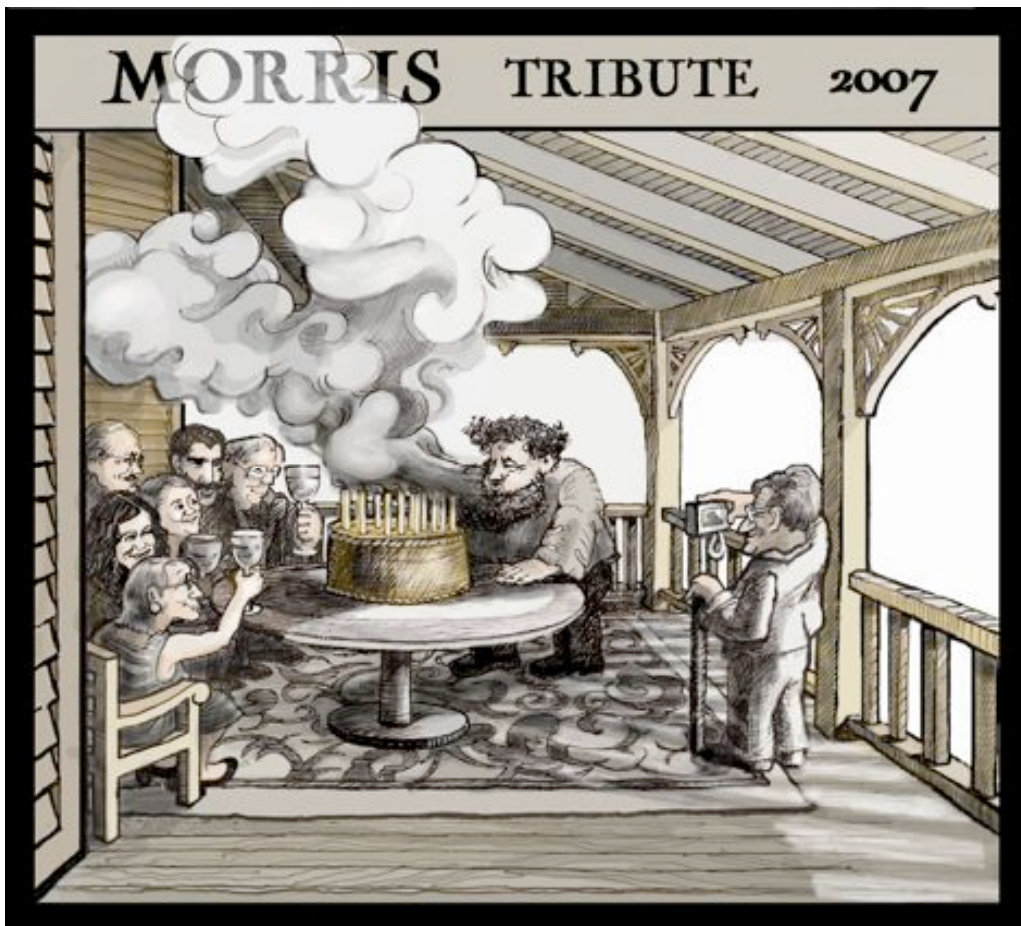


WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY IN THE UNITED STATES

Newsletter

Winter 2007



CONTENTS

Letter to Members <i>Florence Boos</i>	2
Morris Society Garden Party <i>Ray Nichols</i>	4
Upcoming Morris Society Events	8
Announcements and Reports	9
John Barlas (Evelyn Douglas): Sweet Anarchist and Schizophrenic? <i>Simon Berry</i>	13
Memoir of Morris by Richard Watson Dixon <i>Edited by Florence Boos</i>	19
“Dialogues”: David Mabb’s Videos in St. Petersburg <i>Anna Matyukhina</i>	23

On the cover: illustration by Judy Hanks-Henn, August 2007.

Submissions to this Newsletter, including articles, reviews, announcements (of publications, exhibitions, and events), and member news, may be sent to Florence Boos, Department of English, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA 52242, florence-boos@uiowa.edu.

For updates on Morrissian and related events, please visit the William Morris Society’s recently updated website at www.morrissociety.org.

LETTER TO MEMBERS

As many members already know, Kelmscott Village and Manor suffered last July from Oxfordshire’s worst flooding in many decades (see the picture from the Manor’s website below).



The house’s curators Jane Milne and Tristan Molloy ferried food into the village from the Manor’s small canteen in a boat, and villagers helped them raise heavy furniture onto pallets and rescue artworks such as Morris’s *Cabbage and Vine* and Rossetti’s *Blue Silk*

Dress. Jane and Tristan hope to reopen the premises for visitors next spring.

A bitter and enduring loss was the Walthamstow Borough Council’s decision to close the William Morris Gallery, “terminate” its staff and curator Peter Cormack at the end of November, and begin discussions for the removal of much of the Gallery’s collection to Lambeth’s Beaufoy Institute south of the Thames (whose chairman happens to be married to a member of the Council). In effect, the Borough’s Councillors have systematically set out to destroy the Gallery’s integrity as a center for the study of Victorian and early twentieth-century art, despite a steady stream of pleas, protests, substantive offers to raise funds and supportive commentaries—most of them scathing—in the British press. More detailed information about local resistance to their coup and updated information may be found at the site www.keepourmuseumsopen.



William Morris Gallery, June 2007

In the United States, the designer Judith Hanks-Henn and her husband, Jay Michael Henn, hosted a reception last July at their house in Kensington, Maryland. Ray Nichol’s account of this event appears below, and Judy’s charming sketch of those who attended graces our cover. In late October, the Society also co-sponsored a talk to a substantial audience by Nancy Green, curator of Cornell University’s Art Museum, who spoke on “Shared Dreams: Partnerships of the Arts and Crafts Movement.”

Also in October, I was able to arrange a session on “William Morris and Material Culture” at the North American Victorian Studies Association’s mid-October meeting in Victoria, British Columbia. Brief summaries of the session’s papers (on the *San Graal* tapestries, Morris’s Kelmscott Press edition of *A Dream of John Ball*, and the polyvalent senses Morris gave to the word “waste”) may be found below.

Perhaps the present *Newsletter*’s happiest announcement is that our member and soon-to-be-emeritus webmaster Tom Tobin has redesigned and enhanced our website, www.morrissociety.org. The site has already had more than four million visitors, and we want to make our

presentations of Morris's life and work as clear and informative as we can for future readers. As a partial step in this direction, we have begun to scan into the site past issues of the *Journal of William Morris Studies*, and hope these and other innovations will provide real help to all admirers of Morris's ideals and accomplishments, wherever they may be.

Along the way, we also wish to thank Tom as well as Shannon Rogers, two retiring members of the Governing Committee, for their services as webmaster and *Newsletter*-editor. By the time you read this, we will have held not one but two sessions at the annual December meetings in Chicago of the Modern Language Association—on “The Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic Family,” and “Morris as Metatext: Manuscripts, Printforms, Metatexts, and Illustrations,” respectively. At our annual meeting of the Society on the 29th, we will also welcome two new members of the Governing Committee—Margaretta Frederick, curator of the Delaware Art Museum, and Charles Sligh, assistant professor of English at Wake Forest University.

Since I too am coming to the end of my term (2004–2007), I wish to welcome as the US Society's new president Fran Durako, our former secretary-treasurer and owner of the aptly named Kelmscott Bookshop in Baltimore. She will guide the society well in the years to come.

I have been grateful for the chance to meet and correspond with so many people of common sensibilities and interests over the last three years. I wish to thank you for your letters, your support of the Society, and your interest in the near-kaleidoscopic variety of Morris's life and work.

Earlier this month, Bill and I travelled to London where I delivered the British Society's annual Kelmscott lecture and we met the historian Martin Crick, who has agreed to prepare an official history of the William Morris Society under the auspices of its British branch. In preparation for my interview with him, I dutifully got out boxes of correspondence which ranged from 1978 to 2007—almost thirty years—and reread hundreds of moving handwritten letters from friends and colleagues—“fellows,” in Morris's language—some of whom are no longer living. These carefully penned and typed exchanges reminded us of the depth of these friendships, which began when we lived with our six-year-old son Eugene in Jane Morris's former bedroom at Kelmscott House in Hammersmith in 1978. As the Society's vice-president, I hope to continue to arrange academic sessions for some years to come, and help expand our varied, multilingual and informative website. After the first of the year, kindly send general questions and suggestions to Fran Durako at frandurako@kelmscottbookshop.com, and items for the newsletter to me, at florence-boos@uiowa.edu.

In fellowship, and with all good wishes for the new year,

Florence

NEW MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING COMMITTEE

Charles Sligh teaches Victorian Literature at Wake Forest University, North Carolina. In 2005 he published *The Major Poems and Selected Prose of Algernon Charles Swinburne* (Yale University Press), which he co-edited with Jerome McGann. At the invitation of Florence Boos, Charles recently joined the new Morris Online Edition, where he serves as editor of William Morris's “morality,” *Love Is Enough* (1873).



Margaretta S. Frederick currently serves as the Curator of the Samuel and Mary R. Bancroft Collection of Pre-Raphaelite Art at the Delaware Art Museum. Dr. Frederick received her PhD from Bryn Mawr College, with a focus on British art and art patronage of the nineteenth century. She has organized exhibitions and lectured and published on various related subjects. Most recently she has been responsible for the reinterpretation and reinstallation of the Museum's Bancroft Collection, after its return from a two-year international tour. She is a life member of the William Morris Society in the United States.

MORRIS GARDEN PARTY, AUGUST 25, 2007

Ray Nichols

The William Morris Society gathered at the home of artist and landscape architect, Judy Hanks-Henn, for a tour of her Morris-influenced home. Following are a few photos of the gathering and her home. There is no way to do justice to the wonderful textures that literally filled every square inch of the rooms. The temperature outside was pushing 100 degrees so we stayed out of the garden, which ended up making for way more time to investigate the details of the house along with a much more intimate gathering of the participants.



Left: Starting at the end of our adventure, Judy supplied a cake that I suspect made William Morris smile wherever he is. Our compliments to the baker. *Right:* The whole group gathered for the cake-cutting ceremony.



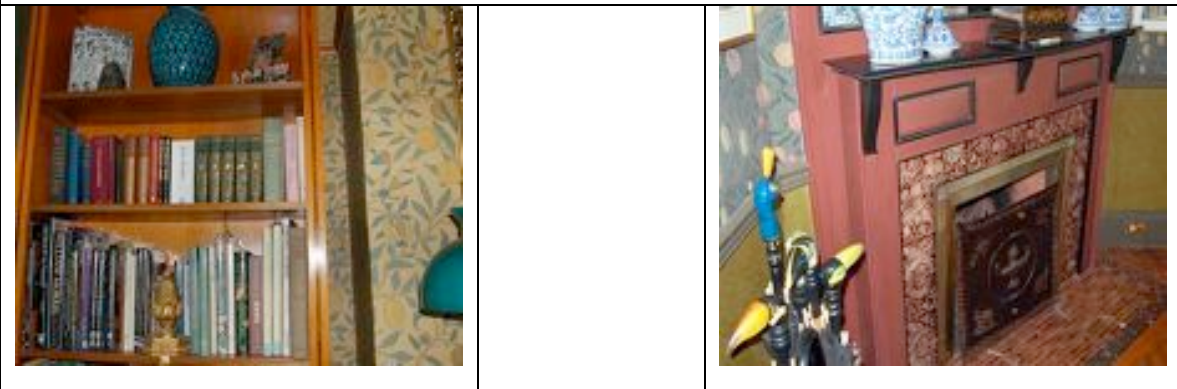
Top Left: Judy started a discussion of how people came to feel connected to William Morris. This is Judy starting us out. Mark Samuels Lasner told his wonderful story of a friend of his grandmother who actually knew Morris. You should get him to tell it if you haven't heard it. *Top Right:* Marilyn Ibach telling her story. *Bottom Center:* Dianne Cummins relating her story followed by Ray Nichols, who got goosebumps, telling his story of his first view of Morris's "Chaucer."



Left: This is a corner of the “winter” room showing five wallpapers and the cornice. The blue/white plates are both wonderful reminders of their Harvard years as well as connecting them to friends of Morris. *Right:* This is the corner of the “fall” room showing the textures, which were simply everywhere and in literally every object.



Left: This shot is right below the one above showing the textural connections between flowers in vases, lamps, and the wallpapers. Simply a stunning effort. *Right:* This door was handpainted by Judy and quotes pop up on all of the doors.



Left: You would expect a bookcase somewhere full of William Morris books by and about him. This is part of it. *Right:* The fireplace provides an additional look at the textures added through the architecture with the fireplace tiles and the brick front on the floor throughout the space.

Below are photos of various groupings of those attending and providing additional views of the completed rooms. To quote Judy, "The house is a 'work in progress.'"





Judy produced clothespins representing William Morris and his circle of friends. You can see them pinned to people throughout the photos above. On the left is John Ruskin and next is William Morris. We took a few extras but then we needed to shoot this photo.



Bookmarks using a fragment of a William Morris wallpaper design were letterpress printed by Wallflowers Press to help remember and celebrate the occasion. *Below:* A nice sunflower detail as we were starting to drive away.



It was a great way to spend a hot, Kensington Saturday.

Ray Nichols and Jill Cypher operate the Wallflowers Press in Newark, DE, <http://wallflowerspress.com>

UPCOMING WILLIAM MORRIS SOCIETY EVENTS

MLA 2008 Call for Papers: William Morris Society Session

The structure of Allied Organization MLA sessions may change before the December 2008 Modern Language Convention (to be held in San Francisco December 27–30). We will have one guaranteed session and expect to apply for two more in conjunction with other MLA Allied Organizations. Proposals for the guaranteed session, to be on “The Morris Circle: Morris’s Friends and Associates,” should be sent to florence-boos@uiowa.edu by March 20, 2008. For information on the topics of other sessions, please consult our website at www.morrissociety.org after February 1, 2008.

“J.W. Waterhouse & Theatre: Painting with an Eye on the Stage” Lecture by Peter Trippi in New York

Tuesday, April 22, 2008
6 p.m. Reception to follow
The Grolier Club, 47 East 60th Street, New York, NY

Co-sponsored by the William Morris Society in the United States, the American Friends of Arts and Crafts in Chipping Campden, the Stickley Museum at Craftsman Farms, and the Victorian Society in America.

\$12 reduced rate for members of the Society and the sponsoring organizations; \$18 for others. Tickets may be purchased from the Morris Society, via our website (PayPal and credit cards) www.morrissociety.org or by sending a check (please mark the envelope “Trippi lecture”) to William Morris Society, P.O. Box 5326, Washington, DC 20009.

The great Victorian painter J.W. Waterhouse (1849–1917) is known worldwide as a “late Pre-Raphaelite” because he discovered and began revitalizing the legacy of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood as late as 1886. It is odd, however, that the paintings he made after 1882, such as *The Lady of Shalott*, have never been interpreted as evidence of Waterhouse’s keen awareness of the golden age being enjoyed in the theatres of London and Paris at the time. Trippi’s talk looks at this phenomenon, linking it to such figures as Ellen Terry and Henry Irving, and also to Waterhouse’s mature masterpieces, such as *Saint Cecilia* of 1895 and *Hylas and the Nymphs* of 1896.

Peter Trippi is president of Projects in 19th-Century Art, Inc., established in 2006 to pursue research, writing, and curating opportunities. He became editor of the magazine, *Fine Art Connoisseur*, after serving as director of New York’s Dahesh Museum of Art. In 2002, Phaidon published Trippi’s monograph *J. W. Waterhouse*. Trippi is now curating a Waterhouse retrospective that will open at the Groninger Museum (Netherlands) in 2008, then visit London’s Royal Academy and the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. A co-founder of the online journal *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide*, he serves on the board of Historians of British Art. Trippi received a B.A. in history and art history from the College of William and Mary; an M.A. in visual arts administration from New York University; and an M.A. in art history from the Courtauld Institute of Art.

FACING THE LATE VICTORIANS:
 PORTRAITS OF WRITERS
 AND ARTISTS FROM THE MARK
 SAMUELS LASNER COLLECTION

Exhibition at the Grolier Club, New York
 February 21– April 26, 2008
 Curated by Margaret D. Stetz

This exhibition will take audiences back more than one hundred years to explore a phenomenon that will seem astonishingly modern and familiar. Like the world we know now, Britain at the end of the nineteenth century was a nation filled with images. Whether circulating by means of posters, books, newspapers, magazines, cards, and advertisements, or hanging on the walls of art galleries and of private homes, images were everywhere. As is true today, what people most wanted to see then were images of faces and bodies, especially those of celebrities. A visual industry arose in the late Victorian period to satisfy the demand for portraits in every medium, from photographs to drawings and paintings, and to reproduce these on a mass scale. Pictures of monarchs and stage performers, of course, were in great demand; more surprisingly, so were portraits of what we might call cultural celebrities—that is, writers and artists. Figures such as Oscar Wilde, Robert Louis Stevenson, Aubrey Beardsley, J. M. Whistler, W. B. Yeats, “George Eliot,” and the feminist “New Women” writers were as famous for the way they looked and dressed as for anything they created.

Just as the twenty-first-century requires us to decode images, so life in the late Victorian age required portrait literacy. The public learned to read representations of faces for their social meaning, in order to glean information about the class, the economic success, the degree of masculinity or femininity, and the special temperamental qualities of the persons depicted. When looking at pictures of writers and artists, however, what spectators hoped most to find was visual evidence of that elusive thing called “genius.” It was up to the makers of the images, therefore, to provide what audiences wanted and to create visible signs of genius, just as it was up to the subjects of the portraits to compose themselves and their surroundings in a way that would send desirable messages. Writers and artists trafficked in commodities, and they became commodities. Their portraits also provided material for other workers in this industry, such as caricaturists, who knew that the public took just as great a delight in seeing its cultural heroes skewered as idealized. These caricature artists, in turn, became celebrities themselves thanks to the “New Journalism,” which was eager to circulate unflattering images of the same poets and painters it made famous.

Facing the Late Victorians features portraits of dozens of well-known figures such as George Bernard Shaw, J. M. Barrie, H. G. Wells, Arthur Conan Doyle, Thomas Hardy, Henry James, and John Singer Sargent, who

dominated the world of the arts, along with pioneering children’s book authors and illustrators, such as E. Nesbit and Kate Greenaway. Many of these are rarely seen images, such as the unpublished sketches of themselves that Rudyard Kipling and Aubrey Beardsley included in letters to friends; the comical drawing of William Morris that the painter Edward Burne-Jones added to his guest-book; or Max Beerbohm’s savage caricature of Oscar Wilde’s head, which seems to decay before our eyes faster than did Dorian Gray’s face. But the show ranges widely to include photographs and drawings of many lesser lights whose work was important in advancing British art and literature—once celebrated writers such as the feminist novelist Olive Schreiner and the Catholic poet Alice Meynell, as well as the artists Walter Sickert and William Rothenstein.



Edward Burne-Jones, Caricature of William Morris, 1892

The show draws its eighty items from the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection, which has been assembled over the past thirty years by one of the premier authorities on nineteenth-century book history. That collection of first editions, presentation copies, authors’ correspondence, and works of art and design is on loan to the University of Delaware Library.

Margaret D. Stetz, the exhibition’s curator, is the Mae and Robert Carter Professor of Women’s Studies and Professor of Humanities at the University of Delaware.

Facing the Late Victorians is accompanied by a lavishly illustrated book by Margaret D. Stetz, published by the University of Delaware Press. Copies are available on site at the Grolier Club or may be purchased from Associated University Presses, 2010 Eastpark Boulevard, Cranbury, NJ 08512; (609) 655-4770, aup440@aol.com. www.aupresses.com (\$49.00 ISBN: 978-0-87413-992-1).

For more information contact the Grolier Club, 47 East 60th Street, New York, NY 10022, (212) 838-6690, www.grolierclub.org.

“SHARED DREAMS”
LECTURE BY NANCY GREEN
IN NEW YORK

On Tuesday, October 30, 2007, an audience of nearly one hundred gathered at the Grolier Club in New York to hear Nancy Green’s talk, “Shared Dreams: Partnerships of the Arts and Crafts Movement.” The lecture was the first of what we hope will be a series of programs to be offered collaboratively by the William Morris Society in the United States, the American Friends of Arts and Crafts in Chipping Campden, the Stickley Museum at Craftsman Farms, and the Victorian Society in America. The William Morris Society acted not only as a co-sponsor but also handled the financial and administrative details of the event, for the first time collecting payments from members and the public through the PayPal mechanism on our website.

Green began by noting the many collaborations within the arts and crafts movement, partnerships involving family, friends, husbands and wives, single-sex couples, and figures whose relationships could not be so simply defined. While Ruskin and Morris both vociferously supported the ideal of the individual craftsman and the personal fulfillment achieved through satisfaction in one’s own labor, the reality was much more complex. Many of these artists and designers were successful because of their interaction with a spouse, a sibling, or a close friend. Historically, it is often this other person that is relegated to a more obscure role, either due to their gender or the publicly acknowledged achievements of the more prominent half of the partnership. This lecture evolves from the research Nancy Green has done for her forthcoming book on this subject. In it, she provides a clearer idea of the valuable contributions of both partners, within the framework of their artistic achievements as well as through their emotional bond, and how these elements acted on the success of each. The collaborative partnerships discussed (and illustrated with images of the artists and their work)—seven in America and seven in Britain—included Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh, Mary and G. F. Watts, Evelyn and William De Morgan, William Morris and his daughter May, Ralph and Jane Whitehead, Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr, and Elbert and Alice Hubbard.

Senior curator of prints, drawings, and photographs at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Nancy Green joined the Johnson Museum staff in 1985 and during the past twenty-two years has organized dozens of exhibitions at the Johnson Museum and elsewhere. She has published numerous articles and catalogues including *Byrdcliffe: An American Arts and Crafts Colony* (2004); *Surrealist Works on Paper from the Drukier Collection* (2003), and *Dreams, Myths, and Realities: A Vincent Smith Retrospective* (2001).

MORRIS IN VICTORIA

Morris was represented at the North American Studies Association Convention in Victoria, British Columbia, held October 10–13, 2007, by a creative performance and two academic sessions.

Dancing Jane Morris

The featured creative entertainment of the conference was a moving and beautiful evocation of the life of Jane Burden Morris (1839–1914) in the form of a dance, “The Violet of Iffley Road,” performed on Thursday October 11. Susan Haines of Western Washington University and Susanne L. Seales, an independent scholar, portrayed Jane as an older woman remembering her girlhood, life as a young mother, and old age.

Morris, Conservation and Material Culture

In “Urban Utopias and Conservation,” organized and chaired by Clare Pettitt of King’s College, London, Astrid Swenson (History, Cambridge University), spoke on “‘The Morris Dance around St. Marks’ and Other International Campaigns for National Monuments,” and Anna Vaninskaya (English, King’s College, Cambridge) spoke on “A Patron Saint or a Case of Mistaken Identity?: William Morris and the Garden City.”

William Morris and Material Culture

In “William Morris and Material Culture,” chaired by Susan Bernstein of the University of Wisconsin, Florence Boos (English, University of Iowa) spoke on “From ‘The Churches of North France’ to Morris’s Socialist Aesthetics,” Andrea Wolk (Art History, Yale University) on “A Crusade Against the Age: William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones, and the *San Graal* Tapestries,” Michelle Weinroth (English, University of Ottawa) on “The Work of Art as Political Disclosure: A Material Reading of ‘A Dream of John Ball,’” and Elizabeth Miller (English, Ohio University) on “Sustainable Socialism: Morris on Waste.” Summaries of the last three of these appear below.

“A Crusade Against the Age: William Morris, Edward Burne-Jones and the *San Graal* Tapestries”

Andrea Wolk, Art History, Yale University

The *San Graal* tapestry cycle (1890–94), designed by William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones, has been widely hailed not only as a crowning achievement of these artists’ careers, but also as one of the masterpieces of late-nineteenth-century British decorative arts.

This talk addressed new interpretive possibilities that I hope will facilitate further scholarly interrogation of the *San Graal* tapestries. In particular, through a close reading of the first panel of the series, “The Summons,” I demonstrate how the cycle as a whole embodies the essence of the collaborative model of life, art and work

shared by Morris and Burne-Jones in their “crusade and holy warfare against the age.” Perhaps of all the mutual projects carried out by these two artists, the *San Graal* tapestries reveal how their careers functioned as a fellowship and how their early enthusiasm for medievalism, socialism and art matured as each pursued their own paths towards fulfilling the same ideal aims. Moreover, I argue that in their mode of production, composition and subject, the *San Graal* tapestries functioned as a visual exemplar designed to set a moral imperative before a captive audience of the British elite. While many have shied away from declaring the tapestries to be a critique upon their patron, the mining tycoon and future founder of British Petroleum William Knox D’Arcy, I fully embrace these works as a bold warning, a quest offered up to its viewers to turn from a life of competitiveness and industry to one of fellowship and art. The tapestries represent a call to action to the wealthy of Britain to arise and seek the salvation of their nation by presenting images of mutual effort and self-sacrifice, functioning both in subject and manufacture as a directive for achieving the ideal collaborative society.

“The Work of Art as Political Disclosure: A Material Reading of Morris’s ‘A Dream of John Ball’”

Michelle Weinroth, University of Ottawa

William Morris’s political romance, “A Dream of John Ball,” first appeared between 1886 and 1887 in *Commonweal*, the newspaper of the Socialist League. Serialized over a set of months (November 1886 to January 1887), the fictional piece functions as an inspiring supplement to information-based material: practical and theoretical discussions of socialism. Set at the time of the Peasants’ Revolt (1381), Morris’s story offered the contemporary readership an allegorical statement that spoke to the active proselytizing and spirit of social change generated by the *Commonweal* project. Five years later (May 1892) along with a short fable entitled “A King’s Lesson,” “A Dream of John Ball” was republished by the Kelmscott Press as a decorative book; it featured, in the vein of the larger Kelmscott *oeuvre*, as a self-conscious *objet d’art*. The handmade paper, the frontispiece—a woodcut design by Morris’s artist friend and collaborator, Edward Burne-Jones—and the ornamental initials of the body of the narrative contributed to its decidedly aesthetic status. For some, it might be tempting to see the decorative form of this text as the conversion of propagandist fiction into pure art, drained of the political intensity of *Commonweal* activism, or, more fundamentally, as Morris’s shift from the fractious politics of his Socialist League days to his rekindled involvement in printing and medieval typography. Such a reading serves the interpretation of those inclined to see his last years—the 1890s—as a period of retirement where the artist comes home to roost, disillusioned and purged of socialist ideals, as if these were a passing phase.

An alternative perspective is offered here, suggesting that the palpably sensuous and visually arresting character of the Kelmscott edition of “A Dream” does not obscure,

but rather exhibits Morris’s political vitality, expressing his most critical views on capitalist mass production, alienated labour, and flattened bourgeois existence. Here the political message of the prose romance arises not only out of the narrative’s content, but also out of its aesthetic form, heralding a statement as radical as the explicitly dissenting articles of *Commonweal*. Morris’s shift from nation-wide activism to a typographical adventure (the Kelmscott project) is undeniable, but its implications are not those of escape or contemplative retirement. Scarcely abandoning politics in this artistic production, Morris rather crafts his convictions differently, shapes another medium for his rhetoric and, contrary to his contemporaries, radicalizes the very concept of political persuasion. After pursuing the letters of journalism, he studiously practices typographical art, merging verbal and visual forms to shape public consciousness in a style both distinct and contrary to homiletics and didactic speech.

In arguing for the constancy in Morris’s political engagement, even as he turns from newsprint to the highly stylized designs of Kelmscott art, this talk underscores the continuity between the internal narrative of “A Dream of John Ball”—one that challenges the premises of conventional political preaching—and its material Kelmscott embodiment: an object that invites us to read and write the world against the rough grain of modernity.

“Sustainable Socialism: Morris on Waste”

Elizabeth C. Miller, Ohio University

William Morris’s late career seems in many ways incongruous or contradictory. After five years as editor for the socialist newspaper *Commonweal* and chief pamphleteer for the Socialist League, Morris wrote *News from Nowhere*, a utopian novel that seems to undercut print’s potential as a revolutionary medium; meanwhile, after ten years of denouncing luxury and inequality, he launched the Kelmscott Press, which produced the most expensive and exclusive books of the day. Thorstein Veblen issued a damning indictment of Morris in his 1899 *Theory of the Leisure Class*, calling the Kelmscott Press a prime example of the “conspicuous waste” that characterizes modern consumption. Today, however, in a moment of acute environmental crisis, Morris’s choices seem more prescient than paradoxical. In this paper, I argue that Morris’s thematic and aesthetic emphasis on durability, his predilection for preservation, and his respect for labor and materials adds up to a profoundly radical philosophy of “things,” which prefigures green arguments for sustainability today. Struggling with the problems of overproduction and overabundance that characterize late capitalism, Morris pinpoints their ideological underpinnings in a faulty conception of waste.

The logic of capitalism depends on a widespread obscuring of the problem of waste and garbage, and a simultaneous de-emphasis on the values of durability or longevity. As twentieth-century industrial designer Brooks Stevens famously put it, “planned obsolescence” is perversely good marketing: if a product is not sufficiently shoddy, or does not soon appear dated or worn-

out, people will have no reason to buy another one a few years later. In *News from Nowhere*, by contrast, Morris creates a society that fends off environmental degradation through a thorough internalization of the value of preservation, which requires a resistance to novelty as well as a commitment to making objects that bear conserving. In one illustrative scene, William Guest goes “shopping” for a new pipe. Morris counters the inevitable objection of “communist shopping”—that if goods are free, people will be wasteful—by depicting the Nowherians as frugal preservationists, who expect their commodities to be durable rather than novel. When Guest is offered a beautiful pipe, he initially demurs, fearing he will lose it. His companions respond; “What will it matter if you do? Somebody is sure to find it, and he will use it, and you can get another.” In *Nowhere*, pipes do not magically disappear, as capitalism encourages us to think: they hang around, they get used by someone else. It is perhaps for this reason that the Nowherians treat all forms of labor as art, not recognizing a distinction between the two categories. “Art” has traditionally been defined according to a presumption of lasting value, but in *Nowhere*, all objects have lasting value, be it a pipe or a book or an “ugly old building.” This is, in fact, a remarkably prescient philosophy of things; for we have learned that if things do disappear, it takes them a very long time to do so, much longer than the manufacturers of plastic (for example) would care to admit.

Carolyn Steedman has identified two different conceptions of materiality at work in archival studies: “dust” and “waste.” Dust is about “the impossibility of things disappearing, or going away, of being gone.” Referring to the “fundamental lessons of physiology, of cell-theory, and of neurology,” she defines dust in terms of the “movement and transmutation of one thing into another.” Waste, which Steedman considers a particularly nineteenth-century idea, refers instead to the belief that documents and things go away all too easily, that they can exist and die and remain perennially unabsorbed by culture. Steedman’s conception of dust and waste offers a window into Morris’s materialist political critique. His Nowhereians view objects as “dust,” as transmutations of all that has come before them. Past events, objects, and people are present in *Nowhere*’s present day, as Matthew Beaumont has argued. A similar idea is at work in ‘A Dream of John Ball,’ which foregrounds the presence of a fourteenth-century revolt in events of Morris’s own time. As Morris wrote in a 1884 letter: “John Ball was murdered by the fleecers of the people many hundred years ago, but indeed in a sense he lives still, though I am but a part, and not the whole of him.”

The value for material endurance that we see in Morris’s late political writings explains why, perhaps, he transitioned from printing socialist journalism to printing some of the most expensive books of his day. Morris may not have planned the obsolescence of cheap political printings like the *Commonweal*, but endurance was plainly not a motivating goal in their production. Cer-

tainly, the exigencies underwriting their assembly are unmistakable in the archive today, in contrast with the still-pristine Kelmscott volumes. Morris felt the prices of the Kelmscott books were a necessary evil in his effort to model a form of production driven by sustainability rather than volume. As he argued in a 1893 interview with the *Daily Chronicle*, “I wish—I wish indeed that the cost of the books was less, only that is impossible if the printing and the decoration and the paper and the binding are to be what they should be.” “What they should be,” for Morris, is not a disposable waste product to haunt future generations, but an object that will do justice to the labor and material that produced it.

NETWORKS OF DESIGN 2008 CONFERENCE OF THE DESIGN HISTORY SOCIETY

University College Falmouth, September 3–6, 2008.

The theme “Networks of Design” responds to recent academic interest in the fields of design, technology, humanities and the social sciences in the ‘networks’ of interactions within processes of knowledge formation. Studying networks foregrounds infrastructure, negotiations, processes, strategies of interconnection, and the heterogeneous relationships between people and things. Within the wider context of post-modernism we are, it seems, experiencing a paradigm shift in design history and this conference offers an opportunity to address, explore and assess that shift, providing a platform for international debate and exchange. Proposals for papers are welcome from individuals and/or panels (of not more than three papers). More details: www.networksofdesign.co.uk or Fiona Hackney networksofdesign@falmouth.ac.uk. The submission deadline is February 25, 2008.

NEW BOOK ON MORRIS AND PRESERVATION

William Morris and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings is an important new book by Andrea Elizabeth Donovan. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, founded by Morris in 1877, sought to preserve the integrity of historic buildings by preventing unnecessary repairs and additions. This practice became known as historic preservation. In this study, Donovan, relying upon original documents from archives in London, traces the history of the SPAB from its foundation in nineteenth-century England to its current activities in England and Western Europe. Included in the *Literary Criticism and Cultural Theory* series edited by William E. Cain, the book is published by Routledge (ISBN 0-415-95595-5).

JOHN BARLAS (Evelyn Douglas) SWEET ANARCHIST AND SCHIZOPHRENIC?

Simon Berry



He was virtually unappreciated and practically unknown in his lifetime. He was brought up by his mother who encouraged his artistic side, but she died when he was 18. He had a desultory college career, imitating classical models and meeting a number of literary figures who were to become famous. He married a girl of mixed race whilst still a student and made rapid inroads into his father's fortune, often helping out needy friends and giving to causes he supported. He became involved in revolutionary politics. After most of the inheritance was gone he lived by teaching. As a sideline he would address meetings of anarchists and he also fancied himself an artist. His early published works made little impact and thereafter he had to resort to self-publication. He used established poetic forms such as the sonnet to express his idealism, often under the guise of love poems, but his later work had a more bitter note. After the birth of his son his marriage became unstable and he regularly used prostitutes; as a result he probably contracted syphilis. He became more and more involved with the political struggle, and was batoned at a political demonstration. After being arrested for shooting a loaded revolver at a government building, he became subject to severe delusions that led him to attack people in the street. Admitted as a voluntary patient to Gartnavel asylum in Glasgow, he spent the remaining twenty years of his life there. He

wrote, painted and composed incessantly but practically none of this work has survived. Few turned up for his funeral, which occurred on the eve of Britain entering World War One. In addition he was influenced by Charles Baudelaire (whose life his own resembled in a number of respects) and the Symbolist movement.

This was John Evelyn Barlas (1860–1914), predestined according to most of his contemporaries for a golden future. How could he fail? He had (for a time) wealth and a good marriage. He also had useful friends at Oxford (including Oscar Wilde and Robert Sherard) and was soon to meet up with others who were influential (the Rhymers Club set, John Gray and J. A. Symons). He was an inspiring speaker and teacher, impressing socialist pioneers in the Social Democratic Foundation and other groups with his organizational ability. It was at the Bloody Sunday march for a united Ireland in November 1887 that he was struck down in Trafalgar Square more as part of the general mêlée rather than for any prominent role he had played. Soon thereafter his life began to go downhill, possibly as a direct result of his head injury, or through the effects of venereal disease. His political opinions were too extreme to lead him anywhere, literary recognition continually eluded him and any ambitions of mixing in society (as Wilde and other friends succeeded in doing) disappeared with his spent fortune. He harboured a self-destructive streak, or at the very least an innate aversion to accepting help, and this accelerated his journey to the Royal Gartnavel Lunatic asylum. He was one of the Tragic Generation who died young (Dowson, Lionel Johnson, H. M. Crackanthorpe, Beardsley, Wilde, Rimbaud, Baudelaire), or suffered mental breakdown (Swinburne, Francis Thompson, Symons, Verlaine). It was all part and parcel of the Decadence that swept most significantly, and self-consciously, Britain and France in the 80s and 90s. In Barlas' case, of course, he didn't actually die in 1894 and his mental problems didn't affect his productivity. But to his contemporaries two decades of disappearance were equivalent to a premature decease.

It is good to know that a real critical biography of Barlas is being written.¹ This is because the last attempt (David Lowe's *John Barlas: Sweet Singe and Socialist*, published in 1915) is clearly inadequate and not always reliable, somehow failing to mention—out of respect for his surviving family, one presumes—that the subject spent more than a third of his life institutionalised. This has been remedied to some degree by Gutala Krishnamurti's entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, which has gathered together most of the known facts about the poet's life. Even though his "productive" life (i.e. before he admitted himself to Gartnavel) was short, there are still huge biographical gaps to be filled before any attempt can be made to get beneath the skin of a very complex personality. Contemporaries such as Symons, Gosse, Sherard and in particular H. S. Salt (who put together a short selection of poems in the 1920s) provide brief snapshots: Barlas exchanging sallies with Wilde in Soho, with Dowson at the Rhymers' Club, at

Morrison's Academy with Davidson, a scene in a Paris bistro, even a mention of his Socialist Democratic Federation involvement in *Commonweal*. Contrast this sketchy picture with his final twenty years when he was under regular observation at Gartnavel.

The Institutionalisation Issue

Barlas (and his *alter ego* Evelyn Douglas) is one of those creative spirits from the *fin de siècle* still remaining to be discovered. Standard commentaries on the period such as Holbrook Jackson make no mention of him. Of course Barlas is one of any number, but there are particular reasons for his neglect. Nearly all the eight collections of poetry issued 1884–1893 were privately printed and have become collectors' items. But pre-eminently there is the issue of his institutionalisation and the resulting isolation. Although he continued to write at an even more febrile rate, as contemporaries observed, during that time nothing of his was read by the world outside the walls of Gartnavel. The stigma associated with insanity made the walls still higher. Sherard wrote a premature obituary in his autobiographical *My Friends the French* which was taken up by a newspaper. Whether or not he truly believed Barlas was already dead in 1909, it is symptomatic of Sherard's rose-tinted approach to writing up the cultural ethos of the time:

Poor Barlas! I had made his acquaintance at Oxford. He was at the same College where he had already earned a reputation as a writer of beautiful verse. There are many of us who still hope that some day his talents may be recognized. He published some years ago, under the pseudonym of 'Evelyn Douglas', several volumes of verse. These, however, were for the most part printed by small local printers, were not reviewed or pushed in any way, and attracted little or no attention, except amongst his friends. I understood a year or two ago that a selection from these various volumes was in preparation, and I had hoped that people were at last due to have a chance of repairing the gross injustice which was done to him in the utter disregard of his genius.

With friends like this, Barlas may well have thought, save me from biographers. Henry Salt, biographer of Thoreau, Francis Thompson, Shelley and De Quincey, would probably have been the best person to write his. He was an early member of the Fabian Society and had met Barlas in his twenties when the latter was at his creative peak. He was a regular correspondent during the Gartnavel decades, often pumping Barlas for information on his early years. Salt died in 1939 after mentioning (in his *Company I have Kept* (1930)) that he had received 70 letters from Barlas in Gartnavel. Of these there is no record, and no notes for a biography. Nor is there any sign of an autobiography that was mentioned by Arthur Symons.

Barlas, however, was no victim. Extraordinarily gifted, he brought most of his misfortune upon himself. The issue for a modern biographer is assessing and evaluating the psychological damage. This is a memory by one of his

pupils at Chelmsford (now King Edward) Grammar School, quoted in Lowe:

*To hear Barlas talk on a social problem and then to read one of his sonnets was to feel oneself almost in the presence of a complete man. He was one of the bravest, kindest, most unassuming and unselfish of men. A real martyr to mankind, if ever there was one. He had too, with all his tragic pity for the poor and oppressed, a fine sense of humour. I shall never forget the clever way he coached me for the part of M. Jourdain in 'Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme'. His name must not be forgotten. To have known him was a privilege; to have been his friend a priceless and undying memory. . . .*ⁱⁱ

How might Barlas' reputation have fared if he had been saved from the madhouse? For example, try putting him into the shoes of two other writers of the period: Francis Thompson, an almost exact contemporary, and Algernon Swinburne.

When Walter Watts-Dunton turned up at Swinburne's rooms in Russell Square with a carriage and whisked him off to Putney he undoubtedly saved his life. Swinburne's brandy drinking had raged unchecked since a spontaneous trip to Glasgow University several months before at the instigation of Professor John Nichol. At No. 2 The Pines he was not under lock and key, but the ground rules were clearly spelt out, and nights of licence with cronies like Nichol were unthinkable. He was to be redeemed and made productive again. Thanks to Max Beerbohm we know how Swinburne spent his days. He rose at 10 a.m., then took a two-hour supervised walk after finishing breakfast. Lunch was at 1.30, followed by two hours of bed rest until 4.30 when he was encouraged to write for two hours and no more. From 6.30 to 7.50 p.m. he read Dickens or Scott to Watts-Dunton and then after dinner he was permitted to work again until midnight. The routine was unvarying and very like a micro-institution. Swinburne's physical health was rapidly restored and he continued to produce new works (plays, prose, criticism as well as poetry) on demand. Some would contend he was a new man, others that he was being subtly brainwashed.

Then consider the case of Francis Thompson. Like Barlas, although not so precocious, he too had reached a crisis point by the age of thirty. He had lived a lot but written very little, mainly due to a perilous existence on the breadline in London and a laudanum habit brought on by reading too much De Quincey. In 1888 when literary editor Wilfred Meynell provided a place for him in his own home in Kensington he was regarded as highly eccentric if not actually dangerous. Although the Meynells offered bed and board over the next ten years, Thompson still retreated back into his old haunts on the Embankment and around the former fruit and vegetable market at Covent Garden. His three books of poetry were all written during the years that they managed his affairs. Later, about the time Barlas was being admitted to Gartnavel, he found a retreat for writing at a Franciscan monastery at Pantasaph in Wales where he was able to complete *The*

Hound of Heaven. But just as suddenly as it had begun, the brief productive period came to a sudden end.

Would it have been a different story if Barlas had somehow met his Meynell or Watts-Dunton? Only, one suspects, if Barlas had been a very different kind of person. To almost all who knew him he seemed so capable, so gifted, so charismatic that even to have offered help would have seemed an act of folly.

Oxford, Politics and Teaching

What we know of his years at New College (1879–83) reads like a rough draft for *Zuleika Dobson*. For Beer-bohm these were the golden years of Oxford, bathed in the combined afterglow of Pre-Raphaelitism, the Oxford Movement and the critical outpourings of Walter Pater, already past by the time Max went up ten years later.

Although Barlas spent a long time at Oxford, not much of it was devoted to the designated areas of study. According to *the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, which relies on “private information (2004) [John Barlas],” he spent the year after the death of his mother in 1878 studying Marxist literature in rooms near the British Museum. Barlas was alone in the world, with no surviving parents or siblings, but with a considerable fortune inherited from his father’s business in Rangoon (where he had been born). When he went up to Oxford the following year to study Classics he was able to combine his private wealth, a natural gift for public speaking, extreme republicanism and prowess on the sports field. With just three of these qualities a promising career in politics would have beckoned, but the fourth made this unlikely.

Instead he concentrated on learning languages, making literary-minded friends (whom he helped out with money where necessary) and cutting a dash. Whilst still a student he married Eveline Davies, the daughter of a family friend from Burma days who was being educated in England and by 1882 they had a daughter, Evelyn (they were now all Evelyns of a sort with Barlas adopting the *nom de plume* Evelyn Douglas). He also started studying to be a barrister. If this were not enough he was furiously writing poetry, and by the time he graduated with a second-class degree he had already written enough work for two collections published by Trübners.

Already there are early signs of a growing fragmentation of the persona. He had the innate gift of applying himself at one and the same time to a range of activities but achieving success at each through rigid compartmentalisation. By 1885 he had suffered two major traumas with the loss of his mother and his daughter and yet to friends he was still resilient as ever. And he still continued to write poetry (mainly sonnets) as a daily activity, possibly using creativity as a lifeline to some kind of mental stability. From now on each one would be meticulously dated, and sometimes two or three would bear the same day’s date: a punishing level of productivity if one considers that others must have been written and rejected.

There are certainly many gaps in the narrative of these years up to 1885 when he became the assistant master in the Classics department at the King Edward Grammar School in Chelmsford, the county town of Essex, north-east of London. Here, for just over a year, he taught before resigning on some point of principle. Part of the reason for the uneasiness of his situation was that he had formed a Socialist Society and would speak on street corners with a red ribbon in his buttonhole (according to Lowe) or at a temperance hotel called appropriately the Red Cow. For nearly a decade (once again Lowe is the prime source) Barlas was deeply involved in the left-wing struggle, principally through the fledgling Social Democratic Federation.ⁱⁱⁱ Further research is needed to discover what role exactly Barlas had with the organisation, given that his own views moved rapidly towards a utopian, anarchist platform. Yet at times, when he was supposed to have been in Glasgow or Dundee organising strikes, Barlas was holding down teaching jobs, one of them as a teacher of army recruits at Egham Barracks!

Certainly it was through his activity as an organiser for the SDF that he found himself in Trafalgar Square in November 1887 on the wrong end of a police truncheon. He was rendered unconscious and clearly there must have been after-effects, and Lowe dates his mental deterioration from this incident. There is some written evidence in case notes and elsewhere that from this point he became unfaithful and violent to his wife, the commitment to the marriage running in an opposite curve to his commitment to the Cause.

By this time the Barlases had moved to Crieff in Perthshire where he taught at Morrison’s Academy. Here he first met the modernist poet John Davidson and composer Frank Liebich, both of whom left some reminiscences. But the origin for the best stories is undoubtedly the gossipy R. H. Sherard, whom he befriended at New College. In his book on Wilde Sherard remembers returning to London in 1891 when Wilde was at the height of his theatrical fame and in the same year that Barlas had been arrested for firing a pistol at the windows of the Speaker’s apartments:

I remember that on one occasion John Barlas came, accompanied by an extraordinary young female, who, to show the ardour of her Anarchist convictions, was dressed in red. Oscar was civil to her, but Barlas seemed to think that he did not show sufficient deference to the comrade; and as we were walking through Berkeley Square, he indignantly separated from us. He said something to the effect that Wilde ought to have given the lady – the poet’s comrade – his arm, which I admit would have afforded a strange spectacle.^{iv}

All this time he was writing poetry. The Chelmsford connection remained, as he continued to self-publish using J. H. Clarke as his printer, but there was little connection between the subject matter of his finely crafted sonnets and the revolutionary sentiments he espoused on the soap box, or indeed between his poems evoking the highest ideals of love and his own sex life. A new biogra-

phy would need to address the causes and development of this dual personality which had such dire consequences. Also to consider to what extent he was aware of this fragmentation. The literary parallels with Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (both dating from this period) as well as characters in fiction by Poe, Conrad and Henry James, are obviously intriguing. In 1883 Henry Maudsley's *Body and Will* had investigated the effects of the "dissolution of the ego" leading to a condition he called "Alternating Insanity." He speculates on whether patients can have clear memories of their "deranged state" when mental balance is restored. Who knows whether either RLS or Barlas had read the book or indeed Du Maurier's *Trilby* which came out in 1894. It is significant, however, that Barlas on a number of occasions expressed an abhorrence of hypnotism and would never agree to being treated in this way.

The fissile poet

Barlas's working methods as a poet should also be researched. Unless there is holograph evidence to the contrary I confidently state that he was not a poet who drafted and revised. He belonged more to the school of Milton and Mozart where the work was written out fully formed straight from the mind. One reason for saying this is the sheer volume of work he produced during concentrated periods of work. In 1887 he self-published three collections containing around 130 poems (around a third of them sonnets, the others usually longer) written over two and a half years (November 1884 to the summer of 1887). This, remember, was not a time when he was resting: after leaving St. Stanislaus College he started the teaching job at King Edward school, began the Socialist Society, then left Chelmsford to start at Morrison's Academy. Granted he had two long summer vacations, but one of these was overshadowed by the death of his three-year-old daughter in June 1885. This productive period ended, coincidentally or not, with the batoning incident in Trafalgar Square. These three books of poetry (*Phantasmagoria*, *Holy of Holies*, *Bird-Notes*) written in his mid-twenties, contain the vintage Barlas along with the *Love Sonnets*, published in 1889 but written over a longer period.

If you plan to bring out three collections of work, first you presumably finish writing *A*. You send it off to the publisher/printer, then you get to work on *B* and complete it before embarking on the writing of *C*. Not so with Barlas. Through his meticulous dating of each piece (what was the real purpose behind this?) it is quite clear that he was writing poems for at least two of the collections at any one time. The collections are each quite distinct in subject matter and metrically. *Holy of Holies* is a sonnet sequence with linking themes, somewhat after the manner of EBB but distinctive nonetheless. The work in *Phantasmagoria* is marked by an often strained voluptuousness of language, a kind of poetic reprise of some of De Quincey's dream fugues, while in *Bird-Notes* there is an

only occasionally successful attempt to use Latin classical forms and other poets as models for contemporary love lyrics. It's almost as if the creative variety is displayed with a kind of bravado—the poet as juggler. Watch closely and see if I drop one, Barlas seems to say to us. Harmless enough to fragment yourself in this way for literary purposes, we might respond, but it's trickier to pull off in real life.

Phantasmagoria seems to have taken him longest to write. Begun when he was twenty-four, it is fascinating for the influences that it reveals: primarily De Quincey's semi-autobiographical, laudanum-tinctured daydreams from *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* and elsewhere. But some of the titles and the use of exotic locations remind one of Rimbaud, Poe and Baudelaire and the later French Symbolists. There are languid ladies aplenty in these poems that show that Barlas had surely spent time looking at paintings by Burne-Jones and the likes of Alma-Tadema. "A Vision of Vengeance" is interesting for its stylistic experimentation and also for the theme of a socialist dies irae where the oppressed see judgment meted out to their oppressors. "The Rebel Star" shows with even more brio a world fallen prey to greed and corruption. But most successful is "A Dream of China" where the exotic oriental scenery of the first part begins to take on a menacing aspect. The artificiality of female behaviour is depicted with a surrealistic intensity and the stanza depicting a magnified moth with "blazing heraldries of stripe and streak and scroll and crescent, and starry-spiked spur" goes well beyond De Quincey and has echoes of Poe and Kafka.

The shorter lyrics in *Bird-Notes* (dedicated to Davidson and another fellow teacher at Morrison's) could not be more different, seeking to introduce a breath of wholesome fresh air. The artful simplicity works better in some than others. The collection also contains one of few directly autobiographical pieces, "A Child's Death."

The little hands clasp thee,
And tenderly tighten,
To keep thee, to grasp thee;
The little eyes brighten.

What is her vision?
Of Paradise portal,
Meadows Elysian
And rivers immortal?

She is gone: -- her white finger
Unlocks and uncloses.
Why should she linger
After the roses?^v

Maybe a touch sentimental, but it should be seen within a late Victorian context. In *Holy of Holies: Confessions of An Anarchist*, Barlas gives us 43 sonnets begun just after the death of Eveline and completed within 8 months, chronicling the progress of an intense relationship with a Beloved figure. With the dedication "To Violet" it would be too easy to look for elusive biographical touches. The

sequence is often dense, paradoxical, almost Metaphysical in themes and imagery (a pair of compasses, solitary comets crossing the night sky, storm and tempest) and some of the sonnets are paired. The earlier pieces are written to a Beloved who at least seems capable of repaying his devotion with human warmth. Towards the end it seems that he is drawn more and more strongly by her inaccessibility and the prospect of a passion which is doomed to be unreciprocated. She represents increasingly an impossible ideal but one that reveals the path to a new consciousness of the world and himself.

The mastery of language and maturity of vision are certainly remarkable for a writer in his mid-twenties. An example from the end of the sequence takes the poet almost to the finale of his self-destructive obsession.

XL

Hark to the tempest caught in a deep rift
Of the high mountains, netted in the firs,
How restless round the narrow gorge it stirs,
As on a whirlpool's power a ship adrift,
Or eagle strong that vainly strives to lift
His caged flight aloft (with his strong spurs
He strikes the ground, and his vain pinion whirs)
Then, finding outlet, issues sudden and swift.
So beats the human soul its narrow bound,
So wheeling flaps and gropes along the wall,
And wastes its strength divine in panting breath.
Then, on a sudden, as it circles round,
It strikes upon an outlet, and from thrall
Forth issues into freedom. This is death.^{vi}

Gartnavel

In July 1894 he was admitted into Gartnavel Royal Hospital. Here he would be almost entirely deprived of the intellectual stimulation and exchange he had enjoyed during the previous ten years of his life in the company of poets and journalists, scholars and radical philosophers, visionaries and revolutionaries. Now he was to fall back on books to keep his mind occupied. His wife was probably his main visitor, but almost certainly these visits would have become less frequent. Only a few of his letters exist. After the Palace of Westminster shooting incident most of his SDF colleagues had shunned him. Cunninghame Graham had left for Spain in 1893 and may not even have been aware of his friend's plight. John Davidson had just published his first *Fleet Street Eclogues*, which brought him instant recognition as an urban poet with a contemporary voice. He was also putting the finishing touches to *A Full and True Account of the Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender*, a satire on intellectual fads and fashions such as Social Darwinism, the rights of married women and flagellation. It even contains an incident at the thinly disguised Rhymers' Club. Another collaborator poet, John Gray, had already undergone his mental crisis in 1892/3, emerging as a reinvigorated Catholic eventually to gain his own parish in Edinburgh. Gray had, of course, been the original for Dorian Gray.

Wilde was about to undergo his own trial by fire the following year.

Despite a precarious mental balance Barlas (now using his own name rather than the Evelyn Douglas *alter ego*) spent these years living ever more intensely in the mind, doggedly continuing to create. After his death visitors spoke of plays, poems and essays being produced in profusion, but there is evidence of only a tiny fraction of this output. The long uneventful days would stretch into identical weeks and monotonous months. Only someone with uncommon self-discipline and, one might imagine, formidable mental strength could find such a remorseless environment congenial for creative work.

Barlas, in rude good health until just a few weeks before his death, became adept at diverting his energies into other available areas of activity. These included piano playing, ballroom and country dancing, cricket and (just for a winter season) stone-breaking. We know all this from his case records. Kept in canvas-bound foolscap copy books with numbered pages, they still exist. Despite being written by medical supervisors for professional eyes only, they contain many vivid points of detail. He could be a disconcerting patient. There would be long periods when, superficially at least, he acted rationally. Then he would explode into violent behaviour, apparently totally in thrall to his delusions. Although the writing changes over the 20-year span, clearly Barlas (or Mr B as he was often referred to) seldom failed to fascinate each new observer. If he had been able to read what they had written, Barlas, once an inspiring teacher, might have applauded their efforts. Since there was no question of that ever happening, each could write with comparative freedom.

The resulting record, spread over eighteen densely written pages, contains several startling vignettes emerging from the mud of late Victorian psycho-medical jargon. Here is what the receiving doctor at Gartnavel wrote:

Private Patient, West House. He is 33 years of age, married and an author, residing at Crieff, but he was brought from the Prison, Perth. He has been insane a few weeks. The cause is not known. He is not epileptic or suicidal but is dangerous to others. N.P. [?] not known.

Medical Certificates state

I: He has delusions, viz that he is arrested and imprisoned on account of his political opinions, that he is being hypnotized by someone. Hypnotism he believes to be due not to any weakness of the hypnotizer or hypnotized, but to wickedness. He has singular ideas of the psychology of hypnotism and of dreams. I have certified him before. Dr McNaughton of the Perth Prison corroborates the above and also states that Barlas is dangerous, irritable and his demands are peremptory.

II: Many delusions. That he is continually annoyed and insulted by young children, grown-up people and old men calling him names. That the Government is laying traps for him. That political agents are watching him. He had to leave two London hotels for keeping sealed [a] room next to his bedroom. Dr MacNaughton says that he has many delusions and is dangerous and irritable.^{vii}

Soon Barlas is adapting to the new regime. However, within a few months of admission he was already showing signs of unpredictability. In March the following year there is a first mention of “voice exercises” which involve violent arm movements. In July, a year after his admission, Barlas is reported to be spending most of the time in his bedroom where he writes and paints undisturbed. In September there was a visit to Gartnavel by one of the government Commissioners in Lunacy, and Barlas buttonholed him to tell him that he was being treated by hypnotism, “to which he strongly objected.” No further comment is made by the writer. A year later his mental condition is giving further cause for concern:

When he goes to dinner he will turn round several times or start off suddenly for a run and stop as suddenly. He will give no explanation of these antics. Otherwise there is no change.

In 1901 a radical change is reported. Now Barlas “goes out to work and also goes to the concerts which he greatly enjoys.” There are no details on what kind of work was undertaken, but by the end of the year there is more in a tantalizingly brief entry:

For the past few weeks he has been allowed at his own request to go out and break stones as he thinks the exercise is good for him. He is therefore on a modified parole and as yet so far has proved trustworthy.

As well as the medical records from this time, which vary in detail according to the writer, there is at last solid evidence that Barlas was still writing. This comes from the *Gartnavel Gazette* which first appeared around this time showcasing literary work and travel reminiscences, essays and whimsy, poetry and prose, all contributed by the literate inmates of the GRA. The first dated poem he wrote was “The Ballade of the Fading Garden.” Written in 1904, this has the taut emotional power that had characterized the best of his sonnets:

Beneath the grey asylum’s pile
The flowers all wither. Now desist
The bees to travel many a mile.
The year’s unwearied alchemist
From snap-dragon and ivy-twist
Makes no more gold, nor basks the drone,
Love’s idle dreamer, fabulist!
Ah me! But Love was once mine own!^{viii}

Just after the twentieth anniversary of his admission to Gartnavel John Barlas died, at 3 a.m. on 15 August 1914. Valvular heart disease was given as the cause. The final entry in the patient record is one of the longest and forms, after a rundown of his final symptoms and treatment, a somewhat grudging valediction by someone who must have known him well. It will serve as a kind of epitaph:

He has become steadily worse since [the] last note and latterly there was marked oedema of the legs, abdomen and hands. Relief was got by the insertion of tubes but his mental condition being rather unsatisfactory he would not allow these to remain in his legs. He refused food and believed it to be poisoned. Vomiting was very marked at

times and blood was freely expectorated. He was at times semi-delirious but, generally speaking, his mental state was more pleasant and he enjoyed the visits of his wife and son. He was rather reserved to the former, a rather impulsive lady, and he frequently expressed the desire to live in order to write some great work of which he believed himself to be quite capable. He was never free from delusions and illusions, many of them of the most imaginative character. A conversation with him was always most interesting. His death removes a dangerous patient, but even in our narrow asylum life he will be missed.

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The photograph of Barlas is from David Lowe, *John Barlas: Sweet Singer and Socialist* (London: Cupar, 1915).

i Stephen Halliwell, *The Life of John Barlas* (provisional title, Rivendale Press catalogue, Buckinghamshire, England).

ii *Selections from the Poems of John E. Barlas* (London: Elkin Matthews, 1925).

iii *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, ed. Norman Kelvin, vol. III, February 18, 1887; In *Commonweal*, February 19, 1887, Barlas was credited with having “ably assisted in getting up our demonstration” in Glasgow.

iv Quoted in David Lowe, *John Barlas, Sweet Singer & Socialist* (London: Cupar 1915), 5.

v Lowe, 17.

vi Lowe, 8.

vii GRA Patient Records in the Mitchell Library Archives, Glasgow.

viii *Ibid.*, ref HB/13/2/150 no.13 (final verse of three plus an envoi).

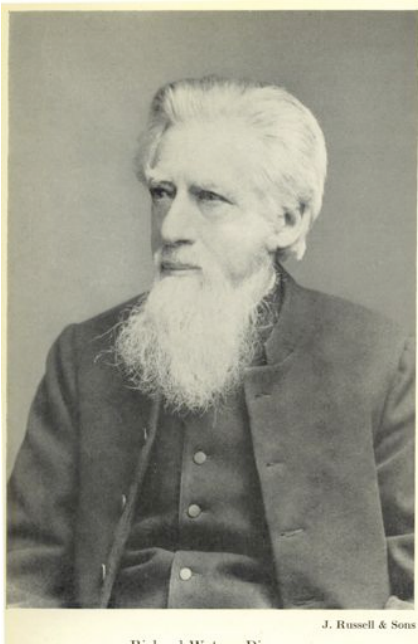
THINGS TO COME

Plans are in the works for “The Aesthetics of Rebellion: The Pre-Raphaelites and William Morris,” a conference-symposium scheduled to take place in Delaware during July 2010. Sponsored by the Delaware Art Museum (home to the largest Pre-Raphaelite collection outside of Britain) and the University of Delaware, this will be a successor to previous conferences organized by the Morris Society in London and Toronto. Details, such as a call for papers and a precise date, will appear in future *Newsletters*.

William Morris, Our Country Right or Wrong: A Critical Edition, edited by Florence S. Boos, printed for the William Morris Society by Stanhope Press, will be published in January 2008. Copies can be obtained from the UK branch of the Society, and in the US from Kelmescott Bookshop, 34 W. 25th St., Baltimore, MD 21218, (410) 235-6810, www.kelmescottbookshop.com.

MEMOIR OF MORRIS

By Richard Watson Dixon
 Edited by Florence Boos



R. W. Dixon in later life

[As the young son of a prominent Wesleyan minister, Richard Watson Dixon (1833–1900) helped his Pre-Raphaelite brethren paint the Oxford Union Murals and contributed actively to the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine before he took orders as an Anglican clergyman and became Canon of Carlisle. His writings in later life included several volumes of poetry (among them Christ’s Company and Other Poems (1861) and Historical Odes and Other Poems (1864), as well as an epic set in tenth century Italy and Normandy (Mano, 1883), and a six-volume History of the Church of England (1878–1902). In a memoir published shortly after his own death in 1930, Robert Bridges (1844–1930) characterized Dixon as a “great ingenuous being [who] went about among men almost unrecognized, though influencing nearly every one with whom he came in contact. As he respected every man, he won respect from all, and any lengthened intercourse with him awoke the best affinities of his associates, who became infected with his grace.” (Three Friends, 1932). This memoir, prepared for J. W. Mackail, is from William Morris Gallery Ms. J189, autograph. Manuscript pages are placed in brackets, e.g. [3]. Dixon uses stars and daggers for his footnotes, but since there are so many I have added numbers to avoid confusion.]

I matriculated at Pembroke College[,] Oxford in June 1851, and began residence in the October November term following, leaving behind me in the Birmingham School Edward Burne Jones, Edwin Hatch, and Cormel Price.

At Pembroke I found two Birmingham School men, whom I had known distantly at the School, Richard Whitehouse and William Fulford. Several other Birmingham men had preceded them there, one of whom was named Rider, who took a first. The reason why we all chose Pembroke was that Dr. Jeune, the Master, had been head master of the Birmingham School, and was supposed to take interest in men coming from it. As soon as I came up, Fulford called on me, after I had been solitary two or three days. I can still hear his step running up the stairs: and his greeting as he came in. I do not know whether you ever saw him. He was a very little fellow, very strong and active, very clever, and immensely vivacious. We immediately fell upon poetry: and he read me a poem, “In youth I died,” which afterward appeared in the Oxford and Cambridge Magazine. He asked me to breakfast next morning: and at his rooms then I met another man of Birmingham though not of Birmingham School, Charles James Faulkner. We three became very intimate. Faulkner was rather younger than I, though he had been in residence at least one term when I first knew him. His rooms were on the same staircase as mine: his at the bottom on one side, mine at the top on the other, in the north east corner of Pembroke old quad.

The first Birmingham man whom I have mentioned, Whitehouse, was I should think the most brilliant man [2] that was ever sent up from the School: a most elegant scholar, splendid in composition, extremely gifted, both in mind and body: the finest actor of the great Shakespearian parts, particularly Hamlet and Macbeth, that I ever heard. I have only heard him in Faulkner’s room, in his scholar’s gown: but he held me and all others spell-bound. He had a wonderful power of spinning “myths,” as we called them: imaginary stories about the dons, and so on. He would hold a room full of men gloating with delight over his inventions. Unfortunately he had entirely wasted his time for the two years that he had been at Pembroke: in this term he went in for honours in Mods; it was his last chance: got ploughed for divinity after sending in some of the finest verse and prose possible: was deprived of his Bible clerkship, and left altogether. He went abroad to Africa and America: returned to England ten years later shattered: paid me a visit of a week in Carlisle: and died shortly after. He was a poet of great elegance, to say no more. His death was about 1865.

Fulford this term and after became extremely intimate with me. He was at least a year beyond my standing: but I could not find that he had any intimates before I came. He seemed to have had no set. Whitehouse he regarded as he said, “as an exceedingly agreeable acquaintance rather than a friend.” However he, Faulkner, and I now made up a small set, and were constantly together. Fulford had great critical power, and extraordinary power of conversation. His literary principles were early fixed. He was absolutely devoured with admiration of Tennyson. Shake-

spare he knew and could speak of as few could. Keats the same.¹ Shelley the same. He never changed much from the first three of these.

Faulkner was, of course, wholly different: a great mathematician, I suppose he must have had an original mind in mathematics, though he never made a noted discovery. He was devoid of [3] literary taste, I think, except so far as it must belong to a powerful mind. But he was, I doubt not, known to you.

Next term, I think it was, Burne Jones came up to Exeter: and William Morris was a freshman of the same term and college. Calling on Burne Jones we all became directly acquainted with Morris; and in no long time composed one set. Jones and Morris were both meant for Holy Orders: and the same may be said of the rest of us, except Faulkner: But this could not be called the bond of alliance. We never spoke of it to one another: and I am sorry to say, for my own part, that it was not contemplated, or kept before the mind. The bond was poetry, and indefinite artistic and literary aspiration: but not of a selfish character, or rather not of a self-seeking character. We all had the notion of doing great things for man: in our own way, however: according to our own will and bent.

At first Morris was regarded by the Pembroke men simply as a very pleasant boy (the least of us was senior by a term to him), who was fond of talking, which he did in a husky shout, and fond of going down to the river with Faulkner, who was a good boating man. He was very fond of sailing a boat. He was also extremely fond of single stick and a good fencer. In no long time[,] however, the great characters of his nature began to impress us. His fire and impetuosity, great bodily strength, and high temper were soon manifested: and were sometimes astonishing. As, e.g. his habit of beating his own head, dealing himself vigorous blows, to take it out of himself. I think it was he who brought in single stick: I remember him offering to "teach the cuts and guards." We had a great deal of it all through our time. But his mental qualities, his intellect, also began to be perceived and acknowledged. I remember Faulkner remarking to me, "How Morris seems to know things, doesn't he?" And then it struck me that it was so. I observed how decisive he was: how accurate without any effort of formality: what an extraordinary power of observation must be at the base of his casual or [4] incidental remarks, and how many things he knew that were quite out of our way; as, e.g. architecture. Burne Jones, I think, knew him from the first: indeed saw more of him than we: and we (the Pembroke men) began very soon to associate them together. I mean that Burne Jones recognized his intellect from the first. He said once, (about this time) that Morris displayed extraordinary logical power in lecture; and might have gained eminence in mental science, if he had chosen.

Morris was much more wealthy than we: and he cultivated his tastes, which were pure and noble. His rooms were full of rubbings of brasses, which he had made: and he had the Arundel Society's reproductions, and many other precious things. This however was rather later, so

far as I remember. So far as I remember, his observation of art began with architecture. He was constantly drawing windows, arches, and gables in his books. One of the first things he ever said to me was to ask me to go with him to look at Merton tower. He used to take the Builder, and read it, and sometimes talk of the plans and designs in it. Few undergraduates have done that.

I believe that his mind was first turned toward decorative art: not actually, but in germ, by reading in Faulkner's room an article in Household Words which described some of the odd and stupid designs that were then common in furniture; asking, e. g. why we walked over lions and tigers in carpets. I remember his intense delight at that. This must have been early.²

[5] I think it was in the October of 1852 that Cormel Price came from Birmingham to Brazenose, and joined the set. He was a great addition indeed. It must have been about the same time, or perhaps later a little, that Edwin Hatch came to Pembroke. We could not know that in him we had among us the rarest scientific intellect of the age. Another Birmingham man, James Price, had come to Pembroke a little before: he was lame; and has been dead about twenty five years. Another, James Merrick Guest, about the same time, succeeded Whitehouse as Bible Clerk. He also belonged to the set.

At this time Fulford had a sort of leadership among us. This was partly due to his seniority: partly to his intense vivacity: partly to his Tennysonianism, in which we shared with greater moderation, and in different ways. It is difficult for the present generation to understand the Tennysonian enthusiasm which then prevailed both in Oxford and the world. All reading men were Tennysonians: all sets of reading men talked poetry. Poetry was the thing: and it was felt with justice that this was due to Tennyson. Tennyson had invented a new poetry: a new poetic English: his use of words was new. And every piece that he wrote was a conquest of a new region. This lasted till Maud, in 1855 or 6, which was his last poem that mattered. It is a great glory to him to have led the youth of his own generation to the height.³ Now Fulford was absorbed in Tennyson. He had a very fine deep voice, and was a splendid reader of poetry. I have listened entranced to his reading of [6] "In Memoriam."⁴ He was also writing much at this time; and would often read his pieces to us.⁵ No doubt many of them had a Tennysonian ring.

I have said that we accepted Tennyson in our own ways. The attitude of Morris I should describe as defiant admiration. This was apparent from the first. He perceived Tennyson's limitations, as I think, in a remarkable manner for a man of twenty or so. He said once "Tennyson's Sir Galahad is rather a mild youth": (meaning "My good sword carves the casques of men.") Of Locksley Hall he said, apostrophizing the hero, "My dear fellow, if you are going to make that row, get out of the room, that's all." Thus he perceived the rowdy or bullying element that runs through much of Tennyson's work: runs through the Princess, Lady Clara Vere [sic, for "Lady Clare de Vere"] or Amphion. On the other hand he under-

stood Tennyson's greatness in a manner that we, who were mostly absorbed by the language, could not share. He understood it as if the poems represented substantial things that were to be considered out of the poems as well as in them. Of the worlds that Tennyson opened in his fragments, he selected one, I think the finest and most epical, for special admiration: namely Oriana. He offered the suggestion, and with great force, that the scenery of that matchless "ballad" is not of Western Europe, but south Russian or Crimean.⁶

At this time Morris was an aristocrat, and a high churchman. His [7] manners and tastes and sympathies were all aristocratic.⁷ His countenance was beautiful in features and expression, particularly in the expression of purity. Occasionally it had a melancholy look. He had a very fine mouth, the short upper lip giving greatly to the purity of expression. His eyes were lionlike: full of intense life, and occasionally of intense fun. I have a vivid recollection of the splendid beauty of his presence at this time.

I wish I could exactly remember the order of his development by reading. So far as I can say, the first book that greatly influenced him was "The Heir of Radcliffe," [sic, "Redclyffe"] which is unquestionably one of the finest books in the world. He fell also under the spell of Fouqué: I was told that he shed tears over Sintram and his Companions. But Fouqué was, as he said, "so fearfully weak." It was when the Exeter men, Burne Jones and he, got at Ruskin that strong direction was given to a true vocation. It was the Seven Lamps, Modern Painters, and the Stones of Venice. It was some little time before I and others could enter into this: but we soon saw the greatness and importance of it. Morris would often read Ruskin aloud. He had a mighty singing voice, and chanted rather than read these weltering oceans of eloquence as they have never been given before or since, it is most certain. The description of the slave ship, as of Turner's skies, with the burden "Has Claude given this?" were declaimed by him in a manner that made them seem as if they had been written for no end but that he should thunder them on the head of the base criminal who had never seen what Turner saw in the sky.

[8] It would be towards the end of 1854, I think, that he began to write. One night Crom Price and I went to Exeter, and found him with Burne Jones. As soon as we entered the room, B. Jones exclaimed wildly, "He's a big poet." — "Who is," asked we. "Why Topsy," the name which he had given him. We sat down and heard Morris read his first poem, the first that he had ever written in his life. It was called "The Willow and the Red Cliff."⁸ As he read it I felt that it was something the like of which had never been heard before. It was a thing entirely new: founded on nothing previous: perfectly original, whatever its value. And extremely striking and beautiful. Extremely decisive and powerful in execution. It must be remembered particularly that it was the first piece of verse that he had ever written: there was no novitiate: and not a trace of influence: and then it will be acknowledged that

this was an unprecedented thing. He reached his perfection at once: nothing could have been altered in the Willow and the Red Cliff: and, in my judgment, he can scarcely be said to have much exceeded it afterwards in anything that he did. I felt at once, as I say, that I had never read anything like it: that it was entirely new in English poetry. I cannot recollect what took place afterwards: but I expressed my admiration in some way: as we all did: and I remember⁹ [9] his remark, "Well, if this is poetry, it is very easy to write."

The next day, I think it was, he wrote a touching little prayer in verse, addressed to his "Sweet friends," containing the lines, or like them, that, in discharging the call of a poet,

"As He in the arms of His Mother, I
In Christ's arms may be nursed."

And from that time onward for a term or two he came to my room almost every day with a new poem. He also began to write prose tales: but I have no knowledge of his first beginnings there: he never shewed them to me. The poems were generally short lyrical pieces, steeped in purest feeling, and many of them were beautiful. They all showed the same independence and originality as the Willow and the Red Cliff. There was one named "Blanche" which struck me as especially fine and lovely. In my belief those poems were the best he ever wrote: at any rate as good as any. I am sorry to say that they have perished. Shortly after he had published his first volume, he told me in London that he had "massacred" all those early poems: giving the reason that they had in them so much of "the absurd." It was a dreadful mistake to destroy them. But he had no notion whatever of correcting a poem; and very little power to do so: else anything really absurd might have been taken out, it may be thought. I may mention further that later than this time, two years later I think, when I met him in Oxford on some occasion, he told me that he had written some "blazing blank [10] verse": and read me a long piece in blank verse. It was a monologue spoken by Helen of Troy: and, as he read it, certainly seemed to answer his description of it. I wonder whether this still remains, or was destroyed by him.¹⁰

About this time, 1854, 5, we started weekly Shakespearian readings in one another's rooms. Fulford, Burne Jones, and Morris were all fine readers. I remember Morris's Macbeth, and his Touchstone particularly: but most of all his Claudius, in the scene with Isabel. He suddenly raised his voice to a loud and horrified cry at the word "Isabel": and declaimed the following speech, "Aye, but to die, and go we know not where," in the same pitch. I never heard anything more overpowering. As an incident not in Shakespeare, I may mention that in the reading of Troilus and Cressida, when Thersites ends his catalogue of fools with the remark "And Patroclus [11] is a fool positive," and Patroclus asks "Why am I a fool," Morris exclaimed with intense delight, "Patroclus wants to know why he is a fool!" We used to draw lots for the parts.

Crom Price had a good deal to do with the arrangements of these readings.

Toward the end of 1855 we agreed to start a periodical, for the dissemination of the ideas and principles of art which had now become well fixed among us. Morris, in my recollection, must have gone to London to arrange with the publishers Messrs Bell and Daldy: and I remember the account he gave on his return of the politeness with which he had been received, the stipulations made, and so on. He had seen "the exceedingly good man Coventry Patmore": but in what capacity I know not. The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine began with the next year. I need not here repeat the history of that undertaking.¹¹ [12] Morris was the chief contributor during the first part of its continuance. He had now taken to writing prose tales: and there are five or six by him in the Magazine: most characteristic: he never wrote any more so. At this time he was living a wonderful life. He had gone into an architect's office in Oxford, where he used to spend the day in drawing and designing: and he sat up most of the night writing these tales. He often went without dinner, living on his lunch commons. I remember one morning going with Hatch to his rooms pretty early, and finding him there with a whole story that he had written at one sitting the night before. We were both astonished at the amount that he had written. It was a mass of manuscript, sheet on sheet.

In the summer of this year, 1856 [ed., 1857 written above in pencil], he paid me a visit of a fortnight in Manchester, where I lived with my Father, for the purpose of seeing the famous Art Treasures Exhibition. He was at this time writing and painting. He wrote in Manchester a poem, afterwards published in the *Defence of Guinevere* [sic], which I think was entitled "Praise of My Lady."¹² At any rate it had the line "Not greatly long my lady's hair." I remember this, because we both tried to write something at the same time, and I wrote nothing. He also wrote a poem there which had in it

"How widely flies the fragrance of the bean fields
O'er the green fields."

I feel that this was one of those that he "massacred." He also [13] painted in watercolours at one sitting, with the greatest enthusiasm, a picture that he called "The Soldan's Daughter in the Palace of Glass." The Lady was sitting in a heavy armchair of wood, and the palace was all shades of bluish glass.¹³ As for the Art Treasures Exhibition, he thought not much of it. I tried to direct him to some of the chief pictures, but he would scarcely look at them, admitting, in apology, that he was "absurdly prejudiced." He liked more the fine collection that there was of carved ivory: and he managed to make "a furtive scratch" of one of them, against the regulations: but I could not see what there was in that one to cause him to want it. When the organ began a "recitation," he said, "Let us get out of the reach of that squealing thing." And so we left the Exhibition.

Whilst he was in Manchester, he received a letter from Rossetti, who was at Oxford, in which he said, "We have unearthed a new poet, who is charming." This was Swinburne.¹⁴

[14] In the long of that year, 1857, I was in Oxford with Burne Jones, Morris, Rossetti, and some others engaged in painting the new room of the Union. We all lived together in a house at the bottom of the High, below University, which is now destroyed. Certainly we had a royal time. I cannot remember any very particular incident regarding Morris. I worked with him on his picture of the famous sunflowers for several days, and was pleased to hear him say that it was improved.

I afterwards lived some weeks with him and Burne Jones in Red Lion Square: and saw them from time to time during the next four years in London.

I may mention that when he was married, I performed the ceremony, going to Oxford from London for the purpose.

[Dixon's notes:]

- 1 I introduced Keats to him. He had never heard of him before.
- 2 This article was not a remarkable one except in drawing attention to absurdities. Faulkner had a set of Household Words, and we often read them to one another.
- 3 I am told that in this generation no University man cares for poetry. This is almost inconceivable to one who remembers Tennyson's reign, and his reception in the Sheldonian in 55. There was the general conviction that Tennyson was the greatest poet of the century, some held him the greatest of all poets. In my time at Oxford there were two other men who, without touching him, obtained an immense momentary vogue, which has never been equaled since perhaps, except by Swinburne. These were Alexander Smith, whose Life Drama was in everyone's hands and caused an immense sensation. Even now I can never come across that long forgotten book without more emotion than I have from any other almost. The other was Owen Meredith (Lytton) in the Clytemnestra volume containing "The Earl's Return." Morris was delighted with this, especially with the incident of the Laird draining a flagon of wine, and then flinging it at the head of him that brought it.
- 4 He read Milton even better: I suppose because there was more to read. His reading of *Paradise Lost* Bk. 1. I shall never forget. He had a fine metrical ear, which helped it. No one can tell how Milton lends himself to a good reader.
- 5 Many of these pieces were afterwards published by Fulford in a volume called *Songs of Life*.
- 6 He held that "the Norland whirlwinds" showed this: and he had other reasons. It was this substantial view of value that afterwards led him to admire ballads, real ballads, so highly. As to Tennyson, I would add that we all had the feeling that after him no future development was possible: that we were at the end of all things in poetry. In this fallacy M. shared.
- I speak of a leadership by Fulford. In reality, neither he nor any one else in the world could lead Morris or Burne Jones. I could say more on this point of Fulford's leadership.
- 7 I was never so much astonished as when he turned Socialist. The first I heard of it was his letter in the papers about the Bulgarian atrocities.
- 8 He wrote me a copy of *The Willow and the Red Cliff*, which I kept for years, but fear that it is now gone. I hope that some one has the poem.
- 9 crossed out—"his animated and delighted face and"

10 It is well known that Morris gave up poetry for a long time after publishing *The Defence of Guinevere* [sic]: a volume which drew great attention for the reason that it was so absolutely original, as well as on account of its merit. It is to be regretted that he did so. He could have produced more of the same sort then. When he afterwards took up poetry again, he could not do it. His Jason was better than his *Earthly Paradise*: but the first flavour was gone from them both.

11 But I shall be glad to give any particulars that I can, on request. I must say that the expenses were borne by Morris, against my will, for I meant to have shared in them; but was never able. Morris, Burne Jones, Crom Price, and I were the original starters. Wilfred Heeley of Cambridge, another Birmingham man, and schoolfellow of ours, was added. He had renewed his acquaintance with us, and formed that of Morris, on a visit to Oxford in 1854 or 5. He had great literary ability. Fulford was immediately consulted, and made editor by Morris.

12 Perhaps I may mention that I happened some time or other to call his poems “grindy lays.” This bit of nonsense highly delighted him, and he adopted it. Henceforth poems were known among us as “grinds,” or “grindelays.” He once said he should call his book of MS poems “*Liber Grindelorum*,” and his book of prose tales, “*Liber Grindelorum*.”

13 I still have this somewhere.

14 I may add that he had just before this visit become engaged to his future wife. I may also add that in this visit I had a terrible exhibition of his “rage,” as we called it. When he was to go, we both (I think) misread the Railway Guide, and drove to the station when there was no train: and there was nothing for it but to wait to the next day. I was made aware of this by a fearful cry in my ears, and saw Morris “translated.” It lasted all the way home. It then vanished in a moment: he was as calm as if it had never been, and began painting in water colours. I wanted to get him some wine: but he said he was all right: and he manifestly was.

“DIALOGUES”: DAVID MABB’S VIDEOS IN ST. PETERSBURG

Anna Matyukhina

The Eighth “Dialogues” International Biennial of Contemporary Art held in the Central Exhibition Hall “Manezh,” St. Petersburg, Russia, in August 2007, featured Morris-based works of William Morris Society member David Mabb.

There are several large exhibition halls in St. Petersburg, but there is no doubt that the “Manezh” Central Exhibition Hall, which celebrates its thirtieth anniversary in 2007, is the most impressive among them. Situated on “Isaakievskaja Ploshchad” (St Isaac’s Square) in the very center of the city, it occupies a beautiful building of the former Manezh (or riding hall) built in 1804–07 in classical style by the famous architect Giacomo Quarenghi for a regiment of Imperial Horse Life Guards. The Manezh was used for breaking in troop horses, and fittingly in 1806 Quarenghi ordered reproductions of the antique statues of the Dioscuri—a well known symbol of horse tamers—from the front of the Quirinal Palace in Rome,

which were executed in Rome by Paolo Triscorni in 1810 and placed flanking the main entrance of the Manezh in 1817. The building was also used for military training, reviews and parades. It is worth mentioning that some exhibitions and shows were held there shortly before the revolution of 1917. Then for many years the building lost its original function and served diverse purposes, including use as a garage, until it was decided in 1973 to restore the building, reconstruct its interior and establish an exhibition hall on its premises. Finally, the Central Exhibition Hall was opened to the general public in 1977 and from that time on it has hosted the most important city art and commercial exhibitions which often become an event in the life of the city. No doubt the exhibitions of this anniversary year take on special significance.



The Eighth “Dialogues” International Biennial of Contemporary Art, one of the main “Manezh” projects since 1993, and which has long been recognized as a serious artistic review, was held in the Central Exhibition Hall from 4th to 14th August 2007 and attracted special attention on account of the Manezh’s anniversary. Over the years hundreds of artists from over forty countries working both with traditional and modern forms of art have taken part in the Biennial. This year participants included such world-renowned artists as Leif Elggren (Sweden), Monika Koch (England), Chapa Miyakawa (Japan-US) and Marcus Antonius Jansen (US), as well as more than one hundred artists from Russia and twenty-five other countries. Visitors to the “Manezh” could look at and appreciate their paintings, sculptures, graphics, photographs and new media works as well as installations and performances. It is especially exciting that it was in this exhibition that David Mabb, well known to William Morris Society members, showed his Morris-based works to the Russian public for the first time.

The “Dialogues,” according to its curator Larisa Skobkina, are dialogues between the artist and exhi-

bition visitor, between tradition and the breaking of conventional taboos in art. This is an appropriate context for David Mabb's work, since the use of Morris' designs in his work helps us to link William Morris and the contemporary. Mabb acts as a mediator, carrying on a dialogue between Morris and modern art. Mabb's work should already be familiar to WMS members in America since his exhibition last year at the Contemporary Art Center in Vilnius, Lithuania, was reviewed in a previous *Newsletter*. For this exhibition he presented his videos, already known to some WMS members since they were shown during the "Morris in the 21st Century" conference in 2005, but brand-new for Russian audiences. It is regrettable that the exhibition organizers failed to show them separately; they were displayed as a part of a video-program that consisted of works by five artists played one after another. This video-programme was shown daily every afternoon, each project being screened several times, and it was hard to find the correct moment when David Mabb's works were being shown, as their duration was less than ten minutes. However, those who managed to watch Mabb's videos did appreciate his works deeply. Among the works shown were "A Closer look at the Life and Work of William Morris" in which Mabb pixilates Morris patterns to the music of "The Internationale" sung by a Red Army choir, and the 80-second video "The Rodchenko Pose" in which he poses for a photo shoot in his Rodchenko "Production Suit" which he has remade out of William Morris "Fruit" fabric. These works develop a deep if troubled relationship between Russian history, art and culture and William Morris's politics and designs, bringing Morris, principally known in Russia only to art and literature historians, to a wider audience.

I do hope that this is not the last time that David Mabb exhibits his works in St. Petersburg and that the dialogue started in the "Manezh" Exhibition Hall will be continued.



David Mabb, Self portrait in the "Production Suit"

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THE LAST WORD

"If people were once to accept it as true, that it is nothing but just and fair that every man's work should have some hope and pleasure always present in it, they must try to bring the change about that would make it so: and all history tells of no greater change in man's life than that would be."

— WILLIAM MORRIS, from "The Prospects of Architecture in Civilization"