heroines in disguised form. The compositional device links the design of 1870 with the earlier designs from the decorations of Red House from the early 1860s. In addition to the compositional device, the idea of the heroines is recast, now hinting at Georgiana Burne-Jones's qualities: her moral standards and exemplary virtues as a woman. The idea of “Minnesang”, the celebration of ladies, is now taken over by the minstrel figures who deliver the celebration with music.

It might therefore be assumed that Morris reused his original idea of heroines between trees to transfer the idea of the Red House cycle and of Burne-Jones's Chaucer cycle into a more restrained tribute to the virtues of Morris's close friend Georgiana Burne-Jones, while at the same time emphasizing the motif of celebration. Thus the title page of “A Book of Verse” might perhaps be interpreted as a reduced and more abstract version of the earlier heroines’ cycle. In repeating this idea of the heroines’ cycle in an altered form, Morris may have hinted at the importance of Georgiana Burne-Jones for him. So the heroines' cycle connects in different forms the two women who were important for Morris at different times — in the early 1860s his young wife Jane, and around 1870 his loyal confidante Georgiana Burne-Jones. This repetition with variation reveals in each case that the artistic celebration of female virtues serves as a testament to the affections of the artist.

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ENDNOTES


2. Compare ibid., pp. 133-134.


10. Embroidery around 1860, Society of Antiquaries of London, Kelmscott Manor, see: Dufty 1985, op.cit., p. 15. The design was also used for a window at Bradford City Art Gallery, designs in the Tate Gallery London, inv. no. 5221, 5222.

11. Dufty 1985, op.cit., p. 23, pl. VII.


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In the final weeks leading up to last year’s presidential election, we at the Morris Archive opened a Twitter account to help publicize its collection of digitized texts and resources. We had not intended on using it to recirculate Morris’s political observations. However, while curating daily tweets we began lifting from Morris’s “Notes on News,” his brief, almost proto-tweet entries from *The Commonweal* in which he reflected on the political problems of his moment. We quickly discovered just how relevant Morris’s words remain. In a selection of tweets above, we encounter Morris much like his character Guest in *News from Nowhere*. Transported from the past, he greets us now in a realm far less politically utopian than Nowhere and reminds us that today’s struggles began long ago. He speaks to us of legal threats to free speech and the right to demonstrate. He condemns police brutality.

In the tweets reproduced above, we feature one of the new oaths that Morris suggested all incoming constables take in order to protect organized and protesting citizens from police-inflicted violence. Morris concluded his set of oaths with the promise, “In short I will do my best to keep the peace and to hinder peace-breakers even if they wear blue coats and numbers.”

In another tweet shown below, Morris expresses outrage over an instance of attempted marital rape and the judicial failure to acknowledge women’s right to bodily autonomy, a right that has remained unprotected and/or endangered from then until now. In the wake of the inauguration and a number of executive orders, Morris’s thoughts on protest, police violence, and civil rights—amongst other issues—urgently speak to us of his moment and ours. They allow us to share his outrage, commitment to resistance, and hope. And they remind us now more than ever that “fellowship is life, and lack of fellowship is death.”
Read these and all of our tweets at https://twitter.com/MorrisArchive

Kyle Barton is completing his dissertation at The University of Iowa on memorialization and the evolution of literary genres in the wake of the Crimean War. He created and maintains the William Morris Archive Twitter account.
MORRIS AT THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION CONVENTION

The Modern Language Association met this year in Philadelphia, and both the William Morris Society-sponsored session and our co-sponsored session were well-attended and evoked spirited discussion.

Our first session, “Craft and Design in Literary Study: The Legacy of William Morris,” was held in the late afternoon, Friday 6 January, and chaired by WMS-US President Jason Martinek of New Jersey City University. Since a scheduled speaker was unfortunately unable to attend, the two presentations, by Lindsay Wells and Sara Dunton, were supplemented by respondent’s remarks by Meghan Freeman.

H.D. AND WILLIAM MORRIS: “There was comfort in the table.”

Sara Dunton, PhD, University of New Brunswick, Fredericton, NB, Canada

American modernist H.D. (Hilda Doolittle, 1886-1961) held a special affinity for William Morris throughout her lifetime of writing. Of all the nineteenth-century artists whose work H.D. absorbs, it is Morris whom she repeatedly acknowledges as the guiding force, particularly throughout the 1940s and 1950s, until her death in 1961. In a letter from 1948, H.D. reveals that she is re-reading Morris’s “Jason” and carries a treasured photo of Morris with her at all times (Hollenberg 81); in 1950 she publishes a poem, “To William Morris (1834-1898),” marked with the refrain “Georgius Sanctus,” that she describes as “a sort of conventional, metrical short litany” (Zilboorg 303); and, in a journal entry from 1957, she refers to Morris as “the god-father that I never had” (Hirslanden Notebooks 25).

Initiated by her fame as an Imagist innovator in the 1910s, H.D.’s poetic works have drawn extensive critical attention throughout the twentieth century. She was also a prolific prose writer, but many of her prose works remained unpublished until as recently as 2007. Since then, the publication of six novels and memoirs written by H.D. between 1941 and 1961 has precipitated new explorations of H.D. One of these novels is White Rose and the Red (written in 1948; published in 2009), H.D.’s fictionalization of the relationships between Morris, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Elizabeth Siddall. Her esoteric re-telling of the Pre-Raphaelite circle provokes new understandings of H.D. as a modernist highly attuned to the interconnectivity between literary and visual artworks. She arises now, more than ever before, on the landscape of modernist studies as a synthesizer of twentieth- and nineteenth-century aesthetics. This paper focuses on H.D.’s appreciation for Morris as a fellow synthesizer, not only as a master of poetry, prose, and visual design, but also as an artist intent on accessing and reinterpreting early ages to suit his own modern age. H.D.’s formulations about the role of the artist—particularly the need to travel back-and-forth into the consciousness of predecessors and inheritors—reflect much of Morris’s thinking about temporality and the importance of visionary imagination.

The inspiration for this discussion emanates from one object—an oak tripod-table, reputedly once owned by Morris, that H.D. used in her séances in London throughout World War Two. Her partner Bryher (British writer Winnifred Ellerman) gave it to her as a gift in 1943, after purchasing it at the estate sale of Violet Hunt, who had been part of H.D.’s avant-garde circle in the 1910s, and whose connections to the “Pre-Raphs” had always appealed to H.D. This indirect inheritance of Hunt’s table in mid-war London revives the modernist’s affinity for Morris and provokes her to re-invent Siddall’s relationship with him to reflect her own: most tellingly, in White Rose and the Red, Siddall looks upon a small table given to her by Morris, and remarks, “There was comfort in the table” (315). This simple object, with its evocation of Morris’s spirit, serves as a powerful metaphor for H.D.’s spiritualist and occult activities and...
connects her directly to him. In her memoirs and semi-autobiographical prose, H.D. forsakes the ornamental details of the table’s appearance, focusing instead on its instrumental value in bringing her messages, and comfort, during her wartime séance sessions. H.D. relays her affection for Morris and his table overtly in *White Rose and the Red*, as she does, with varying degrees of directness, in all the novels, poetry and memoirs she writes after 1943, practicing and integrating his notions about the visual embodiment of ideas.

H.D.’s acquisition of the round-top, three-legged table, as well as her affinity for Morris, have been documented in H.D. scholarship, but closer analyses of the table’s provenance, its role as signifier, and its impact upon her writing practice have yet to be undertaken. The provenance of the Morris table has long puzzled H.D. scholars, likely because H.D. gives us so little information about it. Having known Hunt and assuming that the table was correctly classified in the estate sale, H.D. accepts (as do most readers of H.D. and Bryher) that it “belonged” to Morris; but whether or not Morris actually owned or designed the table remains unconfirmed. As for its material appearance, H.D. always describes it simply and sometimes embellishes its purpose. In *The Sword Went Out to Sea*, for example, she claims: “It was an ordinary tripod-table, as I believe they are called, of dull oak. William Morris had used it for his paints and brushes” (9). Here H.D. alludes to her frequent designation of Morris—as “painter and poet”—which enforces her conception of him as “painter,” but also, interestingly, elides the more accurate representation of his reputation as the “pioneer of modern design,” so appointed by Nikolaus Pevsner as early as 1936.

Investigations into the possible design and origin of the table lead to various tantalizing speculations.

According to Paul Thompson, before the founding of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner & Company in 1861, both Morris and Ford Madox Brown were designing radically simple “rough” furniture, most of which was made to furnish their studio on Red Lion Square (66). A primary example is a full height, four-legged table, now housed at The Wilson Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum, which seems to appear tucked into the corner in Burne-Jones’ 1856 cartoon of the studio. The plain style and humble woods—oak or pine—of these earliest iterations of Arts and Crafts pieces could be aligned with H.D.’s spare descriptions, and so, perhaps, Morris or Brown did indeed design a similar, smaller three-legged table only for studio use. Preliminary research uncovers no visual evidence of a such a table featured either in the Morris, Marshall & Faulkner & Co. records, or in the catalogues of Morris & Co. (founded in 1875) up until the time of Morris’s death.

As the discussion in this paper asserts, however, speculation on the making and ownership of the table is interesting, but ultimately it is secondary: whatever the table’s origins, the significance for H.D. lay in the potency of Morris’s presence in the object, a presence that allowed her to access Morris’s creative essence during and following the war. When H.D. left London for Switzerland in 1946, emotionally and physically depleted, the tripod-table, according to H.D., was left behind—an abandoned “thing”—but she makes sure its presence persists in her writing, especially between 1947 and 1951. When H.D. claims, rather misleadingly, that she writes “to reveal the history of the table” (“H.D. by Delia Alton” 187), she is not at all interested in tracing the material entity, but rather in deploying it as a conduit for her history—a history she re-imagines through adopting Morris’s visionary methods.

Finally, citing Donna Hollenberg’s description of H.D.’s postwar body of prose as “a great outpouring...
a sequence of long experimental historical romances” (74), this discussion suggests that there may be a correlation between H.D.’s sequence and Morris’s prolific production of novels in the 1890s. Comparative investigations of both sequences would certainly generate new understandings of the common connective forces that emerge from the relationship between the experimental modernist, her revered predecessor, and a powerful tripod-table.

WORKS CITED

In the opening chapter of News from Nowhere—Morris’s utopian novel of 1890 that explores the relationship between nature, labor, and art—we meet the protagonist William Guest as he travels home from a disheartening political meeting. Along his commute through Victorian London, he pauses to admire a moonlit tree bough growing alongside the river Thames:

It was a beautiful night of early winter […] There was a young moon half way up the sky, and as the home-farer caught sight of it, tangled in the branches of a tall old elm he could scarce bring to his mind the shabby London suburb where he was, and he felt as if he were in a pleasant country place—pleasanter, indeed, than the deep country was as he had known it. (Morris, 44)

This meditation upon a graphic silhouette, thrown into relief against the glowing backdrop of the night sky, inspires Guest’s subsequent dream of the bucolic haven of Nowhere. In this alternate reality, where towns bloom with flowers and citizens take joy in their handiwork, Guest repeatedly stops to contemplate arthful arrangements of natural scenery, from rose bowers overhanging garden walls to vibrant riverbanks festooned with songbirds. With their emphasis on visual harmony and structural sequencing, these verbal vignettes invite comparisons to the famous wares of Morris’s design firm, Morris & Co., the company behind some of the most iconic patterns of the Arts and Crafts Movement. In his 1881 lecture “Some Hints on Pattern-Designing”, a technical examination of textile printing and tapestry weaving, Morris explains that ornamental pattern-work “must possess three qualities: beauty, imagination, and order”. (Morris, 261) It is my contention that attending to these three artistic hallmarks—beauty, imagination, and order—as they apply to descriptions of nature in News from Nowhere sheds light on the intersection between Morris’s literary and craft careers.

I propose that Morris treats nature in News from Nowhere such that he recreates for readers the experience of actually viewing one of his decorative designs. Through his manipulation of text as a pliable raw material, he demonstrates how fiction is not only able to embody the same aesthetic principles as ornament, but also perform similar functions. Using the criteria outlined in Morris’s design lectures as my interpretive lens, I analyze several passages that detail the landscape scenery of Nowhere and trace the deliberate arrangement of organic motifs within them.
Recognizing *News from Nowhere’s* emphasis on “beauty, imagination, and order” reminds us that Morris did not view his various professional endeavors as mutually exclusive pursuits. Rather, they were individual expressions of a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary artistic philosophy. In *News from Nowhere*, we might think of the central narrative of Guest’s dream, a boat trip from the heart of London into the countryside, as the substructural warp of a literary tapestry upon which Morris weaves a weft of botanical asides. Whether delighting the eye or heightening spatial awareness, natural description in this novel exerts a force as immediate and compelling as the textured threads of a decorative hanging.

**Works Cited**


**Respondent’s Remarks to “Craft and Design in Literary Study: The Legacy of William Morris,”**

Meghan Freeman, Department of English, Manhattanville College

To begin, let me first say what a pleasure it is to have the opportunity to respond to these two excellent papers, both of which eloquently testify to Morris’s importance, not simply as an author and an artist but also as a theorist on craftsmanship and design. Both presentations, in very different ways, attest to how fundamental were the concepts of design and craftwork to Morris’s literary practice and legacy. Lindsay’s paper accounts for the structural complexity of *News from Nowhere* by assessing it according to the three “artistic hallmarks” that Morris ascribed to “ornamental pattern-work”: beauty, imagination, and order. By reading the text according to the principles of textile design, she makes a compelling case for understanding its myriad descriptive interludes as serving the function of decorative tapestries which render the natural world in ways that “inspire genuine compassion for organic life.” In Sara’s paper, we had the chance to see how a simple oak tripod-table, possibly owned by Morris, was “made new again” as both a material possession of Hilda Doolittle and as a symbol for her of their creative kinship, as artists who both believed in “channeling visionary imagination to produce crafted works.”

Reading these papers in preparation for this panel, I found myself admiring how well both of them illuminate an aspect of Morris’s worldview that is perhaps especially worth consideration at this time: namely, his fervent belief that individuals have the ability to impact their environment, to shape and organize them on both micro- and macro-levels, through the directed exercise of the creative faculties. As he says in “The Lesser Arts,” a speech that is referenced by both presenters, “everything made by man’s hands has a form, which must be either beautiful or ugly … we, for our parts, are busy or sluggish, eager or unhappy, and our eyes are apt to get dulled to this evenfulness of form in those things which we are always looking at.” “It is,” he goes on to say, “one of the chief uses of decoration, the chief part of its alliance with nature, that it has to sharpen our senses in this matter” (4-5).

As a means of engaging with some of the foundational premises that these two papers share in their investigations of Morris’s literary practices as those practices were informed by his theories of craft and design, I thought that it might be productive to glance at a poem written by Morris in the period before he had more thoroughly integrated his various thoughts on literature, art, and culture into the distinctive and coherent worldview for which he is now known. Written in 1868 as a preface to the early volumes of *The Earthly Paradise*, this poem, entitled “An Apology,” seems to me useful as a means of gauging the degree to which Morris’s thoughts about literary production were altered by his increasing commitment to decorative arts ideology.

Perhaps one of the clearest statements made by Morris as regards his conception of authorship, “An Apology” is marked in its pessimism about the possibilities of literature, particularly as regards its ability to intervene in the present moment and to inspire its readers to action. Less preface than apologia, the poem opens with an enumeration of all those topics of which the author has “no power to sing.” He is merely “the idle singer of an empty day,” whose words cannot “ease the burden of your fears” nor “bring again the pleasure of past years” nor make the reader “forget your tears, / Or hope again.” Literature, Morris suggests, is too slight a thing to bear “the heavy trouble, the bewildering care / that weighs us down who live and earn our bread.” Rather, it is an anodyne, a narcotic which dulls the pain of the world and lulls the reader back to sleep in the realm of false dreams that lies behind “the ivory gate” against which his “murmuring rhyme / Beats with light wing.”

Though Morris would later be celebrated by Walter Pater (among others) for his ability to conjure a “transfigured world” in his early poetry and then to sublimate “beyond it another still fainter and more spectral, which is literally an artificial or ‘earthly paradise,’” it is important to note that Morris himself did not share this exalted impression of his achievement. Even at the beginning
of the work which would make his literary reputation, he represents himself not as a creator but as a conjuror. “An Apology” concludes with an extended comparison of the poet to “a wizard to a northern king,” likely Merlin, who “At Christmas-tide such wondrous things did show / That through one window men beheld the spring / And through another saw the summer glow, / And through a third the fruited vines a-row / While, still unheard, but in its wonted way / Pip’d the drear wind of that December day.” This analogy brings to mind both Plato’s Allegory of the Cave, with its closed rooms, each an artificial recreation of some scene, “a perfect whole / from living Nature,” but with one important difference. In Morris’s case, what is transformed is not the room the king’s court inhabits but the windows to the outside world; the clear glass through which they should see winter becomes a trick mirror on which is reflected false images of spring, summer, and fall. One might extrapolate from this that Morris’s concern, even as early as 1868, is not literature’s ability to imitate the world and thus obfuscate its reality, nor is it the dangers of the poet’s solipsistic delight in his own creations; rather, what haunts him is the possibility that the imaginative worlds created by the “idle singer” might serve to distract his listeners from the sound of the “drear wind” beyond their door, and the suffering of those who are exposed to the wintery weather. It is for this reason that Morris asks his reader to “pardon” him for building “a shadowy isle of bliss / Midmost the beating of the steely sea”—there is no substance to an island of shadows and, more importantly, it offers no refuge from the “ravening monsters” with which the ocean teems.

Yet, for all of Morris’s pessimism regarding the scope for action open to “the poor singer of an empty day,” I would argue that he uses this poetic apology as a means of articulating his own discontent and of launching a challenge against a conception of literary production that he has come to find limiting and unfulfilling. In other words, he is in search of an answer to the question he asks himself in the fourth stanza: “Dreamer of dreams, born out of my due time, / Why should I strive to set the crooked straight?” It is easy to mistake this question as merely rhetorical, as an expression of hopeless resignation, provoked by a sober assessment of the task at hand. Another way to read it, though, is as the opening salvo in a war that Morris would wage for the remainder of his lifetime, against those forces within himself as much as in the outside world that he associates with selfishness, ennui, and indifference to the ugliness and disharmony that humanity has created.

There is a corollary question that goes unasked in “An Apology,” perhaps because Morris had yet to find a satisfying answer. That question is not “why” the dreaming author should strive to set the crooked straight, but “how.” What use are literary dreams of an earthly paradise in the midst of the “heavy trouble, the bewildering care” of the modern moment? The answer, as he will discover in later years, is that they are of no use at all, if they are only thought of as dreams. Reconceived as designs, however, literary dreams become powerful agents of change, which function as plans for future construction, for the crafting of a new and better world. Sara, in her paper, quotes Morris’s assertion in “The Lesser Arts,” that the individual, by filling the mind “with memories of great works of art,” gains the ability to “look through the ugliness of modernity,” and to see beyond it a visionary prospect waiting to be realized.

Yet, as both papers highlight, for Morris and for those authors who followed in his footsteps, merely seeing such visions, even rendering them faithfully in the text, is not enough. Art is only meaningful to the extent that it reaches new modes of visual and imaginative comprehension, sharpening the senses and re-awakening an awareness to the “eventfulness of form” all around us. To accomplish that end, the art object, be it visual or textual, must embody the spirit, even more than the principles, of design and craft. It should cultivate in its audience a desire to imagine beyond the boundaries of the known world, to plot out this unknown territory, and to collaboratively build upon it.

Importantly, though “An Apology” might be deemed a turning point in Morris’s literary career, he did not turn away from the poetic and narrative dreams he dreamed towards a politically-infected realism. Instead, he recommitted himself even more passionately to those most dream-like of literary forms: to myth and legend, to fantasy and speculative fiction, and to utopia. But he rescued those dreams from their own insubstantiality by grounding them in real-world intentionality. Rather than escapes from the “empty day,” Morris’s later literary productions offered maps to future spaces and imaginary worlds which required the reader’s investment and participation to be realized. For Morris, the dawning of what he calls that “new day of fellowship, and rest, and happiness” depended on the ones who can “look through” the present, helping others who cannot to see this potential future as they “have seen it.” Only then, as William Guest muses at the end of News from Nowhere, only when “others can see it as I have seen it, then it may be called a vision rather than a dream.”
Pocket Cathedrals and Private Presses: Decorated Books as Architecture and the Medieval Inheritance of William Morris’ Arts and Crafts Aesthetic
Brandiann Molby, Loyola University Chicago

While scholars have often noted with pleasure Edward Burne-Jones’ colorful comment that the Kelmscott Chaucer was to be a “pocket cathedral,” scholarly discussion has not fully addressed the extent to which William Morris’ own characterization of good book design as “architectural” helpfully illuminates the legacy of his wider medieval- and Romantically-inspired aesthetic. I maintain that Morris’ conception of book design as a work of architecture theorizes the interaction of text, image, and reader, while at the same time revealing the limited extent of Morris’ debt to medieval aesthetics. Additionally, like Gothic cathedrals before them, Morris’ book designs for the Kelmscott Press, and the Kelmscott Chaucer in particular, are built environments defined by their identity as works of collaborative craftsmanship, which have the capacity to generate an alternative social and economic space through the viewer’s interpretive engagement with the composite verbal-visual narrative of the book itself. This potential, drawn from 19th-century readings of medieval aesthetics, thus defines the legacy of the Kelmscott Press, as well as his entire body of craftsmanship, since it reveals the limitations of Morris’ aesthetic to generate socioeconomic change, as well as the full scope of his vision for the revolutionary potential of the arts and crafts.

In “The Ideal Book” and “The Woodcuts of Gothic Books” Morris describes the process of creating a book design in architectural terms, since for Morris, “if we think the ornament is ornamentally a part of the book merely because it is printed with it, and bound up with it, we shall be much mistaken. The ornament must form as much a part of the page as the type itself, or it will miss its mark, and in order to succeed, and to be ornament, it must submit to certain limitations, and become architectural.” His analogies between book designs and works of architecture help us understand Morris’s own beliefs about the nature and function of books as handcrafted works of art, and by extension, anticipate a corresponding mode of interpretation.

Like all modes of craftsmanship, Morris maintains that book designs cannot be created without “the harmonious co-operation of the craftsmen and artists who produce the book,” in keeping with John Ruskin’s idealization of the medieval craftsman. Good book designs are thus correspondingly defined by their architectural integration of text and image, decoration and design, and form and function into a composite “harmonious work of art.”

In addition, Morris maintains that these architectural book designs are reader- or user-oriented, since their construction is informed by the recognition that the text and the physical instantiation of that text must be interpreted together by the reader.

In addition to the process of ethical craftsmanship and the interpretive engagement of the user, Morris’s characterization of book designs as “architectural” also points to a third means by which the work of art can generate revolutionary socioeconomic change: through its independent action, and it is here that I also see Morris’s debt to medieval aesthetics, or at least to 19th-century interpretations of it. By expanding directly on the Neo-Gothic preoccupation with architecture and the relationship between the built environment and the society that produces it, Morris’s aesthetic posits that the work of art itself creates an alternative socioeconomic space and time. Building on the work of Erwin Panofsky, Gothic cathedrals have been understood to be physical embodiments of the liturgy, and Norman Bryson extends this idea further when he maintains that medieval architecture generates both a liturgical space and a liturgical time through its participation in and embodiment of the church year. This direct action of the cathedral ensures that “the viewing subject is addressed liturgically, as [...] an embodied presence in motion through a circular temporality of text and a choreographic (in the full sense) space of vision, [with] the substance and mobility of his physique [...] fully involved in the work of receiving the images, as he receives the Eucharist, the Doxology, the Word.”

Through its identity as a composite work of collaborative craftsmanship and thus as a non-fetishized commodity, Morris’s work of art similarly reframes relationships among objects, as well as among the individuals
that create and use them, thereby reshaping the physical environment and the fabric of society. The handcrafted work of art simultaneously opens up a new kind of time, since Morris's handcrafted objects do not pursue the mimetic representation of the real world as it appears to be, but rather approach the regeneration of the world as it used to be, according to his medieval craftsman ideal, and as it has the potential to become. Morris's works of handicraft therefore juxtapose past and present together to create a new kind of architecture which stands as an ethical counterweight to the virtual world created by industrialized capital. Morris's career as the leading light of the Arts and Crafts movement can thus be understood as nothing less than his effort to transform Britain's socioeconomic structure by means of radically and architecturally transforming the built environment. In light of Morris's architectural aesthetic, his injunction to "have nothing in your houses which you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful" is layered with a moral and political urgency that directly underscores Morris's belief in the transformative power of architecture. (4)

Which brings us back to the Kelmscott Chaucer—Burne-Jones's "pocket cathedral"—which participates in this liturgical reinterpretation of medieval art and aesthetics. The Chaucer generates this alternative space and revolutionary time through the involvement of the reader in the interpretive process and through the work of art's integration within the space and time of the built environment and its social community. Like all of Morris's works of art, Kelmscott Press books come with the guarantee that by reading them, the reader is actively participating in the social conditions created by the physical book itself. Through reading a Kelmscott Press book, the reader is brought into Romantic alignment with the natural world through Morris's swirling vines and flowers, thereby countering the effects of industrialized production with every page.

By purchasing a Kelmscott book, the reader is also restoring the socioeconomic relationships between individuals by investing in a non-fetishized, non-commodified art object that is both beautiful and useful, in keeping with Morris's Arts and Crafts ideal. As a built environment defined by collaborative craftsmanship, the Chaucer functions independently as a locus of socioeconomic change. Finally, through its identity as part of a decorated interior, the Chaucer serves as both an exemplar and as a microcosm that can regenerate the fabric of industrialized society according to Morris's socialist Arts and Crafts principles.

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**Enlargements: Technology and William Morris’s Typefaces**

**Anna Wager**

William Morris's typefaces for the Kelmscott Press would not have been possible without advances in technology. In November 1888, influential printer and engraver Emery Walker gave a lecture on historical typefaces, an event that led Morris to try his hand at type design. Morris had been interested in letterforms for his entire professional life, and was a practicing calligrapher, but up until this point had not designed any cast type himself. Walker's lecture featured lantern slide enlargements of early typographic examples, and although Morris owned a great deal of incunabula and manuscripts, May Morris stated that it was only in seeing these letters blown up and on a screen that her father decided to dive into type design himself, which ultimately led to the distinctive look of the Kelmscott Press.

This paper is a substantive consideration of Morris's turn to typography and printing. The role of lan-

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**Endnotes**

2. Ibid., 40.
tern slides in Morris’s type design runs counter to popular conceptions of Morris as anti-technology wholesale, a lingering misconception about his working practice. Morris’s literary production would have looked completely different without this technological embrace, where magnification was able to bring about a more focused study of the medieval examples that he admired. This brings up broader questions about technological determinism in print culture studies, stemming from discussions of Elizabeth Eisenstein’s work, where the printing press is couched as an “agent of change.” Technological advancements have a key historical precedence in type creation, a legacy that Morris participated in, and that has been little explored. I argue for a more art historical approach to the technological and typographical realities of Morris’s literary work, as a way to incorporate textual studies into a discussion of Morris’s design. Ultimately, Morris’s embrace of technology in this case may have been just as important to his views on craft as the Kelmscott Press itself. By turning to magnification as a way to master design, Morris changed the look of his literary output.

**Reading Celia Levetus**

Rebecca N. Mitchell, University of Birmingham

Celia Anna Nicholson (née Levetus, 1874-1936) would likely have been in the audience in February 1894, when William Morris delivered a lecture to the annual prize winners at the Birmingham Municipal School of Art. As the first municipal art school in England and one that was at the forefront of educating women in the theory and application of design, the “Birmingham School” gave rise to a generation of women artists keen to adopt Morris’s ideology. In his lecture, in addition to exhorting his listeners to embrace the ethical potential of their role as art producers and “seers,” Morris warned against the danger of becoming too mannered in style, offering three correctives. “First,” he wrote, “the diligent study of Nature, and secondly, the intelligent study of the work of the ages of Art. The third corrective is infallible if you have it; … it is imagination.”[1] This combination of foundational education superseded by imagination is maintained throughout Nicholson’s most mature expressions of her views on art: “The experimental mind rejects, of necessity,” she writes, “all established limitations of any craft, seeking, pioneer-wise, to arrive at new methods and effects; attaining empirical results which may broaden, if not revolutionize, existing conditions.”[2] Thus, reflecting the principles on which her own education was founded, she amplified the individualism that ultimately underscores those principles.

Nicholson also retained a Morris-influenced commitment to the unity of the fine arts and crafts, persistently asking in 1928, “For who shall say this is an art, that a craft? Given a wide and questing spirit, the terms may well become interchangeable.”[3] Continuing to forward Morris’s thinking well into the twentieth century, Nicholson stands as a curious example because her career included successes both as an illustrator and designer—she published, according to one account, more than 600 illustrations between 1895 and 1902 and worked under the tutelage of artists including Walter Crane and George Frederic Watts—and as a novelist and art critic—publishing some 14 novels between 1918 and 1933. Despite this sustained productivity, Nicholson has been nearly forgotten in both art and literary history; the DNB erroneously conflated her biography with that of her grandmother, who was, two generations earlier, one of the first historians of Anglo-Jewish life. Nicholson was, in other words, enormously successful in applied design, art criticism, and literature, and she maintained a commitment to (Morris-influenced) Birmingham School precepts across her chosen media, yet neither this commitment nor her relative commercial success ensured the longevity of her works or her reputation. Part of the problem, as I suggest in this paper, is that Nicholson’s interdisciplinarity was a poor fit for the prevailing models of publication, which failed to keep pace with Morris’s conceptualization or advocacy. Her 1902 name change, occasioned by her marriage, also seemed to befuddle critics, who treated C. A. Nicholson as a different person entirely from the fin de siècle illustrator. Enacting a version of Morris’s ideology was not sufficient, it seems, to ensure that shifts in genre, media, or name did not derail one’s career. This paper takes up
Levetus/Nicholson as a case study to explore the inflection of gender in the application of Morris’s aesthetic principles to literature, and the stakes of cross-medial invocation of a moral design theory.

ENDNOTES

1. William Morris, An Address Delivered by William Morris at the Distribution of Prizes to Students of the Birmingham Municipal School of Art on Feb. 21, 1894 (London: Longmans & Co. [Chiswick Press], 1898), 22.


3. Ibid., 336.

After these sessions we all convened to the Dandelion Pub for lunch, after which several of the group visited the Free Public Library of Philadelphia to view Morris and other Victorian-related items.

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Lunch at the Dandelion Pub: left to right, Andrea Donovan, Lindsay Wells, Evelyn Haller, Paul Acker, Meghan Freeman

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PANEL ON “WILLIAM MORRIS AND VICTORIAN RADICALISM,” NORTHEAST MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION CONVENTION, BALTIMORE, MARCH 25TH, 2017

The U. S. Morris Society panel at the recent NEMLA Convention, arranged and moderated by Michael Robertson, was held 10:15-11:30 Saturday morning at the Baltimore Marriott Waterfront. After the talks, participants celebrated Morris’s birthday of the preceding day with a convivial lunch and cake provided by Michael and Mary Pat Robertson. Abstracts of the papers are reproduced below:

‘ENGLAND IS NOW A GARDEN’: ECOLOGY, CULTURE, AND GENDER IN NEWS FROM NOWHERE
Kate Nielsen, Boston University

In an 1885 letter to George Bernard Shaw, William Morris wrote that he could not “consider a man a Socialist at all who is not prepared to admit the equality of women so far as condition goes.” While Morris espouses gender equality, why, we might ask, does he choose to qualify his remarks with the phrase “so far as condition goes”? His words, though brief, point to a tension in Morris’s views on gender that has long troubled critics of his work, who point out that while he was committed to the need for women’s independence, his adherence to traditional gender roles renders his views on women’s rights insufficiently revolutionary. Morris’s ecological vision, however, has been more favorably received, and I argue that by exploring the connections among women, gardens, and culture presented in News from Nowhere, a fuller portrait of Morris’s gender politics emerges, making it possible to resolve the critical impasse I describe above. In the text, he depicts humans as intimately interconnected with the natural world, and he portrays nature in various states of “culture,” shaped and modified by humans. Women are frequently linked
with the landscape in News from Nowhere, but by associating women with a cultured version of the environment, Morris avoids representing women as essentially closer to nature and therefore subject to patriarchal control. Rather, these links instead suggest that women are intimately bound to the traditionally male sphere of culture, and that they are equal to men not just in their personal freedoms, but in their contributions to society as well.

News from Anytown: The Local States of William Morris and the Socialist League

Martin Martel, University of California at Davis

Late-nineteenth-century local government formed a network characterized by the tension between local autonomy and national standardization. Literary and cultural historians have typically interpreted this “local state” through the lens of disciplinary individualism, the process whereby local authorities express their freedom through voluntary compliance with laws and regulations laid down by centralized institutions. But, as Christopher Harvie suggests, because the British state rests on an unwritten constitution, its operations also rely on cultural mediation. This paper explores how for the local state, one such site of mediation was the political culture of late-Victorian socialism, which competed against other forms of localist print culture – notably local government periodicals and handbooks – to offer models mediating between local prerogative and national standardization. Local socialism’s forms of direct democracy challenge disciplinary individualist accounts of the local state. This paper argues that socialist organizations like the Socialist League sought to develop shadow local states by promoting locally-situated, collective modes of direct democracy, what William Morris called the “folk-mote” and what would be codified as the Parish Meeting in the 1894 Local Government Act. Rather, these links instead suggest that women are equal to men not just in their personal freedoms, but in their contributions to society as well.

William Morris’s Socialist Diary: ‘A Jonah’s View of the Whale’

Florence Boos, University of Iowa

When in 1973 I first visited the British Library Manuscripts Room, I was intrigued by a nondescript black ruled notebook containing a 51-page diary of Morris’s socialist activities from 8 January-26 April 1887 written in his clear fair copy hand, with sections marked for deletion in a future printed version. In due course the Diary was published in 1981, 1982, and 1985 manifestations, but these editions have passed into history, and I was therefore pleased when the proprietor of the Five Leaves Press in Nottingham invited me to prepare a revised version of the Diary, offering a rare lifetime opportunity to rethink my conclusions of more than three decades earlier.

In this talk I comment on the purposes which the Diary served for Morris during this period, his major political preoccupations at the time, especially Irish Home Rule and the Paris Commune, his qualified views on the immediate prospects for socialism, and why, though prepared carefully for the printer, the Diary was never published. And finally, I consider briefly once again Morris’s controversial view that an effective socialist movement must above all maintain a non-legislative component, independent of political compromise and devoted to education and direct democracy.

The Diary permitted Morris to jot down initial thoughts on ideas later written up in Commonweal as well as the longer articles written and delivered during this period. Conversely, a more personal venue may have permitted Morris occasional relief from the need to frame every observation into a public statement. The Diary may also represent a transitional period in his assessments of the prospects of socialism, as the difficulties of inspiring working people to grasp the ideals of cooperative control of resources were every day manifest to him: “I wonder sometimes if people will remember in times to come to what a depth of degradation the ordinary English workman has been reduced” (23 February). During 1887 and later he struggled to convince others of the need for more widespread advocacy rather than immediate campaigning, as he wrote to John Glass in May of that year: “I believe that the Socialists
will certainly send members to Parliament when they are strong enough to do so . . . . But . . . I think it will be necessary always to keep alive a body of Socialists of principle who will refuse responsibility for the actions of the parliamentary portion of the party . . . ."

When I edited the Diary in 1980-81, no one could be found to sympathize with Morris’s distrustful view of electoral politics. I would not now claim that Morris succeeded in squaring the circle—solving the conundrum of how an oppressed group without power can seize control while retaining its original egalitarian aims, but at least he faced it with more insight into its essentially Catch-22 problematics than perhaps anyone of his era. Moreover, thirty-five years after my first introduction it is not difficult to note parallels between the problems faced by nascent socialism in the late 1880s and the political situations of Britain and the United States. In the U. K. an apparently democratic electoral process has elevated New Labour and Tory governments and most recently initiated the isolationist, anti-internationalist Brexit. In the United States elections routinely elevate candidates openly tied to special interests, in a “commercial war” against both equality and democratic norms. Social movements seem to proceed both within and outside of the parameters of political parties, and so Morris may not have been entirely misguided to direct his energies elsewhere. This itself was no simple task, for as Morris stated in his 1887 speech on the Paris Commune, “Truly it is harder to live for a cause than to die for it,” an insight borne out by the events of his Socialist Diary and its continuing aftermath.

In order to understand Morris’s thoughts on the Thames landscape, the inspiration he drew from it, and the ways he interacted with it, it is essential to consider the Thames and its tributaries as he might have known them—physically, in how they looked and functioned, and culturally, in how they were addressed by the writers, artists, and thinkers with whom Morris would have been familiar. Therefore, my combined landscape studies and art historical approach looks to art, literature, archival records, and the physical sites of Morris’s life to form a broad and detailed account of Morris’s Thames landscapes, their uses and depictions, and their cultural context. This account reveals the ways in which Morris’s physical and cultural landscapes manifested in the design and production of his works, focusing particularly on the series of printed patterned fabrics he named for tributaries of the Thames and its estuary: Cray, Evenlode, Kennet, Lea, Lodden, Medway, Wandle, Wey, and Windrush.

I will use the funds provided by the Dunlap Fellowship to support a research trip to the United Kingdom, currently planned for summer 2017. During this trip, I will visit a number of council archives and local museums to view documentation and images of Morris’s riverside landscapes. This material, along with research I plan to undertake in the maps collection of the British Library, will help to reveal the historic features of Morris’s landscapes, as well as the changes they underwent both in his lifetime and in the ensuing 120 years. I will also view Thames imagery and ephemera at the Museum of London and the River and Rowing Museum, Henley, and study Morris’s original tributary pattern designs at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Birmingham Art Gallery. All of this work is essential to my landscape- and ecology-focused interpretation of Morris’s works and legacy, and will contribute particularly to my dissertation chapters concerning Morris’s London and the Merton Abbey factory.

SARAH LEONARD AWARDED THE 2017 JOSEPH DUNLAP FELLOWSHIP

We are pleased to announce that Sarah Leonard, a Ph. D. candidate in Art History at the University of Delaware, has been awarded the 2017 Joseph R. Dunlap Fellowship. She describes her project as follows:

My dissertation, “The beauty of the bough-hung banks: William Morris in the Thames Landscape,” investigates the disparate riverside landscapes of the Victorian Thames as dominant presences in Morris’s varied and intertwined roles as designer, author, political thinker, and factory owner. As a lifelong London resident, Morris was most familiar with the polluted, industrialized city Thames. However, he drew visual inspiration from the rural landscape of the Upper Thames around Kelmscott for his famous pattern designs, and he put forward the same landscape as a medievalist and Socialist pastoral ideal in his poetry, novels, and political writings. At the same moment, he was searching out clean river water for the industrial production of his fabrics, and using that water to wash dyestuffs away from his printed fabrics and downstream into the London river.

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MARK SAMUELS LASNER
LIBRARY COLLECTION EXHIBITION AND SYMPOSIUM

No one has been more important in ensuring the survival and well-being of the William Morris Society in the United States than Mark Samuels Lasner, president of the William Morris Society in the United States for 19 years (1986-2005). It was therefore with enthusiasm and affection as well as interest and respect that his many friends and associates gathered for the 17-18 March 2017 celebration, exhibition, and symposium held to honor his donation of his collection to the University of Delaware Libraries. For many years the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, the largest collection of Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic Movement materials in North America, has benefited visitors and scholars from Britain as well as the United States. We are featuring a report of the symposium, followed by a description of his collection excerpted from the exhibition website.

MARK SAMUELS LASNER: A GENIUS OF COLLECTING AND CONNECTING

Michael Robertson

“Mark Samuels Lasner is a genius of collecting, and he is a genius of connecting.” Elaine Showalter’s tribute to Lasner was part of her keynote address at the symposium “Celebrating the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection,” held at the University of Delaware March 17-18, 2017. The symposium, which marked Lasner’s donation of his extraordinary collection of Victorian books, manuscripts, and art to the University, accompanied an exhibition of highlights from the collection, which continues in the University Library through June 3.

Showalter, Professor Emerita of English at Princeton University, began her address with A. S. Byatt’s 1990 novel Possession, which includes a satiric portrait of Mortimer Cropper, a ruthless American collector of Victorian manuscripts. Lasner, Showalter hastened to point out, is no Cropper, and she praised the aptness of the exhibition’s title—not “Victorian Possessions” but “Victorian Passions.” Lasner, she said, is a passionate collector more interested in an item’s human interest than in its physical condition or monetary value. His
way his collection places items within a dense narrative web of “creation, meaning, and history”—to use Lasner’s own phrase—but in his many connections to a range of people interested in the Victorian era, not only collectors and dealers but also librarians and scholars. “Of all the great collectors of Victorian literature,” Showalter proclaimed, “Mark Samuels Lasner is the best connected and the most fun.”

Exhibition curator Margaret Stetz assembled a variety of items from Lasner’s collection of more than 9,500 works of literature and art. Four that Lasner has identified as among his favorites are of special interest to Morris scholars. The most visually sumptuous is Morris’s illuminated manuscript catalogue of his book collection. Morris never completed the project—the eighteen extant pages list only some of the incunabula he owned—but the skill and time he lavished on the catalogue reveal that his passion for book collecting rivaled Lasner’s. Another Lasner favorite is the 1881-1898 visitors’ book for North End House, Edward Burne-Jones’s seaside retreat on the Sussex coast. Burne-Jones, whom Stetz labels a “compulsive cartoonist,” decorated the visitors’ book with witty caricatures of his guests and family, including a stout, heroic-looking William Morris and a small, woeful Edward Burne-Jones. When the visitors’ book arrived in the mail from a dealer, out fell a drawing that Lasner had no idea was included but that is familiar to everyone interested in the Pre-Raphaelites: Burne-Jones’s drawing of himself in the Red Lion Square studio that he and Morris shared, engaged in decorating a massive medieval-style chair—a chair that is now just up the road from the Lasner Collection at the Delaware Art Museum in Wilmington.

The fourth item is one of the newest in the Lasner collection, a book that only two years ago Lasner believed it would be “impossible” for him to obtain: a pristine copy of the Kelmscott Chaucer. This great work of art exemplifies the connections that Lasner values, representing a collaboration among Morris, Burne-Jones, the designers and artisans of the Kelmscott Press, and Morris’s beloved predecessor Geoffrey Chaucer.

Ten speakers were featured during the symposium, all of whom testified to the Lasner Collection’s value to the study of material culture. Recalling her own academic training during the 1960s and 1970s, Margaret Stetz pointed out that both New Critics and post-structuralist theorists focused on texts, not books themselves; however, the past three decades have seen renewed attention to books and other material artifacts. Barbara Heritage of the University of Virginia’s Rare Book School offered a theoretically sophisticated defense of the importance of special collections at a moment when influential figures within the field of library science are arguing that, in the fully digitized era to come, books will no longer matter. R. David Lankes made that case in a controversial 2014 talk, “Burn the Libraries, Free the Librarians”; Heritage implied that librarians might want to keep their matches in their pockets.

Several speakers talked about how specific items in the Lasner Collection make important contributions to our understanding of the Victorian period. Joseph Bristow of UCLA discussed how two illustrated collections of fairy tales by Oscar Wilde broaden our understanding of Wilde’s career. William S. Peterson, Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Maryland, described his work in progress on the Kelmscott Chaucer, noting that the presentation copy in Lasner’s collection, inscribed to Robert Catterson-Smith, a Kelmscott Press designer, reveals the complex collaboration that produced an artifact Burne-Jones described as a “pocket cathedral.” David Taylor, an independent scholar from the U.K., focused on the correspondence of Vernon Lushington, a little-known but fascinating figure in Pre-Raphaelite circles. It was he who introduced Burne-Jones and Dante Gabriel Rossetti to one another, and his daughter Kitty served as model for Virginia Woolf’s Clarissa Dalloway.

Margaretta Frederick, Chief Curator of the Delaware Art Museum, described how her study of May Morris landscape sketches in the Lasner Collection opened up wider vistas on a figure increasingly recognized as a significant artist. She also discussed her research on the artist Barbara Bodichon, who will be the subject of a future exhibition at the Delaware Art Museum. Linda Hughes of Texas Christian University talked about her ongoing research on frontispiece portraits of Victorian women poets, drawing out the problematic relationship during the nineteenth century between the woman poet’s body and her body of work. Frequently, Victorian publishers avoided any visual representation of the woman poet by omitting a frontispiece. However, as the century went on and women increasingly and publicly put their bodies on the line in suffrage demonstrations, poets and their publishers more often included a frontispiece, dealing in a variety of ways with what Hughes called “the troublesome flesh of the female poet.”
Other speakers included Ed Maggs of Maggs Brothers, a prestigious London book dealer founded in 1853. In the course of a witty and affectionate tribute to his long friendship with Lasner, Maggs detailed the tribulations of the antiquarian book trade, but he also expressed optimism for the future. The millennial generation, he said, is on a quest for authenticity, demonstrated in their fondness for vinyl recordings and fixie bicycles. Their quest, he said, extends to books, and he predicted that there would be Lasner-like collectors yet to come.

The quest for authenticity and passion for material artifacts were vividly demonstrated in the talk by Mark Dimunation, head of the Rare Books and Special Collections division at the Library of Congress. In a series of entertaining anecdotes, Dimunation talked about some of the most significant and spectacular items in the Library of Congress collection, demonstrating the rich narratives and immediate pleasures that are at the heart of collecting, collections, and the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection.

Michael Robertson is Professor of English at The College of New Jersey. His book “The Last Utopians,” a group biography of William Morris and three contemporaries, is forthcoming from Princeton University Press.

VICTORIAN PASSIONS: STORIES FROM THE MARK SAMUELS LASNER COLLECTION

Love, desire, jealousy, ambition, hatred and friendship are among the many sentiments present in “Victorian Passions: Stories from the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection.” On view in the Special Collections Gallery at the Morris Library from February 14 through June 3, 2017, the exhibition brings together unique copies of rare books, manuscripts and artworks that tell stories about distinguished British writers and artists from the period 1850 to 1900, including Charles Dickens, Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, William Morris, George Eliot, Henry James, Christina Rossetti and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Alfred Tennyson, Aubrey Beardsley, W. B. Yeats, Rudyard Kipling and Oscar Wilde.

The exhibition is curated by Dr. Margaret D. Stetz, Mae and Robert Carter Professor of Women’s Studies and Professor of Humanities at the University of Delaware. Stetz organized a 2002 show in Old College Gallery, “Beyond Oscar Wilde: Portraits of Writers and Artists from the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection,” that inspired both a later exhibition at New York’s Grolier Club and her book Facing the Late Victorians: Portraits of Writers and Artists from the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, which was published in 2007 by the University of Delaware Press. “Victorian Passions” focuses on a different aspect of the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, highlighting the subject of emotional connections—whether among the famous lovers, families, collaborators and friends represented here or between these creative figures and the items that they owned. At the same time, it celebrates the collecting passions of Mark Samuels Lasner himself and reveals the narratives that make these manuscripts, letters, graphics and “association copies” (books with inscriptions, annotations, and signatures) such important objects.

Among the many association copies on display are:

- a first edition of The Importance of Being Earnest, presented by Oscar Wilde to a friend who was among his staunchest supporters during his imprisonment for “gross indecency”
- John Ruskin’s influential The Stones of Venice, inscribed to the great critic Thomas Carlyle
- the copy of Idylls of the King that Alfred Tennyson gave to Julia Margaret Cameron and that launched her most significant series of staged photographs
- The Little White Bird, which marked the first appearance in print of the ageless Peter Pan, inscribed by J. M. Barrie to his sister
- the novel Dracula presented by Bram Stoker to the actress Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who was the model for a contemporaneous—and scandalous—vampire-themed painting
- Henry James’s copy of Studies in the History of the Renaissance by Walter Pater, the book that introduced Art for Art’s Sake to the English-speaking world in 1873
- one of the few known presentation copies of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s Aurora Leigh, sent to her friend Ellen Heaton, a pioneering feminist and art collector
- The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, with an inscription from Arthur Conan Doyle to the editor of the Strand Magazine, in which the Holmes stories were first published

The Pre-Raphaelites—a particular strength of the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection—are well represented. For the Rossetti family, there is Christina Rossetti’s Sing-Song inscribed to her brother, William Michael; the proofs of Dante Gabriel’s Poems containing the texts
recovered from the exhumed coffin of his wife, Elizabeth Siddall; and one of Siddall’s three surviving autograph letters. Even more remarkable is Lewis Carroll’s 1863 photograph showing the four Rossetti siblings and their mother, the only other print of which is owned by the National Portrait Gallery, London. William Morris’s calligraphic catalogue of the library at Kelmscott House—a tribute to the poet, designer, and socialist’s love of illuminated manuscripts—is paired with a copy of the Kelmscott Press edition of News from Nowhere inscribed to the artist Edward Burne-Jones. Three items relate to Algernon Charles Swinburne: the manuscript of his poem, “Before the Mirror,” inspired by James McNeill Whistler’s painting, The Little White Girl; a photograph of that artwork inscribed by Whistler to Swinburne; and Swinburne’s leather-bound photograph album, containing a carte-de-visite of Whistler, along with many other famous contemporaries. This section features are a rare presentation copy of the famous Kelmscott Chaucer and a drawing of the Pre-Raphaelite “stunner” Jane Burden, wife of William Morris, by her lover D. G. Rossetti.

LAVINIA GREENLAW,
QUESTIONS OF TRAVEL: WILLIAM MORRIS IN ICELAND
Notting Hill Editions, 2011.

KellyAnn Fitzpatrick

At first glance it is unclear what one should expect from Lavinia Greenlaw’s Questions of Travel: William Morris in Iceland in terms of its relationship to Morris’s travel journals from his 1871 and 1873 trips to Iceland. Is Greenlaw’s book an edition? A monograph? A commentary? A closer look at Questions of Travel suggests that it may most accurately be described as a curation. Greenlaw, best known as a poet and novelist, picks and chooses from Morris’s 1871 journal entries and presents her selections in chronological order. After contextualizing the selections in her introductory material, Greenlaw provides facing-page commentary on Morris’s entries that distill Morris’s experiences into more universal mediations, or the “questions” of the title, on travel.

The book’s back cover and promotional material pronounces the result of this curation to be “a new and composite work, which brilliantly explores our conflicted reasons for not staying at home.” In solidarity with Morris’s decision to “not stay at home,” Greenlaw hints at her own travels to Iceland. She briefly relates her own impressions of the Icelandic geysirs in her introduction, thanks her travelling companion in her “Sources and Acknowledgements” section, and clarifies in her “A Note on the Text” section that “I didn’t go to Iceland because of Morris but, like him, because of my idea of the place” (xxiv). Although Greenlaw does not offer any deeper motivations for her own trip, she does frame Morris’s 1871 Icelandic travels as a means for Morris to get away from the awkward (and likely painful) domestic situation established when D.G. Rossetti moved into Kelmscott Manor in order to spend the summer with Morris’s wife, Jane. Although Greenlaw suggests that Morris undertook his 1873 trip to Iceland for similar reasons, she includes only selections from the 1871 trip, with journal entries running from July 6-September 7.

In her introductory material, Greenlaw rightly observes that Morris’s Icelandic journals are strangely devoid of references to the sagas that were the impetus for his dedication to learning the Icelandic tongue. Greenlaw is at her most insightful in her assessment that amid flashes of the Morris that we know from his writings and designs (e.g., he describes mountains in the language of medieval church architecture), the Icelandic journals are preoccupied with the mundane details of travel. Will travel companion Eiríkr Magnússon miss the train from London? Will there be fresh fish or tinned beef for dinner? What will Morris do when he loses his favorite pannikin, his slippers, or—perhaps most pressingly—the journal in which he is recording his impressions of the trip?

It is in their treatment of these seemingly mundane moments that Greenlaw’s facing-page meditations truly offer the reader a reason to read Morris’s journals through Greenlaw’s eyes rather than turn to a more
complete or scholarly edition. The meditations, located on the left-hand page when the book is open, consist of a phrase or sentence (a “snippet,” if you will) from the corresponding section of Morris’s journal entry that is located on the right-hand page. The snippet from Morris’s text, printed in red on the left-hand page, becomes the header for Greenlaw’s meditations, which consist of a few sentences loosely connected in theme to form a sort of prose poem.

In his July 18 entry, for instance, Morris details how he lost a pannikin (a small cup or pan), which turned out to be the first in a series of objects that he loses (but which are later returned to him). He writes,

About this time began the first series of losses that I suffered, to the great joy of my fellow-travellers: for, lunch over, I missed the strap that fastened my tin pannikin (which made such a sweet tinkle) to my saddle-bow: I applied to Faulkner for another, and of course he refused me with many reproaches: then afterwards, hunting about, he found the strap, but pride prevented me from asking for it, so I tied my pannikin on with a piece of string, and so off we go and ride presently off the grass on to the smooth black [s]and about Ölfusá, called the skeid, and lo after I have ridden a furlong or so, the knot of the string has slipped and my pannikin is gone. (45)

In Greenlaw’s facing-page prose poem, she meditates on a small phrase from Morris’s entry, transforming the specific misplacement of objects of comfort into a more profound examination of what loss means when one is far from home:

— The first of a series of losses
You let go.
Discarding.
You enjoy the joke against yourself.
Your world is what travels with you: slippers and a pannikin.
The world restores itself to you.
You make none of this happen. (44)

Because the selected snippet is not highlighted in any way on the right-hand page, part of the challenge of reading Greenlaw’s book is locating the selected phrases in Morris’s writing. While highlighting the phrase, perhaps using red ink for the snippet on both pages, would make locating the snippet easier, the current design pushes a “back-and-forth” method of reading that necessitates a breaking of thought that is absent if one reads Morris’s entries or Greenlaw’s meditations separately. Oddly, this alternating method of reading brings the reader much closer to the act of journal writing, which is often a process of turning scattered thoughts and impressions into a single, smooth entry intended to reflect an entire day’s worth of existence.

While Questions of Travel was first printed in 2011, a paperback edition and e-book were made available in the U.S. in March 2017. Normally a fan of e-books, in this case I found the hardcopy book worth the paper and ink, as one cannot quite replicate the experience of reading the hardcopy facing-page design on an e-reader. On the issue of design—always of import when considering Morris—my one disappointment with Greenshaw’s curation is in the paucity of images included in her book. The version of the Icelandic Journals available on the William Morris Archive (http://morrisedition.lib.uiowa.edu/icelandicdiaries.html), for instance, is complemented by gorgeous photographs of Iceland taken by Martin Stott in 2013, images of Morris’s handwritten journal, and a map from The Collected Works of William Morris (Vol. 8) that details Morris’s route through Iceland. Although part of the map appears on the cover of one edition of Greenlaw’s book, the pages themselves include only two caricatures by Edward Burne-Jones: “William Morris climbing a mountain in Iceland,” which is nestled between the introductory material and the first journal entry; and “Home Again: William Morris sitting in an armchair,” which closes the book.

The closing image of Morris in his armchair is nevertheless a suitable way to end a volume that ponders the hesitations and anxieties of travel as much as the advantages of experiencing a place as beautiful and exoticized as Iceland. Inasmuch as the book makes poetic philosophy out of the minutia of travel, it thus also manages to draw upon the universal joy of returning to one’s own comfortable home and hearth.

KellyAnn Fitzpatrick is a Brittain Fellow at the Georgia Institute of Technology and a current member of the WMS-US Executive Committee.


Florence Boos

Phillippa Bennett’s Wonderland: The Last Romances of William Morris offers an appreciative defense of the ideological significance of Morris’s last tales. Bennett
defines “wonder” as a receptive and celebratory response to the world and “a powerful means of expressing our relationship to it” (6). Noting that commentators and philosophers since the Middle Ages have remarked on the physical and ethical aspects of wonder, she argues that for Morris “the most fundamental and crucial aspect of wonder was its revolutionary potential” (7).

Chapter 1, “The Embodiment of Wonder,” argues that Morris’s celebration of physical life constitutes “one of his most powerful critiques of late nineteenth-century capitalism” with its disfiguring effects on both the body and mind of its victims (25). Bennett suggests that the erotic pleasure experienced by the protagonists of the last romances, The Well at the World’s End and The Water of the Wondrous Isles, reflects a generosity and mutual respect born of reciprocity, though Morris cautions in The Story of the Glittering Plain and elsewhere that mere physical existence without the vigor of labor and effort is a form of death.

In chapter 2, “The Topography of Wonder,” Bennett explores Morris’s portrayal of wondrous environments as means to an appreciation of familiar or everyday beauty, with emphasis on the two landscapes which most influenced him, Iceland and England. She traces in detail the parallels between Morris’s expressions of awe, fear, and wonder when confronted with the difficult and beautiful Icelandic terrain—especially its mountains and bleakly rugged plains—and the emotional states of his protagonists in similar environments. Observing that for Morris a reverential delight in nature likewise prompts an ethic of care for his own, less remarkable but similarly beautiful English landscape, she finds that especially in his last romances, Morris envisages a relationship between humanity and the natural world “beleaguered by the exploitation and victimization that so often characterized it in his personal experience” (89).

In chapter 3, “The Architecture of Wonder,” Bennett explores the built environments in Morris’s romances against the background of his distaste for the hideous and unhealthy dwellings of industrial society, his views on the imitative nature of contemporary Victorian architecture, and his work for the protection of ancient buildings. His belief that the contemporary “architectural crisis” could only be resolved “by the will to reimagine the relationship between human beings and the spaces and places they inhabit on a daily basis” (95) is allegorized throughout the romances, in which the buildings which survive are those which enhance the unity and well-being of the people.

In chapter 4, “The Politics of Wonder,” Bennett considers the aspects of Morris’s socialist vision founded on hope: the ability to imagine a different and better world. She interprets the last romances in the context of his activism, noting that these “provided an alternative and complementary context in which he could explore the implications of wonder’s drive towards the movement of challenge” (148). She then identifies features of the romance quest which characterize a “revolutionary consciousness”: a willingness to rebel against established hierarchies, even at the risk of life; the search for a worthy purpose for action; and the fulfillment of personal identity in promoting the well-being of one’s society.

In the final chapter, “The Presentation of Wonder,” Bennett explores ways in which Kelmscott Press editions complement and embody the meanings of Morris’s romances. Noting Morris’s great excitement at book collecting and his love for books as material aspects, Bennett describes Morris’s relations with his illustrators and the variety of designs he created for the six prose romances published at the Press. Bennett argues that the Kelmscott Press books were, like his romances, revolutionary in their quiet beauty, demonstrating “how a society that values beauty and encourages craftsmanship free from ‘commercial exigencies’ might produce such books for all its citizens” (200-201).

In viewing Morris’s romances in the context of his Socialist activism, Wonderlands provides an excellent synthesis of the ethos of Morris’s late prose romances as well as the unity of his later endeavors. Bennett’s case for the aspirational significance of these tales as experiments in a new mode of thought seems convincing, although in my view there are aspects of chapter 1’s association of beautiful body and healthy mind which require qualification, as realism and allegory remain in tension. However, Bennett’s regret that critics have rated Morris’s prose romances as of lesser value than his other literary works may soon be obsolete, for a younger generation seems highly receptive to Morris’s romances as an influence on J. R. R. Tolkien and J. K. Rowling.
ANNOUNCEMENTS:

**Arts and Crafts Tours** will be sponsoring a tour, “Liverpool: England’s Second City and North Wales,” from June 10 - June 19, 2017. This nine day tour will be devoted to England’s 19th century architecture and fine arts. Liverpool has a wealth of 19th century buildings and several international connections to America. Participants will explore the work of Wales’ most famous 19th century architect Clough Williams-Ellis at his home and the fantastical Portmerion, spend a day in Manchester seeing the Town Hall and the City Art Gallery, and visit other public buildings reflecting Liverpool’s place as the second city of the Empire. For more information, please write artsandcraftstours@gmail.com or visit www.artsandcraftstours.com.

**Arts and Crafts Weekend** in Haslemere, Surrey 7-9 July 2017; exhibition 1 July-2 September 2017. The brochure describes the history of Arts and Crafts in Haslemere:

In Haslemere a thriving community of artists and craftspeople inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement formed the Peasant Arts Society, and flourished from the late 1890s until the early 1900s. Determined to revive lost country crafts, they set up weaving houses and craft workshops in the town, and these became known as the Haslemere Peasant Industries. Members of the movement, including Godfrey Blount and Joseph King, also collected “peasant art” objects from across Europe and used them to inspire local artisans. Joining them in the pursuit of collecting was Gerald Davies, a master at Charterhouse School in Godalming. His collection of European folk art was later purchased by the Peasant Arts Society [eventually becoming part of the Haslemere Educational Museum in 1926]. Examples of this collection and of the unique local industries are still on public display. For further information see www.haslemere.com/artsandcrafts.


Morris’ designs are characterized by an abundance of flowers, repetitive patterns and intense colors. Morris found inspiration for his designs in his own garden of Kelmscott Manor, in nature and in illustrated books. Morris owned an enormous library with more than 2000 books, among which are a great number of botanical works which he studied to find inspiration for his designs. His special predilection was for the early 16th century books with hand coloured woodcuts of plants by Dodanus, Fuchs, Matthiol, Gerarde, and Parkinson. Leaves from those books are on show in the Printroom of the Museum of the Black Tulip. The exhibition is in collaboration with De Mooiste Muren (demooiistemuren.nl) and Morris & Co. (william-morris.co.uk).

**New Audio CD:** William Morris News from Nowhere: Fellowship Symphony and Artist’s Book, with music by Mike Roberts, the Children of Waltham Forest, and Gustav Holst, and performed by Dan Cruikshank, the Cantata Youth Chorus, and the Fellowship Orchestra. This lovely creation is available from Amazon.com for $19.99, distributed by Still Time Music.

**New Book from The Pre-Raphaelite Society:** The Late Pre-Raphaelites their enemies and friends, and where to find them. By David Elliott and Patricia O’Connor. 45 pages, 59 illustrations. This gazetteer provides information on the lives of the leading Pre-Raphaelite artists and their many associates, together with details of the locations of their gravesites. To order a copy of The Late Pre-Raphaelites please email info@pre-raphaelitesociety.org or telephone 01676 530512 or 07739 892309, or send a cheque for £9 (UK purchasers only) made payable to ‘The Pre-Raphaelite Society’ to M. Wollaston, 18 Floyd Grove, Balsall Common, Coventry CV7 7RP.

The Loyola University Chicago Victorian Society has issued a call for papers for its annual conference on the topic of “Aesthetics and Form in Victorian Art, Literature and Culture,” to be held October 28, 2017. Abstracts no longer than 300 words are sought no later than June 1, 2017. For more information please write lucvictoriansociety@gmail.com

**THE LAST WORD**