

# INTRODUCTION

## Visions Not Dreams: Morris as Designer, Socialist, Entrepreneur, Poet ...

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As most who open this volume will know, William Morris (1834–1896) was an English poet, decorative artist, translator, romance writer, calligrapher, book designer, preservationist, journalist, political leader, and theorist of socialism and the decorative arts. For what is now approaching a century and a half, his admirers have been drawn to the beauty, interconnectedness, and farsightedness of his artistic endeavors and efforts to live up to radical ideals of social justice. Influential in his day as a major literary figure, avant-garde designer, and socialist polemicist, in recent years Morris has also attracted further attention as the author of fantasy narratives, travel writings, and utopian literature. He is widely credited as a pioneer of modern fine press book design and major instigator of the Arts and Crafts movement. Moreover, as a social thinker whose blend of egalitarian and artistic ideals offered a flexible alternative to doctrinaire political systems, he is remembered as one of several nineteenth-century pioneers who campaigned for communal ideals and the preservation and renewal of natural and built environments. The sheer multiplicity of Morris's endeavors has repeatedly intrigued observers, who have sought to grasp their underlying patterns and sources of creative power and, even more importantly, to apply these in variegated ways in the present.

In the immediate decades after his death, Morris's artwork, writings, and memory remained directly influential in Britain, Europe, North America and elsewhere, and after a slight dip in favor at midcentury, these have all enjoyed a remarkable resurgence of attention since the 1970s. Some attempts have been made to chronicle and assess a part of this trajectory, for example, in major bibliographies such as Gary Aho's annotated *William Morris: A Reference Guide* (1985), David and Sheila Latham's *An Annotated Critical Bibliography of William Morris* (1991) with biannual supplements in the *Journal of William Morris Studies* from 1992 onwards, or Peter Faulkner's short but useful *Fifty Years of Morris Studies: A Personal View* (2013), which reflects on the many volumes devoted to Morris that the author has read, edited, or reviewed over a long scholarly career. Notably, over the ten-year period 2004–2013 alone, the Lathams identify no fewer than 796 articles, books, and exhibition catalogues devoted entirely or in part to Morris's works. Even these comprehensive guides are, moreover, more inclusive of scholarship in English than in other languages, and more often identify works of criticism or history rather responses in the form of art or other creative works.

Morris referred to himself as an artist (letter to Andreas Scheu, 15 September 1883, Kelvin 2: 230), and his wide influence on the decorative arts has been honored in a series of major

exhibitions of his works and those of his fellow Pre-Raphaelites held in recent years in Great Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. These have variously emphasized his chosen environments, such as Red House and Kelmscott Manor; his work as architectural preservationist, interior designer, and pioneer of fine book design; and, to a lesser degree, his socialist ideas and activism. Several of these have attempted to trace a genealogy of successors, among them *Beauty and Anarchy: William Morris and His Legacy, 1860–1960* (National Portrait Gallery, 2014–15), in which its curator, Fiona MacCarthy, identifies twentieth-century design successors in such enterprises as the early-twentieth-century Garden City Movement, the Dartington Hall crafts community founded in the 1920s, and contemporary low-cost modern furniture designs intended to bring beauty to the masses. Moreover, recent artists have approached Morris designs from interestingly varied viewpoints; in “We Sit Starving Amidst Their Gold,” Jeremy Deller (b. 1966) images a dark-haired anarcho-revolutionary Morris hurling a large yacht into the sea; David Mabb (in this volume) explores some of the paradoxes of tribute and appropriation against a background of twentieth-century Morrisean/Marxist imagery; and Kehinde Wiley (b. 1977) inserts his portraits of contemporary Jamaicans into lushly rendered Morris-patterned settings. Morris and Co. designs have similarly inspired Russian furniture designer Dmitry Naydenko (b. 1981) and have been reworked in the decorative art and paintings of Russian-Swiss Polina Demidova (b. 1986). Nor has Morris’s poetry been entirely neglected by musicians; following in the tradition of Gustav Holst’s *Three Songs* [by Morris] and *Cotswold Symphonies* and Imogen Holst’s *Homage to William Morris*, in 2010 Ian McQueen’s *The Earthly Paradise* premiered with the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the Barbican in London, and in 2014 Mike Roberts’ “Fellowship Symphony” in honor of *News from Nowhere* was performed by the Cantate Youth Choir and Fellowship Orchestra.

Some causes and/or results of this wider popular recognition may include the public reopening in 2011 of the newly restored Red House, originally designed in 1859 by Morris, Philip Webb, and their friends; the renovation and expansion of the William Morris Gallery, reopened in 2012; and the efforts of the Kelmscott House Museum and William Morris Societies of the United Kingdom (founded 1955), the United States (founded 1971), and Canada (founded 1981) to publicize Morris’s legacy through lectures, publications, and tours—for example, to retrace the itinerary of his 1855 tour of French cathedrals and his 1871 journey to Iceland. In addition, several symposia and international conferences in 1996 (Oxford), 2000 (Toronto), 2005 (London), 2005 (Birmingham), 2010 (Delaware), and 2010–11 (Montreal) have brought together those of kindred interests and prompted the publication of several essay collections (*William Morris Centenary Essays*, eds. Peter Faulkner and Peter Preston, 1999; *Writing on the Image: Reading William Morris*, ed. David Latham, 2007; *William Morris in the 21st Century*, eds. Phillippa Bennett and Rosie Miles, 2010; *To Build a Shadowy Isle of Bliss: William Morris’s Radicalism and the Embodiment of Dreams*, eds. Michelle Weinroth and Paul LeDuc Browne, 2013).

In addition, a burgeoning reprint market has made Morris’s literary works more conveniently available, though often in editions sadly lacking in care and design. The rise in digital editions has also made it possible to envision the gathering of Morris’s vast writings and images of his calligraphic manuscripts and book designs in more accessible form, as in the William Morris Archive (ongoing, founded 2005). Likewise, the explosion of digital media has made Morris designs more available for websites and general use, prompting Facebook pages and appreciation groups, in one case as far afield as Russia (on VKontakte). And as Morris moves into the classroom, aided by youthful interests in fantasy and alternative-world fictions, new collections and instructional videos and recordings explore ways of presenting his works to university and younger audiences (*Journal of William Morris Studies*, special issue 17.2, ed. Rosie Miles, 2007; *Teaching William Morris*, eds. Jason Martinek and Elizabeth C. Miller, 2019). Meanwhile, Morris’s

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political, utopian, and romance writings have been provided with new translations in German, Spanish, Portuguese, and French, as well as first translations into Romanian, Hungarian, Russian, Japanese, and Chinese.

Equally important may be shifts in political concerns, at least in Britain and the United States, where increasing income inequality, militarization, intensifying environmental depletion, and the monolithic stranglehold of neo-liberal political parties make Morris's appeals for revolutionary change in economic and social relations seem urgently relevant. His political prose has aged well in its clear-headed rejection of a social order based on competition, and its counterbalancing, deeply felt imaging of a new society of radical equality and meaningful work for all. In the introduction to her 1994 biography *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, Fiona MacCarthy suggests that "What is special about Morris is the way in which his ideas and personality have outlasted events and issues of the time into our own aspirations and concerns." She adds that quarrels over individual issues should not distract

from the vigour and to many the *terror* of his underlying message, which was the abandonment of capitalism itself and its replacement by more equitable, humane social structures. It is to this generous, immense and sweeping challenge that the left in Britain has returned, with a curious compulsion, through the century. William Morris has provided a voice of inner conscience.

(xvi, xviii).

The vastness and multiplicity of Morris's endeavors precludes any one writer from dealing adequately with all, or even many, of these initiatives, and thus suggests the value of a volume such as this *Companion* to draw together critical responses to Morris's multi-faceted accomplishments. Each of the following chapters, all by authorities in their field, provides necessary historical and/or literary background detail, reviews some of the relevant late-nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century contributions, and offers new insights into its subject. Inevitably, critical and scholarly emphasis on the different aspects of Morris's personality and work has shifted over time in line with the drastic alterations in the political and artistic landscape throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and these essays confirm and extend some of these trends.

On the one hand, the precision and scope of what is now known about mid- and late-nineteenth-century Britain has increased remarkably during recent decades, offering continual surprises even to those who have devoted their lives to this field. Accordingly, the study of Morris and his circle has benefitted from important research aids; these include the five volumes of Morris's *Collected Letters*, edited by Norman Kelvin from 1984 to 1996 (with another volume edited by Frank C. Sharp expected soon); the previously-mentioned acclaimed 1994 biography, *William Morris: A Life For Our Time*, by Fiona MacCarthy (discussed by Michael Robertson in Chapter 1), followed by Robertson's own more compact portrayal in *The Last Utopians: Four Late-Nineteenth Century Visionaries* (2017); and the 386-page *A Bibliography of William Morris* by Eugene LeMire (2006), supplanting earlier, less accurate and incomplete accounts, and supplemented by his 1969 checklist of Morris's lectures and socialist manuscripts. Other major compilations and histories include William Peterson's 1991 *The Kelmscott Press: A History of William Morris's Typographic Adventure*, and two works co-edited with Sylvia Holton Peterson, *The Kelmscott Chaucer: A Census* (2011) and *The Library of William Morris: A Digital Catalogue* (ongoing); a useful compilation of contemporary reviews of Morris's works, *William Morris: The Critical Heritage*, edited by Peter Faulkner; and related editions such as the *Collected Letters of Jane Morris*, edited by Jan Marsh and Frank C. Sharp. As mentioned earlier, the William Morris

Archive seeks to make available online images of Morris's articles and books published in his lifetime, including Kelmscott Press editions, as well as all available manuscripts and other supplementary materials.

In this context, several essays in the *Morris Companion* significantly extend our factual knowledge of Morris's environs (Chapter 4, Julia Griffin; and Chapter 5, Martin Stott), art production practices (Chapter 7, Jim Cheshire; and Chapter 21, Yuri Cowan, book collecting), and education and self-education (Chapter 6, Chris Miele; and Chapter 12, William Whitla). Increasingly, too, critics of Morris have sought to place him in the context of wider political, literary, and artistic movements, viewing him not only as an outstanding individual but also as a moving force within the cross-currents of his time. Morris appears in this volume against the broader backgrounds of Victorian business (Chapter 2, Charles Harvey, Jon Press, and Mairi Maclean), preservationist practices (Chapter 6, Chris Miele; and Chapter 7, James Cheshire), interior decoration (Chapter 8, Margaretta Frederick), Liberal Party and socialist thought (Chapter 16, Frank C. Sharp; Chapter 17, Tony Pinkney; and Chapter 20, Owen Holland), and book design (Chapter 22, Nicholas Frankel). Morris's sometimes-marginalized contributions in translation are assessed in Chapters 12 (Whitla) and 13 (Paul Acker), and the less-explored qualities of his increasingly respected prose romances/fantasy writings are featured in Chapters 5 (Stott), 11 (David Latham), 14 (Phillippa Bennett), and 15 (John Plotz).

Several authors also interpret Morris's ability to merge genres and centuries (Chapter 10, Elizabeth Helsinger; Chapter 11, Latham; and Chapter 15, Plotz), while these and others ponder Morris's contemporary reception and its implications for the present (Chapter 5, Stott; Chapter 9, David Mabb; and Chapter 15, Plotz). Two major trends in the wider critical landscape are also reflected in the excitement generated by the utopian implications of Morris's socialist writings (Chapter 17, Pinkney; Chapter 18, Elizabeth Miller; and Chapter 20, Holland) and his pioneering and prescient eco-socialism (Chapter 19, Patrick O'Sullivan; also a motif in Chapter 8, Frederick, and Chapter 22, Frankel). My own essay, Chapter 3, "Morris, Gender, and the Woman Question," offers tribute to feminist readings of Morris's work as well as his contributions to the socialist-feminist debates of his time.

I have arranged this volume into five parts: "Life, Family, and Environs," "Art: Preservation, Interior Design, and Adaptation," "Literature: Poetry, Art, Translation, and Fantasy," "Literature and Socialism," and "Books: Collecting and Design." Each of these categories inevitably overlaps the others to some degree, and the essays themselves complement and support one another from varied perspectives. In what follows, I will give brief comments on some notable features of each chapter, and in conclusion will gather suggestions and observations for future Morris criticism.

## Part I: Morris's Life, Family, and Environs

*Chapter 1:* In opening this volume, Michael Robertson's "Morris's Biographies" explores three topics at once: Morris's life, his biographers and critics, and the art of biography itself. He assesses each of the three great biographies—those by J. W. Mackail (1899), E. P. Thompson (1955, rev. ed. 1977) and Fiona MacCarthy (1994)—as products of the intellectual currents of their time, but also notes the many other contributions provided along the way by Morris's family, political associates, editors, critics, and less-remembered biographers. Robertson points out Mackail's striking silence regarding Morris's private life, revealing "the way in which Victorian biographical conventions of reticence colluded with patriarchal ideology to erase women from the accounts of men's lives," and notes the counterbalancing contributions made to an understanding of Morris's personal qualities by May Morris, Georgiana Burne-Jones, Bernard Shaw, and J. Bruce Glasier. He explains the debates over the degree to which Morris's socialism was

Marxist and revolutionary, explicitly addressed by R. Page Arnot's 1964 *William Morris: The Man and the Myth* and E. P. Thompson's *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (1955, 1977), but he also gives credit to the alternative approaches of now-superseded biographies by Philip Henderson and Jack Lindsay. He especially admires Norman Kelvin's introductions to his four-volume edition of Morris's letters for their assessments of the latter's work for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and the Kelmscott Press, his book collecting, and his response to the artistic modernism of the fin de siècle.

Most notably, Robertson traces the rise of feminist criticism in the context of revelations about the Morris's private life and Jane Morris's affairs with Dante Rossetti and Wilfred Scawen Blunt, discussing more recent contributions by Jan Marsh, Wendy Parkins, and, especially, Marsh and Frank C. Sharp's *Collected Letters of Jane Morris* (2012), which allowed Jane for the first time to speak for herself but also exposed the deep pain that Jenny's illness caused to both her parents. Robertson also identifies a second suppressed narrative in Morris's business career, considered for the first time from an economic perspective by Charles Harvey and Jon Press's *William Morris: Design and Enterprise in Victorian Britain* (1991). And finally, he applauds the originality and agenda of Fiona MacCarthy's 1995 *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* "to present Morris in all his complexity"; her discerning interpretation of the artistic and sensuous aspects of Morris's socialism; and her tact in acknowledging the uncertainties of his personal life. Interestingly Robertson notes that hers is a characteristically contemporary biography in its plenitude and "novelistic concern with character," citing John Updike's view that in their rich detail and attention to setting, such recent biographies approach "novels with indexes."

*Chapter 2:* In "Business in the Creative Life of William Morris," Charles Harvey, Jon Press, and Mairi Maclean explore an aspect of Morris's life often taken for granted, his thirty-five-year career as a businessman. The authors argue that this was not a backdrop to his other activities but an important part of his identity, enabling many of his other endeavors, and they illustrate their claims through a careful account of his business decisions and practices, examining the stages of his biography and artistic career from the perspective of his economic choices. They note Morris's familiarity with business practices through his family background, his careful initial marketing of the products of Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Company to Gothic Revival firms and others, the ways in which the reorganization into Morris and Company enabled him to increase his range of products as markets shifted to serve both middle-class homes and elite country houses, and his skillful advertising of both high-end and more affordable products to appeal to different clientele. The authors provide information on Morris and Co.'s rising profits, network of clients, distinctive pricing and business practices, and careful preservation of its reputation. They also explain how Morris's transformation of his business into a partnership during the late 1880s and 1890s enabled him to maintain his income while freeing himself for his socialist endeavors even as his health declined.

The authors' account of the finances of the Kelmscott Press is especially interesting, as they refute prior assertions that the Press had been intended as a hobby without commercial aims; Morris used long-familiar forms of pricing and marketing for his new venture and, in most instances, obtained considerable profits. They observe that "Morris, as ever, was prepared to invest heavily in products about which he cared deeply," and that like his other business ventures, this one enabled him to research craft processes and to further his literary and artistic projects. They conclude that Morris could easily have expanded Morris and Co. to increase his profits rather than preserving his time for his political and artistic pursuits, but the model of a "small and independent" enterprise expressed his preferences and offered "support, in one way or another, for all his artistic, cultural, literary, and political ventures." The authors' account of the consistency and ambition of Morris's business practices leads one to wonder to what extent he

sought to redirect his organizational and marketing skills when turning to his boldest venture, the promotion of socialism.

*Chapter 3:* In “Morris, Gender, and the Woman Question,” I suggest that Morris’s views on gender, sexuality, and women’s roles developed largely in parallel with his life experiences, family relationships, and formulation of socialist ideas. He was never fully a feminist in the modern sense, but a comparison of his earlier and later literary works and public statements reveal that he adapted significantly in response to his experiences as husband, father, and political activist. New details on the lives of Jane (1830–1914), Jenny (1861–1935), and May Morris (1862–1938) confirm their active participation in his work and activities. In particular, May’s career, which extended into the third decade of the twentieth century, can be viewed as the embodiment of several of Morris’s ideals for women of the future. Morris’s literary works pay special heed to the psychological oppressions experienced by women within a patriarchal society, and his reflections on gender relations in *News from Nowhere* offer a nuanced response to the avant-garde socialist-feminist ideals of his day. His last completed prose romance, *The Water of the Wondrous Isles*, notably presents a genuinely socialist feminist view of an egalitarian communal society, in which equals of both sexes combine their efforts for the common good.

*Chapter 4:* Julia Griffin’s “Kelmscott Manor: Mr. Morris’s Country Place (1871–1896)” provides a full account of Morris’s tenancy of his most famous home, associated intimately with his ideals and the setting of his utopian romance *News from Nowhere*. Many of the actual details of Morris’s residence at Kelmscott Manor have remained unexamined, and Griffin challenges several earlier claims, including the view that Morris initially leased the house with Rossetti chiefly in order to permit his wife to pursue an affair with the latter; that from the beginning, Morris preferred Kelmscott Manor above other locations; that he spent a great deal of time there throughout his tenancy; and that Kelmscott Manor represented a place of leisure rather than work. Griffin presents two tables to illustrate her points. The first indicates that in some years, Morris visited the Manor for as little as a week, but that after 1887, as he divested himself of the direct management of Morris and Co., his visits became more frequent, rising to a peak of 93 days in the last year of his life. The second table lists the literary and artistic works with which he engaged at Kelmscott—17 designs for Morris and Co., eight books, a poem and an essay, and several items for the Kelmscott Press—confirming that for him, Kelmscott was a working retreat.

Morris also used the Manor for entertaining friends and business associates, and excursions to the surrounding area inspired a high proportion of the cases that he documented for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. Increasingly, too, the Manor was used as a refuge for Jenny, whose epilepsy evoked stigma elsewhere. Griffin also examines contemporary records to uncover what is known of the Manor’s interior during the Morris tenancy and which features have since undergone alteration. Finally, she provides an account of life at the Manor after Morris’s death and considers the reasons which have led to its close association with his memory.

*Chapter 5:* Martin Stott’s “‘What came we forth for to see that our hearts are so hot with desire’: Morris and Iceland” discusses Morris’s 1871 and 1873 *Journals of Travel in Iceland* in many contexts: biographically, as a transformative experience; as a source for his narrative poems and romances; as an outgrowth of his Icelandic readings and translations of medieval Icelandic literature; and as a partial influence on his developing political views. In addition to laying out Morris’s itineraries and emotions during his journeys, Stott examines some of the poetry these inspired and considers the *Journals’* belated publication history and the reactions of modern critics. He also documents the favorable response of Icelanders to Morris’s visits, his fundraising campaign on behalf of Iceland during the famine of 1882, and the moving tributes paid to Morris by Icelanders at his death. He records May Morris’s three later visits to the island (in

1924, 1926, and 1931), and explores the continuing resonance of Morris's eco-socialism with the platform and ideals of contemporary Icelandic Greens, including a former prime minister.

Stott also moves beyond Morris's Victorian period to consider earlier and later accounts of Iceland, especially those of W. H. Auden and Louis MacNeice (*Letters from Iceland*, 1937) and most recently of Lavinia Greenlaw (*Questions of Travel*, 2011); changing public views of the island during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; and the recent phenomenon of popular literature set in Iceland as represented by J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, G. R. Martin's *Song of Ice and Fire*, and the television series by David Benioff and D. B. Weiss, *Game of Thrones* (2016–ongoing). An important feature of this chapter consists of Stott's account of his own responses to the places visited by Morris, the mixed effects of increased theme-related tourism on the Icelandic landscape and economy, and the continuing influence of Morris's *Journals* on several strands of contemporary culture.

## Part II: Art: Preservation, Interior Design, and Adaptation

*Chapter 6:* Chris Miele's "Morris and Architecture" places Morris's lifelong love of architecture, designs, and preservationist activities within a detailed account of the architectural fashions of his day. He notes Morris's early emotional responses to buildings, suggesting that his family's move from an original lovely home may have prompted his sensitivity to buildings and their demise. Miele explains the projects with which Morris would have been familiar as an assistant in the firm of G. E. Street, the level and nature of the tasks likely assigned to him, and the then-current highly-colored styles in Gothic restoration which influenced his later work. He differs from those who have found the design of Philip Webb's Red House truly distinctive, noting that this resembled a larger version of Neo-Gothic vicarages of the 1840s designed by A. W. N. Pugin and William Butterfield, and observing the extent to which Webb's design for the house's frame determined much of its interior decoration. Miele also ranks G. E. Street and Gilbert Scott among the more careful and less destructive Victorian restorationists, and notes the extent to which Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co. relied on such Victorian Gothic restorationists for early commissions, a dependence which would have been less necessary at the time of the founding of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

Miele considers the rise of preservationist groups such as the Commons Preservation Society in the 1870s as a background for the formation of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB). Unlike the Anglican Church, the SPAB viewed ancient buildings not as structures for present-day use but as historical monuments, and the resulting clashes with ecclesiastical authorities limited the number of successful appeals in the Society's early years. Miele identifies the organization's most active members, including Morris, Webb, Morris and Co.'s business manager George Wardle, Thomas Wardle, surveyor Charles Vinall, and architect Hugh Thackeray Turner, and describes its then-innovative use of casework, with information acquired through press-clippings and local correspondents. Early successes came most often when the vicar was himself a restorationist, but as church attendance declined in rural areas and less money was available for ambitious renovations, the more preservationist practices of the SPAB gained increasing favor.

Facing some backlash, Morris separated his political and restorationist activities so as not to harm the latter, but in essays such as his 1884 "Architecture and History," he laid out a neo-Ruskinian, Marxist view of the relationship between buildings and the context of their construction. Miele concludes that although in the heat of forming the SPAB, Morris had "attacked the very idea of Gothic Revival," his 1889 essay on "Gothic Architecture" represented a rapprochement with its ideals, and that his final views of architectural conservation, as embodied in the settings

of *News from Nowhere*, reflect a return to his youthful ideals and passions. Morris's legacy remains in modern-day expectations for preserving ancient sites, the SPAB's promotion of high technical standards for conservation work, and the energetic networks of environmental and preservationist activism in the United Kingdom and North America.

*Chapter 7:* Jim Cheshire's "William Morris and Stained Glass" provides a detailed analysis of the developments in artistic glass manufacture represented by Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Company (after 1875, Morris and Co.) and identifies Morris's own contributions at each stage. Early windows featured a variety of artists and styles, a practice which Cheshire traces in part to Morris's admiration for Ruskin's "The Nature of Gothic," with its praise of autonomous artists collaborating, at times with rough rather than uniformly polished work, to create a harmonious whole. During the late 1860s, the range of artists used by the Firm became more restricted, and by the mid-1870s, Burne-Jones was its chief designer. Cheshire identifies a final stage in the 1880s and 1890s in which Morris and Burne-Jones collaborated to produce spectacular, less mimetic designs influenced by early medieval sources, including Byzantine mosaics. He also identifies an important paradox: although Morris firm designs were allegedly "medieval," they departed from other revivalist work of the time in refusing to adhere to specific historical models, instead claiming status as the work of independent creative artists.

Cheshire explains the processes used in preparing and mounting windows, including Morris's role in selecting colors, supervising glass preparation, arranging leading, and ensuring an overall complementarity of individual panels. Morris contributed figure designs to early panels and at each stage provided patterned decorations and natural foliage to adorn and balance human figures. To trace the Firm's development, Cheshire presents case studies of windows executed for St. Michael and All Angels (1861–62), All Saints Selsley (1862), All Saints Middleton Cheney (1865–93), and St. John's Torquay (1865) as well as several commissions from the 1870s, all of which illustrate the sometimes fraught negotiations between patrons, architects, and the Firm, intensified by rifts between different branches of Anglicanism. Cheshire explores the complex symbolism and color arrangements needed for each separate design, as well as noting ways in which Morris's bargaining skills ensured that Morris and Co. was most often able to fulfill commissions in accord with its own preferences. In addition to offering a history of Morris and Co. stained glass, Cheshire's exposition provides a template for appreciating the dramatic emotion encoded in specific features of these magnificent artworks. He concludes that Morris "not only envisaged new ambitions for the medium, he also successfully implemented them by masterful collaborations with artisans, clergymen, architects and artists in a wide range of contexts."

*Chapter 8:* Margaretta Frederick's "William Morris and the Rise of Interior Design" explores the aspect of Morris's artistry for which he is best known: harmonious and beautiful designs combining artworks in several media to compose a unified environment. Frederick argues that at every stage, Morris's collaborative methods were especially important in creating these interiors, helping him to revive craft processes, cross generic boundaries of the visual and other arts, extend the range of products, and influence his contemporaries and later designers. She examines the economic and artistic culture from which the Morris aesthetic was formed and chronicles Morris's early experiments in a variety of media: literature, figure painting, manuscript illumination, embroidery, painted furniture, and wall decoration. These culminated in the first large artistic project of Morris and his confederated friends, the building and decoration of Red House in a romantically medievalized yet subtly neo-modern style and its offshoot in Morris, Marshall, Faulkner and Co.

Frederick next considers the early labor and design practices of the Firm, including the employment of several women designers such as Lucy and Kate Faulkner, Mrs. George Camfield, Jane Morris, Jane's sister Bessie Burden, and Georgiana Burne-Jones, and traces the



Firm's participation in successive exhibitions and early commissioned work. The relocation to new premises in 1865 accompanied a movement toward more secular themes, as seen in designs for the St. James's Palace Armoury and Tapestry rooms and the Green Dining Room of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The Firm's 1870s interiors were also less medieval in tone and more directly inspired by natural phenomena as Morris and Co. moved toward a more aesthetic mode of home decoration. Frederick discusses the new designs created after the Firm's reorganization into Morris and Co., including the refined patterning of its layered wallpaper designs. She suggests that this more naturalistic tone was also associated with Morris's leasing of Kelmscott Manor, where "the relationship of the interior design to the exterior landscape is particularly evident," as his environs became source material for later patterns. A few years later, Morris's redecoration of his family's new home at Kelmscott House reflected his concern for simplicity and a paring down to essentials. Though the Morrises' residence contrasts with interiors he designed for wealthy clients at the time, these larger installations nonetheless maintained a sense of fitness and harmony with their surroundings. Frederick describes Morris's final new ventures in weaving, tapestries, and carpet design, items which complemented and drew together other elements of room furnishings, and his quite different venture in designing simple, less expensive furniture for a "model workman's small house."

Frederick concludes that Morris's belief in the need to eliminate "troublesome superfluities" and his comprehensive approach to the design of interiors may have been even more important than his role in the reform of specific household furnishings. She finds that his legacy continues in the modern design movement and in his contextual view of design, including consideration of landscape, the physical and emotional health of a home's inhabitants, social justice, and the preservation of nature itself.

*Chapter 9:* David Mabb's "William Morris and the Culture Industry: Appropriation, Art, Critique" takes on the vast topic of Morris's visual and cultural imprint—on his residences, the heritage industry, and on later artists who seek alternately to appropriate, recuperate, or re-contextualize his work in contemporary art forms. Mabb is a noted artist, and his chapter takes the partial form of collage, as in a series of seventeen sections he juxtaposes photographs with quotations and commentary in accord with the epigraph by Walter Benjamin, "But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them" (*Arcades*, 460).

The separate sections move from Morris's environments to his accomplishments and, finally, to recent artistic responses. Early sections consider (1) his appreciation of gardens and (2) the importance of Red House to the later Arts and Crafts movement, its recent restoration by the National Trust, and—the wasp in the ointment—the extent to which preservationist efforts overlap with commercial ones. Section 3 provides an account of the William Morris Gallery's fraught history, near-closure, and successful renovation as a site for the reinterpretation of Morris's life and work. Similarly sections on (4) Kelmscott House and (5) Kelmscott Manor detail the close relationship between the preservation of Morris's London residence and the William Morris Society, including its partial return to private hands; and the extent to which attempts to draw tourists to Kelmscott Manor have de-politicized Morris's memory. Section 6, "Morris and Co.," documents the contemporary use of mechanized, less individualized technologies to produce imitative Morris-design products; and Section 7, "Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings," cites selections from Morris's original manifesto and documents the Society's continued pursuit of these aims. A final commentary by Philip Venning suggests, "Had Morris been less abrasive and more willing to work with these apparent allies [conservative nineteenth-century architects], the Society's driving purpose would have been swallowed up." In Section 8, Mabb considers the paradoxical relationship of Bauhaus designs

to those of Morris and Co., as both sought to provide products for ordinary life, although the Bauhaus fully embraced industrial means of mass production.

The final sections explore installations by modern artists that encode Morris images or designs to express social commentary. Section 9, “William Morris and the Atom,” features Mabb’s 2016 series, “A Provisional Memorial to Nuclear Disarmament,” which protests the misappropriation of Morris textiles by the British Ministry of Defence to decorate a nuclear submarine. In Section 10, “Morris Kitsch,” Mabb critiques the exploitation of Morris designs in inappropriate places, on bad, vulgar, or out-of-context merchandise, and in Section 11, “Jewel Point,” he presents an art installation by Burnaby artist Gisele Amantea which employs elements from Morris wallpapers to express, in her words, “abundance and exuberance in decoration.” Section 12 presents Mabb’s series “Big Red Propeller 2001,” in which a massive ship’s propeller is layered over mass-produced Morris fabrics, allegorizing the need for artisanship rather than the alienated labor of industrial production. Section 13, “Announcer,” features Mabb’s 2015 exhibition, which inlays illustrations from Russian artist Eli Lissitsky’s 1923 *For the Voice* on images of Morris’s 1896 Kelmscott *Chaucer* to offer contrasting visions of resistance to capitalist social relations.

Section 14, “We sit starving amidst our gold,” juxtaposes commentaries on Jeremy Deller’s famous representation of Morris hurling the yacht of Roman Abramovich into the Venetian lagoon. For Deller, the painting encourages us “to turn the mirror on ourselves and ask questions of the society in which we live,” but at least one reviewer pushed back; Tony Pinkney (see Chapter 17) notes that the image falsely presents Morris as a rage-driven individualist-anarchist. Section 15, “Love is Enough: William Morris & Andy Warhol,” explores an exhibition at Modern Art Oxford that postulated significant comparisons between the two artists; some reviewers were skeptical of this link, and in one case suggested that the exhibition presented “two [separate] narratives” (Laura Harris, 2014). Section 16, “The World Stage: Jamaica,” examines Kehinde Wiley’s portraits of contemporary Jamaican men and women against a backdrop of lush Morrisean patterns, affirming Wiley’s aim of binding together temporal, cultural, and racial divides. Finally, Section 17, “I do not want art for a few any more than I want education for a few or freedom for a few,” presents a poster by Jeremy Deller, Scott King, and William Morris that accompanied a protest by artists against government cuts in arts funding. In its reminder of the continuing relevance of Morris’s advocacy for the role of the arts in social transformation, Mabb’s conclusion provides a fitting closure to the chapter’s artistic/political critiques.

### **Part III: Literature: Poetry, Art, Translation, and Fantasy**

*Chapter 10:* Elizabeth Helsinger’s “A Question of Ornament: Poetry and the (Lesser) Arts” probes the fundamental question of what constitutes “ornament,” as conceived by Morris and other aestheticians of his century, and explores how Morris altered his use of ornamentation in successive poetic works. Among other definitions of the term as applied to architecture, music, and even pottery, she cites Jonathan Hay’s description, “rhythmic affirmation of motifs across a surface in tension with a limit,” as suggestive of the crafted forms of Morris’s poetry and its emphasis on audience and its work in the world. She identifies some recent central strains in Morris criticism, including Jerome McGann’s claim for the materialist aesthetics of Morris’s verse, Jeffrey Skoblow’s identification of the radical politics of *The Earthly Paradise*, and Elizabeth Miller’s account of Morris’s dual anti-capitalist print ventures in *Commonweal* and the Kelmscott Press. Helsinger notes that criticism of *The Defence of Guenevere* has centered on its roughness and “narrative difficulty,” a form of imperfection Ruskin had identified with Gothic architecture and the creativity of its craftsmen, but which, as Isobel Armstrong observes, also reflects an

oppressed consciousness under a profit-driven system. Similarly, Lindsay Smith has argued that the *Defence* poems present an imagery of “perceptual aberration,” contrasting intense detail with an “elusive depth of field” that suggests the inadequacy of mechanical models of vision, and Helsinger herself has observed the significance of color arrangement as an expressive language for conveying psychological disturbance. Such forms of “peculiar intensities, repetitions, and compulsive patterning” are central to Morris’s early work, but are modulated in *The Earthly Paradise* to cultivate a sense of unfulfilled desire which in his later works will be used to advocate for political change.

In this context, Helsinger argues that Morris’s longest unbroken narrative, *Sigurd the Völsung*, represents an altered view of ornamentation as a form of popular art which moves its audience to action. Nineteenth-century architects and theorists had agreed that ornament in all cases must be subject to a total design; in *Sigurd*, this total design is conveyed through a propulsive metrics that enforces a relentless cycle of fate even as its verbal surfaces signal the saga’s “social, aesthetic, and ethical otherness.” The poem’s verbal figures resemble Morris’s designs of the period in giving a sense of movement through patterned repetitions, prolongations, scene patterning, and repeated invocations of the tale as tale, suggestive of a cycle whose readers must enact “a tale still to be told.” Morris’s new form of ornament, then, is devoted to prolonging his readers’ expectations “even beyond the needs of the poem” and into a revolutionary future, in accord with his aims in the final decades of his life.

*Chapter 11: David Latham’s “Making Pictures: Pre-Raphaelite Poetry and Its Reception”* tackles a major gap in the study of Pre-Raphaelite poetics—What precisely is Pre-Raphaelitism in poetry, and how do Morris’s works participate in this movement? Latham cites John Ruskin’s perceptive identification of “grotesque idealism,” imagery that reaches toward mysterious truths not rationally accessible, and Walter Pater’s identification of “convulsed intensity” and “opposite excellences” in Morris’s early poetry. These perceptions enable Latham’s fresh readings of major poems of the *Defence of Guenevere*, whose imagery he finds confirms Morris as stylistically “the most revolutionary of the major Victorian writers.” As he evaluates the reactions of successive critics to Morris’s writings, he observes that the *Defence* evoked more insightful and praiseful contemporary reviews than has been recognized.

Latham next contrasts the intense imagery and tone of Morris’s early writings with that of the narrative poems of his middle period, *The Life and Death of Jason* and *The Earthly Paradise*. In these, Morris moves from the lyric poetry of unresolved tensions to “a narrative surface of clear plotline,” influenced by his design work of the period, which Latham characterizes as “a return to the origins of art in terms of archetype and mythology.” In their measured rhythms, these later poems anticipate the pace and ornamentation of his later prose romances and help “develop the prose poems as a new genre of art.” Latham notes that through the *Earthly Paradise*’s frame of Nordic and Greek tales, integration is regained through the songs and stories of our communal roots, a perception later translated into Morris’s lectures on art and socialism. He finds Morris’s last epic, *Sigurd the Völsung*, to be an innovative combination of hexameter rhythms and rugged Anglo-Saxon alliterative lines that expresses an ethos of self-sacrifice for the good of the community.

As a neo-medieval morality play, *Love Is Enough* anticipates Morris’s later fantasy tales, and *Poems by the Way* draws together poems composed over thirty years that anticipate the concerns of his lectures, romances, and designs; in shifting emphasis from love to art, moreover, these provide a means of finding hope through the sharing of tales. Latham provides a close reading of the ornamental syntax of the opening lines of the prose romance *Child Christopher*, organized to evoke an experience through imagery rather than grammar. He argues that in minimizing dramatic conflict to represent instead a shared community of language, Morris disrupts realist

literary decorum, a pattern yet further developed in the artful self-referentiality of Kelmscott Press editions. In their structure, diction, and presentation of alternative worlds, these romances resemble *Poems by the Way*, and Latham suggests that these should be viewed as Morris's final major poetic works.

*Chapter 12:* William Whitla's "William Morris and the Classical Tradition" explores the close relationship between Morris's early classical education and his lifelong linguistic and literary pursuits. Whitla demonstrates the increasing depth and sophistication of Morris's response to Greek and Roman literature and history, exploring his affinity with the populist roots of classical epic, his interest in ancient slavery as a pre-figuration of modern wage labor, and his efforts to pioneer forms of language and prosody that would bridge older and modern linguistic traditions. After reviewing previous scholarship, Whitla's discussion is arranged in five sections. The first, "Formation," explains the curriculum Morris studied in public school and at Oxford, necessary for gentlemanly status. At Marlborough he had studied the syntax of a considerable range of Latin and Greek authors, translating prose and verse both from and into these languages, and though he stood only in the middle of his class, Whitla summarizes that he "must have learned far more than the 'next to nothing' that he claimed." At Oxford, the impressive list of readings required for the "Responsions," "Moderations," and "Finals" centered almost entirely on Latin and Greek translation, with only incidental attention to aesthetics or history. (Logic was taught in part from a Latin text dating from 1691, and science was entirely omitted.) Morris had begun his book collecting by this period, including volumes in classical and medieval Latin, often in early printed versions of the type he would later use at the Kelmscott Press, and throughout his life he continued to collect Latin, French, Italian, and other older printed books. In Section 2, "Translations," Whitla explains contemporary debates about the authorship, dating, and historical status of classical epics, then considers in detail Morris's translations of three of these: the *Aeneids*, which Morris presents as a great people's saga rather than a defense of empire through his choices in meter, prosody, and diction; the *Odyssey*, likewise represented as an expression of early Greek folk culture; and an aborted *Iliad*, abandoned in the throes of his political work.

Section 3, "Adaptations," discusses Morris's adaptation of sources for "Scenes from the Fall of Troy," *The Life and Death of Jason*, and the medieval frame and pastoral tone of the classical tales of *The Earthly Paradise*, which Whitla posits as a kind of inverted *Odyssey*, as the *Wanderers* flee rather than seek their homeland. And in Part 4, "Polemics," Whitla traces Morris's Marxist readings of ancient history as these inform his definition of "civilization" as a state of society in which privileges for a few are built on widespread enslavement. Moreover, the cultural monuments of these ancient societies have been misappropriated by a contemporary elite, distorting a people's tradition of continuing stories. Morris also joined other eighteenth and nineteenth-century thinkers in differentiating the handicrafts of the mid and late middle ages from the allegedly more artificial art and culture of the Renaissance, the period of capitalist and imperial expansion.

A final section, "Calligraphy: Horace and Virgil," reviews the range of Morris's classical manuscript illuminations. Whitla characterizes features of his renderings of the *Odes of Horace* and (with Burne-Jones) of Virgil's *Aeneids*, arguing that his influence on later calligraphers helped guide the calligraphic conventions of the next century. He concludes that through his literary writings, Morris "remade the classics for his own age" and represented its historical roots in ways that "resisted the dominant mode of adulatory absorption of the ancient past."

*Chapter 13:* Paul Acker's "A Very Animated Conversation on Icelandic Matters: The Saga Translations of William Morris and Eiríkr Magnússon" follows the impressive trajectory of Morris's more than thirty saga translations. Acker discusses the lingering linguistic traces of the Vikings in Britain, Morris's early readings in English translations of Old Norse literature, and the influence of such sources on his early romance, "Lindenberg Pool" and two tales in *The*

*Earthly Paradise*. He describes the content and manner of Morris's studies in Icelandic, beginning in 1869 under Magnússon's tutelage, and details their early joint publications, *The Story of Gunnlaug the Worm-tongue*, *The Story of the Dwellers at Eyr*, *The Story of the Völsungs and Níblungs*, and *Three Northern Love Stories*, with its Pre-Raphaelite emphasis on romantic conflicts and ill-fated love. Acker provides details of Morris's concurrent work with calligraphic manuscripts, some left incomplete and others finished in collaboration with Charles Fairfax Murray, George Wardle, and others; these help in dating Morris's translations and also show his care with historical details, as when in a leaf of the *Ynglinga saga*, he has penciled in seven panels with the names of the Norse gods.

Acker next reviews prior critical responses to Morris's archaized word choices, which were generally disliked by modernist critics. Others have noted in their defense that Morris's choices were not coinages but words in prior use, so that he was attempting to revive as well as create an alternate linguistic tradition. Acker also finds that Morris's method is more successful in translating poems, such as those from the Elder Edda, than in his longer prose narratives. Although in the years directly after 1873, Morris turned his attention to other endeavors, in the 1890s he and Magnússon returned to the task of publishing much of their joint work in the six volume *Saga Library* (1891–1901), completed by Magnússon after Morris's death. Even in old age, Acker suggests, Morris retained his identification with the bluntness and broad humor of the sagas, as well as with its oft-beleaguered but courageous heroes.

*Chapter 14*: Phillipa Bennett's "Rewilding Morris: Wilderness and the Wild in the Last Romances" interprets Morris's last romances—from *The Glittering Plain* (1891) through *The Sundering Flood* (posth. 1897)—as attempts to imagine alternate societies whose denizens engage constructively with the natural and social world. She argues that earlier critical claims that Morris's final literary works are escapist fail to engage their ecologically and socially revolutionary content, and she suggests that works in Morris's "late style" offer not closure but inspiration, even disruption, to the conventional expectations of realist fiction and the society which has produced it. She notes that the flexibility of the romance genre permitted Morris to experiment with a wide variety of plots in a vigorous, simple style employing new forms of language.

Characters in the late romances engage with nature in its less settled, "wilderness" aspects as well as with the "wildnesses" within society and their own selves. Bennett demonstrates that Morris's profound experience of the landscapes of Iceland—characterized by anxiety and strain as well as excitement—heavily influenced the settings of the prose romances. Their protagonists must engage with overwhelming spaces without being intimidated by them, and must learn to read the wilderness signs which indicate danger or safety. They must also differentiate accurately true nature from malicious imitations, as when in *The Well at the World's End*, Ursula saves her own life and that of Ralph by recognizing the poisoned water in the well beneath the Dry Tree.

Most important, humans must understand that they are a part of the wilderness, not something alien to it; the protagonists of *The Water of the Wondrous Isles* and *The Sundering Flood*, among others, experience an uninhibited physical joy within nature and commune with wood- and nature spirits who reinforce their strength and sense of identity. Other values in this alternative world include nudity (as a symbol and form of physical renewal), mutual sexual feeling (as a positive expression of our animal nature), and, conversely, the "courage to travel alone" in pursuit of one's quest, even at the cost of renunciation and sacrifice. Bennett argues that Morris sought not to abandon civilization but to transform it, so that the boundaries between built environments and wild spaces remain permeable, lessening our fears of the unknown and ensuring a balance between our imaginative and social selves. Morris's protagonists return from their journeys to fulfill active roles in their communities, and Bennett suggests that if we desire a wilder, more authentic, world, Morris's last romances grant "a vision of what that world could be."

*Chapter 15:* In “Windy, Tangible, Resonant Worlds: The Non-Human Fantasy of William Morris,” John Plotz attempts to account for the strangeness as well as the appeal of Morris’s later romances. He explores the history of fantasy as a genre, suggesting that emerging fields which study the “nonhuman”—such as animal studies, object-oriented ontology, and other materialisms—provide a basis for considering alternate forms of human subjectivity which merge the self and outer world. For Plotz, late-Victorian fantasy is in part a reaction against Darwinianism and realist fiction and is allied with fin de siècle decadence; accordingly, Morris’s imagined worlds offer hope, not for our world as it now is, but rather (in Kafka’s words) “plenty of hope, only not for us.” Morris’s characters share an intuitive knowledge of these worlds, with a sense of full immersion, whereas his readers can only feel disconnection from a “world without us” framed as the antithesis to our capitalist, liberal-bourgeois existence. The power of such representations derives from the fact that we remain acutely aware of the gap between dream and reality; similarly, in Morris’s Prologue to *The Earthly Paradise*, a “wizard to a northern king” creates a magical Christmas panorama of spring, summer, and fall, yet still “in its wonted way, / Piped the drear wind of that December day.” Plotz traces a line of critical response to the perceived existence of this alternate world from George Marsh’s 1864 *Man and Nature* through the writings of J. R. R. Tolkien, Margaret Atwood, Eugene Thacker, Kate Marshall, and others.

After considering the origins of prose fantasy from the late eighteenth century onwards, he argues that the “tangibility, resonance, and nonhuman” aspects of Morris’s imagined worlds have been more influential than is generally credited, since modern prose fantasy began only in the aftermath of Morris’s romances, with their neo-medieval settings, multiple subplots, and focus on northern European mythologies. He counters the criticisms of Christian apologist Colin Manlove, who dismisses Morris’s prose as “anemic fantasy” for its lack of overt allegory; in rejoinder, Plotz argues that Morris’s characters must accept the sheer facticity of their physical environment. He identifies successors in this tradition in Evangeline Walton’s *The Virgin and the Swing* (1936), Mervyn Peake’s *Titus Groan* and other works (1946–1959), and Ursula Le Guin’s *The Dispossessed* (1974), which prioritizes “world building over plot.” Whereas authors such as Tolkien and Lewis import a recognizable this-world moral scheme into their imagined secondary worlds, Plotz finds that Morris pioneered a vision of true alterity in which the “people-for-the-world” inhabit a truly dehumanized, and thus “planetary,” space.

#### **Part IV: Literature and Socialism**

*Chapter 16:* Frank C. Sharp’s “William Morris and British Politics: From the Liberal Party to the Socialist League” provides a valuable account of Morris’s early political career and its relationship to his later socialist advocacy. Noting that Morris spent seven years as a spokesperson for the Radical wing of the Liberal Party (1876–83), Sharp explores the motivations for his early political activism, the causes which most engaged him, and the motives for his later deep and abiding disillusionment with parliamentary politics. In tracing the stages of Morris’s shift from radicalism to socialism, Sharp also explores the continuities in Morris’s thinking, as many of the causes he had hoped to further as a member of the Liberal Party—anti-imperialism, Irish independence, an end to sexual oppression, and the provision of education and non-oppressive labor for all—continued as animating ideals throughout his years as a socialist (1883–96). Sharp concludes that “it seems clear that many of Morris’s endeavors as a socialist were diverted towards an expanded conception of the aims which had prompted his original Liberalism,” and that his period of Liberal activism provided him with insights that “colored his reaction to political events long after he had left Liberal politics.”

Chapter 17: In “*News from Nowhere* in the Museum of Literary Interpretations,” Tony Pinkney takes the reader on a tour of possible alternative readings of Morris’s most famous work. He foregrounds his method of analysis, described as Althusserian–Machereyan (from Louis Althusser’s *Reading Capital* and Pierre Macherey’s *Theory of Literary Production*) and, more broadly, as postmodern; this involves a dialectic of probing for possible contradictions, gaps, or oppositional responses to the text’s surface. Such a process opens a cornucopia of alternative possibilities for interpreting familiar incidents, which Pinkney postulates might properly constitute a “Museum of Literary Interpretations,” similar to *Nowhere*’s evocation of the British Museum or the Wallingford Museum as sites for confronting the past; here visitors would ponder “the conundrum as to what you do with contradictory interpretations of a single textual phenomenon offered by equally well-qualified interpreters.” As Pinkney demonstrates, these are legion; he cites amusingly contradictory responses to the utopia’s serial publication (the weekly chapters invite audience response or, alternately, are merely structurally flabby); the tone of its opening scene at a Socialist League meeting (despairing, or self-ironic); the individuality or lack thereof of its characters; the tone of its famous ending (“Go back again, now you have seen us . . . ”); or its ideological clarity.

True to his desire to link methodology and text, Pinkney turns to the narrative for features of the new society which can be also used to interpret *News from Nowhere* itself: the lack of haste, decentralization, and the inhabitants’ “intense earnestness in getting to the bottom of some matter which in time past would have been thought quite trivial.” Since Pinkney notes that “everything in this remarkable text requires a twofold reading,” reacting back on an initial perception, its green-socialist vision is countered by objectors such as the old Grumbler, Ellen’s grandfather. This double effect is subtly evident in the treatment of objects—sensuously present in creating a realistic world, but also capable of evoking a sense of claustrophobia—as well as in the portrayal of William Guest, who both takes lessons from the new society and imparts his own, possibly disruptive or recidivist assumptions. Similarly open-ended is the issue of the genre of *Nowhere*, which as a “utopian romance” and dream vision suggests the reconciliation of opposites; however, the new society struggles to contain its disagreements, and its triadic generic structure is mirrored in the text’s several unhappy, even murderous erotic triangles.

Pinkney further suggests that the conjunction of genres creates “grinding tensions” among them, as well as between the narrative’s major characters—perhaps, Pinkney speculates, Old Hammond feels potentially supplanted by the new visitor. Remarking that *Nowhere* contains a greater profusion of characters than other utopias, he notes that these exemplify the text’s message of equality and decentralization but can unexpectedly reveal hidden discontents, as when the head-carver Philippa shrugs her shoulders when her daughter invites her to join the others in a toast; or at the dream’s conclusion, when on returning to his own nineteenth-century world, Guest hurries in shock and discomfort past the prematurely aged worker who salutes him—possibly even, Pinkney hints, an image of himself.

A final section, on the “Gothic,” explores the temporal displacement of Morris’s utopia, as well as Guest’s presence as a “ghost” within *Nowhere*, evoking a sense of the claustrophobia characteristic of gothic fiction, as well as Guest’s unstable identity and presence, which inspire imagery of evil spells and even a final exorcism. Pinkney concludes his sympathetically quasi-psychoanalytic readings with the postulate that an essentially anarchist, or freely associative, quality of Morris’s text demands decentered interpretations. These have dominated critical approaches to Morris’s work since the 1970s and will inevitably take new forms (he suggests perhaps “queer,” Deleuzian, or even religiously inflected modes of interpretation) in a future literary Great Change.

*Chapter 18:* Elizabeth Miller’s “William Morris and the Literature and Socialism of the *Commonweal*” explores the ways in which Morris promoted an expansive, internationalist, and ecologically-minded version of nineteenth-century socialism through the artistry of his *Commonweal* writings. She examines the newspaper’s origins, its cosmopolitan content—including translations of German and French revolutionary poetry—and its appeals to affect and sensuous experience in the three important literary works serialized in its pages. In the 1885–86 *The Pilgrims of Hope*, Morris portrays three English citizens—man, wife, and friend—who join the French Communards in their struggle. After the wife and friend (also lovers) are killed, the protagonist, Richard, returns home to gather strength and continue the workers’ struggle. Miller observes that *Pilgrims* marks a transition between Romantic views of nature and late-Victorian social protest poetry, and, as “an eco-poetic, collectivist epic,” the poem’s merging of Anglo-Saxon alliteration with epic hexameters helps construct an internationalist literary tradition. Similarly, its images evoke an erotically charged, liberating relationship between the human world and nature, expressing the multispecies entanglement that interests contemporary theorists of ecology and capitalism. In its appeal to Earth as the repository of memory beyond our own lives, *Pilgrims* also envisions a post-human world: “Till shrunk are the floods of thine ocean and thy sun is waxen pale.”

Morris’s second major work serialized in *Commonweal*, *A Dream of John Ball* (1886–87), employs a dream vision of time travel to explore another revolutionary moment, that of the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381. It positions early English anti-feudal protest as a forerunner of the nineteenth-century worker’s movement, and both within the *longue durée* of socialist struggle. Miller notes that Morris’s medieval period is not idealized but presented as a time of political persecution and oppression, thus forming a fit historical analogue to Morris’s own day. In its attention to details of the architecture, agriculture, communal spaces, and other landscape features of its imagined world, *A Dream* also reflects an environmental awareness of the mingling of human and natural spheres. Although the Peasants’ Revolt is local, John Ball’s words reach out to a wider, and thus international, world, offering solace and hope to the nineteenth-century visitor who has experienced the ravages of global capitalism.

In his 1890 *News from Nowhere*, Morris presents an ecotopia which posits humanity as a part of the natural world. Like *The Pilgrims of Hope* and *A Dream of John Ball*, its goal is to persuade his contemporary *Commonweal* readers to focus on their ultimate goals and interconnectedness rather than on temporary divisions. In this it succeeds, for Morris’s vision of a new society was widely inspirational in the 1890s and thereafter, even for those whose immediate politics differed significantly from his own. Miller notes that as he revised his original text, Morris further emphasized the internationalist and visionary qualities of the narrative, moving the date of its imagined revolution forward into the future even while modeling aspects of the Great Change on the events of the Paris Commune of 1871. She finds that its serial publication encouraged a view of history as open-ended and ongoing, thus encouraging a trans-historical and internationalist vision of socialism. And finally, its imagery of gardens, orchards, and hay harvests; its critique of extractive capitalism and coal-smoke pollution; and its ecological vision of the interpenetration of nature and humanity as enunciated by its central characters all suggest the centrality of natural renewal to his vision of socialism. Miller concludes that in all three literary works written for *Commonweal*, Morris creates a model of humanity that “extends backward into the past, forward into the future, sideways to other nations, and upward and downward into the very atmosphere and soil that constitute the earth”—a speculative and artistic feat which could not have been achieved through journalism alone.

*Chapter 19:* Patrick O’Sullivan’s “Desire and Necessity: William Morris and Nature” presents Morris’s views on nature and the environment against a background of recent environmental



thought. After explaining the divergences between several factions of environmentalists (technocentrists, ecocentrists, Cornucopians, Accommodaters, Mainstream and Dark Greens, Gaians, etc.), all of which focus on economic scarcity (i.e., demand), he defines eco-socialists as those who identify the problem elsewhere: in the tendency of economic systems, especially capitalism, to overproduce. The remedy to alleged scarcity, then, is the overthrow of capitalism, since “the liberation of nature and the liberation of human beings are one and the same.” Against this background, O’Sullivan finds Morris to be the most “green” of the nineteenth-century utopian theorists. His environmental ideas address most of the issues later publicized by radical environmentalists, including the advocacy of simplicity in lifestyle, production for need alone, use of alternative technologies, local production for local consumption, and respect for the natural environment.

O’Sullivan outlines the development of Morris’s ecological thought in his writings from his early 1877 essay on “The Decorative Arts” (later “The Lesser Arts”) onwards. In a first phase, from 1877 to 1883, Morris attacks “competitive commerce” as a foe of the inherent “beauty of life,” advocating instead “simplicity of life,” a limitation of wants, and an end to the division of labor which requires “mechanical toil.” He expands on these ideas in his 1882 “The Lesser Arts of Life,” noting that we should make do “with as few things as we can,” and correlatively, “take active interest in the arts of life which supply (our) material needs.” O’Sullivan notes that at this stage, Morris was still a member of the Liberal Party, and that he identifies the source of the problem in “civilization,” which “cannot mean at heart to produce evils.”

A major shift occurred, however, after Morris joined the (Socialist) Democratic Federation in 1883. He now finds that these evils arise from competition within a system driven by the profit motive, as he states in his 1884 essay “How We Live and How We Might Live”: “It is profit ... which turns beautiful rivers into filthy sewers, [and] which condemns [some to live] in houses for whose wretchedness there is no name.” He notes that machines have thus far been used not for liberation but to displace skilled work and increase the precariousness of employment, but under socialism, alternative technologies will flourish and labor again produce pleasure. Capitalism is inherently wasteful, on the one hand promoting the production of luxuries, and on the other, the making of inherently shoddy products for those who can afford no more. In essays of 1886–87, Morris develops the ideas which later inform *News from Nowhere*, as he explores the moral and ecological implications of socialism and the nature of socialist polity: land should be treated as a “fair green garden” and preserved from pollution and disfigurement; each family should be granted adequate space in pleasant surroundings and children enabled to play in gardens near their homes; the huge aggregations of manufacturing districts will be broken up; and a federation of independent communities will organize labor and ensure wider cooperation between groups.

Similarly in *Nowhere*, the fullest embodiment of these views, Morris projects a society without cash exchange, in which goods and services are provided on the basis of need; decisions are made directly, not through representatives; and the rights of dissidents are preserved. O’Sullivan also argues that in *Nowhere* Morris “intended to signify” women’s full political, social, and sexual emancipation, for despite the text’s frequent eroticized allusions to women’s appearance and a largely gendered division of labor, the work which *Nowhere*’s women perform is highly respected and they are granted entire freedom of choice in partners. Food is grown locally and intensively throughout the city, the landscape has been altered through woodland management, rivers have been purified from pollution, and wastes and wildernesses are carefully preserved. O’Sullivan observes the *Nowhere*ians’ use of “permaculture” and “agroecology,” and their identification of the Thames valley as a bioregion. A final section of the chapter considers the application of these principles in anarchist Republican Spain in 1936–37. O’Sullivan notes the power

of a more ecological society to generate moral change, including the relative emancipation of its women and the redirection of work toward fulfilling local human needs. He concludes that Morris's assertion of our ethical obligation to protect nature from exploitation may ultimately be his greatest contribution to the future.

*Chapter 20:* In "Morris and Marxist Theory," Owen Holland identifies the many correlations between Morris's socialist views and those of Karl Marx and "Marxism." He distinguishes these strands with care and places them within the context of competing late-nineteenth-century socialist parties and the views of later commentators such as E. P. Thompson, Perry Anderson, and Paul Meier. In the first of the chapter's five subsections, "Marx, Morris and the Socialist Movement in Fin-de-Siècle Britain," Holland observes the extreme marginality of socialist views at the time; in speaking to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1884, for example, Morris referred to Marx as "a great man, whom, I suppose, I ought not to name in this company." Nonetheless, Morris consistently gave Marx credit for the latter's insights on labor, class struggle, and the historical development of capitalism, as well as for the establishment of socialism "on a scientific basis." Holland notes that *News from Nowhere's* critiques of imperialism and the destructive effects of global markets are indebted to ideas emphasized in the *Communist Manifesto*, and that in associating with contemporary Marxists such as Edward Aveling, Eleanor Marx, and Ernest Belfort Bax, Morris participated in a socialist culture in which Marx's ideas were becoming influential but not yet codified. Holland also points out that the Socialist League formed its closest contacts with the Marxist (as opposed to the anarchist) groupings on the continent, and that Morris served as a Socialist League delegate to the 1889 Paris conference held by the Marxist Worker's Party of Jules Guesde and Paul Lafargue, later recognized as the founding conference of the Second International.

In Section 2, "Socialism from the Root Up," Holland explains the centrality of Marx and "scientific socialism" to Belfort Bax and Morris's *Commonweal* series of the same title. The authors devoted an entire chapter to expounding Marx's theories of use, exchange, and surplus value, and the *Communist Manifesto*, scientific socialism, and the Marxist German Workers' Party are featured in their historical account of the development of socialism. In Section 3, "Romanticism and Marxism: Morris's and Marx's Elective Affinities," Holland traces some commonalities between the ideas of the two socialists, both indebted to a strain of revolutionary-utopian romanticism characterized by opposition to capitalist modernity. They assumed contrasting roles, however: Marx as a theorist of alienation, production, and revolution; and Morris as a propagandist for revolutionary communism with a deep grasp of the social reality of alienation.

Section 4, "Alienation, Production and Sensuous Emancipation" compares Morris's and Marx's reflections on the sensory deprivation of workers. Holland notes the emphasis on sensuous experience central to *News from Nowhere*, including its repeated references to sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste, an immersion through which "the aestheticism of Morris's pre-socialist years takes on definite political value as a rhetorical means of persuasion." Similarly, both Morris and Marx assert the human need for beauty; Marx uses aesthetic production as a model of non-alienated labor, and Morris endorses the Ruskinian maxim that "Art is man's expression of his joy in labour." Both also view human nature as capable of change and expansion through circumstances, as Morris posits that a new social order will bring changes in "ethics and habits of life," and Marx asserts that a communist society would heal the individual's alienation from nature, from his own creativity, and from his fellows. Both of course attack the cash-nexus, division of labor, and an inhumanly extended work day. Finally, both assume that non-alienated labor will be desirable and sought for its own sake; under communism, the worker becomes, in Marx's words, "a different subject," and for Morris, labor and leisure will blend into one.

In Section 5, “Revolution, Dual Power and the Transition Beyond Capitalism,” Holland asserts the importance of Morris’s commitment to revolution, conceived as “a change in the basis of society” instituted by workers themselves, a view which led him to reject alleged solutions that failed to attack the structural unity of the capitalist order. What Holland describes as the “drama and intensity” of the account of revolution in *News from Nowhere*, “How the Change Came,” also exemplifies Marx’s description of periods of “dual power”—revolutionary eras during which new representative bodies compete for authority with an existing state. In the early stages of “the Change,” the counterweight to existing authority is provided by a Committee of Public Safety, supplemented by a network of workingmen’s associations capable of organizing a producers’ strike. Finally, Marx and Morris both share an ultimate goal: the withering of the state as an instrument of oppression. Holland concludes that although Morris does not reproduce Marx’s formulations exactly, the striking affinities in their thought help illuminate the grounds of Morris’s political imagination.

## Part V: Books: Collecting and Design

*Chapter 21:* In “William Morris’s Book Collecting,” Yuri Cowan explores Morris’s collecting practices and indicates ways in which these illuminate his artistic and literary activities. He notes that it is important to consider equally the content, form, and history of the books which Morris owned, and observes that it is not only the medieval manuscripts and incunabula which should receive attention, but also his ordinary reading copies and nineteenth-century resources on medieval and art history. The medieval texts, for example, show his interest in all aspects of the past, including hunting, gardening, painting, dyeing, medicine, and cookery. Although Morris’s chief period of collecting was directly before and during his work on the Kelmscott Press (1889–96), he had begun to collect rare items much earlier, since an early catalogue of 1876 includes several incunables and Icelandic works. Unfortunately, since much of our information comes from sale catalogues, less is known about the dates of his acquisition of books than about those owned at the time of his death, and Cowan suggests that more research into his relationship with booksellers such as F. S. Ellis or J. and J. Leighton might clarify some of this chronology.

At Morris’s death, his executor Robert Steele made a plea for the collection to be purchased in entirety by a library or other institution, as not only “a worthy tribute to [Morris’s] memory, but an absolutely unparalleled education in taste.” Unfortunately this opportunity was lost, and an industrialist, Richard Bennett, bought the collection, later selling many books which were purchased by Morris’s friends or whose fates are now unknown. A large number of the medical and other books ended up in the Wellcome Library in London, including geographies, herbals, medical treatises, and books on dyeing. Bennett sold his larger collection to J. Pierpont Morgan in 1902, and the Morgan Library prepared a printed catalogue of the Morris items, supplemented by a 1976 exhibition catalogue by Paul Needham. Cowan summarizes that “all the major incunables and manuscripts that belonged to him can be found there”; these include many bestiaries, psalters, and books of hours. Other items pertaining to the Kelmscott Press and Morris and Co. arrived at the Huntington Library through the sale of the Helen and Sanford Berger collection. In addition, items originally at Kelmscott Manor and sold after May Morris’s death included many manuscripts as well as books read by the family, such as ballad collections, works edited for the Early English Text Society, books on plants, and a fifteenth-century Latin geometry text with intricate woodcut designs. Others were retained by the Society of Antiquaries, and May Morris bequeathed some to the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Cowan also notes that for Morris, a library was always a social environment where he discussed books with his co-workers and friends, so that his collaborators in design, such as Emery

Walker and Edward Burne-Jones, also benefited from access to his collections. Moreover, he clearly enjoyed giving books as presents, as testified by the many inscribed copies to his family, friends, and fellow authors. He also kept copies of Kelmscott Press books for himself, especially vellum editions, not all of which have been located, and in a few cases made up bound collections of proof illustrations and other texts in preparation for potential catalogues of incunabula and rare woodcuts. Many of his books remained “uncut,” that is, with the edges untrimmed, an instance of Morris’s preservationist instincts and care with binding. Cowan concludes with suggestions for what might be learned from further explorations in Morris’s use of books, for example, from his catalogues of handicraft and antique material culture from the South Kensington Museum, his illustrated antiquarian histories of medieval dress and art, and his many works on popular medieval life which informed his later theories of art and society. He notes that although scholars have explored Morris’s many indebtednesses to more famous literary sources, Morris “also built up his own canon, a more wide-reaching and inclusive one, exemplified in the great diversity of his reading interests,” and that in his writings and personal life, he created a community within which rare books could be shared and experienced.

*Chapter 22:* In “William Morris and the Kelmscott Press,” Nicholas Frankel explores Morris’s ambitions in founding the Kelmscott Press, which included not only his stated aim, the desire to produce books which “would be a pleasure to look upon as pieces of printing and arrangement of type,” but also the creation of art works which would provide an alternative to the printing practices of his day and thus an intervention in the history of Western bookmaking. He remarks that the political implications of Morris’s printing experiments had not been observed until the advent of late-twentieth-century critics such as Jerome McGann, Michelle Weinroth, and Elizabeth C. Miller (see Chapter 18), and that the cooperative labor practices of the Kelmscott Press, modeled on a medieval guild or artisan’s workshop, radically departed from the isolating, near-industrial conditions under which Victorian books were generally produced.

Indeed, Kelmscott books deemphasized single authorship; Frankel notes that a few even lack title pages, ceding importance to the elaborated colophon that emphasized the facts of printing and bookmaking, so that even a literary work became a communal enterprise. He summarizes Morris’s stated principles for print design: the use of fonts devised to avoid narrow and small type, the control of spacing to avoid unsightly rivers of white space, and the arrangement of layout by openings rather than separate pages; most importantly, ornament should be “architectural” rather than separate from the text. Beyond basic design, illustrated books were further desirable as “intimately connected with the other absolutely necessary art of imaginative literature” (“The Ideal Book,” 73).

Previous critics have remarked on the significant materiality of Morris’s Kelmscott Press books; according to Jerome McGann, Morris “wants us to read ... as much with our eyes as with our minds,” and thus anticipated the modernist, imagist, visual and concrete poetry of the next decades. Jeffrey Skoblow finds that the “pervasive materiality” of Kelmscott books provoke sensory derangement, and this resistance to normative reading practices forms a critique of sensory alienation and commodification. Michelle Weinroth adds to these insights a recognition of the political intention of these printing practices, the re-enchantment of the rhetoric of social and political change. The Kelmscott Press version of *A Dream of John Ball*, for example, evokes expanded “epistemologies of time” and a new mode of “three-dimensional thought,” removing the reader from capitalist time. And Elizabeth C. Miller also notes that the Press’s productions are both archaic and futuristic, incarnating a political vision earlier thwarted by mass print and circulation practices. In contrast to the compromised newsprint spaces of *Commonweal*, in the Kelmscott Press version of *News from Nowhere*, for example, we view an alterity in order “to highlight our own alienation from the present it depicts,” an alternate reality which, as Frankel

notes, is also rendered concrete and tangible through the frontispiece drawing and the inclusion of familiar settings in the text. Miller observes that such anti-capitalist print practices also encouraged discontent with realist fiction and other forms dependent on mass print, influencing the “anti-novel” turn among early-twentieth-century writers as well as other radical forms of cultural and political activity.

To these insights, Frankel adds recognition of the importance of Morris’s plant designs and floriated forms to the effects created by the Press. No mere devices or decorations, for Morris these patterns evoke our alliance with nature, and should remind us of “the outward face of the earth” (“Some Hints on Pattern Designing”) and its patterns of growth and change. Frankel notes that it took some time for Morris to figure out how to replicate the dynamic effects of his wallpapers and fabrics within the confines of a book, as he experimented with chintz covers and other discarded bindings and initially eschewed all use of color. Instead, through their use of foliated printed borders, Kelmscott Press volumes create a natural and protective habitat for the text, and the intertwining boundaries between border and text simultaneously immerse the reader both in its immediate language and the outer world. As instances, Frankel points to the Kelmscott Press presentation of “From the Upland to the Sea,” whose floral border invites the reader to join the speaker in his imagined visit to the countryside; and that of the “Prologue” to *The Earthly Paradise*, (“Forget six counties overhung with smoke”), nested in a tangle of floriated forms suggestive of the epic’s appeals to imagine an alternate, more natural world. Similarly, in the much smaller sextodecimo *Child Christopher and Goldilind the Fair*, the short text on each page places greater emphasis on the border and initial illuminated initial, and the text itself seems visually enjambed in consonance with the woodland “Oakenrealm” it celebrates.

Such practices accord with the celebration of floriated ornament expressed in John Ruskin’s *Nature of Gothic* (the fourth book published at the Press)—which Morris praised as “one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century.” To Ruskin, such vegetative forms suggested the arts of a “tranquil and gentle existence,” including those of literature, science, and domestic and national peace. In addition to heightening the meanings within his own works through their designs, Morris’s Kelmscott Press versions also reinterpret the works of others, for example, lending new political urgency to the opening lines of Keats’s “Endymion,” and exemplifying through its designs the poem’s claim that imagination may “wreath a flowery band to bind us to the earth.” Frankel concludes that Kelmscott Press books not only strive to reclaim the printed word from the constraints of capitalist production but also to create a symbiosis between the natural environment, text, and reader, so that a printed book may, in Morris’s words in “The Lesser Arts,” be made to “look as natural, nay as lovely, as the green field, the river bank, or the mountain flint.”

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In pondering these chapters, I have been repeatedly impressed by the instances of convergence and interrelationship between Morris’s multifaceted activities—in the decorative arts, business, travel, translation, poetry, prose, and the promotion of socialism—all of which evince his sense of immediacy and concreteness on the one hand, and, on the other, an unstated aspiration toward something beyond. As many have noted, such a unity-in-difference forms an analogy to the urgency and duality of his decorative patterns: reposeful and restless, evoking growth and development, but never entirely renouncing their source. In an 1876 letter written from Leek cited in J.W. Mackail’s *Life of William Morris*, Morris reaches out to what his biographer describes as “a friend who was passing through one of those darkneses in which the whole substance of

life seems now and then to crumble away under our hands.” As he strives to comfort his friend, Morris makes a rare attempt to explain what for him are the inner principles of life itself:<sup>1</sup>

I wish I could say something that would serve you ... and indeed I entreat you (however trite the words may be) to think that life is not empty nor made for nothing, and that the parts of it fit one into another in some way; and that the world goes on, beautiful and strange and dreadful and worshipful.

“That the parts of it fit one into another in some way” is of course an apt description of a Morris design, or even of his vision of a transformed society of fellowship; “that the world goes on, beautiful and strange and dreadful and worshipful” could well describe the ethos of his poems and romances. Morris’s works also embody a coherent historicist/futurist vision—something close to a *totum simul* perspective—the belief that all history occurs at once, and that we who are now living are implicated in it. This view is both terrifying and consoling (“strange and dreadful and worshipful”): terrifying because deeply rooted, obliterating evil seems likely to recur; and consoling because we have a part and a duty within this process to act heroically for the good. Moreover, we are not alone in this effort, but surrounded by the community of all who have similarly acted from time immemorial into the indefinitely extending future.

As we have seen, in addition to providing a fuller understanding of Morris’s contributions in interior design, stained-glass artistry, and several interrelated genres of writing, these chapters also amplify several recent cultural and critical preoccupations. The latter include the increasing emphasis on Morris’s pioneering eco-socialism, his ecological and holistic worldview, and the latter’s influence on his travel and fantasy writings, textile and book designs, and imagined futures. Moreover, in recent years, the idea and practice of utopia has been the subject of renewed attention on the part of critical theorists such as Terry Eagleton and Frederic Jameson, political philosophers such as Ruth Kinna and Ruth Bristow, and literary scholars such as Kristin Ross, Owen Holland, and Michael Robertson (*Communal Luxury; William Morris’s Utopianism; The Last Utopians*). The *Companion* essays on Morris’s socialist writings indicate a clear resurgence of interest in the utopian-socialist aspects of Morris’s thought, defining this within the leftist intellectual currents of his day, projecting present-day applications, and advancing “strong” creative interpretations of his utopian romance. And from different quarters, as Morris designs continue to circulate in various popularized and commercial forms, these also inspire both historical research and concern for the preservation of artistic integrity in new contexts. In addition, the proliferation of digital media has given increased focus to the study of the book, and thus to Morris’s practices of manuscript illumination, book collecting, and designing for the Kelmscott Press—in turn prompting concomitant questions of the extent to which his works may be creatively adapted within new forms of print and distribution technologies.

And what of the future? As *News from Nowhere*’s Henry Morsorn replies to Guest’s query about the future of the new society, “I don’t know ... We will meet it when it comes” (chapter 27). Some initial suggestions for new approaches have been made in these chapters, however; for example, Michael Robertson observes that more could be said on the homosocial bonding of Morris’s early friendships and collaborations; Tony Pinkney envisions the possibility of Deleuzian or religious studies approaches; Martin Stott finds Morris’s continuing presence in travel literature and fantasy more broadly; and Yuri Cowan suggests that Morris’s day-to-day use of the books he possessed deserves more scrutiny. Other gaps include a full study of Morris’s shorter political journalism (apart from the directly literary works), which remains consistently pithy, caustic and biting in humor, and graceful and powerful in style. Though Morris’s translations from Old Icelandic, Latin, and Old French have been individually well studied (as

in the chapters by William Whitla and Paul Acker in this volume), the remarkable range of his translation work—from the Danish, Greek, and Anglo-Saxon as well as the aforementioned languages—suggests the need for a synthetic study of the development of Morris’s translation practices and their clear effect on his other writings. Perhaps most urgent, however, would be an attempt to trace more fully the international aspects of the affinities of Morris’s writings, artwork, and socialist ideas, not only in Ireland, the United States, and other English-speaking countries but also in Europe, Southeast Asia, Japan, China, and beyond, itself a heroic effort which would require far more than a single volume or exhibition.

At 21, Morris tried to console his mother for the fact that he no longer intended to be an Anglican cleric, as she had hoped. In a letter which blends earnestness, a bit of defensive pleading, and some gentle sarcasm, he lays out his life hopes: “Perhaps you think that people will laugh at me, and call me purposeless and changeable . . . but I in my turn will try to shame them . . . by steadiness and hard work. . . . I will by no means give up things I have thought of for the bettering of the World in so far as lies in me—Stanley and Rendal, and Arthur, and Edgar [his brothers] shall keep up the family honour in the World . . . and sometimes when I am idle and doing nothing, pleasant visions go past me of the things that may be” (Kelvin 1:25, 11 November 1855). The following volume bears witness to the importance of these “pleasant visions,” as well as to the original insights of the scholars, critics, and artists who have explored and interpreted them anew for our own time.

### Note

- 1 *Life of William Morris*, 1.327. For a fuller discussion, see my *History and Poetics in the Early Writings of William Morris*, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2015, 285fn. Since Mackail was the Burne-Jones’ son-in-law and the letter is cited without salutation, its likely source was the Burne-Jones family. Also Edward Burne-Jones apparently experienced moods “in which the whole substance of life . . . seem[ed] to crumble away.”



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