"In the First Rank," an acrylic painting by Carolyn Marsland, commissioned by Lord Tom Sawyer. A depiction of the 1889 Dockers March with Eleanor Marx, William Morris, and Keir Hardie et al.
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This newsletter is published by the William Morris Society in the United States, P. O. Box 53263, Washington DC 20009. Editorial committee: Florence S. Boos (editor), KellyAnn Fitzpatrick (assistant editor), Anna Wager and Brandiann Molby. Karla Tonella (designer).

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

This year the William Morris Society held its annual meeting at the Modern Language Association Convention in Chicago, Illinois from January 3-6. Our session, organized and presided over by board member Kelly Ann Fitzpatrick, was entitled “William Morris: Reflections on Art and Labor” and included these three papers: “The Handcrafted Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Walter Benjamin and the Revolutionary Potential of William Morris’s Decorated Books,” by Brandiann Molby of Loyola University, Chicago; “Aesthetics and the Birth of the Consultant: Wilde versus Morris on Art, Work and the Self,” by Patrick Fessenbecker of Bilkent University; and “William Morris and The Dawn: Ideas for "The Society of the Future,”” by Rebekah Greene of the Georgia Institute of Technology. Dr. Greene had the added distinction of being the recipient of our annual Dunlap Memorial Fellowship Award, to enable her to complete research on the subject of her paper.

The Newberry Library provided the focus for our annual field trip. Dr. Jill Gage, Custodian of the Wing Foundation on the History of Printing, led a group of eight on a tour of the library. We were shown the remodeling of the entrance hall; a glimpse of the stacks; and an exhibit of Morris works chosen for us (see photo). The library owns a complete collection of Kelmscott Press books. We had a close look at (among other items) some of Morris’s ornamental designs for the Kelmscott Press. The library had acquired a pencil sketch by Edward Burne-Jones for a woodcut of Adam and Eve used (beautifully) in the Kelmscott Press Golden Legend, a copy of which was also on display. I had requested that we view a few pages of Morris’s calligraphy for a hand-decorated copy of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, alongside a facsimile of the finished version owned by the British Library (MS Add. 37832). Morris in the Newberry leaves left room for the golden line initials and interlinear, floral decoration seen in the facsimile.

As Dr. Gage pointed out, many of the volumes feature bonus items in the form of handwritten correspondence. The Rubaiyat pages were accompanied by May Morris’s letters in 1927 to her friend Winifred Holiday (daughter of the artist Henry Holiday), mentioning May’s gift of the calligraphic pages in exchange for some blue silk to be used by her embroidery students (see photos).

Our annual dinner was held in the cozy wine room of Quartino’s restaurant in the River North area of Chicago. After a productive meeting of attending members of the board (myself, Dr. Fitzpatrick, Dr. Jane Carlin and Dr. Anna Wager), a group of thirteen diners (I am not sure which one of us was Loki) introduced themselves, and then I presented the Dunlap Award to Dr. Greene. Since we were required to meet a minimum amount on our food bill, a Pantagruelian feast ensued with an abundant selection of appetizers, small plates and liters of Italian wine. William Morris himself would have delighted in our convivium.

In closing, I would like to thank for their past services departing board members Sean De Vega and Michael Robertson, now on sabbatical in England and preparing a biography of William Morris. We are also fortunate to be able to welcome three new members, David Lowden, a legal special counsel with a long history of serving non-profits, Melissa Buron, Director of the Art Division of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, and Sarah Leonard, a Ph. D. candidate in Art History at the University of Delaware and a 2017 recipient of the Joseph Dunlap Award.

Wishing you all an excellent 2019,

Cordially,

Paul Acker
It was a delight to meet the new President of the UK William Morris Society during a recent visit to London. Lord Sawyer of Darlington (Tom Sawyer) is the new President as of May 12th, 2018. Lord Sawyer’s biography from the website of the UK Society outlines his impressive career and interest in William Morris:

Tom Sawyer began his working life at the age of 15 on the factory floor of a County Durham engineering works. He went on to have a distinguished career in the labor movement, including serving as deputy general secretary of NUPE and later UNISON, before becoming General Secretary of the Labour Party from 1994-98. He recently stepped down as Chancellor of Teeside University after serving a twelve-year term.

Tom first encountered William Morris’s writing at the age of 21, when he read Morris’ classic Utopian work *News from Nowhere*. He says of his relationship with Morris:

‘Throughout my years as a union official I would often turn to Morris for inspiration and incorporate ideas from his work, particularly signs of change, into my speeches... His message and his principles are timeless. He has enriched many lives – mine included.’

Lord Sawyer has a particular interest in the art and craft of bookbinding. In 2008 he commissioned a number of designer bindings of seminal texts in the history of British socialism, including Morris’s *News from Nowhere*, for an exhibition which he organized at the House of Lords (retrieved from williammorrissociety.org/2018/03/15/a-new-president-for-the-society/, August 6, 2018).

The meeting with Lord Sawyer was made all the more exceptional because it included (along with my daughter) a personal tour of the Houses of Parliament designed by Charles Barry with interiors by Augustus Pugin. The two Houses, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, differ significantly in style. The House of Lords is very grand and opulent while the House of Commons is more understated in keeping with the representation of the people. We were treated to a visit to the Queen’s Robing Room, the Royal Gallery, both the Lords’ and Commons Chambers, as well as the House of Lords Library which features a series of riverside rooms with wonderful views of the Thames. Along the way we learned a few behind the scenes facts including, for example, that each Lord has a special locker and peg for their robes. It was evident as we toured the House of Commons that Lord Sawyer is a well-respected and much revered Peer. It certainly bodes well for the Society who will benefit from having such a well-respected and genuinely interested leader.

Lord Sawyer is a book collector and has spent time building up a fine collection of books on socialism. He documented his collection in a book published in 2012: *Radicalism: A Passion for Books*. As he shares in the Introduction: “Book collecting is a very private affair; books slip on and off shelves and in and out of houses, most often unseen and unknown by any person other than the book collector. Very few collectors have left a record of why they chose particular books. So I decided I would leave a short story that others, including my family and friends, but particularly my grandchildren might enjoy or at least understand the reasons for my passion.”

The book is presented in 31 groups that showcase a wide range of topics, with section 23 devoted to William Morris. Of Morris, Sawyer writes, “Morris is the man. The greatest ever British Socialist. Morris the writer, Morris the agitator, Morris the thinker, Morris the activist.” His collection of Morris publications is incredibly diverse and includes published books, pamphlets and ephemera, along with items from the collection of Arthur Halcrow Verstage, an architect with a lifelong love
of William Morris and founding member of the UK William Morris Society. Some of treasures in this collection include: a letter from May Morris to Agnes Larkin (eldest daughter to Dr. Robert Steele, a well-known scholar and one of Morris’s executors), a photograph of May in old age at Kelmscott House, a proof copy of The Sundering Flood, over fourteen pamphlets published by the Socialist league and various pamphlets published by the Hammersmith Socialist Society.

Lord Sawyer also has a particular interest in the art and craft of bookbinding. In 2008 he commissioned a number of designer bindings of seminal texts on the history of British socialism, including Morris’s News from Nowhere, for an exhibition he organized at the House of Lords. He worked closely with the Designer Bookbinders of the United Kingdom and commissioned unique beautiful bindings that celebrate their craft and creativity as well as the history of socialism in Britain. Master bookbinder Lester Capon bound News from Nowhere. Capon studied at the Camberwell School of Arts and Crafts and has been a Fellow of Designer Bookbinders since 1986. His work is represented in libraries across the UK and United States. As described in the catalog: “The theme is taken from Morris’ trip up the Thames during which he experiences and portrays his vision for the future. The layout is based on the format of journey maps that were prevalent in the 19th century. The gold work and colored underlays running across the book represent his vision. I felt it suitable to use vellum for this binding as Morris often used it for the Kelmscott Press. Also, the ‘pierced vellum’ technique is an early style of binding here revived and adapted – I hope Morris would have approved.” (I am sure he would have!)

News from Nowhere was an important book and as shared by Lord Sawyer, “Many people consider it to be Morris’s best work, and that great as he was, he was greatest as a revolutionary. I feel certain that News from Nowhere was read extensively by the early socialist activist. Although it did not feature in a list of books read by the intake of Labor members of Parliament in 1906, it was included as recommended reading by Robert Blatchford at the end of his book, Merrie England.”

Also included in the exhibition was William Morris – Artist Writer Socialist by May Morris bound by Stephen Conway. He currently runs a small bindery in Halifax, West Yorkshire, working mainly on private press editions, presentation work, commissions and design binding. In 1998 he won the Designer Bookbinders Silver medal, and in 2000 was elected Fellow of Designer Bookbinders. The book was selected as part of the exhibition as an homage to William Morris. Volume 1 includes a 92-page introduction by May Morris to her father's work as well as a 120-page introduction to his literary work. The second volume includes a contributed essay by George Bernard Shaw as well as writings by May about her father’s commitment to socialism. The binding depicts a stained glass window and is loosely based on a Morris window designed for Bradford Cathedral. An image of Morris is found on one of the panels and the overall design reflects his interest in the medieval.

The legacy of William Morris is made all the stronger by the committed leadership of Lord Tom Sawyer. The US Society congratulates him on his appointment as President of the Society and looks forward to years of collaboration.

Jane Carlin is the Director of the Collins Memorial Library of the University of Puget Sound and the Secretary of the U. S. William Morris Society Governing Committee.

The William Morris Society will sponsor sessions at the 2020 Modern Language Association Convention

Seattle, January 9th-12th. Our guaranteed session will be on “Re-Evaluating the Raphaelites,” and we hope a second session will be approved on “Eco-socialism and the Late Victorians,” to be co-sponsored with the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment. Information on sessions and speakers will be available on our website by June 2019 www.morrissociety.org.
It has recently come to light that one of Morris & Co.’s last commissions during Morris’s lifetime was for the decoration of the Russian royal Winter Palace. According to Nicholas Onegin’s “English Wallpapers in the Apartments of Emperor Nicholas II in the Winter Palace,” (Decorative Arts Society Journal, November 2018), the wall covering of the private apartments of the last Russian Emperor Nicholas II (reigned 1894-1917) and his wife Alexandra was partly bought from English suppliers including Morris & Co. A 12 November 1895 letter to the Russian Embassy at Chesham House declares, “His Imperial Majesty the Emperor decreed to give orders to purchase from Morris and Company in London (Oxford Street) 300 arshin (1 arshin is an obsolete Russian unit of length equal to 71.12 cm. 300 arshin = 213.36 m.) of cretonne for the decoration of His Majesty’s premises. In consequence of this, St. Petersburg Palace Administration asks that you permit the acquisition of cretonne from the specified company as soon as possible in accordance with the sample attached.” The ordered cretonne was received from Morris & Co. on 1 April 1896, together with the invoice amount of £48.3.2 paid soon afterwards. It should be mentioned here that this material was used not only for wall covering but also for upholstery and cushions. Unfortunately, the cretonne by Morris & Co. that decorated the small passage room between the Library and Emperor’s swimming pool was seriously damaged during the 1917 assault by revolutionaries on the Winter Palace, and completely lost in the late 1920s, and at present one of the museum exhibition halls is in its place.

The fact that Morris & Co. contributed to the Winter Palace decoration was first established by Rifat Gafifullin and Maria Khaltunen in a 2004 article, “William Morris and the Winter Palace Interiors,” and research by Nicholas Onegin of the State Hermitage Museum begun in 2016 has verified and augmented data published by these two Russian authors. In anticipation of the release of his findings I interviewed my Hermitage colleague about how he turned to this topic and how he worked on it:

Despite being very busy at my main job at the Department of History of Russian Culture of the State Hermitage Museum and writing scientific articles, I also find time for...
educational activities and lectures. It’s rather often that such meetings lead to discussions with the audience that reveal interesting points that can become an impetus for research. It so happened that in early 2016 I gave a talk to the members of the English Culture Club on the “English taste” in the design of the private rooms that were created for the Imperial family in the Winter Palace in 1894-1895. When it was over I was approached by Natalya Korogodova, the art project manager of the Manders shop (St. Petersburg art historian and art critic N. Korogodova and the Russian decorative firm Manders specialized in providing Russians with English-designed paints, wallpaper, textiles, decorative stucco, fireplace portals and ceramic tiles, as explained in my Useful and Beautiful 2017.2 article, “Morris at Manders in St. Petersburg: ‘Five O’Clock’ with Sculptor Victor Grachev and Others”). While talking we found out that her attention had been caught by the fact that one of the black and white photographs I used to illustrate my lecture showed a pattern similar to the one of the current Morris & Co. wallpapers that could be acquired at her shop.

We were both thrilled and several days later met at Manders. Looking through the Morris & Co. catalogues we found out that the “Garden Tulip” wallpaper designed by Morris in 1885 was truly identical to the pattern used for the wall covering of the small passage room located between the Library and the Nicholas II swimming pool captured in an early 20th century black and white photograph from the Hermitage Archives. To understand whether our assumption was true, I began to study the literature on the subject and archival documents. It turned out that Ri-fat Gaffullin and Maria Khaltunen had made the claim in their 2004 article in Pinakoteka (a Russian magazine devoted to art and culture) that Morris & Co. did supply cretonne for the Winter Palace, so our hypothesis was confirmed, but these authors called the pattern “Medway” while Natalya and I thought it had been “Garden Tulip.” Thus, I was eager to find out what the matter was and also to find answers to the other questions which had arisen during my research… Suddenly I got a chance to clarify the situation.

In autumn 2016 I visited the UK, where I contacted the firm that owned Morris and Co. patterns, Walker Greenbank PLC, who were glad to explore facts from William Morris’s biography previously unknown to them. September 26, 2016 turned out to be unforgettable for me: I took the morning train from London to Loughborough, enjoying English scenery on the way, and was met at the end of my journey by Alison Keane, Export Sales Manager at Walker Greenbank PLC. Together we headed to the wallpaper factory at Anstey, which produced Walker Greenbank brands including Morris & Co. It was there where, with the help of Miles Thacker, Business Development Director at the Anstey Wallpaper Co., I was destined to experience the essence of the wallpaper production in Morris’s time.

First of all, Miles showed me how wallpapers were produced nowadays and the impressive results of the cooperation of man and machine. At this point, the climax of my visit, we visited the place where the original Morris & Co. equipment transferred there in 2003 was held – the ones that were used for creating wall covering for the turn-of-the-century clients who admired Arts & Crafts styles, including the last Russian Emperor, who together with his wife Alexandra Feodorovna, a granddaughter of Queen Victoria, was well acquainted with William Morris’s wallpapers and fabrics. I was very fortunate as history came to life before my eyes: watching Miles demonstrate the main steps of the block printing process, it suddenly occurred to me that it would be great if the original blocks used for creating cretonne for the Winter Palace had been preserved. Prompted by my inquiries, Alison and Miles located eight authentic wooden blocks used for printing the “Garden Tulip” pattern in the 1890s, in particular for the Nicholas II passage room. This would allow us to recreate, if necessary, the very room wall covering using the original blocks. I took a picture with one of them as a memory of that rare and precious moment of my life!

On the same day we turned to the company’s archival data that confirmed that it had indeed been the “Garden Tulip” pattern that was used for the cretonne supplied to the Winter Palace. Among its color range we found the one that matches the description of the passage room in one of the Palace inventories: “large red flowers over yellow little flowers on a pale background.” A trip to the UK thus allowed me to clarify many aspects of the wall covering supplied by Morris & Co. to the Winter Palace, to understand the process of creating such a wall covering, and to clarify the exact title of the pattern. In addition, I was able to learn more about William Morris himself and his legacy. I appreciate sincerely my good fortune that let me work with the genuine Morris sketches, drawn by his own hands, watch block printing as it was in the late 19th century, and even touch the printing blocks...
used for the cretonne for Nicholas II—a never-to-be-forgotten experience.

My further research was conducted in the St. Petersburg archives, and its results were published in the article written for *The Decorative Arts Society Journal*. I should say that before I started to study the question of Morris & Co. participation in the decoration of the Winter Palace, William Morris was known to me only through books on interior design, since interior design history has been my line since my student years. Yet I had never thought of Morris’s connections with Russia and it was hardly possible for me to imagine his flower patterns in the main Russian imperial residence in St. Petersburg, but now it is a proven fact that seems quite natural when one considers the artistic taste of the last Romanovs. Moreover, one can realize now that the links between Morris & Co. and Russia that exist in the present had first appeared during Morris’s lifetime.

According to Mr. Onegin, with whom I can’t agree more, the study of this topic is very important for both countries. On the one hand, significant points of the history of the Winter Palace the personal life and artistic tastes of the last Emperor Nicholas II are clarified, and on the other, we add to the creative biography of such a multifaceted person as William Morris.

In summary, through his research devoted to the Morris-designed wall covering supplied to the apartments of Nicholas II in the Winter Palace, Nicholas Onegin has identified an unexpected cultural tie. Yet his explorations thus far have been devoted mainly to one small room, while the broader topic of the association of English wall covering suppliers, including Morris & Co., with the Russian Empire before the 1917 Revolution is an interesting but still unexplored question, so Nicholas is going to continue his work.

Anna Matyukhina is a senior curator of the New Acquisitions Department at the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia. She has published articles on William Morris and tapestry weaving as well as on Morris-related artworks in Russia.

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Morris Society of the U. S. will hold its annual events at the **Modern Language Association Convention in Seattle, 7-12, 2020**. Our guaranteed session will be on “Re-Evaluating the Pre-Raphaelites,” and we hope a second session will be approved on “Eco-socialism and the Late Victorians,” to be co-sponsored with the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment. Information on sessions and speakers will be available on our website by June 2019.

**Arts and Crafts Tours** will sponsor tours on “Normandy and its Influence on the British Arts and Crafts” (June 15 – June 24, 2019), “Gimson and the Barnsleys (September 7-16, 2019), and “Private Presses and Private Libraries in Ireland and Scotland” (October 12-21, 2019). For more information, see www.artsandcraftstours.com.
WILLIAM MORRIS MEETS LUCY PARSONS

Stephen Keeble

Transatlantic Turbulence

In October 2015, a copy of Signs of Change by William Morris sold at a provincial English auction. Inscribed by the author to Lucy E. Parsons, the book is a token of three weeks in the autumn of 1888 which saw the two most prominent native English-speaking revolutionaries of the time sharing platforms in common cause.

On Friday, 11th November 1887, four of eight anarchists convicted in Chicago of murder and conspiracy—Lucy Parsons’ husband Albert, George Engel, Adolph Fischer, and August Spies, were hanged in Cook County Jail. The day before, the sentences of Samuel Fielden and Michael Schwab were commuted to life in prison and Louis Lingg committed suicide in his cell with dynamite; Oscar Neebe had been sentenced to fifteen years. Their trial followed police intervention at a demonstration in Chicago’s Haymarket Square on 4th May 1886, the throwing of a bomb, and subsequent violence, which resulted in at least eleven deaths—including seven policemen—and many injuries. The demonstration had been called to protest against Chicago police firing on picketing workers the previous day at the McCormick Reaper Works, killing at least two and wounding many others. Although they had advocated the use of force in self-defence and violent revolution, none of the accused was proved to have a direct connection with the Haymarket Square bomb. The trial attracted international attention and was widely perceived as a miscarriage of justice.

Two days after the executions, 10,000 or more protesters against Government policy in Ireland, and unemployment, were attacked in the approaches to London’s Trafalgar Square by police wielding truncheons. Infantry with fixed bayonets and cavalry were also deployed but were not ordered to shoot or draw swords. In the ensuing clashes many protesters and police were injured; three protesters died of their injuries.

Lucy Parsons’ acceptance of an invitation to visit Britain was announced, mid-October 1888, in The Commonweal—co-edited by William Morris and future son-in-law Henry Halliday Sparling. She was to be the main attraction at a series of meetings in London and elsewhere to commemorate the first anniversaries of Chicago’s ‘Haymarket’ hangings and London’s ‘Bloody Sunday’.

The Socialist League had been riven by disagreement and was in a deepening crisis when Lucy Parsons travelled to Britain. Earlier in the year the Bloomsbury Branch—of which Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling were members—was suspended, then dissolved (reconstituting itself as the Bloomsbury Socialist Society) in a dispute over the League’s policy of non-participation in parliamentary and municipal elections. Morris concurred with these decisions. He was to change his mind on the issue, coming to advocate revolution by Parliament, but his position in 1888 was clearly stated in Signs of Change:

I say that our work lies quite outside Parliament, and it is to help to educate the people by every and any means that may be effective; and the knowledge we have to help them to is threefold—to know their own, to know how to take their own, and to know how to use their own.

By this time, however, rather than the preserve of socialist educators, the League was falling prey to militant anarchists and their sympathisers, impatient to usher in the new world by force. In his classic William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary, E. P. Thompson points to the Haymarket Affair as the catalyst of the anarchists’ growing strength:

The decisive factor in turning the League in an Anarchist direction... was... the great and inspiring example of the Chicago Anarchists, whose brutal judicial murder on the eve of Bloody Sunday had both shocked and inspired Socialists of every opinion. For months the shameful proceedings of a brutal and perjured ‘justice’ had dragged themselves out before the horror-struck Leaguers—seeming to their eyes as if they were a grotesque magnification of the petty perjuries and brutalities familiar to them in the British courts. ... The heroic bearing of the Chicago victims inclined many members of the Socialist League...
to listen with respect to the Anarchist case—and even to look with sympathy upon acts of terrorism and political assassination on the continent of Europe.9

Thompson identifies the presence of ‘the heroic widow … of striking beauty, and a moving speaker’ as the climax of Chicagoan influence on the Socialist League. Historian of British anarchism, John Quail, further attributes to Lucy Parsons’ visit the ongoing anarchist advance:

She came and made a strong impression both at her London meetings and on her provincial tour which was also arranged by the League. She was no pathetic, sorrow-struck victim. She came as a propagandist to whom tragedy had given a stronger voice. Her visit, more than any other factor, accelerated the drift towards a ‘definitely Anarchist attitude’ in the Socialist League. But even without her aid this process was well under way in 1888.6

Parsons’ activity fomented friction between radicals and socialists as well as disagreement among socialists themselves, and increased to the breaking point tensions within William Morris’s own band of comrades. It was this state of affairs which delivered, in News from Nowhere: or An Epoch of Rest, the eagerly anticipated revolution and libertarian, egalitarian harmony. Appearing first as instalments in The Commonweal, however, News from Nowhere’s incidents, conversations and reflections were ‘a last-ditch effort against the Anarchists who were seizing control of Morris’s Socialist League’.7

**Campaign Chronology**

**Wednesday, 31 October.** Lucy Parsons sailed from New York aboard the ‘Arizona’.8

**Thursday, 8th November.** She arrived in Liverpool in the morning and took the train to London.9

**Saturday, 10th November.** There was a welcome supper for Lucy Parsons at St. Paul’s Café, by St. Paul’s Cathedral. Liberal Member of Parliament Robert Cunninghame Graham—the UK’s first socialist MP—chaired proceedings and William Morris delivered a welcoming speech. Morris spoke of the connection between the American struggle for the eight-hour day and Chicago’s ‘murdered martyrs’ who, as revolutionists, were ‘selected as victims by the capitalist class, not for what they had done … but for what they had uttered’ (see postscript).

Although he did not call into question her claim to Mexican and Native American heritage, on the strength of her appearance, Morris, like others, concluded that Parsons had a degree of African ancestry—something she and Albert emphatically denied. Describing her to his daughter Jenny, Morris wrote ‘she is a curious looking woman: no signs of European blood in her, Indian with a touch of negro; but speaks pure Yankee. I was much tickled by her indignation at the barbarous & backward means of communication in London’.10

The question of Parsons’ African ethnicity was finally settled by Jacqueline Jones in her 2017 biography Goddess of Anarchy: The Life and Times of Lucy Parsons, American Radical. Originally named Lucia, she was born a slave in Virginia. Lighter-skinned than her mother, it is likely that she was fathered by a white man—possibly her owner, Dr. Thomas J. Taliaferro. In 1865, aged twelve, she was taken to Texas where, before meeting and marrying Albert, she lived with former slave Oliver Benton as his ‘wife’. Lucy Parsons’ singular appearance and relocation to Chicago facilitated her self-reinvention. Jones observes that ‘in effect, she rejected a personal history or ethnic identity in favour of presenting herself as a champion of the labouring classes’.11 There can be no clearer example of this than her address to her welcome in London, when she assumed both a ‘genuine American’ and trans-national persona:

Friends and Fellow Comrades, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am somewhat abashed at your marvellous reception, not in numbers but in genuine heartfelt enthusiasm. As you know, this is the first time that I have ever stood where the great Atlantic washes the eastern hemisphere. … In this hall tonight is grouped perhaps all the nations of the earth, or nearly all. … Men are here, born among the snow-capped mountains of despotic Russia. I am one whose ancestors are indigenous to the soil of America. When Columbus first came in sight of the Western Continent, my father’s ancestors were there to give them a native greeting. When the conquering hosts of Cortez moved upon Mexico, my mother’s ancestors were there to repel the invader; … I represent the genuine American. I don’t say this from any national feeling of boundary lines … I am one whose gospel is that of one of the promoters of the Declaration of Independence—Thomas Paine. His motto was ‘The world is my country, and to do good my religion’.12

**Sunday, 11th November.** On the anniversary of the Chicago executions Lucy Parsons spoke at two large gatherings: in fog-bound Regent’s Park in the morning and, along with Morris and Cunninghame Graham, at Hyde Park in the afternoon. The Hyde Park meeting was attended by George Bernard Shaw.13 The Commonweal related that

Mrs. Parsons particularly called attention to the mistake often made of speaking of the ‘Chicago Riots’. The meeting in the Chicago Haymarket of May 4th, 1886, was as peaceable as the present one. There was no official prohibition, and no disturbance; women and children were present in numbers. … The bomb that killed (the) policemen was thrown by no one knows whom, most likely by an agent of the stock-jobbers who wished to break up the labour movement by terror and panic.14

Ten days before the Haymarket trial, at a conference convened by the Fabian Society, Morris challenged the reformist socialist organisation to consider the case of America:
A country with universal suffrage, no king, no House of Lords, no privilege as you fondly think; only a little standing army, chiefly used for the murder of red-skins; a democracy after your model; and with all that, a society corrupt to the core, and at this moment engaged in suppressing freedom with just the same reckless brutality and blind ignorance as the Czar of all the Russias.

Morris played an active part in the Chicago amnesty campaign from 1886. Art Young, then a Chicago-based cartoonist, recalled that in the last days before the executions William Morris, Walter Crane, Annie Besant and others telegraphed protests, and that George Bernard Shaw was involved in the circulation of a petition signed by 16,000 members of working-class organisations in London asking Illinois Governor Richard J. Oglesby to save the doomed men.

Monday, 12th November. Lucy Parsons spoke in the evening to a ‘packed’ and ‘enthusiastic’ audience at Wornum Hall, Store Street, Tottenham Court Road. Letters of sympathy were read from reformers C. A. V. Conybeare MP, T. P. O’Connor MP (editor of The Star), Professor James Stuart MP, W. T. Stead (editor of the Pall Mall Gazette), H. M. Hyndman of the Social Democratic Federation, and Christian Socialist Anglican priest The Rev. Stewart Headlam. Telegrams were received from socialist groups within the UK and from the Continent. Other speakers included William Morris (chairing the meeting), future MP and cabinet member John Burns, and exiled Russian ‘Anarchist Prince’ Peter Kropotkin, then living in Harrow.

Tuesday, 13th November. Some 5,000 people attended an evening meeting in Clerkenwell Green to commemorate the anniversary of ‘Bloody Sunday’. Contingents from a variety of democratic, socialist, and radical organisations carried flags and banners and there was music from several bands. Speakers included William Morris, Robert Cunninghamhame Graham, Edward Aveling, Eleanor Marx, and future UK MP and co-founder of the Indian National Congress — Dadabhai Naoroji.

Aveling, Annie Besant, John Burns, Cunninghamhame Graham, Eleanor Marx, Morris and George Bernard Shaw had been among the demonstrators on ‘Bloody Sunday’. Cunninghamhame Graham — who sustained head injuries — and John Burns had been arrested and sentenced to six weeks’ imprisonment for unlawful assembly, riot, and assaulting the police.

Wednesday, 14th November. William Morris and Arts & Crafts/Socialist League confederate Walter Crane separately wrote to The Star in response to the newspaper’s condemnation the day before of ‘a small section of London democrats mixing themselves up with the cause of Anarchism’. Notwithstanding its editor’s letter read at Wornum Hall (most likely condemning the injustice of the ‘Haymarket’ executions and expressing support for the cause of free speech), The Star asserted,

Anarchism is tyranny’s best friend. It is the negation of progress; the destruction of rational society; the last miserable resort of intellectual and moral pessimism. Away with it! We will have no part or lot in it; and the sooner our friends the Socialists understand that, the better.

Crane — who later produced the cartoon ‘The Anarchists of Chicago’ — wrote that the unpopularity of the term ‘anarchism’ ought not to prevent a fair enquiry into its character:

Anarchism at present, so far as I understand it, is an ideal. It aims at the absolute freedom of the individual, or of the social group. I suppose The Star aims at least in this direction, though by purely parliamentary means. Anyway, we ought to go to the chief exponents of a cause for a true account of it, and yours certainly does not square with what the leaders of Anarchism — men like Peter Kropotkin for example — tell us about it.

Morris replied in a similar vein:

I have nothing to do with defending Anarchist principles, but it does not become a democratic newspaper to meet those principles with a mere shriek of horror and a hiding of the eyes instead of meeting them with sober argument. Sir, it is a game unworthy of a democrat to hold up a name as a bogey wherewith to frighten people and prevent them from looking at facts. If Radicals are to be
forbidden to protest against acts of injustice and cruelty, for fear they should compromise themselves, the party bonds will grow unendurable to honest and thoughtful men; they will break them, and your careful party organisation will have nothing left to organise but tricksters and fools.21

Lucy Parsons spoke in the evening at William Morris’s London home, Kelmscott House. Morris—a member of the governing committee of the Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society, then holding its first exhibition in the New Gallery, Regent Street—wrote to his daughter Jenny that ‘Mrs. Parsons’ lecture was a great success here, the room crammed. May was in the chair; I was not present as I had to go to a meeting of the Arts & Crafts’.22

Morris’s daughter, May, would have chaired the Kelmscott House gathering in the Coach House, where meetings of the Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League took place.

**Thursday, 15th November.** Morris presented Parsons with a copy of his *Signs of Change: Seven Lectures Delivered on Various Occasions*. Inscribed ‘To Lucy E. Parsons from William Morris Nov 15th 1888’, the book includes ‘Useful Work versus Useless Toil’ and ‘The Aims of Art’—articulating Morris’s understanding of the need for creative craftsmanship, pleasure in work, and beauty in culture.

The depiction of Parsons staying overnight at Kelmscott House, in the short film *Lucy Parsons Meets William Morris: A Hidden History*, is consistent with the presentation of the book the day after her talk at the Coach House.23

**Friday, 16th November.** The Star reported the refusal of an application from the Socialist League to take vans into Victoria Park, to be used as platforms for a meeting on Sunday 18th. It had been decided to enter the park with or without permission; Cunninghame Graham was to put a question about the matter in the House of Commons and a deputation would be sent to the Metropolitan Board of Works.24 The Board finally relented and reversed its decision.25

**Saturday, 17th November.** Morris travelled to Nottingham, where he was to speak the following day.26

Parsons spoke at two venues. The *Commonweal* reported,

A crowded audience assembled in (the) hall of the Prince’s Square International Club…when Mrs. Parsons gave a splendid address on ‘The Labour Movement in America’. She was frequently interrupted by enthusiastic applause, especially when advocating the right of the people to use any means to defend themselves against the armed forces of tyranny. … Mrs. Parsons afterwards visited the Autonomie Club, Windmill Street, W, and delivered another eloquent address to a packed audience.27

The Autonomie Club—the location of the North London Branch Socialist League meetings—was an anarchist club with a mostly German and French membership. In 1894 Martial Bourdin, a French member, blew himself up apparently attempting to bomb the Royal Observatory, Greenwich.

**Sunday, 18th November.** William Morris delivered two lectures at the Secular Hall, Beck Street, Nottingham: ‘Monopoly’ in the morning, and ‘Equality’ in the evening.28

Lucy Parsons spoke in the afternoon at the meeting in Victoria Park.

Amongst the speakers to the Socialist propaganda, were Mrs. Lucy Parsons … who had a large audience, Prince Kropotkin, and Mr. Cunninghame Graham MP. A large number of mounted police and constables were in readiness to quell any disturbance that might have arisen.29

The report of the Aberdeen Weekly Journal told of Lucy Parsons’ praise of dynamite.

Mrs. Parsons … in the course of a loudly applauded speech, stated that science had come to the assistance of the worker, and if the police and military used force against the people, the latter would use bombs in order to protect themselves. She pointed out how little was the cost of bombs and how cumbersome were the arms used by the police and military. The tone of the meeting was very revolutionary, and at each platform the proceedings closed with cheers for the ‘Social Revolution’.30

Lucy Parsons’ notorious 1884 article, ‘To Tramps, the Unemployed, the Disinherited, and Miserable,’ concluded, ‘avail yourselves of those little methods of warfare which Science has placed in the hands of the poor man and you will become a power in this or any land. Learn the use of explosives!’31 Quoted by the prosecution at the Chicago anarchists’ trial, the address appeared in the first issue of *The Alarm*, edited by Albert Parsons, and was reissued as a leaflet. Jacqueline Jones comments,

‘Tramps’ folds late nineteenth-century Victorian literary devices into a gothic horror story of betrayal and revenge. The language is florid. The starving wife and child were stock figures of contemporary sentimental fiction; but here, in contrast to a conventional story of a desperate father redoubling his search for work, he commits premeditated murder by lobbing a bomb or stick of dynamite through the window of a Prairie-district mansion. …

Both Lucy and Albert remained committed to labor unions as the building blocks of a cooperative Commonwealth; but here, in ‘Tramps’, a single, aggrieved victim acts on his own to bring justice to an immoral world. In fact, neither of the Parsons was particularly dogmatic in appealing to the masses, yet both resorted increasingly to explicit threats in their speeches and writings.32
Tuesday, 20th November. Now in East Anglia, Parsons lectured in the Pioneer Hall, Ipswich, ‘meeting with an enthusiastic reception’ and with ‘a little opposition… splendidly disposed of’.33

Morris was engaged to speak outside Walham Green Church for the Socialist League.34

Wednesday, 21st November. Lucy Parsons went to Norwich, speaking in the evening at St. Augustine’s School on ‘The Labour Movements in America’.35 The meeting was chaired by anarchist firebrand and tailor Charles Mowbray who in January 1887 had been sentenced to nine months on the treadmill in Norwich Castle Prison for ‘riot with force, injuring buildings and assault’.36

Mowbray’s wife, Mary — the daughter of a Paris Communist — died of consumption in 1892. Her funeral in London took place while Mowbray was again in custody, awaiting trial for incitement to murder (of which he was acquitted). William Morris stood the £500 bail for him to be able to attend. The cortège included ‘several thousand’ people — ‘Red Virgin’ Louise Michel among them — some twenty anarchist banners, and a brass band. The banner at the head of the procession invoked the spirit of the Haymarket ‘martyrs’ and the last words of August Spies: ‘Remember Chicago: There will be a time when the spirit of the Haymarket martyrs’ and the last words of August Spies: ‘Remember Chicago: There will be a time when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today’.37

Thursday, 22nd November. Lucy Parsons attended an open-air meeting ‘of some four or five thousand persons’ at 7.45 pm in Norwich Market Place, again chaired by Mowbray. ‘After this, The Commonweal reported,

Mrs. Parsons … proceeded to Gordon Hall, which was filled to overflowing with members and friends who had assembled to welcome her. … Mowbray moved … ‘That this the Norwich Branch of the Socialist League heartily welcomes our comrade Mrs. Parsons to this city, and hopes she will convey our deepest sympathy with herself and the wives and children of our comrades Spies, Engel, Fischer, Neebe, Schwab, Fielden, and the mother of Louis Lingg, and pledges itself to work to the utmost for the cause for which our brave comrades laid down their lives and are suffering imprisonment at the hands of a universal band of exploiters.’

(The) Chairman then presented Mrs. Parsons with an illuminated address. Mrs. Parsons acknowledged her reception and made a most pathetic appeal to (the) audience to do all they could to help the cause. The meeting concluded with singing ‘Annie Laurie’, ‘No Master’, and the ‘Marche alla sissilla’.

‘Annie Laurie’ had been sung ‘with beauty and pathos’ by Albert Parsons on the morning of his execution. John P. Boughan, an Associated Press reporter who heard the singing at the jail, was told by guards that it was Parsons in his cell ‘and that to him the familiar old ballad meant no literal Annie Laurie, but signified Anarchy, world-wide Communism’.39 ‘No Master’ was one of Morris’s ‘chants for socialists’, sung to the then well-known tune ‘The Hardy Norseman’. It concludes,

This is the host that bears the word,
‘No MASTER HIGH OR LOW’ -
A lightning flame, a shearing sword,
A storm to overthrow.

Friday, 23rd November. Parsons returned to London.40

Saturday, 24th November. Fabian Society member Annie Besant — a prominent supporter of that summer’s successful London Matchgirls’ Strike — strongly criticised the commemorations associating the Haymarket Affair with ‘Bloody Sunday’. Although she had taken part in the amnesty campaign on behalf of the Chicago anarchists, she had no sympathy for anarchism. In ‘Socialism and Dynamite’, published in The Link, she remarked on a piece in The Echo which reported Lucy Parsons commending the use of bombs in self-defence against the police and armed forces. Annie Besant was forthrightly dismissive both of violent ‘propaganda by the deed’ and its foreign advocate:

For Mrs. Parsons herself every excuse may be made; she comes out of a hot-blooded race, nursed under the tropical sun; she lost a husband, tenderly beloved, under circumstances so horrible that suffering must have well-nigh maddened her; she knows nothing of our English struggle, of the propaganda with tongue and pen which we are carrying on, and carrying on so successfully that Socialism is playing a part in all our political and municipal contests. But for those who heard her without protest, and even applauded her foolish and wicked advice, no condemnation can be too strong.41

Sunday, 25th November. Back in London and ‘after a much-needed rest’ Parsons visited the International Working Men’s Educational Club in Berner Street. The club, where the membership comprised mostly Jewish anarchists, was also the meeting place of the Socialist League’s Hackney Branch.42 Lucy Parsons delivered ‘a vigorous address’ in the course of which ‘she strongly denounced the article written by Mrs. Besant in The Link’.43

William Morris was scheduled to give a Socialist League-sponsored talk on ‘Equality’ at 8 p.m. at the Branch Rooms, Effie Road, Walham Green.44

Monday, 26th November. Parsons travelled to Edinburgh where she ‘spoke to a very successful meeting’.45 According to an interview for The Chicago Tribune she spoke in Edinburgh and Glasgow and stayed in Edinburgh at the house of a Unitarian minister.46
Tuesday, 27th November. Parsons returned to London.47

Thursday, 29th November. There was a meeting in the evening at the South Place Institute, Finsbury, to bid Lucy Parsons farewell.

William Morris reviewed the position of the workers for the world’s advancement, and eloquently set forth their aims and methods. Kropotkin dealt with the decentralisation of social life and the increased scope for development of the individual that Socialism would bring about and insisted on the elevation of character that would result.

The choir then sang ‘Down among the Dead Men’, and David Nicoll, speaking next, alluded in strong terms to the ill-treatment he considered Mrs. Parsons had received, and begged her not to allow the ill-doing of individuals to mingle in her memories of England and the Socialist party here. Sparling summed up the objects of the meeting, and asked Mrs. Parsons to convey the greetings of Old-World Socialists to those of the New.

Mrs. Parsons then replied; she spoke of her position, and deprecated any personal merit or importance; circumstances had made her to some extent the mouthpiece and representative of others. Her position had been a difficult one, and not rendered easier by certain things that had happened; but on the whole she could look back upon her English visit with pleasure, and speak in high terms to her friends of the progress we were making.

After singing the ‘Marseillaise’, and cheering for the Revolution, Mrs. Parsons, Morris, and Kropotkin, the meeting dispersed.48

Friday, 30th November. Lucy Parsons began her journey home.

Mrs. Parsons left St Pancras Station Friday night for Liverpool, whence she sailed on Saturday for New York. The platform was crowded with Socialists of all opinions and nationalities. ‘Annie Laurie’ was sung, and addresses were presented. Mrs. Parsons thanked those present for their enthusiasm and said her visit to England had met with good results.

She was pleased to see that the working classes were combining to put an end to their misery. She was determined never to rest until the wage slaves were free, labour emancipated, and Socialism triumphant. The train left the station amid cheers and the strains of the ‘Marseillaise’.49

Saturday, 1st December. The Commonweal led with a rejoinder to Annie Besant’s ‘Socialism and Dynamite’, signed ‘on behalf and by order of the Council of the Socialist League’ by its Secretary Frank Kitz:

Last year, Mrs. Besant entered heartily into our protest… Few among us at that time hoped that our protest would be of any use except as a protest: since then Bloody Sunday has intervened to show us that we were more nearly concerned with the violent suppression of opinion in America than some would have had us think: otherwise the situation is unchanged, and what was good to protest against then, is still good to protest against.50

Frank Kitz, a ‘rebel by temperament rather than Anarchist by philosophy’ and a dyer by trade, claimed to be the son of an exile of the German revolutions of 1848.51 Before joining the Socialist League he was active in the Social Democratic Club in Rose Street, Soho, which had become a magnet for German political refugees following the passing of the Anti-Socialist Laws of 1878. Kitz spoke fluent German and was in close contact with this group which included apostle of ‘propaganda by the deed’ Johann Most who, in 1879, began publishing the paper Freiheit for illegal distribution in Germany. When, in 1881, Most was imprisoned for incitement to murder, Kitz edited a short-lived English paper—also called Freiheit—which carried Most’s articles in translation.52

After release from prison in 1882 Most migrated to the United States where he resumed publication of Freiheit and began an association with Albert and Lucy Parsons, as well as August Spies. When Spies was arrested in connection with the Haymarket bomb, police found in his desk a letter from Most offering to send him 20 or 25 pounds of ‘medicine’—understood to mean dynamite. After her husband Albert’s death Lucy Parsons and Johann Most were rumoured to be enjoying ‘a close relationship that went well beyond their shared devotion to anarchist ideology’.53

Saturday, 8th December. The Commonweal contained a letter from a Mr. Thomas Smallwood, a member of the Social Democratic Federation. Mr. Smallwood informed the League that the Bermondsey Branch had passed a resolution the previous Sunday evening regretting that ‘most of the prominent members of the Federation seem to have practically boycotted the noble wife of the heroic Anarchist Parsons, who has lately visited this country’.54

Distancing itself from Lucy Parsons’ belligerence, the previous Saturday’s Justice—the Federation’s newspaper—discounted the relevance of Chicago anarchism to domestic circumstances:

Mrs. Parsons is a noble woman and her husband was a hero; but Socialism is really making great way in Great Britain, and can only be hampered by the use of intemperate language. Anarchism will never take root here: we have seen too much of it under the capitalist system.55

Monday, 10th December. Lucy Parsons arrived in New York aboard the ‘Auraula’. Interviewed for The Chicago Tribune in the house of anarchist saloon-keeper Justus Schwab, she spoke of her reception in England and Scotland, commenting that
‘there is more liberty of speech in England than was ever dreamed of in this country’. Asked ‘What do you think of England as compared with this country?’ she replied,

The working people are worse off there than they are here, and God knows their condition is bad enough in both countries. But they are making great strides on the other side—not toward the accumulation of wealth, but in the direction of organizing to fight their enemies and oppressors. The people of England are much further advanced on Anarchistic questions than are those of this country. The truth is making rapid headway there, and I do not think it will be many years before the believers in anarchy over there will be too strong to be overcome.56

The article also asserts that Parsons had confirmed her engagement to Eduard Bernstein, exiled German editor of the London-published Der Sozialdemokrat and later theorist of ‘evolutionary socialism’. When the article was published, an outraged Schwab condemned the report of the relationship with Bernstein and Parsons also denied any such connection, alleging it was ‘gotten up for sensational effect and to kill what little influence my return might have on our movement,’ adding that ‘it would be a strange kind of conglomeration for me to go to London to speak at memorial meetings and return betrothed to another man’.57

**Aftermath**

One month after Parsons’ talk at Morris’s home he wrote ‘there seems to be a curse of quarrelling upon us. The Anarchist element in us seem determined to drive things to extremity and break us up if we do not declare for Anarchy—which I for one will not do’.58

Morris’s aversion to anarchist Leaguers’ eager contemplation of acts of violence may be seen in The Commonweal’s instalment of News from Nowhere on 31st May 1890 which—with overtones both of ‘Haymarket’ and ‘Bloody Sunday’—depicts a massacre of unarmed demonstrators in Trafalgar Square. The horror takes place partly because the soldiers fear ‘the use by apparently unarmed men of an explosive called dynamite, of which many loud boasts were made by the workers … although it turned out to be of little use as a material for war in the way that was expected’.59

In July 1890 Morris wrote to David Nicoll—who had beenmoaned Lucy Parsons’ ‘ill-treatment’ in England and was now editor of The Commonweal—complaining about a piece on the Leeds gas strike riots which lamented the absence of corpses among ‘horse and foot soldiers, police, scabs, mayor and magistrates’, and the failure, through want of ‘the knowledge’, to wipe out ‘the whole cursed lot’.60 Morris threatened to cut off all support (in 1889 he reckoned his annual subsidy to the League and The Commonweal at £500) and implored Nicoll to ‘do your best not to drive me off’.61 Nicoll was later to serve 18 months’ hard labour for incitement to murder.

William Morris and the Hammersmith Branch seceded from the Socialist League in November and re-formed as the Hammersmith Socialist Society. In his last piece for The Commonweal—‘Where Are We Now?’—Morris identified two mistaken approaches to securing socialism: ‘palliation’, and ‘partial and necessarily futile, inconsequent revolt, or riot rather, against the authorities, who are our absolute masters, and can easily put it down’.62

In response, and taking issue with Morris, Charles Mowbray echoed Lucy Parsons’ language in ‘To Tramps’ and elsewhere: ‘I feel confident that a few determined men—and when I say determined, I mean men who are prepared to do or die in the attempt—could paralyse the forces of our masters provided they were acquainted with the power which nineteenth century civilisation has placed within their reach’.63 Mowbray also quoted approvingly from the speech of Albert Parsons following his conviction: ‘Dynamite is man’s best and last friend … Force is the law of nature; and this newly discovered force makes all men equal and therefore free’.64

In April 1901 in Chicago, Peter Kropotkin again shared a platform with Lucy Parsons. Jacqueline Jones remarks that ‘he took pains to distance himself from her fire-eating rhetoric, especially her calls for violence against the capitalists. Like many other anarchists, he believed that she tainted the cause by her reckless writing and speechifying’.65

**Signs of Change**

FBI Stamp on Parsons’ Signs of Change

FBI Stamp on Parsons’ Signs of Change

Signs of Change inscribed by William Morris to Lucy Parsons, 1888
Lucy Parsons remained an unrelenting militant to the end of her long active life as a labour organiser, writer, editor, and orator. When she died in a house fire on 7th March 1942, aged 92, all her remaining books and papers were confiscated by the FBI, according to a policeman on duty at the burnt-out house.\textsuperscript{66} It was widely thought that all these documents, letters, and library of 2,500 to 3,000 volumes ‘devoted to anarchism, socialism and sex’ had been destroyed: an assumption reinforced by the fact that a number of Freedom of Information Act applications to the FBI yielded no results.\textsuperscript{67}

Yet the \textit{Signs of Change} inscribed to her by William Morris sports a ‘Property of Federal Bureau of Investigation US Department of Justice’ ink stamp, a ‘Surplus Library of Congress Duplicate’ ink stamp, and a number of its pages bear traces of smoke damage.\textsuperscript{68} At some point it was released from FBI custody, and the Library of Congress—with first call on other US government library disposals—declined to take it in. Somehow it eventually found its way back to ‘where the great Atlantic washes the eastern hemisphere’.

Tom Wright, a specialist in nineteenth-century American and British oratory, performance and literature, recognises Morris’s gift to Parsons as particularly appropriate:

\begin{quote}
It symbolised their shared anger at social injustice and their common calling as public speakers … The book was a tribute from one orator to another … In Parsons he found someone approaching ideas similar to his own from a divergent cultural and racial perspective, through language whose vehemence shook him. The gift of \textit{Signs of Change} was potentially one way of urging a less ferocious but no less committed route to social progress.\textsuperscript{69}
\end{quote}

On the evening of 15th November 1888—the day on which he presented \textit{Signs of Change} to Lucy Parsons—William Morris attended an Arts & Crafts Exhibition Society lecture on letterpress printing by Socialist League comrade Emery Walker; this provided the impetus for his decision to design his own typefaces and set up the Kelmscott Press.\textsuperscript{70} In a curious instance of double synchronicity, the auction of Parsons’ \textit{Signs of Change} coincided with The Folio Society’s publication of a lavish leather-bound, first-ever facsimile of Morris’s beautiful Kelmscott Press edition of \textit{News from Nowhere}.

\textbf{Postscript:}

\textit{William Morris welcomes Lucy Parsons to London, 10th November 1888, Commonweal, 17th November 1888.}

William Morris was … called upon by the chairman, and proceeded to welcome Mrs. Parsons to London in the name of the comrades here who are striving in the same cause for which Albert Parsons died. It was not for the tortures and penalty which her husband and his comrades had suffered, nor for the horrors which she had gone through, but which they all appreciated, but for the cause of labour emancipation which they and she represented. Socialists had little regard for hero-worship, but they called to mind their dead comrades to honour an idea and not a person.

Perhaps all present might not understand the full history of the Chicago martyrs. He would simply recall that in 1886 a great labour struggle was progressing on the American continent, a movement for a general eight-hour day. Mind now that these murdered martyrs were all revolutionists, marked men. Their ideals were nowise satisfied by this great labour movement, yet they could not stand aside when any great effort of labour was progressing. Knowing themselves to be marked men, knowing the risks they ran beyond all other men, with that generosity which characterised them all, they threw themselves into the fray, and met the fate they only too well predicted for themselves, being selected as victims by the capitalist class, not for what they had done at the time, but for what they had uttered before. They willingly made themselves the victims; ay, more, in the case of Parsons he voluntarily surrendered himself to what he knew was certain death.

How rotten must be that social system that can only live by strangling its critics! The deliberate doing to death of these men, with all the cruel lingering devices of legal torture, is a lasting infamy to the State of Illinois and the United States. Read the final speeches of these men at their trial and you will find nothing but broad simple Socialism. Who shall say they did not die honourably? They died, not in despair, but in hope! We honour them not as individuals, but as symbols of our religious belief. They are called the enemies of ‘society’; but of what ‘society’? Their deaths are as a candle placed against the dark, showing its blackness. They show the society of fear, of cowardice, tyranny, and oppression. What would be the final result to this ‘society’? … an indelible disgrace. You may put to death individuals, but a cause you can never kill. Men die, but principles live!\textsuperscript{71}

Stephen Keeble is Vicar of St. George’s, Headstone, Harrow, a church recently described by the local Anglican bishop as “a studied and cultivated suburban eccentricity.”
Notes


3. Revolution by Parliament — ‘I think we have to create a party. A party with delegates in the House of Commons which would have complete control over those delegates, and would rapidly grow. The party of reaction would make concession after concession until it was forced over the edge, and then they would probably surrender at discretion’ (A Socialist Poet on Bombs and Anarchism’, William Morris, *Justice*, 27th January 1894, 6, re-published in *The Journal of William Morris Studies*, Autumn 1993, 2-5). ‘I say that our work lies quite outside Parliament …’ (‘Whigs, Democrats & Socialists,’ *Signs of Change*, 54).


5. Ibid, 507.

6. Quail, 82.


15. ‘Whigs, Democrats & Socialists,’ *Signs of Change*, 42-43. The lecture was read by Morris at the conference convened by the Fabian Society at South Place Institute, 11th June 1886. It appeared in two parts in *Commonweal*, on 26th June and 3rd July 1886. In *Signs of Change* Morris adds a footnote which refers to ‘Bloody Sunday’, and another which mentions ‘the murder of the Chicago Anarchists’.


33. *Commonweal*, 1st December 1888, vol. 4, 381. The erroneous date ‘Tuesday 19th’ is given.

34. Nicholas Salmon with Derek Baker, 209.


37. *The Times*, 25th April 1892, 7. Charles Mowbray began a series of speaking tours in the United States in 1894. He later moved to New York, opened a saloon, and ‘developed a taste for heavy drinking’. Deported in 1905 after an anarchist assassination attempt on President McKinley, he returned to London. By 1907, according to a former colleague, he had forsaken anarchism. He was said to have organised Australian emigration schemes and lectured on tariff reform: ‘Mowbray, Charles Wilfred, 1857-1910’, Nick Heath, posted on libcom.org, 19th September 2004, 381.


42. Quail, 82.

43. *Commonweal*, 1st December 1888, 381. Lucy Parsons was initially scheduled to speak at the Berner Street club on the evening of 18th November, after the meeting in Victoria Park, but she was unable to do so ‘through fatigue and feeling unwell’. *Commonweal*, 24th November 1888, vol. 4, 372.


46. *Chicago Tribune*, 11th December 1888, 1.

47. *Commonweal*, 1st December 1888, vol. 4, 381.


49. Ibid.
a rebel by temperament . . . ’ (J. Bruce Glasier, William Morris and the Early Days of the Socialist Movement, London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1921, 128). Kitz was born Francis Platt, the illegitimate child of Mary Platt, a domestic servant.

Justice, 1st November 1888, 4.

Chicago Tribune, 11th December 1888, 1.

‘gotten up for sensational effect . . .’ (New York Evening World, 11th December 1888); ‘it would be a strange kind . . .’ (Chicago Tribune, 11th December 1888, 1, 12th December 1888, 1).


‘News from Nowhere,’ Commonweal, 14th June 1890, vol. 6, 186.

H. B. Samuels. Commonweal, 12th July 1890, vol. 6, 222.


Commonweal, 15th November 1890, 361.

Commonweal, 29th November 1890, 381-382. In ‘Our Civilization: Is It Worth Saving?’ The Alarm, 8 August 1885, Lucy Parsons wrote ‘Not to be a slave is to dare and DO’.

The Accused, the Accusers: The famous speeches of the eight Chicago anarchists in court when asked if they had anything to say why sentence should not be passed upon them. On October 7th, 8th and 9th, 1886, Chicago, Illinois: Socialistic Publishing Society, 1886.

Jacqueline Jones, email to Stephen Keeble, 21st September 2017. See Jones, 256-257.

Carolyn Ashbaugh, Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary, Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1976, 266; note 29, 280. Ashbaugh’s sources include conversations with Irving Abrams of the Pioneer Aid and Support Association, to which Lucy Parsons had bequeathed her property for the maintenance of the graves of Albert Parsons and his comrades. ‘Irving Abrams had gone to the house the day after the fire to take possession of Lucy’s extensive library. When he arrived, he found only the most badly damaged books left. The rest were gone. The policeman on duty told Abrams the FBI had taken the library away’.

‘devoted to anarchism, socialism and sex’; Chicago Tribune, 8th March 1942, 10.

Inspection by Stephen Keeble.


Commonweal, 17th November 1888, vol. 4, 364. Albert Parsons had not surrendered himself ‘to what he knew was certain death’; he had been persuaded by defence lawyer William Perkins Black that appearing in court voluntarily would result in his and his comrades’ acquittal: Jones, 142.

As industrialization brought sweeping and dehumanizing changes to 19th-century England, a small group of artists reasserted the value of the handmade. Calling themselves the Pre-Raphaelites, they turned to the unlikely model of medieval European craftsmen as a way of moving forward. Victorian Radicals presents an unprecedented 145 paintings, drawings, books, sculpture, textiles, and decorative arts—many never before exhibited outside of the UK—by the major artists associated with this rebellious brotherhood.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Everett Millais, William Holman Hunt, Edward Burne-Jones, and William Morris dubbed themselves the Pre-Raphaelites in reaction to the Royal Academy of Arts, whose methods to artmaking they regarded to be as formulaic as industrial methods of production. This movement had broad implications and inspired a wide range of industries to rebel against sterility and strive to connect art to everyday life.

The Pre-Raphaelites and members of the later Arts & Crafts movement operated from a moral commitment to honest labor, the handmade object, and the ability of art to heal society dehumanized by industry and mechanization. The works of the men and women presented in the exhibition illustrate a spectrum of avant-garde practices of the Victorian period and demonstrate Britain’s first modern art response to industrialization. These artists’ attention to detail, use of vibrant colors, and engagement with both literary themes and contemporary life, is evident in the paintings, watercolors, and superb examples of decorative art on view. Drawing on the renowned collection of the Birmingham Museum of Art in Birmingham, England, Victorian Radicals is a comprehensive consideration of the search for beauty in the age of industry.

Victorian Radicals: From the Pre-Raphaelites to the Arts and Crafts Movement is organized by the American Federation of Arts and Birmingham Museums Trust.

Image: La Donna della Finestra, 1881, Dante Gabriel Rossetti.
ON COLLECTING WILLIAM MORRIS

Jack Walsdorf

For me, collecting William Morris was an especially pleasant experience, for I started my collection within 20 miles of Morris’ country home, Kelmscott Manor near Lechlade in Oxfordshire. I had known about Morris, mainly his achievements of printing, from a course taken in graduate school at the University of Wisconsin Library School. The course was called “History of Books and Libraries” and it was taught by a most remarkable teacher and human being, Rachel K. Schenk. It was Miss Schenk who first opened the world of fine, privately printed books to me and taught me to know and appreciate the work of Morris, Cobden-Sanderson, Walker and others connected with the revival of printing.

My records show the first Morris book I ever purchased was a fragment of the 1896 Kelmscott edition of The Earthly Paradise. I bought it in 1966, some seventy years after publication, while working in Oxford as an exchange librarian. The book is only a part of volume III, but the price of $12.60 seemed a steep one on my librarian’s take home pay of $50.00 per week.

But I wanted that book, for I recall distinctly that tucked within the pages of the rebound, fragment of volume III of The Earthly Paradise (a book I had no interest in at the time) was another piece of Kelmscott printing, one signature only of A Note by William Morris on his Founding of the Kelmscott Press. I knew nothing, or next to nothing about Morris’ poetry, but I did know I was interested in his printing.

I recall my joy when returning to our small, North Oxford flat, at finding this essay by Morris to be not only a jewel of fine printing, but also an enjoyable essay on his philosophy of printing.

During my year in Oxford, spanning June 1966 to July of 1967, my professional life as a senior lending librarian at the Oxford City Library and the location of the ancient city library, near the corner of the High and St. Aldates Street, left me ample time during the lunch hour to haunt and hunt the various new and used bookshops. The Turl Cash Bookshop (now, I am sorry to say, defunct because of unsafe beams) was the nearest to the library and was my first stop. I was also within easy reach of Blackwell’s Antiquarian shop on Ship Street. All of my early training and background and appreciation of private press books and most of my early knowledge of Kelmscott press books was learned by closely examining books in the Antiquarian department.

I still have in my library a copy of Blackwell’s catalogue #814, “Private Press Books,” on which I first cut my teeth. I took this catalogue to the public library and slowly and meticulously checked each item in the private press section of this catalogue against the printed sale records in the Book Auc-
tion Record. The notes resulted in comments such as these: “This item mentioned in D. McMurtrie’s *The Book* in reference to an early Ashendene Press item.” Or, “Oxford: most truly private press in England,” referring to the Daniel Press. The Doves Press brought forth two quotes: “Perfection in composition, press work” and “Cobden-Sanderson tossed type into Thames.”

This catalogue, dated 1965, listed 8 Kelmscott Press items and my notes on these were rather short, and I am a bit disappointed in finding this old catalogue so devoid of early gems of wisdom regarding Morris. My entire note on the Kelmscott Press read: “Golden type. Paper’s water mark, flower, fish or apple.”

Some of the prices in this catalogue and the changes in prices might be indicative both of world inflation and continued interest in Morris and Press books. For example, in 1965, J. W. MacKail’s *Biblio Innocentium* was priced at £31.10 (or about $87.00, since the pound was then £2.80). A recent Los Angeles price for this book was $900.

Morris’ own *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* was priced then at £55 (or $154.00). A recent Toronto price was $800.

Rossetti’s two Kelmscott volumes, *Ballads and Narrative Poems* and *Sonnets and Lyrical Poems* were priced at £47.10 each, or about $263.00 for the two. Current price = $1,000.

Dealer catalogues were useful to me in learning both about Morris and the values of his works. Also valuable and informative were my visits to the Antiquarian departments of various shops for my own continued education about such things as points, condition and inscribed copies.

But the single book which proved most valuable to me was one I had to type myself for I couldn’t afford to buy it. That book was *Private Presses and Their Books* by Will Ransom, published in 1929. My copy proudly states on the verso of the title page, “Typewritten by the hand of John J. Walsdorf at Oxford, England between November 26 and December 12, 1966.” I did not type the last half of this book, which is a bibliographical listing of the work of various English and American Private Presses, but I did type the first 185 pages, plus a 10-page index. I carefully photocopied the illustrations in this book and tipped them in as well. I might add that I obtained this book through the regional lending library system in England, from the headquarters in Bristol and, since the loan period was for two weeks, I had to spend most evenings at home typing. I shall never forget the look on my wife’s face as I proceeded to spend hour after hour typing 185 pages from Ransom.

By typing these pages, I happened to retain many more names and facts than I normally would by simply reading a book once and taking a few notes. With Ransom under my belt, I was ready to collect. I had bought a few books, (fine books, I might add) but without any real design or purpose. But in Ransom and the typing out of the pages of Ransom, was born the idea of my collection. I noticed from Ransom not only the continued references to Morris in sections relating to presses, often founded long after his death, but I also noticed in the press bibliography numerous presses had printed something relating to Morris, either something Morris authored, or titles relating to Morris and fine printing. And so, ever so slowly, the idea was formed to collect William Morris and Private Press books by collecting private press books by and about Morris. My plan was simple, but progress was slow. And before I really got into collecting Morris, I took the time to learn what I could firsthand about Morris and the environs in which he lived. I made a weekend trip to London where I visited the Hammersmith area of London and saw Morris’ home, called Kelmscott House. I also saw the home of Sir Emery Walker, Morris’ close friend, located nearby. Lastly, I had lunch at the Dove Tavern, reputed to be a 400-year-old coffee house from which T.J. Cobden-Sanderson got the name of his now famous Doves Press.

I also paid a number of visits to Morris’ country home, Kelmscott Manor, located some twenty miles southwest of Oxford near a small village called Lechlade. One visit was preceded by a side tour of Blackwell’s Antiquarian Department. Here, in the usual brash manner of an American tourist, I put my case to the young man in charge of the department on a rainy, cool Saturday morning. I explained my interest in Morris and my inability to buy any of his Kelmscott Press works. I then said that I was about to visit Morris’ country home and before doing so, I wanted to show my wife a Kelmscott Press book so that we both might better appreciate the beauty and grandeur of this man’s work. The shop assistant mumbled, “Jolly good,” and disappeared out the door we had just entered through. We heard him going up some stairs outside the shop and then heard his footsteps overhead. Presently, he returned, bringing with him not one, but three examples of Kelmscott Press books. I am sorry to say I cannot remember any of the titles, but whatever they were, we were both soon justifiably impressed by the fine cream colored paper and the jet black ink and early manuscript-type borders. I was also impressed by the assistant who had just turned over $1,000 or more worth of books for us to examine, saying only, “You can leave them on this table after you are finished looking.” With this, he retired to a back room, where, from the sounds that came forth, he spent his time typing future catalogue entries.

My year in Oxford, which ended in June of 1967, came to a close on two happy notes. During the spring of ’67, I entered a nation-wide essay contest sponsored by the Booksellers’ Association and the Publishers’ Association in conjunction with National Library Week. The contest was judged on the basis of the best list of 50 books which would be widely read and would influence men and women for generations to come. Accompanying the list was a 100 word essay on “What gives a book fresh appeal to successive generations?” This list, on re-reading it, was fairly standard and the essay was not overly
great either, but I was lucky enough to win second prize, which was £20 worth of book tokens. I can still identify some of the books I bought with my prize and two of them happened, by chance, to be published in 1967, and they are, today, considered to be some of the best books about Morris. The first, Paul Thompson’s *The Work of William Morris*, is a three hundred page study of Morris’ work in architecture, furniture and furnishing, tiles and wallpaper, stained glass, book design and writing.

The other book, Phillip Henderson’s *William Morris, His Life, Work and Friends*, is a 380-page biography, well written and illustrated, which is today considered one of the most authoritative biographies since J.W. MacKail’s 2 volume, standard biography, *The Life of William Morris*, was first published in 1899.

My second happy note at the close of my year in Oxford occurred in May, just before I was about to take a short holiday in the Lake District and then depart for the United States. My doorbell rang late one evening and I went to the door to find a nearby neighbor, Mr. H.G. Dixey. It was already getting dark, and Mr. Dixey excused himself for calling so late, but he realized that I was soon off on holiday and he wanted to give me a going away present for he was not sure if he would see me again before I left for America. Mr. Dixey, a man in his late seventies at that time, handed me a book. In the dim light of a fading sunset, I took a quick glance at it, noted it was a book by Morris printed in the now familiar style of other Morris books printed shortly after his death by the Chiswick Press. Even then, in 1967, after collecting Morris in private press editions for less than a year, I could identify Chiswick Press items with a quick glance. I thanked Mr. Dixey, a retired school master and at that time, the operator of England’s longest running private press, the Dixey Press, and returned to my flat. Only after he had left, and I had more time to look at the book in full light, did I realize my mistake. It was not a Chiswick Press book, but a Kelmscott Press book, Morris’ own essay, *Gothic Architecture*.

You can well imagine my embarrassment both for the casual way in which I had accepted a relatively expensive book and also because of my stupidity in not looking at it more carefully when it was given to me. I also began to worry that, through some strange combination of age and lack of knowledge, Mr. Dixey did not realize the true value of this book.

The next day I wrote Mr. Dixey a note, thanking him for the book but adding that I could not consider keeping the book, for I feared he did not realize its true value which in those days was substantial both to me as a poorly paid librarian and to him as a man retired, in his late seventies, probably living on a small pension.

Mr. Dixey wrote back a very kind note which indicated that, although he was not aware the book was priced as high as it was, he was aware of its general value and he felt that it would have more meaning to me than to him. He then added that it was their hope (his and his wife, Joan’s) that the book would stay with me and always remind me of my year in Oxford.

I left England with a trunk full of books, 88 books in all, and the result of my first full year as a book collector. I had paid just over $350.00 for these 88 books, an average of $4.00 per volume. With that $350.00 I had bought two Kelmscott Press items, and books from the following private presses: Golden Cockerel, Daniel, Stanton, Stanbrook Abbey, Gregynog, Golden Hind, Grabhorn, Shakespeare Head, The First Editions Club and the Doves Press.

My wife (and young son, with some prodding from her) looked at me with worry in their eyes. Things that other people seemed to take so for granted and apparently found important, like two cars, riding lawn mowers and boats, did not find their way to our door. Rather, a long line of catalogues, then books and then invoices following close behind became our daily visitors.

A bit has to be said here regarding this vice of book collecting and the long-suffering distaff side of the family which has to put up with it. Books are a bane to the spouse of the one who collects them. Not only do they cost a good deal of money, but they are often old, sometimes falling apart, and always take up lots of room. And to top it all off, although the collector professes “That they are a good buy now,” and “Wait until you see what it might cost next time,” and “I can always sell them for more someday,” that day, we know full well, will never come to the true collector. Books are to be bought, catalogued, read and then shelved. They are not, usually, to be sold. And as to their increasing value, the spouse soon learns that they hear only about the ones bought for $10 and now listed for $25 or $30 in another dealer’s catalogue. They never hear about the ones bought for $65 and found weeks later in another catalogue for $40. And, we pray that the collector has never been near a stockbroker, or he might start trying to average out his losses.

On a more serious note, I would like to pursue for just a bit the function of the private collector and his relationship with the world and scholarship. The friendship and cooperation now present between Universities and private collectors is most important because only in this way can private collections get a proper showing which will benefit large numbers of people. Few private collectors have the financial resources to properly display their books, yet their collections, often built up painstakingly over the years, might have started when “their” subject was unknown and unloved.

The importance of the private collector and the need for cooperation with universities is best illustrated in a letter I received from Carroll Coleman. Mr. Coleman was the owner of the Prairie Press of Iowa City, Iowa, and the person responsible for one of America’s finest continued presses. I find his work very worthwhile both from the standpoint of literary content
a prized item in the Walsdorf collection.

I had written to Coleman about Derleth and to my letter he replied thusly, “I miss August a great deal. We did not see each other often, sometimes not even once a year, and most of our correspondence was brief, just notes about the books, for the most part. I was in awe of the volume of work he got through, in his writing, his publishing, his correspondence, etc. He scheduled himself, worked himself very hard, and while not all of his books were top-notch, he produced a very fine body of work in general.” I should add that Derleth published over 100 books.

Coleman goes on, “I did not mean to make this letter so long, but memories of August crowd in upon me and as I said before, these things may be of interest to you. I should have kept all of his letters, but I’m not a very systematic person, and when I had to clear out my Mother’s house in Muscarine after she died, I simply had no place for many of the things I had stored in her attic – we have a very small house here – and had to throw away so many things I would have loved to have kept: letters, valuable files of magazines, such as the Bookman, the American Mercury, The Inland Printer. There were cards and letters from H.P. Lovecraft (these were from the 1920’s, long before I ever knew August or his own connection with Lovecraft) from H.L. Menchen, Sinclair Lewis, etc. It was heartbreaking to have to do this. I asked the library to take the things, but they work so slowly and I had to clear the house.”

And so, what would now be a very valuable collection of primary research material, letters from the likes of Lovecraft, Lewis, Mencken, and Derleth are lost. Someone, somewhere, moved so slowly that a man, moving from one small town to another, had to throw away letters. “Letters,” as Gerta Goethe said, which “we lay aside never to read them again, and at last we destroy them out of discretion, and so disappears the most beautiful, the most immediate breath of life, irrecoverable for ourselves and for others.” Had but a relationship existed between a librarian and a printer at that point in time, letters would not have been lost.

I would now like to speak of the uses of a private collection. The first use I put my collection to was in the creation of a book which I developed with the help of Barry Moser of the Pennyroyal Press of Easthampton, Massachusetts. The book was called _Men of Printing_, and this is how it came to be. I received a catalogue from an Antiquarian dealer in Easthampton and in this catalogue was listed an etching of William Morris by a young and unknown artist named Barry Moser. The portrait, which was limited to 50 copies, was priced at $48.00. In those days, that being 1974, $48.00 seemed like a steep price to pay for a single etching, so I overcame the temptation and passed it by. A few weeks later, when talking on the phone to a friend, Rick Harwell, then Head of Special Collections at the University of Georgia in Athens, he happened to remark, “Have you seen the latest catalogue with the Morris etching?” I remarked that I had seen it but the price was too steep for me. On hearing this, Rick made just one comment, “You’ll be sorry. Moser was a student of Baskin and he will be the best known American wood engraver in a few years and you won’t afford to touch him then.” I slept on this for one night, and then my good senses returned and I bought the etching. When it arrived, I was amazed at the excellence of this man’s work, and immediately sat down and wrote Barry a letter telling him how much I enjoyed the Morris etching and asking if he intended to do etchings of any other printers.

He replied, saying in effect, no, because he didn’t know who to do and did not have the picture file on which to base further etchings of printers. And so the book, _Men of Printing_, was borne, because I wrote back and said that I did have the pictures and could give him a list of men he should do. All of this took place in February of 1975, and one of the copies of _Men of Printing_ in my collection is inscribed, “The first bound copy for Jack Walsdorf for your endurance and patience. Barry. 3-June-76.” Books, unlike babies, unless they be baby elephants, are not born quickly. This little book, a mere 85 pages, took exactly 16 months to see light of day.

I am also happy to report that Rick Harwell was correct about the worth of Barry Moser’s work for our little book, published at $40.00 has, now that it is out of print, risen in value to the $400-$600 range. Of course, I am fully aware that this book has grown so valuable not because of the eight wood engraving by Barry Moser, but because I am listed as the Editor. That’s why the Antiquarian dealers who now list this in their catalogues always alphabetize it under the “M”’s for Moser!

My next book, _Printers on Morris_, took even longer to see the light of day, some five years, and frankly, was almost still born. _Printers on Morris_ is a miniature book, measuring the “proper” miniature size, that is, less than 3 inches in height. The book is made up of quotations from 24 American and English printers. The colophon states that there were “300 copies on Strathmore Text and 26 special copies” bound in full leather and signed by the editor, artist and printer.

But I doubt that more than 200 copies were ever bound, although the printer did print all 300 copies. Something called a divorce in the life of the printer caused two moves, legal battles as to who owned what, and a binder left with folded and
gathered sheets without payment to proceed with the binding. All I can say is that if you own a copy of this miniature book, with a truly wonderful postage stamp-size frontispiece by Barry Moser, keep it. No one knows how few copies there may be, but as the editor, I can guarantee you it is less than the 300 stated on the colophon page.

There is one other bit of trivia which makes Printers on Morris a bibliographically interesting work, for despite its miniature size, the work had two separate frontispieces cut. I first asked Barry Moser to do the cut, giving him clear instructions and a mock-up of the title pages and frontispiece showing Morris on the left, facing right, towards the title page. When the first wood engraving arrived, and the printer printed it, Morris faced left, away from the title page. Thus, two separate wood engravings had to be made for this ever so slight a book, the first, incorrect cut facing left, and the corrected version facing right.

Another book, William Morris in Private Press and Limited Editions: A Descriptive Bibliography of Books by and about William Morris, 1891-1981, was more than fifteen years in the making, and thus the justification for the overly long title.

Actually, I almost didn’t write this book at all, as my first attempt at finding a publisher met with less than lukewarm results. To my enquiry as to the possibility of the work being published by the William Morris Society, I received a note saying, “This is a pretty bit of work and would be enjoyed by a limited number of collectors... I don’t think it likely that the bibliography could be published as a commercial undertaking and at the present time the William Morris Society... has no funds to spare...” This letter, written on January 9, 1980, left me disappointed, but still undaunted and determined. With the help of two acquisitions editors at the Oryx Press in Phoenix, Arizona, I created a new and expanded Book Prospectus Proposal, which was submitted to the President of the Oryx Press.

Finally, on April 22, 1981, almost fifteen years after buying my first Kelmscott Press book, I had in hand a signed contract. I agreed that “The author will deliver to the publisher before February 1, 1982, manuscript copy for the work which shall consist of two typewritten copies of text and front matter in form and content satisfactory to the publisher.”

Little did I realize how hard it would be to keep to that deadline. Bibliographies are simple things to do, especially if you have in your own private collection 95% of the 208 items described. Still, delays do come. I am by nature, a procrastinator.

In any case, I delivered the manuscript as called for by my Author’s Agreement, only slightly late – in October, 1982, only 8 months late. Still, I’m glad I was late, because I will always remember that October, not simply for having finished the book, but because as I toiled away on the book in the summer of 1982, I also faithfully followed the glories of my new baseball team, the Milwaukee Brewers as they proceeded to almost win the World Series.

Delivering the book to my publisher was a rather anticlimactic thrill. Sort of like waiting for the other shoe to fall, because the completed manuscript is not really the end, but just the beginning. I might add that finally finishing the book and typing “Then End,” does truly seem like the end at last. To live with a book for years, to put it together slowly, to see seasons change, children grow into teenagers, all during the time of toil on a book, does really make one sigh with a sense of relief. And then, “Bam!” the publisher hits you with gallery proofs to read, then page proofs to read, and finally page proofs to re-read. All told, after writing the book, I had to read it three separate times. I don’t know if my example was an exception but if it was not, then fewer books should be published. You would think any author who has read his own book three times would see how bad it was before the critics told him so, and would kill the book before giving the critics the chance. My Morris bibliography took about fifteen years for conception, a year and a half for writing, less than a year for publishing (I turned the manuscript in October, 1982, and the first copies were sold in April, 1983).

One of the truly good things about publishing is the royalties - all those million dollar deals one reads about for the Stephen King of the publishing world will soon be mine, thinks the author. In my own case, I invested $29,000 out of pocket over fifteen years to collect the nearly 1,000 books I used in writing my Morris Bibliography. I then waited two and a half years while I used my “free time” to write, edit and proof read the manuscript, and finally, after paying for photocopying and typing charges, I have pocketed just over $8,000.
This is truly a very, very, gentlemanly way of growing rich very, very slowly.

But, I would not like to discourage any of you from writing books. The money is not great, but you do get fame. I saw this for myself on visiting a chain bookstore in Philadelphia a few years ago when I was in that city for the A.L.A. convention. I noticed two young women, in their thirties, looking about for a book. I overheard one say to the other, “They must have my book, it’s in all the bookstores.” I then heard her ask the shop assistant for “her book” by title and author, to which he replied, “Oh that one. We had 10 copies in for about two months. It was a dog, didn’t move, so we sent them all back to the publisher.” So much for fame, and longevity in the life of a published author.

In closing, I would like to read a brief quote from a just published, unfinished novel by William Morris. More than any other reason, this is why I continue to collect and write about William Morris.

So the young folk were left alone, and eyed each other rather shyly at first, ’til John said:

“Father’s given Arthur such a good new Arabian Nights - not like the old one, you know – a new translation. Would you like to have a volume?

“Oh I should,” she said. “I do so love tales – but here’s an idea, John, bring a volume the day we get to Ruddywell, and let someone read aloud. I don’t like swallowing my stories so greedily as you boys do. When I get something I like, I like time and place to go with it.”

“Well I know,” he said. “I sometimes wonder if I shall have read all the good books before I die. How dull it will be. But I’m not such a bookworm as Arthur. I remember when we were all little, reading in this very room one snowy day, about Christmastime; and he and I read our bookswallowing about on the floor, while you read solemnly in the inlaid chair at the table, with your sugarplums handy; but I got tired first, and then you, and then we both bullied Arthur for reading in the twilight, by the firelight – don’t you remember?”

“Yes,” she said, “so well, that I think I can see myself looking up and watching the great snowflakes growing less and less visible as the light faded.” “Surely,” she said after a pause, “we three have been the happiest children that ever lived.”

In reading and owning Morris’s many masterpieces and in writing about Morris, I too can say that, “I have been the happiest child that ever lived.”

Jack Walsdorf (1941-2017) was a librarian, bibliographer, and beloved former president of the William Morris Society in the United States. A fuller account of his life is available in Useful and Beautiful 2017.2. Liberty’s Tribute at Morris’s Death.

As is well known, several of the members of the Morris-led Socialist League and its smaller successor, the Hammersmith Socialist Society (1890-96), were anarchists. Among these was master tailor and bookseller James Tochatti (see the essay in Useful and Beautiful 2017.2), the co-founder and editor of the thoughtful anarchist paper Liberty: A Journal of Anarchist Communism (1894-96). The journal’s masthead, portraying a powerful female allegorical figure wearing a revolutionary cap, tending a revolutionary flame and holding aloft the unfurled banner of “Liberty,” was designed by illustrator William John Monkhouse (“Cosmo”) Rowe (1877-1952). Like Tochatti, Rowe was also an active member of the Hammersmith Socialist Society, serving as an outdoor speaker and literature secretary, and he later joined and was an active member of the Independent Labour Party. Unlike Tochatti, Rowe saw value in socialists contesting elections and himself stood as a candidate in the Hammersmith Vestry election of December 1894 as part of the Hammersmith Socialist Society/ILP ‘slate’.
Rowe painted and drew images of Morris as well as other leftist heroes Keir Hardie, Tolstoy, and August Bebel.

Morris had campaigned for the pardon of the anarchist Haymarket martyrs (see Stephen Keeble’s essay on Lucy Parsons in this issue), and after leaving the editorship of Commonweal in 1890 he contributed two essays to Liberty, “Why I Am a Communist,” (February 1894) and “As to Bribery Excellence” (May 1895). After Morris’s death James Tochatti published his “Reminiscences” of Morris in the December 1896 issue, and the November 1896 issue contained three elegies on his death, by a “Griffith Dell,” “John Fulford,” and Walter Crane.

“John Fulford” was a pseudonym for the still unidentified woman author of the 1893 A Look Round and Other Poems and an 1899 “new woman” novel, Some Unoffending Prisoners. The identification of “Griffith Dell” is also uncertain, though Dell would likely have known Morris since s/he lectured on “The Philosophy of the Future” to the Hammersmith Socialist Society on 13 September 1896. Dell contributed an article, “Why I Am a Member of the ILP” to Liberty in December 1895, inserted a shorter essay on “Commonplace Acceptances” in the November 1896 issue in which the elegy on Morris also appeared, and in the same year published a volume of poems, Songs for the Songs of God, published by the Manchester based Labour Press Society, itself linked to the ILP.

Something of Dell’s views, resonating with many who joined the ILP in these years, is indicated in the Liberty article: “The most important part of our work, as true revolutionists—[is] to educate, to enlighten, to lift-up, rather than to demonstrate scientifically. … Let us have socialists everywhere, in Parliament as well as out of it” (186). “Fulford” and Dell probably knew one another, for Dell’s volume in the Conway Hall Library is inscribed “To John Fulford.”

Though somewhat indebted to other traditional elegies such as Shelley’s “Adonais” and Swinburne’s “A Ballad of Francois Villon,” both in its stanza form and content Dell’s lyric pays tribute to the “Apology” of Morris’s Earthly Paradise.

October 3 1896

Dry leaves whirl down the wind that brings the rain
To fall upon the face of summer dead,
And sorrow-laden Autumn comes again
‘Mid showers of pallid petals blossom-shed;
And only memories remembered
Are left to us, for thou art passed away
From all the strivings of Life’s empty day.

The craftsman’s Land, the poet’s golden song,
The prophet’s voice, the tireless hope and faith,
The great heart aching with the people’s wrong,
The dauntless spirit, all are passed to death;
The night is long and dawning lingereth,
Yet who shall hearten us upon the way,
Oh dead sweet singer of this empty day?

Dead? Nay, thou livest while to man is left
The love of loveliness; while weary earth
Of its one golden hope is not bereft;
And till strife bear sweet fruit of joy and mirth,
Till, the world know that wondrous second birth,
Thy light shall guide us if we go astray
Among the shadows of this empty day.

Oh strong-souled builder of the common weal,
The generations of the after years
Freed of the wrong thou hast essayed to heal,
Even as we, shall speak thy name with tears,
Shall linger o’er thy loves and hopes and fears,
And shrine thy memory in their hearts always,
While birth and death make up man’s empty day.

Griffith Dell

Walter Crane (1877-1915) is better known as an artist and illustrator, but he had also published three volumes of poetry accompanied by his own illustrations: Sirens Three (1886),
Queen Summer (1891), and Renascence (1891). He felt deeply about the arrests and killing of the Haymarket anarchists, publishing a sonnet “On the Suppression of Free Speech at Chicago” in the 17 July 1886 Commonweal. He created designs and cartoons on behalf of several wings of the socialist and anarchist movements, including the Socialist League and later, the Labour Party, several of which were gathered in his Cartoons for the Cause (1896, expanded 1907). Crane would most likely have known Tochatti personally, since he lived near the latter’s bookshop, and his commemorative sonnet for Liberty captures several of the intertwined themes of Morris’s life and work.

William Morris

How can it be? That strong and fruitful life
Hath ceased—that strenuous but joyful heart--
That craftsman in the loom of song and art--
That voice by beating seas of hope and strife;
To lift the soul of Labour from the knife
Who strove ’gainst greed of factory and mart
Ah! ere the morning, must he, too, depart,
While yet with battle cries the air is rife?

Blazon his name in England’s book of gold,
Who loved her, and who wrought her legends fair
Woven in song and written in design,
The wonders of the press and loom, a shrine,
Beyond death’s chilling hand, that shall enfold
In Live’s House Beautiful a spirit rare.

Walter Crane

Note: For Walter Crane’s political drawings, see Morna O’Neill, “Cartoons for the Cause: Walter Crane’s The Anarchists of Chicago,” Art History 38.1 (2015), 106.

Stephen Williams worked as an education officer for the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) and UNISON in the UK between 1979 and 2011. He co-authored the two volumes of official NUPE history and since retirement has written on Morris’s socialism and the Socialist League. Florence Boos is the editor of Useful & Beautiful.

WHAT MORRIS LEARNED AT MARLBOROUGH

Michael Robertson

I went to school at Marlborough College, which was then a new and very rough school. As far as my school instruction went, I think I may fairly say I learned next to nothing there, for indeed next to nothing was taught; but the place is in a very beautiful country, thickly scattered over with prehistoric monuments, and I set myself eagerly to studying these and everything else that had any history in it, and so perhaps learned a good deal.¹

William Morris, writing to Andreas Scheu about his school days, established a piquant paradox that has proven irresistible to biographers: the rebellious young Morris, indifferent to the stuffy and incompetent Victorian pedagogues of his public school, escaped into nature and the material culture of the prehistoric and medieval past, emerging a self-taught prodigy. Now William Whitla, in a lengthy, densely researched, and compelling essay published in the Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies has called into question this long-accepted narrative.² Using Marlborough school records and dozens of other sources, Whitla argues that Morris received a “far more sophisticated preparation in the classics of Greece and Rome than has previously been recognized,” and he offers a richly detailed history of Marlborough School between 1848 and 1851, when Morris was a student.³

Marlborough College was founded in 1843 by a group of clergymen and public-spirited citizens who desired to educate the sons of clergymen at a moderate cost. The school’s charter stipulated that no more than one-third of the students could be sons of laymen, and it lured clergymen’s offspring with a remarkably low fee of only thirty guineas a year for tuition, room, and board; sons of laymen paid fifty guineas. The founders located a handsome eighteenth-century structure in the Wiltshire town of Marlborough: a former home of the Dukes of Somerset that had been turned into an inn. Marlborough, located midway between London and Bath, was an important coaching stop until the 1840s, when the railway reached Bath. Coaches stopped appearing at the Castle Inn, and the school founders were able to acquire it at a good price.

The setting was — and is — extravagantly picturesque. The Castle Inn, which became the school’s principal hall, is nestled against the Mound, a Neolithic barrow constructed at the same period as nearby Silbury Hill and Stonehenge. The building is located on the site of a ruined Norman castle, parts
of its moat still evident on the school grounds. Just east of the school is St. Peter’s, the fifteenth-century church where Cardinal Wolsey was ordained in 1498. Beyond that is the wide, handsome Marlborough high street, anchored at its far end by another fifteenth-century church. The River Kennet, the vast Savenake Forest, and the rolling Wiltshire downs are all nearby.

The school opened its doors to two hundred students. Less than five years later, the number had grown to five hundred, and the main building was flanked by hastily constructed dormitories and a new chapel. When Morris arrived in February 1848, he was entering a school that was “rough” in more ways than one. The new construction had burned through the school’s capital reserves, and it was dependent on the scanty tuition paid by the boys’ clergymen-fathers. The masters—almost all of them clergymen—were ill-paid, and the school’s managers saved money by scrimping on food; hunger is a common theme in graduates’ memoirs.

Why did Morris’s father, who could have afforded any of the more established public schools, send him to Marlborough? Whitla does not address the question, but evidence suggests that the devout William Morris, Senior may have been attracted by the school’s emphasis on Christian education. An early recruiting brochure states that the school was founded “for the education of sons of clergymen and others in the doctrines and duties of Christianity, as the same are received, understood, and taught by the United Church of England and Ireland, and also in the various branches of literature and of science.” Marlborough’s curriculum was not significantly different from that of long-established schools such as Eton and Harrow—all public schools of the period included religious instruction along with classical studies—but Marlborough foregrounded its Christian character.

English public schools of the 1840s had not yet undergone the reforms that, later in the century, would significantly alter their curricula, pedagogy, and extra-curricular activities. “Modern” courses in English literature, history, and the natural sciences were still in the future, as were organized sports. At Marlborough, as elsewhere, the boys were examined in only three areas: the primary curriculum of divinity and classical studies, mathematics, and French. Whitla’s invaluable contribution, based on detailed exploration of the Marlborough archives, is to show the thorough grounding in the Bible and the Greek and Roman classics that Morris received. Whitla’s wide research reveals that Morris’s complaint of learning “next to nothing” at school was a Victorian trope: “I learnt—well—absolutely nothing.” Tennyson said of his four years at King Edward VI Grammar School, while Robert Browning said of his
time at school, “They taught [me] … nothing there.” Whitla summarizes the formidable questions in Morris’s fifth-form examinations, which required the students to translate the Greek New Testament and Greek and Latin verse into English, as well as to turn passages of English verse into Latin elegiacs and Greek iambics. Morris’s examination results throughout his four years at Marlborough place him in the middle of his form in the divinity and classics exams as well as in mathematics; he ranked near the top in French. Whitla’s research proves that Morris’s education at Marlborough was not confined, as he claimed in his letter to Scheu, to what he picked up in his rambles through the Wiltshire countryside.

Whitla devotes half his article to the Marlborough curriculum and the books available in its library; the other half explores the school’s culture and the rebellion of 1851. This schoolboy rebellion has been a part of Marlborough lore since its occurrence. What is known for certain is that in autumn of that year, Morris’s eighth and last term, the school was struggling under the direction of its founding headmaster, the Reverend Matthew Wilkinson. Relations between the boys and their masters were not, on the whole, good. Many, though not all, of the masters relied on flogging with a cane to maintain classroom order, and they paid scant attention to the boys outside of class time. In the days leading up to Guy Fawkes Day—a holiday celebrated then, as now, with mischief, pranks, and explosive devices—some boys pelted the house of the school’s unpopular gatekeeper with stones. On the day itself, November 5, boys let off fireworks in the courtyard—an incident that the masters might have overlooked. But then someone set off firecrackers in the schoolroom itself. Reprisals followed: canings and expulsions, including the expulsion of a popular boy who had not purchased or set off fireworks but had collected the money. Some of the boys undertook reprisals of their own: windows were broken, one or two fires were set, and, most spectacularly, someone contrived to open the masters’ locked desks when they were out of the schoolroom, and those present burned the contents of the desks and broke up the desks themselves. By this time the end of the term was near, and the rebellion ended with the administration of examinations followed by the long winter vacation. Wilkinson tendered his resignation early in the new year. He was replaced by a master from Rugby, which, under Thomas Arnold, had a reputation as the most progressive and well-run of the public schools.

Years later, Morris regaled his daughters with “racy” accounts of the Marlborough rebellion, but the raciest account is that written by A. G. Bradley for the school’s semicentennial celebration in 1893. Bradley was an interested party. An old Marlburian himself, he had attended the school from 1862 to 1867 under the headmastership of his father, the school’s third
head, a highly regarded figure who had also come from Rugby. Bradley’s history colorfully contrasted the school’s rough early days with its present glories. An author of popular histories, he cast the school’s story in highly dramatic terms: “More than once in her early days the School was upon the verge of bankruptcy... A rebellion among the boys, which for magnitude and obstinacy has no parallel, we fancy, in the story of any other school, at one period, though happily a remote one, threatened her very existence. But from these and other difficulties... she emerged triumphant.” In his account of the rebellion itself, Bradley raised the drama to a high pitch: “The whole College... reeked of gunpowder. Authority was paralyzed [and] anarchy reigned everywhere throughout the week.”

Whitla accepts Bradley’s 1893 account in full, though there is reason to doubt it. H. C. Brentnall, who wrote his own history of the school’s early years for the 1943 centennial, begins his work by discrediting Bradley’s frequent and colorful inventions. To give one example: Bradley wrote of the school’s first day, “Brilliant and auspicious sunshine heralded the birth of the School on August 20, 1843.” Brentnall drily comments that the actual date was August 23, and it was raining.

Similarly, accounts by some of Morris’s contemporaries offer a less dramatic account of the rebellion. The Marlborough College archives contain two sources that call Bradley’s narrative into question, one of them directly. Morris’s classmate William Gildea was so outraged by Bradley’s work that he privately published his own memoir of his schooldays, challenging every part of Bradley’s history and labeling his recounting of the great rebellion a “marvelous fiction... With the exception of the fireworks, there was no organized rebellion.” In a tone of righteous indignation, he quotes Bradley’s assertion, which Whitla cites, that “for four days the boys did practically no work, smashed windows freely, and pelted and hissed every master who attempted to keep order,” calling this “altogether false” and “grotesquely absurd.” He concludes his account of the rebellion: “there was no open defiance of authority, or anything approaching a combined rebellion on the part of the School, though a few boys, probably not more than a score, did certain regrettable acts... under cover of darkness or when no authority was present.”

Gildea’s account, written by an outraged old Marlburian more than fifty years after the event, should not be taken as authoritative. J. A. Mangan, whose article on the early history of Marlborough College is as lengthy and richly researched as Whitla’s, dismisses Gildea as completely unreliable. However, Gildea’s more measured assessment of the rebellion is supported by the contemporary diary of another Morris classmate, Boscawen Somerset. Here is every entry from November 1851 containing any reference to the rebellion:

Nov. 5: Fireworks let off in schoolroom after tea and out of doors from 5½ - 6½. Also, some in evening prep, and after evening prep, and all night till 6 a.m.

Nov. 6: Twyford sent away for buying fireworks and Benson and Turner. Fireworks let off from 5½ - 6½. Lots of windows broken after chapel and some at 3. Played football 12-1.


Nov. 20: Got 400 lines pro 4 days to grounds, for coming late to tea on Monday as Clayton could not find out who kicked door.

Nov. 30: Great row. Biden’s desk broken, Fowler’s, Clayton’s, Wade’s and Wilkinson’s broken open, and Fowler’s and Wilkinson’s chairs destroyed. Dr. W. addressed us after tea and had us in after chapel.

That’s it. In between and following these entries, he writes about playing football, receiving “grub parcels,” doing translations, climbing trees to steal birds’ eggs, going skating in a cold snap, traveling home for the winter vacation, and then dutifully returning to school for the next term. Somerset’s diary suggests that for many of the schoolboys, what Bradley called the “great rebellion” registered as a series of rebellious episodes and one “great row.” It seems likely that Morris, who never referred to the rebellion in any of his written accounts of his schooldays, may have had the same response.

Unlike Somerset, his exact contemporary, Morris left Marlborough College at the end of the autumn 1851 term, but no evidence exists that his departure was precipitated solely, or even principally, by the rebellion. An equally likely cause is that both he and his mother realized that he was unlikely to pass the entrance examinations for Oxford without private tutoring. After four years at Marlborough, Morris was, at age seventeen, still in the fifth form. Some of his peers—including William Gildea, who entered the school at the same time as Morris and like him began in the fourth form—had been promoted to sixth form by that time.
Whitla’s account of Morris and Marlborough may overstate the nature and impact of the 1851 rebellion, but it performs a great service in countering Morris’s own mythicizing of his time there—not least by noting his later amicable relations with the school. When the headmaster inquired about commissioning a window for the school’s chapel from Morris & Co. in 1875, Morris wrote back that “it will give me a great deal of pleasure to have anything to do with the decoration of the Chapel.” The year before, Morris had counseled Edward Burne-Jones to send his son Philip to Marlborough, and he happily joined Burne-Jones on several excursions there while Philip was a student. Near the end of his life, Morris presented his alma mater with two signed Kelmscott Press books: one composed in the Press’s Golden type and one in its Gothic, the better to display his artistic range.

Any assessment of Morris’s years at Marlborough requires sensitivity to his own contradictory attitude: he “learned next to nothing there”; he learned, perhaps, “a good deal.”

Michael Robertson is Professor of English at The College of New Jersey. His latest book, The Last Utopians: Four Late Nineteenth-Century Visionaries and Their Legacy, was published by Princeton University Press in 2018.

Notes
Special thanks to Marlborough College archivist Gráinne Lenehan and Oliver House at the Bodleian Library for their invaluable assistance.
3. Ibid., 51.
10. Ibid., 33, 42-43.
12. Extracts from Boscawen Somerset’s diary, typed ms., Marlborough College Archives.
14. Whitla notes that Morris donated a signed copy of the Kelmscott Press Sidonia the Sorceress; the Marlborough College library also holds a signed copy of The History of Godfrey of Bologne.

A CORNUCOPIA OF NEW BOOKS:


This is the entertaining story of four utopian writers—Edward Bellamy, William Morris, Edward Carpenter, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman—and their continuing influence today. In this lively literary history of a time before “Orwellian” entered the cultural lexicon, Michael Robertson reintroduces us to a vital strain of utopianism that seized the imaginations of late nineteenth-century American and British writers.

The Last Utopians delves into the biographies of four key figures—Edward Bellamy, William Morris, Edward Carpenter, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman—who lived during an extraordinary period of literary and social experimentation. The publication of Bellamy’s Looking Backward in 1888 opened the floodgates of an unprecedented wave of utopian writing. Morris, the Arts and Crafts pioneer, was a committed socialist
whose *News from Nowhere* envisions a workers’ Arcadia. Carpenter boldly argued that homosexuals constitute a utopian vanguard. Gilman, a women’s rights activist and the author of “The Yellow Wallpaper,” wrote numerous utopian fictions, including *Herland*, a visionary tale of an all-female society.

These writers, Robertson shows, shared a belief in radical equality, imagining an end to class and gender hierarchies and envisioning new forms of familial and romantic relationships. They held liberal religious beliefs about a universal spirit uniting humanity. They believed in social transformation through nonviolent means and were committed to living a simple life rooted in a restored natural world. And their legacy remains with us today, as Robertson describes in entertaining firsthand accounts of contemporary utopianism, ranging from Occupy Wall Street to a Radical Faerie retreat.


Sasso’s book is among the first to investigate the latent and manifest traces of the East in Pre-Raphaelite literature and culture. Weaving together literary, linguistic and cognitive analyses of Pre-Raphaelite paintings, illustrations and writings, socio-cultural investigations of the pan-Asian, and rhe-

torical considerations about Arabian forms of writing, Sasslo redefines the terms of critical debate surrounding the East. It takes as a starting point Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) in order to investigate the latent and manifest traces of the East in Pre-Raphaelite literature and culture, including conservative associations with its mystic aura, criminal underworld, and feminine sensuality, or to put it into Arabic terms, of its aja’ib (marvels), mutalibun (treasure-hunters) and hur al-ayn (femmes fatales).


One of the most interesting writings from the period of his socialist activity, Morris’s *Socialist Diary* of 1887 is one of only two extended diaries of his activities which he kept during his life. It represents an effort to record and analyze experiences of a new phase of his work and thought, as Morris assesses national and international events, the different audiences he encountered in England and Scotland, the effects of constant police harassment on socialists, and the internal divisions within the nascent socialist movement.

This book examines how the sagas and other literature of Iceland shaped the poems of William Morris. It argues that his work was hugely influenced by the medieval sagas and poetry of Iceland; in particular, they inspired his long poems “The Lovers of Gudrun” and Sigurd the Volsung. Between 1868 and 1876, Morris not only translated several major sagas into English for the first time with his collaborator the Icelander Eiríkur Magnússon (1833-1913) but he also travelled on horseback twice across the Icelandic interior, journeys which led him through the best known of the saga sites. By looking closely at his translations of the sagas and the texts on which he based them, the journals of his travels in Iceland, and his saga-inspired long poems and lyric poetry, this book shows how Morris conceived a unique ideal of heroism through engaging with Icelandic literature. It shows the sagas and poetry of Iceland as crucial in shaping his view of the best life a man could live and spurring him on in the subsequent passions on which much of his legacy rests.


This beautifully illustrated booklet was created to accompany an exhibition of Morris’s artworks held at the Cleveland Museum of Art between October 2017 and January 2019, whose contents may still be viewed at https://www.cleveland-art.org/exhibitions/william-morris-designing-earthly-paradise

The Cleveland Museum of Art’s collection includes woven and block-printed textiles spanning each stage of Morris’s career, joined by a loan from the Cranbrook Art Museum of an embroidery by William Morris’s daughter, May. Also showcased are volumes from the Cleveland Museum’s nearly complete collection of books printed by Kelmscott Press. Morris’s meticulously designed books were his final labor of love; indeed, they exhibit the same delight in organic forms and time-tested craftsmanship visible in his textiles. The voices of May Morris, Kate Faulkner, Walter Crane, and Edward Burne-Jones displayed in the exhibition and catalogue also feature among the projects that Morris so passionately brought to fruition. With illustrations of Morris & Co. wallpaper, carpet, and Kelmscott Press volumes, Designing an Earthly Paradise brings to life Morris’s striking, revolutionary designs.


Holland’s book offers a new interpretation of William Morris’s utopianism as a strategic extension of his political writing. Morris’s utopian writing, alongside his journalism and public lectures, constituted part of a sustained counter-hegemonic project that intervened both into the life-world of the fin de siècle socialist movement, as well as the dominant literary cultures of his day. Owen Holland demonstrates this by placing Morris in conversation with writers of first-wave feminism, nineteenth-century pastoralists, as well as the romance revivalists and imperialists of the 1880s. In doing so, he revises E.P. Thompson’s and Miguel Abensour’s argument that Morris’s utopian writing should be conceived as anti-political and heuristic, concerned with the pedagogic education of desire, rather than with the more mundane work of propaganda. He shows how Morris’s utopianism emerged against the grain of the now-here, embroiled in instrumental, propagandistic polemic.
TESSA WILD,  
WILLIAM MORRIS & HIS PALACE OF ART  
London: Philip Wilson Publishers, 2018  

Reviewed by Anna Wager

William Morris may have only lived in Red House, Bexleyheath from 1859-1865, but Tessa Wild’s William Morris & his Palace of Art, published by Phillip Wilson Publishers in July 2018, convincingly demonstrates that though Morris’s tenure at Red House was relatively brief, his impact on the site, and the site’s impact on him, was long lasting. Wild is the former curator at Red House, and is currently an independent curator, collections advisor at Houghton Hall in Norfolk, and the assistant director of the Attingham Summer School. Her knowledge of Red House is therefore extensive, and this book is a useful resource for both Morris-philes and those more generally interested in Arts and Crafts design.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The first two deal with Morris’s pre-Red House years, establishing his relationships with Edward Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, his wife Jane Morris, and Philip Webb, his co-designer for Red House. Chapters three and four provide details on designing, building, decorating, and furnishing Red House. Next are chapters on the garden and the Firm. Finally, the two concluding chapters are on Morris taking his leave from Red House, and the house’s life after the Morris family’s departure. These last two chapters were particularly revelatory to me, as I had not really given any consideration to what happened to Red House after 1866. Morris had to bargain and negotiate about what he could take from the house—since so many of the furnishings were built for the house—and Wild works in primary documents from Morris’s circle and the future owners of the house in a smart and thoughtful way. Notable architect Edward Hollamby lived in Red House from 1952-1999, and he helped to create the preservation efforts that have allowed the house to now be a National Trust site. The general structure of the book’s organization works well, situating Red House in both Morris’s life, but also in the years surrounding his habitation there. The first few chapters retread the Morris mythos narrative, and while the context is necessary, and helpful, the book really picks up steam once Wild gets to the house itself.

The book itself is gorgeous, lavishly and generously illustrated. The use of Morris’s Golden typeface feels appropriate, not derivative. I have never been to Red House, and the photographs here are by far the most comprehensive images of Red House that I have ever seen. I especially appreciated the double page spreads of room interiors, which really do convey the holistic design approaches at work; we obviously know about Morris and his design practices, but it is rare to really see the relationships between wallpaper/painting, textiles, furnishings, and architecture. The images could have been tied more concretely to the text, and in some cases feel solely illustrative. Wild also occasionally uses phrases without extrapolating the context surrounding them, like “romantic medievalism” and “romanticism.” I would also have liked more of a sustained discussion about Phillip Webb—he is woven throughout the text, but could easily have his own designated section too. But these are all minor points—the overall visual components for the book are excellent, as is the organization.

One of the most welcome additions is “A Red House Colour Chart” (267), which “shows colour matched samples of the original colours used in the decoration of the interior walls, ceilings and joinery elements of the house from 1860-65,” based on an “architectural paint analysis undertaken by Lisa Oestreicher from 2003-2015.” The paints were recreated in 2013 and 2015. The chart includes 16 colors, which are listed by room, and location—a deep burgundy was used on the dining room walls and chimney breast, and on the south-west bedroom’s walls, while a pale gold was used for patterned ceiling decoration in the studio, to provide two examples. Oestreicher’s analysis of these paints overlapped with Wild’s tenure at Red House, and their collective work on the house is brought to useful fruition in this book. William Morris & his Palace of Art treats the material realities of Morris and Webb’s designs with the specificity and detail that they deserve, and the book is a rich resource. Morris’s motto, “Si Je Puis,” or “If I Can,” appears on many surfaces at Red House. As this book demonstrates—and the beauty of Red House reinforces—he could, indeed.

Anna Wager is The Clarence A. Davis ’48 Visual Arts Curator, Hobart and William Smith Colleges.
THE STARLIGHT YEARS: LOVE & WAR AT KELMSCOTT MANOR 1940-1948

Reviewed by Florence Boos

In this book Joscelyn Godwin, born at Kelmscott Manor in 1945, gathers many of the paintings, drawings, letters and diaries of his parents, Edward Godwin and Stephani Scott Snell/Godwin, who resided at Kelmscott Manor during the Second World War and its aftermath. Both loved Kelmscott Manor, and its environs and their sense of Morris’s legacy informs their distinctive drawings, Stephani’s uninhibited, rhapsodic letters, and their fictionalized biography, Warrior Bard: The Life of William Morris (1948). The Godwins’ life at Kelmscott—fraught with concerns over money, domineering mothers, parenthood, and the war—was nonetheless a period of artistic creativity and personal stability before financial needs prompted emigration to New York and eventual separation.

As Joscelyn Godwin summarizes: “Anti-modernists par excellence, they found fellowship in a Parnassus that included the early Renaissance painters, the Romantic poets, William Blake and William Beckford, the Victorian book illustrators, and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Morris’ views on industrial society and the degradation of the environment perfectly echoes theirs; in the half century since his death, his worst fears had been realized. But by living in a house haunted by his benign presence, these two lovers were able, for a while, to create an aesthetic, erotic, and psychedelic paradise that was the only existence they valued” (10). This beautifully illustrated and carefully edited volume is Joscelyn Godwin’s tribute to his parents’ ideals as well as an often poignant evocation of the tensions which penetrated even to the idyllic setting of wartime Kelmscott.

Florence Boos is the editor of Useful and Beautiful.
THREE HOUSES: A BOOK BUILT ON WILLIAM MORRIS’S “GOLDEN RULE”

Reviewed by Mary Faraci

Three Houses, reprinted in 2012, has been welcoming readers into Angela Thirkell’s stories of Lady Burne-Jones since its publication in 1931 (Williams). Thirkell dedicates her 1931 Oxford publication, Three Houses, to “My Father and Mother,” but she decorates her book according to William Morris’s “golden rule” just as her grandmother decorated the houses of her childhood. Noting the Morris and Co. decorations throughout the memoir, Thirkell pauses just before Nanny draws the Morris blue chintz curtains in the nursery (Faraci “Little Angela’s”) to give the heretofore unexamined little girl’s version of the Birmingham lecture: “Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful” (“Hopes”).

In the narrative voice of “the little girl,” Thirkell takes her readers back to her happy childhood in the houses where Morris & Co. ruled (Faraci “What”). Taught by her grandmother how to live by Morris’s “golden rule,” the little girl pauses on the “blue staircase” in the North End House in Rottingdean: “On this landing all the un-self-consciousness, all the discomfort and all the beauty of pre-Raphaelitism was epitomized in a small space.” She describes the zinc sink in the playful voice of the little girl:

Just at the foot of the top flight of blue stairs a zinc-lined cave had been built out from the wall with a tap in it for the use of the housemaid. There was no attempt at concealment inside or out. From the outside this preposterous square excrescence was stuck on to the back of the house, looking ready to fall off at any moment, and from the inside there it was, obviously a housemaid’s sink, with no disguise, and the water coming in from the Brighton main made a roaring that filled the blue staircase. (136)

Next, she takes us to the stained-glass window:

Above the bold-faced sink was a stained-glass window of jewelled brilliance, containing four scenes from the story of the Sangraal; the summoning of the knights, the adventure of the Sangraal, and at the end the holy cup itself, guarded by angels in Sarras. (136)

Requesting our permission to let the seven-year old echo the Birmingham lecture, she concludes, “The Holy Grail above a housemaid’s sink, both needed, both a part of daily life” (136).

Wallpaper, curtains, carpet and uncomfortable furniture decorate the little girl’s wonderland. Fitting a book that remembers how William Morris decorated her childhood houses, Thirkell closes her lecture on something useful and beautiful:

It is easy to laugh a little, but there was a splendid disregard of external values in this juxtaposition and it was a summing up of the best part of the pre-Raphaelite attitude to life. (136)

She gives the last word of the book to Morris and Co. in North End House, Rottingdean: “Then Nanny came up and drew the curtains. The room was luminous with sunlight penetrating the blue Morris chintz” (148).

Mary Faraci is a Professor of English at Florida Atlantic University. Her most recent book is The Many Faces and Voices of Angela Thirkell (Angela Thirkell Society, 2013).

Works Cited


We have just learned of the sad passing of Gary Aho, a former president (1985-87) and longtime active member of the William Morris Society in the United States. A medieval scholar, Gary was the author of *William Morris: A Reference Guide* and many articles on Morris’s Icelandic travels. All who knew him will remember his keen humor, sense of camaraderie, and love of travel and all things Icelandic. Gary Aho, 83, passed away peacefully at home, surrounded by family, on January 13, 2019. The cause was renal failure.

Born in Portland, Oregon, in 1935 to Fred Aho and Edna Matson, Gary spent his youth in Portland and, after his father was killed in a logging accident in 1937, lived for periods of time with various aunts and uncles throughout Oregon. He often said his happiest year in high school was the year he lived with his kind yet firm Uncle Lawrence and Aunt Grace and their then-four children in Depoe Bay.

After graduating from Roosevelt High School in Portland, Gary began his studies at Portland State University, supporting himself by washing dishes in the grill at the St. Francis Hotel. He told the chef he wanted to learn to be a good fry cook, but that was not to be. In January of 1955, Gary and a few friends joined the U.S. Army. After training in Fort Ord, in California, Gary was sent to Fort Sill, in Oklahoma, to play baseball and basketball for the Army. Because he was never in combat, Gary used to joke, in typical dry and self-deprecating fashion, that, “I won the war in Oklahoma.”

After his discharge, Gary returned to Portland State University on the G.I. Bill, graduating in English and education in 1959. Throughout his life, he would say, “The Army saved me, the Army and the G.I. Bill.” Perhaps his most fervent belief was that every kid in America, regardless of background, should have access to an affordable college education.

In 1959, Gary married Patricia Scott, of Portland and Seattle, with whom he raised two children. Gary taught English and coached basketball at a Portland high school for one year, but left in 1960 to pursue a Ph.D in English at the University of Oregon, specializing in Old and Middle English and Old Icelandic literature. In 1964, he received a Fulbright Scholarship to Iceland to study Icelandic language and literature, research he would use for his dissertation. He received his doctorate from the University of Oregon in 1966.

Gary taught in the English Department at the University of Massachusetts Amherst from 1966 until his retirement in 1997. As a result of the establishment of several one-year academic exchange programs, Gary was able to teach English literature in Germany, London and Hawaii. He also taught short courses in Switzerland and Estonia, and led Elderhostel tours in Iceland, Greenland and the Faroe Islands.

Gary loved athletics, especially the Sunday touch football games with English Department colleagues, playing lumberjack on weekends in the woods of the Pioneer Valley, accompanying good friend George Carey on sailing trips, coaching youth softball, attending his children’s sporting events, drinking beer in the bleacher seats at Fenway Park, building his sauna in the woods of Western Massachusetts, playing poker, hearing a joke well told, jogging, running his dogs, reveling in the exploits of friends and strangers alike, and finding humor in even the most mundane. With three friends, he ran the Newport Marathon twice, the Boston Marathon twice, and the New York City Marathon, before hanging up his sneakers to take up daily laps in the pool.

Gary Aho is survived by his wife, Patricia, son Kriss (Cathy), daughter Karen, granddaughters Lucy and Tess, and dogs Lizzie and Sam. A memorial service will be held at a later time. Gary requested that any donations be made to the William Morris Society at William Morris Society in the U.S., P.O. Box 53263, Washington, D.C., 20009, or designated to the Leukemia And Lymphoma Fund at Massachusetts General Hospital at https://giving.massgeneral.org/donate.
WILLIAM MORRIS ON CLIMATE CHANGE

FROM AN EARLY MORRIS LECTURE: “THE PROSPECTS OF ART IN CIVILIZATION”

‘[T]is we ourselves, each one of us, who must keep watch and ward over the fairness of the earth, and each with his own soul and hand do his due share therein, lest we deliver to our sons a lesser treasure than our fathers left to us. Nor, again, is there time enough and to spare that we may leave this matter alone till our latter days, … no time to spare before we turn our eyes and our longing to the fairness of the earth; lest the wave of human need sweep over it and make it not a hopeful desert as it once was, but a hopeless prison; lest man should find at last that he has toiled and striven, and conquered, and set all things on the earth under his feet, that he might live thereon himself unhappy.

Most true it is that when any spot of earth’s surface has been marred by the haste or carelessness of civilisation, it is heavy work to seek a remedy, nay a work scarce conceivable; for the desire to live on any terms which nature has implanted in us, and the terrible swift multiplication of the race which is the result of it, thrusts out of men’s minds all thought of other hopes, and bars the way before us as with a wall of iron: no force but a force equal to that which marred can ever mend, or give back those ruined places to hope and civilisation.

Therefore I entreat you to turn your minds to thinking of what is to come of Architecture, that is to say, the fairness of the earth amidst the habitations of men: for the hope and the fear of it will follow us though we try to escape it; it concerns us all, and needs the help of all; and what we do herein must be done at once, since every day of our neglect adds to the heap of troubles a blind force is making for us; till it may come to this if we do not look to it, that we shall one day have to call, not on peace and prosperity, but on violence and ruin to rid us of them.

Delivered 1880; published 1882 in Hopes and Fears for Art.