

Editorial

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Since the last issue of the *Journal of William Morris Studies* a war has come and gone. It was a war about which many felt ambivalent, if not downright opposed. Recently I was reading through E. P. Thompson's account of Morris's entry into politics due to controversies over the 'Eastern Question' in the 1870s (see *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* [Pantheon, 1976], pp. 202-25). Disraeli's alliance with the Turks for seemingly imperialist ends and concerns about Britain therefore being dragged unwillingly into a war against Russia caused 'A storm of protest [to break out] in the country, coming in the first place . . . from the organizations of the people'. Morris wrote to A. J. Mundella, Radical MP for Sheffield (who was to become Chair of the Eastern Question Association) on 15 November 1876 with a list of friends who were strongly opposed to the Government's direction. Burne-Jones wrote to Ruskin for support and received this reply: 'I hope neither Morris nor you will retire wholly again out of such spheres of effort. It seems to me especially a time when the quietest men should be disquieted, and the meekest self-asserting'.

Such a popular storm of protest and evidence of the quietest being disquieted were witnessed to in the marches that took place in major cities all over the world prior to the start of hostilities against Iraq. Now the war is over and saturation media coverage is long gone it's left to some recent statistics from Oxfam to tell me that the cost of two stealth bombers could have paid for 48 million children in Africa to attend school for a year, or that the debts of 22 African countries could have been completely written off for just half the amount the US congress authorised for the war. There is still much to protest about.

It is fitting in this issue which remembers Ray Watkinson that articles should appear on the influence of Morris's arts and crafts design principles and on the continuing debates about the nature of Morris's socialism and its relationship to other socialist organisations of the time. It's also a pleasure to feature Sheila Smith's poem about Ray and his response to it. This issue also features a bumper crop of reviews on a whole range of Morris-related topics. Judging from the articles thus far received, the Winter 2003 edition of the *JWMS* on Morris and the Book Arts also looks to be well worth anticipating.